

# The Sin of Stubbornness

Rick Railston

January 30, 2015

Let's go back in our minds 96 years ago to France during World War I and the Battle of the Somme. Ninety-six years ago after two years of trench warfare, the Allies were attempting to break through the German lines on the western front in France near the River Somme. What occurred was one of the largest battles in World War I—one of the largest battles that had occurred up to that time. It was fought between July 1 and November 1 of 1916 near the Somme River in France. It is one of the bloodiest battles in the history of the world. It's just amazing.

What had happened was the lines between the British-French and the Germans had stalled. Nobody was advancing; nobody was retreating. The lines had stalled. Each side dug these deep trenches. I'm sure you've seen movies about World War I or documentaries where they dug these trenches on each side of the lines. They had makeshift hospitals down there. They could prepare food down there. They had bomb shelters down there—the most rudimentary of conditions. Everything was wet, damp and rat infested with fleas and lice. It was just horrible, just a horrible existence.

So, the line was static and you had trenches on each side of that line but to advance and to defeat the enemy you had to go across a "no man's land." In that no man's land, there were no trees, no grass, just dirt, bomb craters, and barbed wire. So, to mount a charge, one side had to rise up out of their trenches, dash across no man's land for a mile or so (maybe two miles) to try to get to the enemy's position.

The British wanted to break through to stop the stalemate. Artillery was the key to the offensive because the theory was "If we could lob enough shells into the German lines, if we did it long enough and put enough shells there, nothing would be left. There would be no German front lines at all." So on July 1, 1916, Britain began one of the largest artillery bombardments in the history of the world. They launched one million shells at the German lines. Now think about that—a million shells. This is 1916. Then, when the artillery was to stop, in theory the British and French would rise up out of their trenches to dash across no man's land. There would be nothing left of the Germans and the Allies would just mop them up. That was the theory.

There was one huge mistake made, however, by the British. What they did was the artillery stopped bombarding the front lines prematurely. And the artillery bombed farther back which allowed the Germans to get out of their bomb shelters, get their weapons, man their machine guns, and get ready just as the French and English got up out of their trenches. Here soldiers are running with rifles across no man's land trying to dodge barbed wire, jump barbed wire just at the time the Germans manned their machine guns.

In the first minutes of that battle, 20,000 British soldiers were killed—in just a few minutes. They were mowed down by machine guns like we would mow grass with a lawnmower. Just killed as they were running! On the first day alone, Great Britain suffered 58,000 casualties in the first twenty-four hours. Remember this went on for three months.

The British Commanding General—he later was knighted—was Sir Douglas Haig. His theory of battle was the following. He was known for a strategy of attrition, which resulted in a high number of casualties. In other words, if you threw enough men at the problem, the enemy had to give up sooner or later. And he mounted charge after charge after charge over this three-month period. This is where the term “cannon fodder” came into existence. The men who were doing the charging viewed themselves as nothing but cannon fodder. So, charge after charge occurred during this three-month period in an effort to wear down the German army. If a soldier refused to get up out of the trench and charge, he was shot on the spot as being disloyal and a deserter. It was perfectly legal to do that.

Now, Haig had a fixed image of war in his mind. He was absolutely resolute in his image of how war should be conducted. If you threw enough forces at the enemy, over time it would wear them down and then the enemy could be overcome. Let me read from The Reader's Companion to Military History. It's edited by Robert Cowley and Geoffrey Parker. This is important because we're leading to the subject of the sermon.

Essentially Haig did not change his mind about this structure [of war that I just described] throughout World War I. He continued, therefore, to think of war as relatively simple, human-centered, dependent on morale and requiring the determination of a commander to persist until victory.

If the morale was good enough and the commander was persistent enough, you could win no matter what. Now that was probably true when you were fighting with spears and swords. If you were aggressive enough and had enough leadership, you could win. But that has no relevance when you're charging across no man's land with a rifle and the guy at the other end has a machine gun—a 50 caliber machine gun firing hundreds of rounds every minute. And Haig, despite the facts that loss after loss after loss occurred, tens of thousands of men were dying, stubbornly refused to change his mind and alter his tactics.

