A “stiff-necked” People

Introduction

Scripture Reading: Acts 7:47-53

1. Stephen has just delivered a powerful sermon to the Jews from the call of Abraham and then including the Patriarchs in Egypt, the deliverance by Moses, the rebellion of Israel against God, and finally that God’s true tabernacle is in the hearts of men.

2. In verse 51, Stephen refers to the Jews as “stiff-necked,” a people who resists the Holy Spirit as their fathers did.

3. Though true, the phrase levied against these Jews cost him his life. Those words “cut to the heart” of the people to anger.

4. The phrase “stiff-necked people” is a figure of speech for rebellion and disobedience taken from stubborn domestic animals, such as oxen that turn their shoulders away from the yoke and refuse to follow directions.

A. A stubborn horse will stiffen his neck and refuse to be turned.

1) It is to be stubborn, unyielding, arrogant, and proud.

a. “stubborn” = refusing to comply!

5. Let’s look at some examples of such stubbornness and what it means to be stiff-necked:

Old Testament Examples

1. In a sense, Israel was stiff-necked when they refused to obey the word of God and chose rather to follow after idolatry and immorality.

A. Listen now to how those that were disobedient to God's commands were referred:

2 Kings 17:14 Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God.

Deuteronomy 31:27 for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD, then how much more after my death?

Nehemiah 9:16-17 But they and our fathers acted proudly, Hardened their necks, And did not heed Your commandments. They refused to obey, And they were not mindful of Your wonders That You did among them. But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion They appointed a leader To return to their bondage. But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness, And did not forsake

Jeremiah 17:23 But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.

2. This terminology was levied against King Zedekiah because of his rebellion.

2 Chronicles 36:11-13 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear an oath by God; but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel.

Stiff-Necked Examples Today

1. Baptism is for the remission of sins.

Mark 16:16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

A. Many today become stiff-necked and refuse to obey the Lord's teaching.

2. Remarriage authorized by the Lord in scriptural cases only.

Matthew 19:9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

A. Many have become stiff-necked and refuse to obey the Lord's teaching.

3. Reverence God, Remember the Lord, exhort one another on the first day of the week.

Hebrews 10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Acts 20:7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread,.....

A. Many have become stiff-necked (self-willed) and unwilling to come and reverence God, remember Jesus, and exhort the brethren, disobeying God's law.

4. Not to become a friend of the world.

James 4:4-7 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

A. Yet so many have become stiff-necked and forsaken the Lord to drink the from the wells of worldliness.

5. God's word has NEVER changed. People have drifted away from God, stiffened their necks, refusing to obey our creator.

Jeremiah 17:23 But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.

Romans 10:21 But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."

The Consequences of Being Stiff-necked:

1. **When one resists our Father and our Lord, one is resisting the Holy Spirit.**

    A. **We can't say we love God, if we resist the Spirit. They are all one family.**

2. **As a result of Israel's disobedience, they were destroyed.**
2 Kings 23:5-6

    A. **Why?**
    2 Kings 23:13-14

3. **The last thing Zedekiah saw was his children and princes' being put to death.**
Jeremiah 52:8-11

4. **The question for us is this: How much worse punishment will we receive?**
Hebrews 10:28-31

    A. **In Matthew, hell is described as an unquenchable fire, outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, an eternal torment.**

Conclusion

1. Let us not be guilty of stiffening our necks at the commandments of God.

Romans 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

A. We KNOW how God dealt with His children of old when they were disobedient. Let's learn from them, so that we will obey our Lord and live!

Invitation

Place **Date**

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