

## Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy – Ezekiel 36:16-28

### I. Introduction:

- A. When we first meet **Ezekiel**, he is beside the river Chebar in Babylon/Chaldea.
1. Ezekiel had been born in Judah, but when King Jehoiachin was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, he was among the people who were carried away.
  2. When his ministry began, there were still a few Jews in their homeland living under the rule of their final king, Zedekiah.
  3. From that distance God, through Ezekiel, had a few choice words for those rebellious people.
  4. After some chapters explaining God's judgment, eventually Ezekiel's prophecies began to mellow, taking on the themes of hope and national salvation.
  5. For example, **chapter 37** – the chapter which follows our text – we are told about *"the valley of dry bones."*
    - a. Brother Daniel Pearson preached last Thursday from this chapter, applying it to the work of the ministry.
      - (1) There is work to be done by others in giving life to the dry bones of those who are spiritually dead.
      - b. I have also heard gospel messages from this chapter – emphasizing **God's** restoration of life.
      - c. But the **primary focus** of the prophecy is about Israel in the **future**.
  6. Through **Ezekiel** God says, *"Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel"* – **Ezekiel 37:12**.
  7. That is not a prophecy about Zionism and the 1948 establishment of the nation of Israel.
  8. It is a prophecy about the Millennium, when the Messiah will establish His blessed thousand year kingdom.
  9. And our text is about the same subject.
- B. But it is not so much the prophecy itself which concerns me this morning.
1. It is about the **nature** of that **national salvation**, but... I'd like to apply it **personally**.
  2. Notice **verse 26** – *"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."*
  3. Let's think about that stony heart.
- C. The title for today's message is: *"Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy."*
1. That big pair of words is doctor-speak for the *"hardening of the heart."* It **is** an actual **disease**.
  2. It is not the same thing as the hardening of the arteries – *"arteriosclerosis"* – caused by cholesterol plaque.
  3. *"Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy"* is a condition in which the walls of the left ventricle become thick and stiff.
  4. Over time, the heart can't squeeze out enough blood during each heartbeat to supply the body's needs.
  5. Without treatment the person with this disease will grow weaker and weaker until he dies.
  6. But it is treatable with modern medications – undoubtedly, very expensive modern medicines.
- D. However, there is another similar disease, called *"Cardiac amy-lo-i-do-sis"* which is **not** treatable.
1. This is a condition where certain proteins bunch up and then collect on the inner linings of the heart.
  2. There they solidify, again causing stiffness of the cardiac muscles, hindering the electrical impulses which regulate the beating of the heart.
  3. The prognosis for untreated *"Cardiac amy-lo-i-do-sis"* is death somewhere between ten months and ten years.
  4. And in most cases the only option for the person with this disease is a heart transplant.
- E. And with that I come back to our message for the day – **spiritually hardened hearts**.

### II. The Bible has much to say about our subject under a number of different terms.

- A. It uses words like *"stiff-hearted," "hard-hearted,"* and *"stony-hearted,"* before going on to other terms, including *"stiff-necked"* and *"hardened faces."*
1. There are dozens of scriptures which highlight and condemn these interrelated conditions.
  2. Some of those scriptures are well-known and often-used, while others are obscure.

