

Harden Not Your Hearts

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Recently I visited with a couple of friends, shared with them my faith, trust in Jesus Christ as my savior and Lord, and asked them if they had ever made a decision to receive Jesus Christ as their personal savior and Lord. They said that they had not. I then asked them if they had ever thought about it and they said that they had thought about it but had never done it. I then gave them an opportunity to pray and receive Jesus Christ while I was visiting with them. They were not ready to make that decision, but thanked me for sharing my faith with them.

Sharing my faith and trust in Jesus with my friends was not easy and I don't know that I communicated the Gospel message as well as I would have liked, but I felt compelled to share it at that particular time as I now live in another state and rarely see them anymore. I continue to pray that God will soften their hearts that He will draw them to Himself, and they will receive God's gift of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ.

None of us know how long we have on this earth.

I am reminded of how my Dad died suddenly in a tragic farm accident at the age of 42. It was at this time in my life when I really had to evaluate my faith and all that I believed in. Either my faith and trust in Jesus Christ was real or it wasn't. It was where the rubber met the road. It was where my faith met the reality of a physical death. I am thankful that my Dad knew Jesus Christ as his personal savior and regularly testified of his faith and trust in Him. Even though I was devastated at the age of seventeen when my Dad died in my arms, I had great comfort in knowing where he was and that I would someday see him again in heaven.

Many people think that they can put off making a decision to accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior and Lord and do it later, on another day, maybe later in life, or they need time to think about it. Unfortunately, for many, tomorrow never comes and they never get another chance to make the most important decision of their lives which effects where they will spend eternity.

I pray that my friends will make the decision to accept Jesus as their savior before it is too late.

My biggest regret in life is that I have not been as outspoken and verbal as I feel I should have in telling my friends and acquaintances of my faith and trust in Christ. I guess it is something that we leave unsaid because it might make our friends, relatives or acquaintances feel uncomfortable. Or, perhaps, in my case, I felt that somehow they would know of my faith because of my involvement and dedication in the music ministry of the church and the life I lived.

This silence on my part is something I intend on changing.

If you feel the prompting of the Holy Spirit calling you to make a decision to repent of your sins and receive Jesus Christ as your personal savior and Lord, do not hesitate. Do not say “No, maybe later.”

My friends’ hesitation to act and receive Jesus Christ as their personal savior and Lord reminds me of the scripture in Hebrews 3.

⁷ That is why the Holy Spirit says,

“Today when you hear his voice,

⁸ don’t harden your hearts

as Israel did when they rebelled,

when they tested me in the wilderness.

⁹ There your ancestors tested and tried my patience.

even though they saw my miracles for forty years.

¹⁰ So I was angry with them, and I said,

‘Their hearts always turn away from me.

They refuse to do what I tell them.’

¹¹ So in my anger I took an oath:

‘They will never enter my place of rest.’”

¹² Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. ¹³ You must warn each other every day,

while it is still “today,” so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.

¹⁴For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ. ¹⁵Remember what it says:

“Today when you hear his voice,

don’t harden your hearts

as Israel did when they rebelled.”

¹⁶And who was it who rebelled against God, even though they heard his voice? Wasn’t it the people Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷And who made God angry for forty years? Wasn’t it the people who sinned, whose corpses lay in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom was God speaking when he took an oath that they would never enter his rest? Wasn’t it the people who disobeyed him? ¹⁹So we see that because of their unbelief they were not able to enter his rest. Hebrews 3:7-19 NKJV

Unbelief is the reason that the children of Israel were not permitted to enter into the Promised Land. Instead, they wandered around the desert for forty years until all those twenty years old or older living at the time perished and died except for Joshua and Caleb.

²⁹ You will all drop dead in this wilderness! Because you complained against me, every one of you who is twenty years old or older and was included in the registration will die. ³⁰ You will not enter and occupy the land I swore to give you. The only exceptions will be Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. Numbers 14:29-30 NLT

The children of Israel were afraid and refused to enter the Promised Land when told to do so by God. God told them to go and occupy the land and he would be with them. Only two out of the twelve spies sent to check out the land were in favor of going in to possess the land. The other ten were afraid and did not believe that God would take care of them and help them conquer the Promised Land.

In the New Testament we also read a warning against hardening one's heart against God.

¹⁷ With the Lord's authority let me say this: Live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused. ¹⁸ Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him. Ephesians 4:17-18 NLT

Unbelief and rejection of Jesus Christ are the reasons why people will perish in their sin and never enter into heaven, but instead receive eternal damnation in hell.

Why do we need salvation?

For this answer we go back to the book of Genesis.

Adam and Eve's sin separated them from God. They could no longer bear to be in His presence, but sought to avoid Him.

¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Genesis 2:15-17 NKJV

We then read how the serpent tempted Eve and how she yielded to that temptation and disobeyed God.

¹ Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹ Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where *are* you?”

¹⁰ So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

¹¹ And He said, “Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

¹² Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

¹³ And the LORD God said to the woman, “What *is* this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” Genesis 3:1-13 NKJV

The passage goes on to describe the consequences of their disobedience to God and how they went from being in close fellowship with Him to being expelled from the garden.

Our sins and iniquities separate us from God, so He will not hear us.

² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. Isaiah 59:2 NKJV

In Psalms and Romans, we find that no one is righteous.

There is none righteous, no, not one. Romans 3:10 NKJV

¹ The fool has said in his heart,
“*There is no God.*”

They are corrupt,
They have done abominable works,
There is none who does good.

² The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.

