

## **WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY**

### **The Glory of God in the Hardening of Sinners?**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

R.A. Torrey was a pastor/evangelist in the early 1900s. He worked with the evangelist D.L. Moody. Torrey eventually became the head of what we know today as Moody Bible Institute and pastored the church in Chicago that is called Moody Church.

D.L. Moody told Torrey as story of a man he met when he was young and still not a believer. The man told Moody that as a young boy his mother gave him a New Testament and said, "My boy, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'" Providentially the boy moved from his hometown and went to a church and the first Sunday he attended the preacher seemed to point at him and use the same text of Scripture.

All through his life, occasion after occasion he would hear the same verse and for years, he struggled but refused to obey. He kept saying that he'd deal with God after he got his life goals established. This went on and on through his life. God kept sending this Word to him and he kept ignoring it. After one instance of a strong spiritual battle he said this to Moody: He said, "Dwight, from that day to this the Spirit of God has left me, and I have never had the slightest inclination to be a Christian." Mr. Moody said, "I did not understand it then. I was not a Christian myself. I went to Boston and was converted. Then I understood it."<sup>1</sup> Moody followed up on this man as the years went by. He eventually ended up in an insane asylum found quoting the verse over and over, "Seek first the Kingdom of God."

Stop and think about the numbers of times the Jews in Jesus day heard the Gospel, saw the miracles, and witnessed the proofs that He was the Christ. At this point in the life and ministry of Christ we must have some answer as to the widespread, catastrophic unbelief among the Jews. John provides us that insight that we need. Initially John will cite Isaiah 53:1 which reflects the astonishment of the prophet that the nation would reject the Servant of the Lord, the Christ.

**TEXT: [JOHN 12:36b-43 \(ESV\)](#)**

#### **I – JUDICIAL HARDENING**

##### **Definition**

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<sup>1</sup> Torrey, R.A., Get Ready for Forever, Whitaker House, Springdale PA, Pages 44-45

This is not a topic that is often taught in the Church. It would not surprise me if there are many here today who have never been instructed in what is called God's Judicial Hardening. It is called God's judicial hardening because it comes from God and it is His judgment on a people – AT IT IS JUST. It is not some capricious act of a tyrant. The verb to harden in Hebrew relates to the idea of making strong or establishing. An illustration might be that if I add hardener to concrete, I am strengthening a pre-existing condition.

### The Hardening of Israel

As it relates to the ethnic nation Israel, turn with me first to In Isaiah 6:9–10 (ESV). This is what John references in verse 40. This is a passage quoted 6 times<sup>2</sup> in the New Testament.

*<sup>9</sup> And he said, "Go, and say to this people: " 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' <sup>10</sup> Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."*

God told Isaiah that He would sovereignly prevent the nation of Israel from responding to the truth Isaiah would bring. That is mind-blowing. Similarly, as we read in this morning's Scripture reading, Jesus spoke in parables not only to reveal spiritual truth to believers but also to conceal it in judgment on unbelieving Jews (Matt. 13:11–13; Luke 8:10).

### Another Example

Maybe the clearest example of this judicial hardening of God is Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. There we read these terrifying words: *"But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment."* (Exodus 7:3–4, ESV). Twice in Exodus 8 we read that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15,32).

Grant Osborne helps us tremendously when he writes, "It is not a cold, calculated act but falls on a people who are already guilty . . . They have been guilty of unbelief, and God is judging them by sending further hardening on them."<sup>3</sup>

In our text we have illustrated for us exactly what Divine hardening looks like. Notice "When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them."<sup>4</sup> *"Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,"* (John 12:37, ESV). There comes a time in the life of an unbeliever when their constant refusal to repent, their constant choice to continue in their sin results in

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 13:14–15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26–27; Romans 11:8

<sup>3</sup> Osborne, G. R. (2018). *John: Verse by Verse*. (J. Reimer, E. Ritzema, D. Thevenaz, & R. Brant, Eds.) (pp. 306–307). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Jn 12:36). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

God departing and hiding himself from them. Paul stresses this very principle in Romans 1:21–28 (ESV). In verse 28 we read: “*And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.*” (Romans 1:28, ESV). God gave them up! There are no sadder words in holy Scripture.

Here's the point: **There comes a day that those who persistently reject the truth will be unable to believe it; God will harden their hearts and fix them in the path they have chosen.**

## APPLICATION

John was right as he opened his Gospel: “[Jesus] *came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*” (John 1:11, ESV). Even some of those who appeared to believe in Him had a false faith – a faith that “*loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*”<sup>5</sup> This is a hard passage to preach and a hard passage to hear preached. For those of us in Christ we immediately think of friends and loved ones who continue to resist the Gospel and we wonder if God will not simply harden their hearts and fix them in the path they have chosen? Perhaps there are some listening today who ought to be asking, “Is my heart hardening?” I am convinced there are some people who attend Elk Point Baptist Church on quite a regular basis who have never been born of the Spirit, never been truly saved – and each time they hear the truth of the Gospel they become more and more hardened in their pride and self-effort.

C.S. Lewis was right, “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, “Thy will be done.”<sup>6</sup> Which are you? As you look at your life, is it a life lived under the will of God, or your own?

How does the Bible help us, so we don’t become hardened in our sin? The author of the Book of Hebrews gives us two responses:

1. “<sup>7</sup>Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup>do not harden your hearts.”<sup>7</sup> Delayed obedience is disobedience. How many of us here today or listening on the Internet have heard the voice of God calling us to obedience, calling us to pursue holiness, calling us to deny self and follow Christ? The best response to God’s voice is to obey – TODAY! Obey – right away!

Secondly, we read:

2. “<sup>12</sup>Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. <sup>13</sup>But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you

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<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 12:43). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/16309-there-are-only-two-kinds-of-people-in-the-end>

<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 3:7–8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”<sup>8</sup> I am convinced that people who attend churches but fail to enter into accountability relationships will eventually become hardened by sin. We are experts at rationalizing our sinful behavior. We need people in our lives who love us enough that every day that challenge us as to our holiness. One of the greatest gifts to our sanctification is members of the Body of Christ.

This is the most terrorizing topic. The fact that at some point God will simply walk away, turn His back on you is terrorizing. That fact that God will cooperate with your desire to live in sin and unbelief and leave you alone in it, is terrorizing.

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<sup>8</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 3:12–13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.