Look at the cost of this one man's stubbornness. By the end of the Somme Campaign, ninety days, the combined casualties of the Allies and the Central Command (Germany and her allies)—listen to this—they lost more than one and a half million men in ninety days. Can you imagine? That's more than the population of Portland and Seattle put together. That's the average of losing 12,000 per day. They had trouble burying them. They had trouble carting them out of no man's land because when they tried to go get the dead, a sniper would shoot them. Can you imagine dealing with 12,000 bodies on average per day? Some days obviously there were more than others.

In World War I, France lost sixty percent of their young men between age eighteen and their late twenties. Britain lost forty percent. Germany lost an equal amount. After this Battle of the Somme was over with, guess what? The lines remained essentially the same. One and a half million men died and the lines didn't move but just a few feet. This was all due to the stubbornness of this commander.

Yet, as stubborn as Sir Douglas Haig was, his stubbornness is nothing compared to the Israelites. Absolutely nothing compared to the Israelites! Let's go back in time approximately 2500 years to 445 BC.

As you will recall, we've covered this in sermons before but prior to 445 BC, a hundred and twenty years earlier the Jews had been taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. A hundred and twenty years later, Cyrus issued the decree and allowed the Jews to come back to Palestine. At that time in 445 BC, Nehemiah was "the cup bearer" (Today, we would call him chief of staff.) to Artaxerxes the King of Persia. The Jews had been in Palestine for 120 years with all the problems we've discussed before. With that in mind, let's turn to Nehemiah 9 and we're going to see what Nehemiah has to say about the attitude of the Israelites. Granted, his situation is about the Jews, but he's looking back to the history of the Israelites. Nehemiah 9, we're going to begin in verse 9.

***Nehemiah 9:9.*** *And (referring to God) [God did] see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and [heard] their cry by the Red sea;  
10) And [showed] signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: ... (KJV)*

Nehemiah is now reflecting on the miracles God has done for Israel, the blessings He has provided for them in their own eyes. They saw it with their own eyes.

*11) And [you did] divide the sea before them, so that they went through the [middle] of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors [you threw] into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.  
12) Moreover [you led] them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. (KJV)*

God took care of them; God watched after them.

*13) [You came] down also upon Mount Sinai, and [spoke] with them from heaven, ... (KJV)*

They heard God's words. They saw the fire on the top of the mountain.

*13b) ... and [You gave] them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:  
14) And [You made] known unto them [Your] holy Sabbath, and [commanded] them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses [Your] servant:  
15) And [gave] them bread from heaven ... (KJV)*

God gave them the food they needed in the form of manna.

*15b) ... for their hunger, and [brought] forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and [promised] them that they should go in to possess the land which [You had] sworn to give them. (KJV)*

Look at the demonstration of God's power to these people: the parting of the Red Sea, His coming down on top of Mount Sinai, hearing His words, the tablets of stone, manna appeared twice as much on the preparation day, the pillar of fire, the pillar of the cloud, everything God did in their presence, all of that they saw. Look at all these blessings. He took care of everything they needed. Now notice Israel's response after all this.

*16) But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, ... (KJV)*

That's going to come up as a word that we're going to deal with and look at closely a little later.

*16b) ... [they] hardened their necks, [they listened] not to [Your] commandments, 17) [they] refused to obey, neither were mindful of [Your] wonders that [You did] among them; ... (KJV)*

And here's that word "hardened" again.

*17b) ... but [they] hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: ...*

*18) [Yes], when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is [the] God that brought [you] up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations; (KJV)*

Can you imagine the stench in God's nose after He did all those miracles and then Israel makes calf out of earring and says, "This is the god. This thing did it all," if you can imagine that?

*19) Yet [You] in [Your] manifold mercies [forsook] them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go.*

*20) Thou [also gave them Your] good spirit to instruct them, and [withheld] not [Your] manna from their mouth, and [gave] them water for their thirst.*

*21) Yea, forty years [You sustained] them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes [didn't grow] old, and their feet [didn't swell]. (KJV)*

Despite all of these blessings—think—their clothes didn't wear out, their shoes didn't wear out, their feet didn't swell because of the heat and walking.

**Nehemiah 9:26.** *Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against [You], and cast [Your] law behind their backs, and [killed Your] prophets which testified against them to turn them to [You], and they wrought great provocations. 27) Therefore [You delivered] them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto [You, You heard] them from heaven; and according to [Your] manifold mercies [You gave] them saviors [looking back referring to the time of the judges], who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. 28) But after they had rest, ... (KJV)*

Meaning: After they had repented and started being obedient and God began to bless them again.

