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SALVATION

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, or aren't sure and would like to become one, then you need to believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God, that he was God who became a man, that he lived a sinless and perfect life, keeping the Law of God perfect in every way, that he kept faith perfectly, and that he was crucified on that cruel cross for your sins, mine and the entire world- he died for our sins! His death on the cross paid the penalty fully, one time for all sins that we have ever committed and that we will ever commit. He died; he went down into the bowels of the earth, even into Hell, and was raised from the dead on the third day in a resurrected, eternal body. He ascended back into heaven, was seated at the right hand of God, and is now Lord over heaven and earth. He is coming again to judge the world, to raise the dead, where he will give an eternal, resurrected, glorified body to everyone that has believed on him as their Lord and Savior, and to establish his kingdom one earth.

You come become a Christian right now as you read this, by personally placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior; believing that he is God's only begotten Son, that he died on the cross for you and that he was raised from the dead and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.."* Acts 16:31a And when you do trust Christ, and Christ alone, as your Lord and Savior, then go to God the Father in heaven in prayer and tell him so. Tell him that you have believed on his Son, thank him for his Son, and thank him for forgiving your sins and saving you! *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* Romans 10:9,10 *"For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Romans 10:13 *"Therefore, being justified by faith (declared righteous), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:1

Stiff Necked Believers

Intro:

What is it that causes us so much problem in our lives and interferes with us having fellowship with God and receiving his blessings on our lives? Could it be that the problem is one of pride? This is a short study on pride and its effect even on our bodies.

Old Testament References

Deuteronomy 21:18 – *“If a man have a stubborn (sarar) and rebellious (marah) son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them:”* סורר ומרה

Deuteronomy 21:20 – *“And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.”* סורר ומרה

Exodus 32:9 – *“And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:”* עִם־קֶשֶׁה־עַרְף

Exodus 33:3 – *“Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.”* עִם־קֶשֶׁה־עַר

Exodus 33:5 – *“For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.”* עִם־קֶשֶׁה־עַרְף

Exodus 34:9 – *“And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.”* עִם־קֶשֶׁה־עַרְף

Deuteronomy 9:6 – *“Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.”* עִם־קֶשֶׁה־עַרְף

Deuteronomy 9:13 – *“Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:”* עִם־קֶשֶׁה־עַרְף

Deuteronomy 9:27 – *“Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the*

stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin:" אֶל־קִשֵׁי הָעַם הַזֶּה

Deuteronomy 10:16 – "*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.*" וְעִרְפַּכֶּם לֹא תִקְשׁוּ

Deuteronomy 31:27 – "*For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death?*" וְאֵת־עִרְפְךָ הִקְשֵׁה

Judges 2:19 – "*And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.*" וּמִזִּדְרָכֶם הִקְשֵׁה

1 Samuel 15:23 – "*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness, (patsar), is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*" הַפְצֵר

2 Kings 17:14 – "*Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.*" וַיִּקְשׁוּ אֶת־עִרְפֵּם

2 Chronicles 30:8 – "*Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.*" אֶל־תִּקְשׁוּ עִרְפֶּכֶם

2 Chronicles 36:13 – "*And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD God of Israel.*" וַיִּקְשׂ אֶת־עִרְפוֹ

Nehemiah 9:16 – "*But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments,*" וַיִּקְשׁוּ אֶת־עִרְפֵּם

Nehemiah 9:17 – "*And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.*" קִשׁוּ אֶת־עִרְפֵּם

Nehemiah 9:29 – "*And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.*" וְעִרְפֵּם הִקְשׁוּ

Psalms 78:8 – "*And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn, (sarar), and rebellious generation;*

a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. סורר ומרה.

Proverbs 7:11 – "(She is loud and stubborn, (*sarar*); her feet abide not in her house:" וסררת

Proverbs 29:1 – "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." מקשה-ערף

Isaiah 48:4 – "Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;" קשה אתה וגיד ברזל ערפך

Jeremiah 7:26 – "Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers." ויקשו את-ערפם

Jeremiah 17:23 – "But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction." ויקשו את-ערפם

Jeremiah 19:15 – "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words." ויקשו את-ערפם

Hosea 4:16 – "For Israel slideth back as a backsliding (*sarar*) (*stubborn*) heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place." סרר

"A stubborn and rebellious son" - *sarar* and *marah*. Deuteronomy 21:18

This phrase is found frequently in the Old Testament to describe the attitude and actions of believers and the effect that our attitudes have toward our actions.

