

A Hard Headed Preacher

By Jesse G. Jenkins

Members of the church quite often refer to some preacher as being "hard headed." I don't know why some preachers are disposed to deny it. A preacher working with and trying to save rebellious people has to be hard headed -- just as hard headed as the people with whom he is working -- if he is to accomplish the desired end. Before you disagree, let me quote two passages -- one from the Old and one from the New Testament.

"Behold, I have made thy face hard against their faces, and thy forehead hard against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house" (Ezek. 8:8-9). "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4).

Ezekiel was a hard headed preacher, and God made him so. Why did God make him hard headed? Simply because the people to whom he was to preach were hard headed and rebellious, "...for all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and a stiff heart" (Ezek. 3:7). He had to have a head as hard as theirs, or he would have no chance of making any imprint on them.

Ezekiel's hard head is not to be confused with a lack of love or concern; for, time and again he fell upon his face before God to plead for Israel (Ezek. 9:8-10, 11:13). And for a sign to Israel, he willingly gave the "desire of thine eyes" -- his wife -- without being permitted to shed a single tear over her death (Ezek. 24:16-24). Oh, how he must have loved God and the nation of Israel!

It is true that the people generally do not like for a preacher to be so hard headed that he will persevere in giving them the straight truth when their lives are not in harmony therewith. If it were otherwise, it would be something new under the sun! The prophets were misused (2Chron. 36:16); put to flight to save their lives (1Kings 17:3, 18:10); imprisoned (Jer. 36:5); cast in a dungeon to sink in the mire (Jer. 38:6); put to death (1Kings 18:13; Acts 7:52). Ezekiel also was persecuted by the very people whom he was trying to save. "But, thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them and thou shalt not go out among them" (Ezek. 3:25). His people did not appreciate him. He was just too hard headed. He would not stop preaching against their sinful ways -- even the ways of their leaders (Ezek. 22:25-28). But whether the people liked it or not, the hard head that God gave him enabled him to do the work of a prophet of God. "And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forebear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet they shall know that there hath been a prophet among them" (Ezek. 2:5). And the people who persecuted him were in reality fighting God.

Gentle friend, when you are inclined to talk about some preacher having a hard head, please remember that in the case of Ezekiel the preacher's head was made hard because of the hard headed people with whom he had to work.

God, give us preachers today with characteristics of Ezekiel -- who love God and will obey Him regardless of the personal loss, who love His people even when they are rebellious, who have courage enough to preach the word forcefully and uncompromisingly, and who have heads hard enough to persevere in the face of rebellion and persecution.

The Fate of Sand Castles

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Cor. 4:16-18).

You've watched it, too. I know I'm not the first or only person who has seen it. But there is a lesson in it that we both may have overlooked.

There are some children on a beach. They're playing and giggling -- building sand castles all the while. They seem so intent on the project. You get amused at how meticulous and careful they are with crumbly corners and towers. The looks on their faces as they screw their mouths around and stick out their tongues make you smile. Their resolute concentration on the task is priceless.

Then a big wave begins building and starts toward shore. But the kids don't panic. Instead, they do the strangest thing. They jump to their feet, scream with delight, and watch the torrent of water wash away their creations. There is no panic. No sadness. No bitterness. Even children know the inevitable end of sand castles. They are neither surprised nor angry about what has happened.

You and I should be so wise. The stuff of this world is about as lasting and durable as children's sand castles on the beach. Yet we grownups can get so caught up in it, defensive of it, and depressed over the loss of it.

God didn't create you to be famous, get rich, live in the biggest house, or drive the fanciest car. He created you for his glory. He put you in the world to love people and do holy things. Your destiny is not bound up in physical things, but spiritual. So living to be a hundred is far less important than living well -- even if for a short time. Beautifying your body is far less urgent than purifying your soul.

Children know that their sand castles are brief joys destined to disappear with an incoming tide. So they don't fret as the waves approach. They watch their creations get swept away without shedding tears. Again, we should be so wise.

Everything about this life is fleeting and perishable. The incoming wave of human mortality is going to sweep it all away. Like sand castles, nothing done for the sake of this world can last. Only what we do for eternity will survive.

What would the loss of your job or business do to you? What if your house were lost to fire or storm? What if a strange pain sent you to your physician and led to the discovery that you have only a few weeks to live? These things really do happen to people, you know. We are all as vulnerable as sand castles.

Life is God's gift. Revel in every good thing. But as you enjoy your creations in the sand, just remember not to get overly attached to them. (Author Unknown)

Sundials in the Shade

"He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:6). There is a story about a man who was treated kindly by people in a remote village in Africa. The man, wanting to show his appreciation, sent the natives a gift. He sent them a sundial thinking that it would help all the people in the village to determine the time of day. The natives were so appreciate of the gift that they built a hut over it to protect it from the elements. Naturally, by thus treating the sundial, they rendered it useless for its designed purpose. Likewise, we need to show our appreciation of truth by diligently teaching it to others. Seed left in the barn does not produce a crop.