*28) But after they had rest, they did evil again before [You]: therefore [left You] them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned [they came back to God], and cried unto [You, You heard] them from heaven; and many times [You did] deliver them according to [Your] mercies; (KJV)*

Let me read verse 29 out of the NLT translation.

**Nehemiah 9:29.** *"You warned them to return to your Law, but they became proud and obstinate and disobeyed your commands. They did not follow your regulations, by which people will find life if only they obey.... (NLT)*

Notice this:

*29b) ... They stubbornly turned their backs on you and refused to listen. (NLT)*

"Stubbornly turned their backs." Verse 30, back to the King James.

*30) Yet many years [did You] forbear them, and [testified against them by [Your] spirit in [Your] prophets: yet would they not give ear: ... (KJV)*

They wouldn't even turn their ear toward God.

*30b) ... therefore [gave You] them into the hand of the people of the lands. (KJV)*

So we see here that they refused to listen and they stubbornly wanted their own way. They stubbornly wanted to do what they wanted to do.

Now this same attitude is extant in the world we live in today. Look at our President for example. He stubbornly insisted he knew better in the Middle East and he overruled his major advisors when they all told him "You can't do this," and he pulled out of Iraq early. He didn't leave enough forces behind because he knew better. And look at the mess we have with ISIS today and Syria and Iraq. And then how it is expanding. It just

grates me that those soldiers over their gave their lives, gave their blood, gave their limbs for that territory and he knew better and he walked away from it—stubborn, absolutely stubborn.

Workers today consider correction from their bosses as unfair and abusive. They file lawsuits. They stubbornly want to do what they want to do rather than how they are directed to do by the person over them.

It's sad to say this attitude of stubbornness exists too often in the greater church. Remember we are spiritual Israel. We've talked about that and you know that.

We have situations where husbands stubbornly refuse to esteem their wives better than themselves. They take scriptures out of context and consider themselves a fuehrer rather than a loving husband. We have wives who attempt to dominate the home and they stubbornly refuse to submit to their husbands.

We have people in the church who for decades have stubbornly refused to change. In other words, the problems they had two decades ago or three decades ago, are the same problems they have today. They just stubbornly refuse to change.

I remember a few years ago, I talked to a minister. There were some problems in the church and I went to him, I hope in an attitude of humility. I said, "Look, if you could just approach it this way, things would go a lot better," and it was a harsh way. He says, "Nope. That's the way I was raised. That's the way I am." I thought "Doesn't Christ tell us we have to change from the old man to the new man, to become a new person?" "Nope, that's the way I was raised. That's the way I am." End of story. It was just stubbornness.

The fact is that we're all subject to stubbornness. I've been stubborn too many times. I'm embarrassed by the number of times I've been stubborn in my life. You just dig in your heels and just like a donkey, you refuse to move. We've all been stubborn. It is one of the greatest impediments to growing and overcoming. As we look forward to the Passover, that's one of the things we have to do is grow and overcome and change. Yet stubbornness is one of the greatest impediments that will prevent that process. So, the title of the sermon is:

### The Sin of Stubbornness

We're going to look at this in detail. I hope after we're finished we'll see that stubbornness takes many forms and it is far broader in scope than we might have otherwise thought. Now, we can't define stubbornness by going to a Webster's Dictionary. We need to define stubbornness by how God defines stubbornness. We can't get those two confused. So what we're going to do today is we're going to look at some words in the Old Testament and a word in the New Testament that define stubbornness and, hopefully, we will see that it is a far broader problem, far broader in scope than maybe we thought before.

**1. We're going to look at definitions from the Old Testament. We're going to look at three words and learn from these.**

**1.A. The word "stubborn."**

It is Strong's 5637. It is spelled in English "carar." It's pronounced saw-rar'. And it literally means *to turn away*. It means *to turn your back and go the other way*. It can mean *backsliding* or it can mean *rebellious*.

Let's see where this is used. Let's go to Isaiah 65 and read verses 2 through 6. We're going to see how this word is used. Then maybe we can learn about stubbornness from the context in which this word is used. Isaiah 65, we'll begin in verse 2. Notice what Isaiah says inspired by God. God is speaking here.

