

Stiff Neck People... the dangers of stubbornness

God warns us concerning stubbornness - Isa 30:1 - "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the Lord, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but **NOT BY MY SPIRIT,** heaping sin upon sin;

God describes how man's stubbornness has separated him from God - Rom 1:18-32 - 18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who **suppress the truth** by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they **neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.** 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. 24 **Therefore** God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and **worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator** — who is forever praised. Amen. 26 **BECAUSE OF THIS,** God gave them over to **shameful lusts.** Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. 28 **Furthermore,** since they did not think it worthwhile to **retain the knowledge of God,** he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Although they **know God's righteous decree** that those who do such things deserve death, they **not only continue to do these very things** but also **approve of those who practice them.**

Like Pharaoh, we tend to become stubborn when things feel normal - Ex 8:12-15 - 12 After Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh, Moses cried out to the Lord about the frogs he had brought on Pharaoh. 13 And the Lord did what Moses asked. The frogs died in the houses, in the courtyards and in the fields. 14 They were piled into heaps, and the land reeked of them. 15 But when Pharaoh **saw that there was relief,** he **hardened his heart** and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said.

When God's people became stubborn it would ignite God's wrath - Ex 32:7-10 - 7 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. 8 They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' 9 "I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a **stiff-necked people.** 10 Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation."

This stubborn group of people almost brought destruction on themselves - Ex 33:1-6 - Then the Lord said to Moses, "Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' 2 I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 3 Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way." 4 When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments. 5 For the Lord had said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.'" 6 So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb.

God warned the Israelites time after time to let go of their stubbornness –

2 Kings 17:13-15 - 13 The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets." 14 But they would not listen and were as **stiff-necked as their fathers,** who did not trust in the Lord their God. 15 They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their fathers and the warnings he had given them. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the Lord had ordered them, "Do not do as they do," and they did the things the Lord had forbidden them to do.

2 Chron 30:8 Do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were; submit to the LORD. Come to the sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you.

Unchanged stubbornness was evil and treated as such - Deut 21:18-21 -18 If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, 19 his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. 20 They shall say to the elders, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard." 21 Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.

The book of Judges is a series of historical stories of the Israelites stubbornness and being them being dealt with because of their stubbornness - Judg 2:19 -19 But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways. (Judg 17:4 , Judg 21:25 (everyone did what was right in his own eyes.)

The Israelites stubbornness kept them from the true blessings of God - Ps 81:11-12 -11 "But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. 12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.

❖ **Three elements that create stubbornness are** 1.) Complacency 2.) Self-centeredness 3.) Pride and/or tradition

Stubbornness is equal to idolatry - 1 Sam 15:22-23 - 22 So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king." NKJV

The danger of stubbornness still exists for us today if we don't resolve it - Heb 3:7-14 - 7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, 9 where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. 10 That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" 12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Our stubbornness can eventually be our demise –

Rom 2:1-6 -You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. 2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. 3 So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? 5 But **BECAUSE OF YOUR STUBBORNESS AND YOUR UNREPENTANT HEART,** you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

Prov 29:1 -A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will **suddenly be destroyed** — without remedy.

Stubbornness can make us miss the true message of God –

Mark 3:1-6 - Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." 4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. 5 He looked around at them **in anger and, deeply distressed** at their **stubborn hearts,** said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Acts 19:8-9 -8 Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. 9 But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way.

Our stubbornness will make us ignore the Holy Spirit - Acts 7:51-53-51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

Seeing the difference between being stubborn and not - Rom 2:6-8 - 6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done." 7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, **HE WILL GIVE ETERNAL LIFE.** 8 But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, **THERE WILL BE WRATH AND ANGER.**

The remedy to stubbornness is reverence for God

Reverence must be the main characteristic of every Christians life - 1 Peter 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

***Stubbornness can exist in the whole or portions of our lives. However; we must live our entire life based on God!**

The reverence we are to have for God must be ALL the time - Prov 28:14 Blessed is the man who **ALWAYS** fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.

Learn from the reverence of Jesus - Heb 5:7-9 - 7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard **BECAUSE OF HIS REVERENT SUBMISSION.** 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

Stubbornness produces the following characteristics which are opposite of reverent submission:

- Worldly compassion
- Emotional acceptance
- Senses and intelligence over Faith
- Pride and human allegiance over God

We need to go to God for all the answers and all the ways - Ps 25:4-5 - 4 Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; 5 guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

Stop rebelling at God's commands, respect them - Prov 13:13 He who scorns instruction WILL pay for it, but he who respects a command is rewarded.

Jesus gave the answer to resolve stubbornness - Matt 16:24-26 - 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Though you may not see it now, fearing God produces the only good outcome

Eccl 8:12 Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God.

Eccl 12:13-14 - 13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because **this applies to every person.** 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. NASU

Learn from the lessons of the past!!! - Heb 4:6-7 - 6 It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. 7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, **DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.**"