- B. **Stephen**, for example, was a physician who warned others of this spiritual disease, but the patients executed him for it.
1. He said, “Ye **STIFFNECKED** and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do **always resist the Holy Ghost; as your father dies, so do ye**” – **Acts 7:51**.
  2. In that statement we have a **basic diagnosis** of the spiritual disease: **resistance** against **God**.
  3. **Paul** used the word several times early in the **Book of Hebrews**.
    - a. For example in **chapter 3** he wrote, quoting **Psalm 95**:
      - b. “Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost said, To day if ye will hear his voice, **HARDEN** not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness;
      - c. when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.
      - d. Wherein I was grieved with that generation... so I said in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.)”
  4. **Zechariah** condemned Israel saying, “The Lord has spoken to your fathers...” “But they...
    - a. refused to hearken and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.
    - b. Yea, they made their hearts as an **ADAMANT STONE**, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of God hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets...” – **Zechariah 7**.
  5. Skipping over many others, I’ll add just one more: **Jeremiah 5:3** –
    - a. “O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved;
    - b. thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to received correction;
    - c. they have made their **FACES HARDER** than a **ROCK**; they have refused to return.”
- C. In one of the message we heard this past week mention was made of **today’s** pervasive **spirit** of **fear**.
1. Satan is using a number of means to stir people’s hearts into fearing everything from **terrorists** to political and social **terms**; from **germs** to **Germans**; from **unlikely disasters** to even **less likely diseases**.
  2. None of you listen to the national news on ABC, NBC and CBS, and I don’t blame you.
    - a. For the most part, all they have to talk about are terrifying or disruptive.
    - b. And since you don’t know, because you don’t watch, let me tell you that 90% of the advertisers on those broadcasts are dope-dealers – pharmaceutical companies.
    - c. And their ads are filled with the idea that **if you don’t use** their drugs you’ll die.
    - d. But, if you **do use** their drugs, you may die from the **after effects** of their drugs.
- D. While that message to which I referred exhorted us that we need not fear because we serve a sovereign God, I’m here to tell you that there is a certain disease which you need to fear like the plague.
1. I’m talking about spiritual “**Cardiac amy-lo-i-do-sis**.”
  2. I didn’t finish all that verse from **Zechariah 7** – **they made their hearts as an ADAMANT STONE, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of God hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets...**”
  3. The verse concludes with the words, “**therefore came a GREAT WRATH from the LORD of hosts**.”
- E. For those who have humbled themselves before the Lord, submitting themselves to the heart-softening ministry of the Holy Spirit there is absolutely nothing in this world to fear.
1. But for those “**hard-hearted,**” “**stony-hearted,**” and “**stiff-necked**” rebels, there should be terror of that sovereign God to whom I just referred.
  2. The **Pharaoh** of Egypt, in Moses’ day, hardened his heart against Jehovah; He paid the price in a terrifying death, and he is still reaping the effects of his spiritual “**amy-lo-i-do-sis**.”
  3. **God’s chosen nation** died in Babylonian and Assyrian slavery – due to the effects of their hard hearts .
  4. And many in Israel died at the hands of the **Romans** in the year 70, because their hearts were hard against the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- F. And here is my simple point for this morning.
1. You may be **snickering** at my use of those big words. I have used them to catch your attention.
  2. And you may also be **yawning** at my references to Pharaoh, Romans and Jews.

3. But here is the thing: you may be suffering from the spiritual version of this *"Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy."*
4. Your heart may currently be like a stone – adamantly resistant to the moving of the Holy Spirit.
5. Your heart and soul may be like concrete.
6. And like concrete dropped into a lake, you may be headed to the bottom of the Lake of Fire.

### III. How does this happen? What is the cause of this deadly disease?

- A. I suppose that everyone is a little different and therefore, perhaps, detailed explanations aren't important.
  1. But any one of several things can calcify your heart hard. And then there are combinations & culminations.
  2. For example, the Lord Jesus brought up one cause of cardiac cement, in a parable in **Matthew 22**.
    - a. *"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,*
    - b. *And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.*
    - c. *Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.*
    - d. ***But they made light of it, and went their ways..."*** Things didn't end well for those people.
  3. This particular bunch weren't particularly evil; these people didn't kill the king's ambassadors; they simply considered the message and invitation as less important than their own agendas.
  4. And I'll just tell you bluntly, **those** hard-hearted people are in hell today, where perhaps you will spend eternity.
- B. Spiritual *"amy-lo-i-do-sis"* can flow out of **indifference** and **unconcern** toward the Lord's warnings
  1. How many times do we have to be told that certain foods cause *"arteriosclerosis?"*
  2. How many mini-strokes do we have to suffer before we see how near we are to seriously hardened hearts?
  3. Maybe the doctor tells us that we are headed toward a heart attack, but there is a proven medicine which can postpone our deaths for a while, and he writes us a prescription.
  4. Most of us wouldn't have any excuse if ignored, or neglected, that medicine and died.
  5. Spiritually, hearts may become hard through **neglect** – neglect of **prayer**; neglect of **God's Word** and **avoidance** of the House of God.
- C. Oh, and by the way, my thoughts are not confined to non-Christians.
  1. It is altogether another message, but the hearts of saints of God can become rock hard as well.
  2. We have all seen stiff-necked, stubborn Christians.
  3. They may have new hearts from the Lord, but they ruined the second one, just as they did the first.
  4. But as I say, that is for a different sermon. And they don't die the second death.
- D. Another cause of hart-heartedness, is **prejudice**.
  1. Prejudice is a preconceived opinion about something, which is not based on experience.
  2. Someone may decide she doesn't like the idea that God considers us to be **beneficiaries** of **Adam's sin**.
  3. Another person hates that God requires **blood for an atonement** for sin.
  4. *"Faith in a man who died two thousand years ago, in order that I might be forgiven by God, is ludicrous."*
  5. It doesn't matter how many scriptures, or how many times, the truth is shared with these people, their prejudice against God and His Word makes their heart harder and harder until it stops beating.
- E. Then we have the illustration of the Babylonian king, **Nebuchadnezzar**.
  1. By God's grace the man had risen to the top of the world, like cream to the top of the dairy bucket.
  2. And he had the council of Daniel, the man of God; He had been introduced to Jehovah, the God of Israel and the Creator of the Universe.
    - a. Nevertheless, his head was filled with himself, and his heart was filled with calcifying sin.
    - b. Then one day the Lord God took it all away. He was struck down like a man with a stroke.
    - c. Then again, the Lord graciously healed him, and he apparently learned his lesson.