*Isaiah 65:2. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people ... (KJV)*

That is Strong's 5637, "carar," which is translated here "rebellious." Notice the characteristics of these stubborn, rebellious people.

*2b) ... which [walk] in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;  
3) A people that [provokes] me to anger continually to my face; that [sacrifices] in gardens, and [burns] incense upon altars of brick;  
4) Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; (KJV)*

Can you imagine?

*5) Which say, Stand by [yourself], ... (KJV)*

Meaning: Get away from me!

*5b) ... [Don't] come near to me; for I am holier than [You].... (KJV)*

What an attitude!

*5 continued) [God says,] These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that [burns] all the day.  
6) Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but [I] will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, (KJV)*

"I'm going to take it right up to them. They're going to suffer for their sins."

So, we see here in Isaiah 65 God links stubbornness with rebellion. The words actually are interchangeable with this particular Hebrew word.

Let's see another place where it is used in Judges 2:19. We know the book of the Judges looks like waves of the sea. It's just a cycle where Israel would disobey. They would be punished. They would go into captivity. They would wail and cry to God. God would send a judge. They would start obeying. The judge would help them overthrow their enemies. There would be a time of peace and prosperity. Then they would start to sin again and the cycle would go over and over and over.

**Judges 2:19.** *And it came to pass, when the judge was dead [The leader that led them in God's way], 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. (KJV)*

This is Strong's 5637 which is translated "rebellious" in Isaiah 65 and translated "stubborn" here. We see that they insisted on doing what was right in their own eyes. So, in this definition of Strong's 5637, God links stubbornness to rebellion, to not listening, and to doing what is right in one's own eyes.

### **1.B. The word "stubbornness."**

You would think that would be related to the word "stubborn," which we just covered, but it isn't. It's a completely different word. It is Strong's 6484. It's interesting that the literal meaning of this word means *to peck at*. As a chicken is out in the barnyard pecking at the ground looking for grain or something—peck, peck, peck. That's the literal meaning of this word. And figuratively, it means *to push or to press*. Now Baker and Carpenter in their Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament give two definitions for Strong's 6484. We're going to cover both of them because they're very important and very apropos.

#### **1.B.(1) The first one from Baker and Carpenter is "a literal physical push against someone."**

Let's begin turning to Genesis 19 where we'll see how it's used in context. But let me set the stage for Genesis 19. Remember that two angels came to Sodom in the evening and Lot invited them to come and eat with him. As they were in the house, the men of Sodom wanted these two men for illicit sexual purposes. Lot, mind-blowingly, offered them, instead, his daughters. The men of Sodom were so perverted they didn't want the daughters; they wanted these men to satisfy their own lusts. In Genesis 19:9, we pick up the story.

**Genesis 19:9.** *And they ... (KJV)*

"They" refers to the crowd standing outside Lot's door in the front of his house.

**Genesis 19:9.** *And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow [referring to Lot] came in to [live with us], and he [makes himself] a judge: now*

*will we deal worse with [you (meaning Lot)], than with them [the angels]. And they pressed ... (KJV)*

“Pressed,” this is the word, Strong’s 6484, pushed or pressed.

*9b) ... sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door.*

*10) But the men [meaning the angels] put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut the door.*

*11) And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: ... (KJV)*

Here is a situation where the crowd kept pushing, pushing, pushing to get what they wanted. And they paid a horrible price—blindness, because they stubbornly pushed and pushed and pushed to get what they wanted. They wouldn’t listen to any kind of reason at all. In this first half of the definition of Strong’s 6484, God links stubbornness with pushing to get one’s own way. Just pecking, pecking, pushing, pushing to get one’s own way. We’ve experienced it; maybe we’ve done it.

**1.B.(2) The second half of this definition from Baker and Carpenter is “*in a negative sense, it refers to rebellion against someone, or arrogance.*”**

Now begin turning to 1 Samuel 15. I think you know where we’re going here. If you remember Saul was made king. And Samuel told Saul to go out and utterly destroy Amalek, kill the king, kill the men, the women, the children, all the animals. And if you remember, Saul didn’t do that. He spared Agag the king. He spared the best of the animals.

