

Barley
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Scripture Lesson: -

Text: -

Introduction: - One of the worst errors of our modern thinking is the conception that the earth, its people, and the order of things as we know them, is static and incapable of being changed. In God's universe there is no static standstill. The stars move in their appointed courses; the planets turn upon their axes; the tides flow in and out; the seasons change in their ceaseless rhythm; erosion alters the face of the earth and comets are born to run their course, fade out and die. History changes, nations are born, governments change hands, and even our physical bodies undergo a complete change every seven years.

Peter struck a death blow at this ancient and modern fallacy that all things continue as they were, when God, "For this they are willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens, and the earth which are now, by the same word of are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

When this earth, which is now literally restrained from judgment by the merciful power of God, is ravaged by the refining fire

of God's judgment, then will ungodly men begin to pray. Think of it, men who never before uttered the name of God except in profanity will be calling on Him to save them. However, it will be too late.

The Lord continually warns that there is coming a day of judgment in which men will call upon God when it is too late. God has given many opportunities for repenting of sin and believing on His Son, but some have neglected or refused to accept the salvation that is in Christ. On that great day, the Bible indicates man will begin to pray and call upon God, but it will be too late. The Scriptures tell us that men who have never been to a prayer meeting before will be falling unashamedly to their knees on the day of judgment to pray. But it will be too late. What are the kind of people who are going to pray, when it is too late?

I. First, there are the men who have been reprov-
ed by the Spirit of God. "He that being often reprov-
ed shall be destroyed". (Prov. 29:1.) God reprov-
es men both negatively and positively. He both cautions them
by righteous warnings and lures them by ~~righteous~~
~~merciful~~ merciful love. And if a man is lost, he
will be lost because he ignores this faithful re-
proving of the Spirit of God. God reprov-
es men by his word. He also reprov-
es men by the righteous lives of his saints. All of
know men and women ~~by their righteous~~ in whose
presence we find it easier to do right than wrong.
Possessors of that spiritual grace, seem to draw
all who come in contact with them toward God.

An atheist once spent a few days with Fenelon
and then said, "If I stay with this man of God

much longer, I shall become a Christian in spite of myself. The weighty convincing argument of a holy life, and the consistent walk of the saint, Fenelon, had accomplished more in the life of an atheist than all of the theological arguments and discussions he had ever heard.

A famous actress died at the age of 82. She was living in poverty and made the statement to her neighbor. "If I had my life to live over again, it would be entirely different. What if that woman as a beautiful young lady many years ago had given her life to Christ? She would never have had any regrets on her death bed.

You are in the prime of life. Many are a little past that stage, but turn your life over to the Christ, before it is too late.

II.

Then, there are those who have hardened their hearts. The word of God says, "He that being oft often reprov'd and hardeneth his heart." The heart of man is a wonderful mechanism. Within its mysterious recesses is hidden the power of decision. Man has been given the power and ability to make his own choices. So, within the heart of man is found both the possibility of rising to the highest heights, or of sinking to the lowest depths.

Our text indicates that God does not harden men's hearts. This hardening process is carried out by man alone, by his own decisions, by his own rebellion and his own neglect, in spite of God's faithful and persistent efforts to reprove men of sin.

III.

Your heart can be hardened by neglect. The pop-

ular idea that we have to commit some sin to be lost is erroneous. We don't have to do a single thing to be lost, we are lost already. The word of God says, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:18).

Through childhood, youth and even old age, the Spirit of God, bids for your soul. But just as it is impossible for God to harden your heart, it is impossible for him to force you against your will to accept him as Savior. All you need to do to be lost is just continue in your present state, just neglect the matter of your soul's salvation.

We can also harden our hearts by rejection. God has given to every one of us a "sixth sense", the sense of spiritual perception. If this were not true, the Holy Spirit could not draw men to God. But unconverted men are so given to stifling this "sixth sense" by continual rejection, that it becomes deadened by neglect. "My spirit shall not always strive with man", saith the Lord. When the heart is totally hardened, then the Spirit of God has no means of speaking to man.

When Aaron Burr was a young man he attended a Gospel meeting. The Spirit of God made a strong bid for his soul. Aaron Burr rejected the pleadings of the Spirit and said, "God! You leave me alone, and I will leave you alone!" In later life, when Burr was an old man, he admitted that the Spirit of God had left him alone, and that he had never again felt the impulse to become a Christian. Yes, we can harden our hearts by rejection.

V

There will be men who face certain destruction, because they chose the way of death, praying in that day. But the word of God says, "They shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy!"

It is a serious mistake to think that we, as a government, or as individuals, will find all "things to continue as they were". Civilizations have perished because they ignored God, His precepts and His mercy. When a nation hurls itself into God's face, she will as surely be destroyed as have other great civilizations. A sad and tragic end awaits us if we, having been oft reproved, harden our hearts and reject his pleadings.

"There is plenty of time", is the age old excuse. This excuse, seems to be universal. If we speak to the young man about God and his soul's salvation, he replies, "there is plenty of time". If we speak to the middle aged business man, with the grey hair showing, he also says, "There is still plenty of time". If we speak to the old man about eternity and the welfare of his soul, he replies, "There is still plenty of time".

The greatest enemy of man is not war, nor disease, but death. Sixty million people will die during the year 1960. Many of these without God and without hope; some of these will be those who have hardened their hearts and trampled his mercy under foot.

Conclusion: - I can but say unto you, fall upon your faces and pray this prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner". Come to Christ this morning; he died for your sins. If you will say that prayer

sincerely and earnestly, you will receive Christ in your heart. You will be able to say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. If you continue to neglect the Gospel, you, some day, will cry for the rocks and mountains to fall on you. I ask you, I beg of you, to ask God to come into your heart. Ask him to take control of your life, and let him rule and direct your life. Will you do it? Come while we sing.

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