The word *sarar* is translated as **stubborn**, which is a good rendering of the idea. It means that a **believer won't listen to the Word of God. They refuse to sit under the teaching of Bible Doctrine and/or they refuse to apply it in their lives**

The backsliding heifer is a poor translation but a good picture of the dynamic. It should be rendered as a **stubborn heifer** for it speaks of an heifer **that refuses to go along with what its master wants**; it resists the yoke and will not be disciplined. One can use many words to describe the concept, but better still is a mental picture of an heifer pulling away, kicking and fighting its owner.

And this is a good description of what so many believers in Christ are doing with the Lord. Christ said that his yoke is easy and his burden is light, but believers all over the world are fighting him constantly. We refuse to do what he wants us to do; we refuse to listen to him; we refuse to apply his Word to our lives; we fight him all the way. That's the idea of stubbornness. **So in the idea of stubbornness, *sarar*, are the elements of resistance to God, disobedience to God, fighting God's will for our lives and the element of resentment and pride.**

So a stubborn son is one that won't listen to his parents, (the ones who brought him into this life). He won't obey them; he won't listen to reason; he's disrespectful; he's proud and arrogant and he fights them all the way. And many Christians are like this; and in a time of national apostasy, and/or the end times, most Christians will be like this!

The word for **rebellious** is *marah*. Now *marah* does mean to rebel against God, to not do what he wants, to not only disobey him, but intentionally go in the other direction. But its root idea is bitterness!

The emotion of bitterness is the root of our arrogant rebellion against God and all the wonderful spiritual and material blessings that he has for us! And **its source is the pride of the believer in Christ**. All the way through the Bible every bad act had as its root **the reaction of a bitter soul!** Cain's murder of his brother; Esau's marriage to the two wrong women; Israel's rebellion against God in the wilderness and throughout its entire existence had bitterness as the mental attitude behind idolatry, rebellion and every other evil act!

So, in our study on dealing with negative emotions and the destructive effect that they have on our bodies, we see that at the root of all this is the pride of the believer and his refusal to listen to and apply the Word of God to his life. It is our stubbornness, our pride, our rebelliousness and our bitterness that brings all these negative emotions on ourselves!

"And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:"
Exodus 32:9

The term **stiff necked people** is found all the way through the Old Testament when God was describing the nation of Israel. When Stephen was addressing the Israelites that is what he called them. *"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."* Acts 7:51

In the Hebrew it's *im qashah oreph*, עִם-קָשָׁה-עֹרֵף, three words but all connected together with the hyphen to treat them as one word. What it's saying is that the Israelites were not just the **people, im**, of God, but that they were lumped together in the identifying feature of being the **stiff-necked-people** of God!

So throughout the entire history of Israel in the Old Testament right on into the time of the Church Age, the Israelites were called the **Stiff-Necked-People of God** as referred to by Stephen in this way.

But what does it mean to be **stiff necked**? To understand this we must go back to the Old Testament and find out what it meant from that context, for that's where the term originally comes from. The term has a figurative use, which we will explain, but it also has a literal idea, which we will get into later on in the study.

Having a **stiff neck**, or **stiffening the neck**, meant that they didn't obey the Lord, that they refused to obey the Lord, that they didn't believe the Lord, that they refused to believe the Lord; that they didn't trust the Lord and that they refused to trust the Lord. It meant that they wouldn't listen to the teaching of Bible doctrine and that they rejected the authority and teachings of the

communicators of Bible doctrine; that they wouldn't apply Bible Doctrine to their lives. They went the other way from God, that they wanted to be like the World System, that they loved the World and it was more important to them than God, that they got into idolatry, that they rejected the spiritual dynamic that God had for them in the Old Testament and us today in the Church Age. It meant that they refused to do God's will and rejected his authority over them, that they rebelled against and became resentful of his discipline. These are all concepts connected to having a stiff neck.

But there is also a literal dynamic going on which is quite fascinating because of its impact on our bodies! The word for **stiff** is *qashah*, such as to have a stiff neck, or to stiffen the neck, and it means to be obstinate or stubborn, but it also means to to be hardened, or **to stiffen something both figuratively and literally!**

When applied to the body it means to stiffen the muscles! That the muscles become stiff, that they tighten up and lose their flexibility. In time, they can become rigid, unbending, like stone or gristle, or as one passage puts it, "*Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;*" Isaiah 48:4 **There are certain mental attitude and emotional dynamics that go into our muscles tightening up to the place that they become stiff.** What this shows is that our attitude toward God and our feelings do have an impact on our bodies.