Saul was in denial when Samuel arrived. Do you remember what he said? He said, “I’ve done the commandment of the Eternal. I’ve done what He said.” Of course, Samuel sarcastically said, “Okay, if you have done what God said, then why am I hearing the bleating of sheep? Explain that to me, Saul.” Remember Samuel said, “When you were little in your own eyes, you were made king over Israel.” The reason he said that indicated that at that time Saul was not little in his own eyes. He was filled with arrogance—part of the definition of this word that we’re talking about. Saul was still in denial that He had done anything wrong. With that in mind, 1 Samuel 15:22:

**1 Samuel 15:22.** *And Samuel said, [Has] the [Eternal] as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? ... (KJV)*

He’s asking the question.

*22b) ... Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to [listen (which Saul had not done)] than the fat of rams.*

*23) For rebellion [which is tied in with stubbornness] is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness ... (KJV)*

This is the same word, Strong's 6484, which was translated “*push*” with Lot.

*23b) ... is [the same] as iniquity and idolatry. Because [you have] rejected the word of the [Eternal, He has] also rejected [you] from being king. (KJV)*

So, we see in this second part of the definition that God links stubbornness with sin and idolatry because we arrogantly put our desires ahead of God's desires. That's exactly what Saul did. He thought he was so great at that time. He was a big man—a shoulder above everybody. He thought he was so great and so good that he could do what he wanted to do. And he arrogantly put his desire before God's desire.

So we see in these two definitions, our view is starting to expand because that word links stubbornness with sin, with idolatry, and with being arrogant—all of that. It's just amazing how this concept begins to expand here looking at these words.

### **1.C. The third word is the word “hardened.”**

It is Strong's 7185. When I first read the definition, I couldn't help but laugh because it says it means *to be dense*. Most of us do have a problem with that; that's human nature. Strong's 7185 means *to be dense*; that is meaning *tough, cruel, or to be stiff-necked*. If you make your neck stiff, you tighten all the muscles up there. And it becomes dense and tight. Baker and Carpenter, Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament, say about this word “harden”, Strong's 7185, that “*to harden or stiffen one's neck means to become stubborn.*” So every time you see in the Bible “stiffening of the neck,” it means stubbornness—absolute stubbornness.

Let's go to Jeremiah 7 and see how this word is used. Jeremiah 7, we're going to read verses 23 through 28. God is talking through Jeremiah and He's talking about Israel.

**Jeremiah 7:23.** *But this thing commanded I them [referring to Israel], saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and [you] shall be my people: and walk [you] in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. 24) But they [listened] not, nor inclined their ear, ... (KJV)*

“Nor inclined their ear” is a Hebrew idiom. When you want to hear something, you'll sometimes cup your ear or you'll lean an ear forward. God is saying, “They didn't listen. They didn't even try to listen. They didn't even lean their ear forward to see and pick up the sound.” Notice:

*24b) ... but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. (KJV)*

Remember one of the definitions of stubbornness is *to turn back*.

25) *Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them:*

26) *Yet they [listened] not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened [Strong's 7185] their neck: they did worse than their fathers. (KJV)*

So, we see here that this word “hardened,” translated also as stubbornness, is linked with being hard-hearted or stiff-necked. So, stubbornness has a very broad application here—hard-hearted or stiff-necked.

Now we've seen three words in the Old Testament. If we put all these definitions together, we see that God links stubbornness with rebellion; rebellion puts the self before God. God links stubbornness with idolatry; idolatry puts something before God. Doing what's right in one's own eyes puts that before God. God links stubbornness with pushing, pushing, pecking, and pecking for what one wants—again, putting oneself before God. Finally, God links stubbornness with being stiff-necked and hard-hearted, just as hard as stone, won't change. These are the concepts that we see in the Old Testament.

## 2. Let's look at the definition in the New Testament.

When I started this study, it was interesting because the words “stubborn” and “stubbornness” are not found in the New Testament. You would think they would be, but they're not. They're not there. However, the word “harden” is there and that is Strong's 4645. The Strong's definition of “harden” is *to render stubborn, or to harden*. Again, being hard-hearted or to harden or stubbornness are part of the same definitions of the same Hebrew or Greek words.

Let go to Hebrews 3 and we'll begin in verse 7 to see how this word, Strong's 4645, is used when it's translated *to render stubborn or to harden*. Hebrews 4, we'll begin in verse 7 and read through verse 15. It's used in these verses three times.

