

## SIGNS OF A MATURE CHURCH The Condition of the Heart

**Text: Philippians 1:7-8**

**Key Word: Condition**

**Key Question: What Was the Condition of Paul's Heart When He Was Afflicted?**

We live in a time when the medical professionals are searching for new medicines and treatments to overcome the high increase in heart disease. The words of Jesus are gaining a new meaning with our generation.

*“Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”*

*Luke 21:26*

The apostle Paul was given one of the most difficult ministries recorded in the Scriptures. He faced many severe hardships for the cause of Christ. He was indeed a true shepherd who was surrounded by a vast number of hirelings who were destroying the flock of God. His heart must have ached many times when he was daily confronted with those who opposed his message of the gospel. He could have used the circumstances to make an excuse for himself. Instead he chose to become a faithful servant who would not give into the unceasing/relentless barrage of accusations and attacks. He kept his heart pure through the many afflictions he faced.

### **I. INFECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION**

#### **A. Weakens the Heart**

We have all heard the reports of new viruses and forms of bacteria. The medical profession has continued to struggle with new techniques and treatments to overcome the constant increase and variety of strains. They have learned that they must be pro-active and not disregard the signs or neglect to deal with the factual results that now face them.

The apostle Paul likewise knew that he had to deal with the many types of “**spiritual viruses**” that attempted to infect and weaken his heart. It is during times of affliction that we can allow our hearts to be infected. There are many Bible cases of those who have fallen for this trap. There will always be those who complain out of a weakened heart when they suffer afflictions like the multitude that came from Egypt (Exodus 16:3). There will always be those like Demas (II Timothy 4:10) and Alexander (II Timothy 4:14) who turn from the faith.

Yet there will also be those like the three Hebrew boys who would rather burn than bow at the king's command to worship a heathen idol (Daniel 3:13-18).

## I. INFECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION (Contd.)

### A. Weakens the Heart (Contd.)

We must remember as well that not all affliction comes from the devil. God also has used affliction to refine us in our ways.

*“See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.”*

*Isaiah 48:10*

Affliction has a way of bringing to the surface what is really in our heart. God also uses it to instill truths that will keep us from returning to our past bondage.

*“Do not eat it (Passover) with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste – so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt.”*

*Deuteronomy 16:3*

May I remind you of the story of Job who faced severe affliction. He lost his servants, flocks and herds, sons and daughters and eventually his health. The reports that came to him in one day were enough to give him a heart attack. He faced a time when his heart was weakened but it could not destroy his faith in God.

\*\* George was having trouble with a toothache, so he decided to visit his dentist.

*“What do you charge for extracting a tooth?”*

George asked.

*“Fifty dollars,”* replied the dentist

*“Fifty dollars for only five minutes of work?”*

Complained George

*“Well,”* replied the dentist, *“If you wish, I could extract it very slowly.”* \*\*

Bob Phillips

*“The World’s Greatest Collection of Clean Jokes”*

p. 127

## II. DEFECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION

### B. Hardens the Heart

“Hardening of the heart ages people more quickly than hardening of the arteries.”

“There is only one quality worse than hardness of the heart, and that is softness of the head.”

E. C. McKenzie  
“14,000 Quips and Quotes”  
p. 232

Some people find themselves in great difficulty coping with a hardness in their hearts when they face times of affliction. They question God and His Word. They can't believe that a loving, gracious and compassionate God would allow them to undergo such severe trials. They question the love of God and begin to draw away from others. They basically are saying, “**Since God doesn't love me/ I won't love you.**” They feel they have a right to defect.

### 6851 Frosts Needed

\*\*\* A young man was trying to establish himself as a peach grower. He had worked hard and had invested his all in a peach orchard which blossomed wonderfully – then came the frost. He did not go the church the next Sunday, nor the next, nor the next. His minister went to see him to find the reason. The young fellow exclaimed: “*I'm not coming anymore. Do you think I can worship a God who cares for me so little that He will let a frost kill all my peaches?*”

The old minister looked at him for a few moments in silence, then said kindly: “*God loved you better than he does your peaches. He knows that while peaches do better without frosts, **it is impossible to grow the best men without frosts. His object is to grow men, not peaches.***” \*\*\*

Christian Workers Magazine  
“Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations”  
p. 1510

## II. DEFECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION (Contd.)

### B. Hardens the Heart (Contd.)

There were many servants of God like Paul who faced times in prisons because they stood for truth. Joseph chose to be imprisoned instead of defiling Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39). Jeremiah was placed into a cistern because he chose to speak the words of a prophet into the hearts of the evil kings of his day (Jeremiah 37:18). John the Baptist was placed in Herod's fortress at **Machaerus in Peraea** for speaking to Herod about his adulterous lifestyle. Peter was placed in the **fortress at Antonia** for preaching the gospel. Paul was imprisoned a number of times for the sake of the gospel. In fact, the apostle Paul wrote the words of our text from a Roman prison.