Any woman who has worked over a typewriter or a computer, or any man who has worked over a bench for hours can certainly testify that their neck muscles will become tight because of having to hold the body in a certain position for long periods of time. But that's a stiffening of the muscles due to a physiological reason. There is also a spiritual, volitional and emotional cause for the same effect!

In every instance where we have the **stiffening of the neck** concept mentioned in the Word, the sin that is behind it all is a volitional sin! The believer in Christ does not want to do what God wants him to do! And the mental attitude sin behind that is **pride!** So it is the believer's personal pride that rebels against doing what God wants him to do.

It is our pride that keeps us from praying to God, that keeps us from confessing our sins, that keeps us from living in the filling of the Holy Spirit, that keeps us from forgiving others, that keeps us from applying the spiritual problem solving devices that he has supplied us in grace, and on and on.

It is a rare believer indeed that does not have an authority problem with the Lord. As the Lord said, "*Why do you call me Lord, but don't do what I say!*" The rebellion of the will is directly linked to our pride. It was Israel's problem in the Old Testament and it's our problem today.

The relationship that our anger has with our pride is that we get angry when we have to do what we don't want to do. We get angry when we're not able to do, or not allowed to do, what we want to do. We get angry when we have to do something when we would rather be doing something else.

So our anger comes about when God's will is at cross purposes with our wills! We get angry when we don't get our way! So anger is directly related to our will which is controlled by our pride! **So we have pride> negative volition> anger.** All of this is manifested by our not

believing God's Word, by not trusting the Lord, by not sitting under Bible Doctrine and by not applying the Word to our lives.

So our pride has affected our will, which has caused anger to be aroused in us, now we have another problem. Our anger restricts the blood flow causing the muscles around our neck to tighten up, or to *stiffen* as the Hebrew has it! So being a “*stiff necked*” believer, or having stiff muscles in our neck and the surrounding areas, is due to our own old sin nature activity of being angry, becoming angered, of burning with anger, over having to do God's will for our lives!! It is our inner rebellion of having to do God's will for our lives!!! So we do it to ourselves!

The word for **neck** in the Hebrew is *,oreph*, which does refer to the neck, **but it also refers generally to the back!** So what we are talking about is not just a stiffening of the muscles in the neck, **but it can also refer to the stiffening of the muscles in the upper and lower back!** This can be helpful and insightful information to all those believers who suffer from lower back problems.

So when it talks about believers who are **stiff necked** we know that it's referring to believers who are resisting God's will and his Word in their lives. Even though they have the indwelling Holy Spirit and a new nature, they still, due to personal pride and the sin nature, resist, rebel against and reject the will of God in their lives.

This resistance to the will of God, which is their will not wanting to do what God wants them to do, creates, resentment, anger, burning anger, repressed anger, anger of all forms inside their souls, which tightens up the muscles in the back and/or neck, which in turn creates all sorts of problems and discomfort in their bodies!

The key to success in overcoming all this is by appropriating the spiritual provisions that God has supplied to every believer in Christ. To do this means to submit yourself unto God and it is the opposite of pride. Pride is the thing that holds us back.

God has provided for us the filling of the Holy Spirit, a new nature, Bible doctrine, the confession of our sins to him, prayer that will enable us to do God's will from the heart, which is what all Christians are supposed to do. Not with lip service, not with the facade of hypocrisy, but wanting to do, and doing, the will of God from the heart.

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” Romans 6:17 We see here that obedience to God must proceed out of the heart. “Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;” Ephesians 6:6 And we see here, once again, that God wants us to do his will out of the heart.

An interesting side note is Nehemiah 9:17, “*And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.*”

God had a wonderful plan for ancient Israel, as he does for Church Age believers today. Their

own land, financial prosperity, being out of debt, freedom, independence, physical health and soul prosperity, which included freedom from the ravages of the sin nature and the tyranny of the emotions.

But they rebelled against his will, (the function of pride), they refused to take in Bible doctrine and apply its teachings to their lives, and they disobeyed him. They rejected the means by which God's blessings would come upon them. It deteriorated to the place where they wanted to go back to the slavery that they were enslaved in, **and selected leaders to lead them back into slavery!**

The connection goes like this: there is the factor of pride in every believer, which causes the believer to refuse to submit to the authority of God and his Word, which pride is the reactor factor that causes the believer to become angry, the old sin nature is unleashed, negative emotions of all sorts are activated, the believer is definitely out of fellowship with the Lord, and the body is affected with TMS, all sorts of other maladies, and as we have seen, the stiffening of the upper, middle and lower back muscles.
Pastor Mike