**Hebrews 3:7.** *Wherefore (as the [holy spirit says], Today if [you] will hear his voice,*

8) *Harden [Strong's 4654] not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: (KJV)*

Paul is referring here to what we find in Exodus chapters 16 and 17 when Israel provoked God—just hard-hearted, stubborn.

9) *When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.*

10) *Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. (KJV)*

Why? Because they wanted their own way or they wanted the way of the people around them.

11) *So I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.) (KJV)*

And those in that forty year wandering—we know—didn't. They died in the wilderness. Verse 12, now Paul is switching to his present day and by implication, by extension to us today.

12) *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, ... (KJV)*

So keep that thought of “unbelief” in your mind as we go on.

12b) *... in departing from the living God.*

13) *But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened [Strong's 4645] through the deceitfulness of sin. (KJV)*

Sin can cause us to have a hard heart because it is deceitful. When we're deceived we don't know we're deceived because we are deceived. So we can become hard-hearted without knowing it.

14) *For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;*

15) *While it is said, Today if [you] will hear his voice, harden [Strong's 4645] again] not your hearts, as in the provocation. (KJV)*

So here in the New Testament, stubbornness and hardening of the heart are tied to unbelief as we read in verse 10; “They have not known My ways.” Stubbornness and hard-heartedness in sticking to our old carnal ways, following the ways of the world, not seeking God's ways but seeking our own ways.

So, now if we summarize these two points (Old Testament definitions, the New Testament definition), through these definitions we can get a better idea of how God defines stubbornness. He defines it as *rebellion, putting oneself before God, idolatry, putting self before God, not listening, doing what we want, pushing and pushing for what we want, not letting something go, hard-heartedness, being stiff-necked, refusing to change, wanting to remain carnal.*

So we can see here through these definitions as God defines stubbornness (not Webster's), it is far more encompassing than we might have previously have thought—certainly as I thought before this study. Now that leads us to the third point. The first was Old Testament definitions; the second was New Testament definitions. In the third we want to clear up one point.

**3. We cannot confuse stubbornness with steadfastness.**

They are two totally different things. And people of God's church have confused those for decades.

I think we've all known very stubborn people in our lives. I've probably know half a dozen really, really stubborn people. A few years ago I was counseling one of them, a man. I just told him, "Look, you're stubborn. You are just one of the most stubborn guys I've ever met in my life." His reply was, "No. I'm not stubborn. I'm steadfast." I said, "No, you're not. You're stubborn."

There's a huge difference between the two and he was getting very confused about which was which. I was trying to set him straight and get him to realize that he was stubborn. He was just digging in his heels, closing his ears just like ancient Israel. Now let's see a scripture that uses both words in the same verse. Maybe we can see how we can distinguish between those two words and how they differ. Let's go to Psalm 78 verse 8. Stubborn and steadfast are used in the same verse. They're different Hebrew words obviously. David is talking to Israel. David is imploring Israel to not be like their fathers.

***Psalm 78:8.*** *And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious ...*  
(KJV)

Notice those two words are interlinked.

*8) ... a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. (KJV)*

Now the Hebrew word for "stubborn," we've already covered. It was the very first one, Strong's 5637, which means *turning away or rebellious*. So David is saying, "Don't be like your fathers who turned away and who were rebellious, a stubborn generation.

He says, "their spirit was not steadfast." The Hebrew word for "steadfast is Strong's 539 and it's spelled in English "aman" and it's pronounced (aw-man'). It figuratively means *to be firm or to be faithful, to trust or to believe, to be morally true or morally certain*. This is a totally different definition than the word "stubborn." Steadfastness is just the opposite of stubbornness. Stubbornness and rebelliousness turn away from the truth. Steadfastness holds onto the truth; it hangs on.

The key in discerning stubbornness from steadfastness is asking "Who are we faithful to?" Are we faithful to ourselves and what we want? If we're doing what is right in our own eyes, God says that is stubbornness. And we've read all these definitions up to this point that prove that. But, if we are faithful to what God wants, then God says "That is steadfastness. You are holding onto Me. You're being firm and faithful. You're believing. You're trusting. You are being morally true or morally certain about My laws and My ways." So we need to be on guard to not confuse stubbornness with steadfastness. Steadfastness applies to hanging onto God and God's law and Jesus

Christ and what we know. Stubbornness refers to putting ourselves before God, not turning to God. In fact, turning away from God.