3. Later **Belshazzar**, Nebuchadnezzar's successor – a man who had inherited the same kind of heart as his father, was going through the same cardiac event. God sent Him a spiritual heart attack.
4. Daniel, the spiritual physician, was brought in to counsel the royal patient.
  - a. He reminded him of the well-known story about what took place in Nebuchadnezzar's heart and life.
  - b. Then pointing to Belshazzar he said, *"But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind HARDENED in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him."*
5. *"And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;
 
  - a. But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven... Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written... MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.
  - b. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.
  - c. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.
  - d. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.*
6. *In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."*
7. That very night Belshazzar died of a hard heart – *"Cardiac amy-lo-i-do-sis."*
8. **Sinful pride** is a major cause of hardened heart disease.

F. Earlier I quoted Paul as he quoted one of the **Psalms**: *"Wherefore as the Holy Ghost said, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness..."*

1. That *"provocation,"* was when Israel provoked the Lord to anger, during their march from Egypt to Canaan.
2. God had given them stable leadership, meeting their needs, but not their wants and wishes.
  - a. The country-side was hot and dry; without vegetation; without entertainment.
  - b. And the people began to sinfully murmur and complain. They had no faith, or love, for the Lord.
3. They provoked Him to anger, through their unrelenting complaining and murmuring, hardening their hearts toward the Lord and His will.
4. Do you ever complain at the Lord's leadership and that you no longer have the leeks and garlicks you had in your old godless days? Maybe it is because you are still Godless.
5. **Fear the hardened heart.** Israel suffered dearly when she provoked the Lord to anger.
6. *"Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness."*

G. **YOU** may be **near death**, because of your *"Cardiac amy-lo-i-do-sis."*

1. You may be dying, standing in God's presence, because you are suffering from a hard heart & a stiff neck.
2. This is deadly serious. You may not have another twenty-four hours of earthly life left.
3. And then when you die, that cement-filled heart will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, dragging you down farther and farther into that bottomless pit.

#### IV. But I'm here to tell you that there is a cure; there is a solution to this spiritual **"cardiomyopathy."**

A. I thought about attempting to be clever, but I think I'll skip that embarrassment.

1. I thought about talking about **God's word** where it is described as a **hammer**.
2. I thought about taking you to **Jeremiah 23:29** where God says, *"Is not my word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces."*
  - a. *"Lord I know that your question is rhetorical.*
  - b. *Yes, your Word is like a hammer, and it can crush any human argument and any human heart."*
3. But I ask you: what happens to the rock that is crushed by the hammer?
  - a. Don't we end up with dust and baby rocks?
4. A moment ago I deliberately misquoted **Jeremiah 23:29** – more fully it says, *"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"*
  - a. What happens when the rock is tossed into the extremely hot fire?
  - b. Doesn't it cease to be rock? Doesn't it melt and cease to be solid?
5. I probably could twist those two thoughts a bit and make an application to you and your hard heart.
6. But I'd rather get to the point – this point:

B. Please return to **Ezekiel 36** and follow along as I **paraphrase**.

1. *"But I had pity for mine holy name, which the **hard-hearted sinners** had profaned.*
  - a. *Therefore say, Ezekiel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do **not** this for **your sakes**, but for mine holy name's sake, which **YE** have profaned.*
  - b. *And I will sanctify my great name, and the unbelievers shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.*
2. **Verse 25** – *"For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.*
  - a. *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*
  - b. ***A new heart** also will I **GIVE** you, and a **new spirit** will I **PUT** within you: and I will **take away the stony heart** out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*
  - c. *And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*
3. **Verse 29** – *"I will also save you from all your uncleannesses."*

C. What is **only solution** for a sin-hardened heart?

1. *"**Ye must be born again.**"* You must be given a new heart to replace the old one.
2. You must start over. You must be regenerated.
3. That old heart **cannot** be **repaired**. It must be **replaced**.
4. There is no philosophical, metaphysical or religious medicine which can repair the damage that sin has caused.
5. Ye must be born again or die an eternal death.
6. And how is someone born again?
7. Taking my answer from the context of that Biblical exhortation: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **BELIEVETH** in him should not perish but have everlasting life."*
8. Put your humble, dependent, loving trust in the crucified Saviour and thou shalt be given a new heart.