**None of these godly men of defected from God because of the afflictions they faced. Their hearts were softened - not hardened during the time of trouble.**

## III. REJECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION

### C. Breaks the Heart

The third choice that Paul could have made was that of **Rejection**. The word rejection according to Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary means ***"to cast away as worthless; discard."*** I have found that many Christians never even get to second base before they discard the gospel. They feel like they have been rejected so in turn they reject God.

These kind walk around with a **Broken Heart** not a **Hardened Heart**. There are only two types of broken hearts. The **first kind** fears that some day God will turn them away so they attempt to cast Him away first. They want to serve God but their heart breaks not knowing what to do. **Fear keeps them in torment.**

**\*\*** As a patient came slowly out of the  
anesthetic he said, *"Why are the blinds drawn,  
doctor?"*  
*"There's a fire across the street and we  
didn't want you to think that the operation was a  
failure."* **\*\***

Bob Phillips  
*"More Good Clean Jokes"*  
p. 46

The **second kind** are like Paul whose heart was also broken. Paul had every reason to walk around with a broken heart and reject God. I don't know of anyone in Scripture who faced such continual hardships for the sake of the gospel (II Corinthians 4:8-10; 6:4-10).

### III. REJECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION (Contd.)

#### C. Breaks the Heart (Contd.)

*“All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.”*

*II Corinthians 4:15*

**Paul could see beyond the problems to the benefits that his suffering brought to others.**

### IV. AFFECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION

#### D. Softens the Heart

*“It is right that I feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart . . .  
8. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.”*

*Philippians 1:7,8*

The more that Paul was placed in chains, the more his heart softened. He longed to be with those who had become one with him in persecution. He became better not bitter. He allowed God to mold him into the image of His Son. Jesus was the supreme example being the One who reached out with a softened heart that was full of affection to those who mistreated and mocked Him.

**6840 Easy  
Road  
Crowded**

The easy roads are crowded.  
And the level roads are jammed;  
The pleasant little rivers  
With the drifting folks are crammed,  
But off yonder where it's rocky  
Where you get a better view,  
You will find the ranks are thinning  
And the travelers are few.

Where the going's smooth and pleasant  
You will always find the throng,  
For the many, more's the pity,  
Seem to like to drift along;  
But the steps that call for courage,  
And the task that's hard to do,  
In the end results in glory  
For the never-wavering few.”

**Paul Lee Tan**  
*“Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations”*  
#6840, p. 1508

## IV. AFFECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION

### D. Softens the Heart

“The gospel of Jesus Christ breaks hard hearts and heals broken hearts.”

“A man can have no better epitaph than that which is inscribed in the hearts of his friends.”

E. C. McKenzie  
“14,000 Quips and Quotes”  
p.232

*“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”*

*Proverbs 4:23*

“Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.”

Helen Keller

### What Is the Condition of Your Heart During Times of Affliction?

Is it . . .

**I. INFECTED AND WEAK**

**II. DEFECTED AND HARDENED**

**III. SHOWING SIGNS OF REJECTION AND BREAKAGE**

**IV. POURING OUT AFFECTION AS IT CONTINUES TO SOFTEN**

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Date: Oct 30/22

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Refiners Fire - F

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**I. INFECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION**

**A. Weakens the Heart** - Exodus 16:3; II Timothy 4:10; II Timothy 4:14; Daniel 3:13-18; Isaiah 48:10; Deuteronomy 16:3

**II. DEFECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION**

**B. Hardens the Heart** - Genesis 39; Jeremiah 37:18

**III. REJECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION**

**C. Breaks the Heart** - II Corinthians 4:15

**IV. AFFECTION THROUGH AFFLICTION**

**D. Softens the Heart** - Philippians 1:7,8; Proverbs 4:23