**4. In recognizing stubbornness in ourselves, when we examine ourselves, we must admit that our own ideas and our own opinions are just that. They're our ideas and our opinions. Not necessarily God's.**

Passover is less than nine weeks away if you can imagine that. God wants us to examine ourselves between now and the Passover. One thing we need to examine in ourselves is to see if we are steadfast or are we stubborn. Remember Proverbs 21:2?

***Proverbs 21:2.** Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but [God ponders] the hearts. (KJV)*

So between now and Passover we want God to tell us if our heart is right with Him. Are we being steadfast, holding onto God's law and God's way? Or are we being stubborn, holding onto what we want and our own way?

We have to remember that not every thought we have is necessarily from God. I've talked to a few ministers in years past and I know a couple of ministers that are heads of a couple of groups that they honestly believe that every thought that comes into their head is from God. I'm here to tell you that doesn't happen. It is impossible because we are human. Satan is alive. Satan broadcasts his messages into our minds and we can have the most cockamamie thoughts in the world just come out of nowhere. Just because we think it, doesn't mean it's true. We have to remember that.

Let's go to Matthew 7 and read verse 21. Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, in three chapters basically covers the whole New Testament in the sense that every major principle in the Sermon on the Mount is amplified in the balance of the New Testament. Obviously, the gospels cover Christ's life and give us great insight and cover the lives of the apostles. The basic principles are all outlined in that very first sermon.

***Matthew 7:21.** Not everyone that [says] unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that [does] the will of my Father which is in heaven. (KJV)*

He will be the one that makes it. It's what we wind up doing; the life that we live is the important thing. We have to remember that our opinions are our opinions. They are not necessarily God's opinions. We have to be very, very careful because Satan would like us to get the two confused. And he would lead us astray thinking that we're doing what God wants or that we're thinking what we want is what God wants. Most of the time that is not the case.

When I have a knee-jerk reaction, I have learned over the years: (1) do not act on it; (2) keep your mouth shut; and (3) sit on it a little while because the first reaction generally

is a carnal reaction. Just be patient. Let it settle in. Ask God to put your mind straight so that you don't make a mistake.

So let's be on guard in this fourth point. We have to recognize and admit that our own ideas are just that—our own ideas.

## **5. What is the antidote to stubbornness?**

One word; what is the antidote to stubbornness? It's humility. One word stops it all.

Stubborn and proud people have an exaggerated sense of their own self-worth, of their own value because they can't see their actions from an outside viewpoint.

Sir Douglas Haig, as we talked about in the beginning, could not see anything beyond what his desire was and what his firm belief was in the conduct of war. He kept saying, "The Germans are about ready to break. One more charge will do it." And in one more charge, another 50,000 men died. And that went on and on and on until a one and a half million people died. He couldn't take a deep breath, step back, look down, and see that the Germans were not ready to break. They just weren't ready to break, but he couldn't see that. If he had an outside reference, which could have been his commanders in the field or soldiers on the front line that told him, "Look, this isn't working! We have to do something different here."

Our outside reference should be God. Our outside reference should be, "God what do You think of this situation? Tell me what You think of what I've just been thinking." Stubborn and proud people take satisfaction in their own achievements, fixate on their own achievements, how good and how wonderful they are, but those of us who have God's holy spirit, we have a balance that they don't have because we understand that we make mistakes. We understand that we're fallible. We understand that we screw it up. We understand that not every word that comes out of our mouth is from God nor every thought in our head comes from God.

But a prideful stubborn person doesn't have that balance. They don't admit that to themselves. That balancing factor of realizing that we're human and make mistakes and they blame others for all their problems. Therefore, they stubbornly refuse to listen to the opinions of others or the advice of others. General Haig being a prime example as well as the Israelites refusing to listen to God. They don't take into consideration that they might be wrong or that they've made mistakes. This outside source in the Israelites case was hearing God, seeing the pillars of cloud and fire, the parting of the Red Sea, but Israel just washed all that away. "What I want is more important, I'm not thinking about that."

The solution is humility because a humble person admits that "If it isn't for God, if it wasn't for the grace of God, I shouldn't even be here. And I'm so thankful God called me!" Philippians 2:3, this verse should be seared in our memory banks. Verse 5 says:

**Philippians 2:5.** *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (KJV)*

Philippians 2:3 out of the New King James.