³ They have all turned aside,
They have together become corrupt;
There is none who does good,
No, not one. Psalm 14:1-3 NKJV

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23. NKJV

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. I John 1:8 NKJV

In God's eyes there is no one who is good and all of mankind has sinned. So what can bridge the gap between God and man? What can restore fellowship between the Holy God and sinful man? How can man be made right before God?

Mankind was in need of a savior, someone who could pay the penalty for sin and redeem mankind from their sins.

How do we obtain salvation?

Salvation comes through Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God.

⁶Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14:6 KJV

For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23 KJV

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:16-18. NKJV

Salvation through Jesus Christ is so easy as we see in Romans 10.

⁵ For Moses writes that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands. ⁶ But faith's way of getting right with God says, "Don't say in your heart, 'Who will go up to heaven' (to bring Christ down to earth). ⁷ And don't say, 'Who will go down to the place of the dead' (to bring Christ back to life again)." ⁸ In fact, it says,

"The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart."

And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: ⁹ **If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.** ¹⁰ **For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.** ¹¹ As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced." ¹² Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. ¹³ For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."

¹⁴ But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless

someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!”

¹⁶ But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, “LORD, who has believed our message?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. Romans 10:5-17 NLT

As we see in the following verse from Ephesians, salvation is a gift of God through faith and trust in Jesus Christ. We cannot obtain salvation or heaven through good works.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Romans 5:8-11 NKJV

Jesus paid the penalty of our sins by dying on the cross. He bridged the gap between sinful man and a Holy God for all who would receive His free gift of salvation. Through Jesus Christ we can now be reconciled to God and stand before him as though we had never sinned, because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins.

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:12 NKJV

Adam’s sin separated man from God and resulted in condemnation, but Jesus obedience to God in taking our sins upon himself and dying in our place, resulted in the free gift of salvation to all who will receive it.

¹⁸ Therefore, as through one man’s offense *judgment came* to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹ For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous. Romans 5:18-19 NKJV

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9. NKJV

All you need to do to be saved is to admit that you are a sinner, confess your sins, confess with your mouth that Jesus, Son of the Living God, is Lord, who died for your sins, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins and receive His free gift of salvation. Ask Him into your heart and life to take control and be the Lord of your life.

If you do not know Jesus and would like to, you can pray your own prayer or pray one of the sample prayers below. As you will see below, there is no one right prayer. These are sample prayers for you to look at. God knows your heart. Be yourself and talk to Him.

Don't harden your heart. Don't put off the most important decision of your life. Receive God's free gift of salvation right now through His son, Jesus Christ. Decide your eternal destiny now!

Sample prayers:

Lord Jesus, I humbly come to you and ask you to come into my heart, forgive me of my sins and receive me into your arms. I confess with my mouth that You are the only begotten Son of God, that you were crucified for the remission of my sins and that you have risen from the grave and are now seated at the right hand of the Father. I pray this prayer and receive my salvation in Jesus name. Amen.

From the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association &

<http://peacewithgod.jesus.net/>

God knows who you are, He loves you, and He wants you to know and love Him.

How do you do that?

First, admit that you, like all of us, are a sinner. Being sinners means we have wronged God and fall short of His perfect standard. It also means we are separated from Him and deserve His judgment.

But He loves us! God sent His own son Jesus Christ to die for our sins. He died for your sins. He was punished so you don't have to be. Not only that, death did not defeat Him. After three days Jesus rose from the dead, alive again!

Trusting in Jesus' sacrifice for you is the only way to find forgiveness from God and to begin a relationship with Him. We urge you to take this step of faith today. To do that simply talk to God – this is called praying – and tell Him you believe in His Son. We suggest a prayer like this:

“Dear God,

I'm a sinner. I'm sorry for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I believe that Jesus Christ is your Son. I believe that He died for me. That He rose from the grave. That He's alive. I want to invite Him to come into my heart to take control. From this day forward forevermore. And I pray this in the name of Jesus.

Amen”

Sinner-prayer.com

<http://www.sinner-prayer.com/>

"Father, I know that I have broken your laws and my sins have separated me from you. I am truly sorry, and now I want to turn away from my past sinful life toward you. Please forgive me, and help me avoid sinning again. I believe that your son, Jesus Christ died for my sins, was resurrected from the dead, is alive, and hears my prayer. I invite Jesus to become the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me obey You, and to do Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

Into the Light Ministries

<http://www.intothelight.org/answers/sinners-prayer.asp>

"Heavenly Father, have mercy on me, a sinner. I believe in you and that your word is true. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that he died on the cross so that I may now have forgiveness for my sins and eternal life. I know that without you in my heart my life is meaningless.

I believe in my heart that you, Lord God, raised Him from the dead. Please Jesus forgive me, for every sin I have ever committed or done in my heart, please Lord Jesus forgive me and come into my heart as my personal Lord and Savior today. I need you to be my Father and my friend.

I give you my life and ask you to take full control from this moment on; I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

If you prayed to receive Jesus Christ as your personal savior and Lord, Congratulations! I am so very happy for you. But don't stop here! Start reading your Bible every day, and if you don't have a Bible, get one. Pray and talk to your heavenly Father daily. Find a good Bible believing church near you and start attending. Start attending a small group Bible study and make some new Christian friends. Being a Christian isn't easy so having a group of Christian friends to help you grow in your new faith in Christ is important. It is also important to have a small group of believers that you can go to when you need prayer and encouragement in your life.

Most important of all never forget the words of Jesus:

⁵ For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we may boldly say:

"The LORD is my helper;

I will not fear.

What can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6

²³ Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. ²⁴ God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.

²⁸ May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. I Thessalonians 5:23, 24, 28