

A Spiritual Echo

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There is a broad consensus—even within Scripture itself—about the age in which we are living. The Bible describes it as **the last days**.

The Early Church

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, His apostles lived with a deep sense of urgency. They believed Christ could return in their lifetime. What they did not perceive was the length of time—nearly 2,000 years—that would unfold before His return.

Jesus

Jesus said the end times would be like the days of Noah. A time when *every intention of the thoughts of men were only evil continually*. His thoughts, his desires, his intentions—everything flowed away from God. That is what sin does. Sin separates man from God—and that separation begins in the heart.

Paul.

Paul describes the last days to saying us that people will be lovers of themselves—self-centered, consumed with their own lives and desires. They will be lovers of money, materialistic and covetous, never satisfied, allowing money to dictate priorities, values, and behavior. And they will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. **(2 Tim. 3:1-5)**

Scripture gives us a Holy Spirit-inspired echocardiogram of the human heart in the last days and we do not have to look far to see it.

Heart Condition of the Church.

Tragically, this condition is not only present in the world—it is present in the church. Many within the church suffer from the same spiritual heart condition: self has become central, money has become the master, and pleasure has become more desirable than obedience to God.

That is why Paul says they will have a form of godliness but will deny its power.

Biblical History.

The problem has always been the heart. When we look throughout biblical history, we see moments when God's patience reached its limit.

- In Noah's day, God declared that His Spirit would no longer strive with man. Judgment came, and only eight souls were spared.
- In Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham interceded, asking if God would spare the city for fifty righteous people. That number kept decreasing—because none could be found. The hearts of men were fully corrupted.
- To Israel. God sent prophet after prophet, warning them, calling them back. But the day came when they would not listen any longer, and judgment followed. The nation ceased to exist.

The Final Judgment.

Jesus says that one day **the Master of the house will rise and shut the door**. Just as God shut the door of the ark, there will come a day when the door of grace closes.

Before judgment, God always sends warnings.

- Noah was a preacher of righteousness.
- The prophets spoke to Israel.

Repentance: The Ministry of John the Baptist

Repentance begins when a person finally sees their heart as it truly is—when the light of God's Word exposes sin. The heart is pierced, sorrow follows, and a person turns away from sin and turns toward God. That was John's ministry—to **turn the hearts of the people back to God**.

Ministry Today.

In these last days, God has spoken to us not merely through prophets, but **through His own Son**. Today we preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today, preaching the gospel is a daunting task. Sin has such a grip. Darkness is deep. And just as in Noah's day, just as in Israel's final days, people have become hardened. (i.e. the prophets)

The Bible says in the last days people will **not endure sound doctrine**. They will not tolerate truth. They will gather teachers who tell them what they want to hear. **(2 Tim. 4:1-5)**

The Authority of the Church

In the early church, there was the apostolic authority. The pastor had authority in the church to the extent that people recognized his holy calling. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us to obey those who have the rule over you in the Lord, for they watch for your souls.

Today, people don't have to listen to it. They can go somewhere else because there's plenty of other churches they can go to where they'll not be subjected to conviction nor held to a standard.

So how do you minister to people with this type of a heart condition?

How do you help a people who are callous?

How do you reach a person who refuses to be told the truth?

- For they are lovers of themselves, right? It's all about them. If you can agree with them, then fine. If not, there gone! They don't have to endure sound doctrine.
- In this day and time, people don't possess an attention span.
 - They don't have time to read or study the bible.
 - They don't want to be discipled and have to do the work of learning and growing.
 - It's all about being lovers of pleasure, gratification, having a good time. Everything is superficial.

How do you minister to such people?

Our only hope lies within the longsuffering of God, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

*So, my prayer, my burden as a pastor, is that God would **turn hearts**—that truth would pierce hearts, that people would recognize God's love, that they would understand Jesus died for them, and that they are trading their soul for the futile things of this world which are passing away.*

Spiritual Procedure: Deuteronomy 10:16 "So circumcise your heart and stiffen your neck no longer."

So today, **do not harden your heart**. Listen to the voice of God. Surrender your life to Him. Come under His authority. And let the Spirit of God give you **a new heart**—a heart of flesh, not a heart of stone.