**Philippians 2:3.** *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, ... (NKJV)*

Nothing! That should not be our motivation. And in the past in the church it was all too often there—ambition and conceit.

**3b)** *... but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. (NKJV)*

If we do that, if we esteem others better than ourselves, we would listen to the advice of others. We'd seek the counsel of others and especially seek the counsel of God.

Let's go to another familiar scripture in Micah 6; we'll read verses 6 through 8. I know you know this. It's so plain what God asks of us, what God requires of us, what God wants of us. It is so simple. Yet sometimes we can get it confused or we get discombobulated and get our brains scrambled somehow through Satan and through our own human nature. Micah asks the question—a very basic question.

**Micah 6:6.** *[How] shall I come before [God], and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? 7) Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (KJV)*

Would God be pleased with that? Of course, not. In verse 8, we get the answer.

**8)** *He [has showed you], O man, what is good; and what [does] the Lord require of [you], but to do justly, ... (KJV)*

That means *to be fair, to be even-handed, no respecter of persons, no looking out for the self.*

**8b )** *... to love mercy, ... (KJV )*

Be willing to forget and forgive.

**8) continued)** *... and to walk humbly with [your] God? (KJV)*

It's very simple. But General Haig was so stubborn he could not admit that he was wrong and he would not listen to any outside sources. Charge after charge, ten thousand deaths, ten thousand more deaths the next week, twenty thousand more deaths—it didn't make any difference to him.

It's interesting we talked about the Sermon on the Mount. Let's go to Matthew 5 and look at verse 3. Christ starts off this sermon with what we commonly call the Beatitudes. There are nine of them and two of them are directly related to humility. Notice what He says.

**Matthew 5:3.** *Blessed are the poor in spirit: ... (KJV)*

If we have a poor spirit, meaning a humble spirit and not a haughty arrogant spirit, He says:

*3b) ... theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (KJV)*

It's ours to possess, if we have a humble spirit. Now look at Matthew 5 and verse 5.

**Matthew 5:5.** *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. (KJV)*

Poor in spirit and meekness are keys to overcoming stubbornness, recognizing stubbornness and all that that entails.

What we need is a new heart. What Ancient Israel needed was a new heart. Let's go to Ezekiel 36:26. This is a promise that has come in part and type to the firstfruits, but it is a promise for all mankind—a new heart. This is the promise.

**Ezekiel 36:26.** *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: ... (KJV)*

Notice this:

*26b) ... and I will take away the stony ... (KJV)*

The hard, the stiff heart out of your flesh—the word for “stony” can be translated as “flint.” Flint is a very hard rock. And God says, “You've got a heart like flint. I'm going to take that flint”

*26 continued) ... out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. (KJV)*

We see here it's very clear that the great antidote for stubbornness is a good dose of humility. As we go toward Passover, we need to grow in humility and we need to rip out stubbornness if it's found in any of us. And I'm speaking more to myself than anybody else.

So, let's conclude now by just looking back and see the pain and the suffering stubbornness has caused. Look at the death and destruction General Haig brought upon the flower of the youth of Britain and France and Germany—a million and a half casualties in ninety days, if you can imagine that.

Look what stubbornness has caused in the greater church. It's destroyed relationships. It's destroyed marriages. It's caused people to follow false doctrine, false ministers, follow the world, follow Satan by playing right into the hands of Satan because who was the first stubborn being that ever existed? It was Satan. So when we become stubborn, we're just following in his footsteps, that's all.

Look at the ultimate fruit of stubbornness. We've seen what Israel did. We've seen General Haig. We've seen the litany of problems in the Old Testament because Israel refused to change. We see the problems in the New Testament, both in the apostles' day and our day. Look at the ultimate fruit, Luke 19:27. This is the ultimate end; this is how stubbornness ends. Christ says this:

**Luke 19:27.** *But those [My] enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring [them here], and [kill] them before me. (KJV)*

The whole world will be given the opportunity to have Christ rule over them. We have that opportunity right now. And what Christ is saying is, "If you don't want Me to rule over you, if you want to stubbornly adhere to your way, to what you want, okay. You are a free moral agent. You have choices, but I'm telling you at the end of the day, you're going to stand before Me and I'm going to toss you into the lake of fire. It's going to be merciful for you because you won't exist anymore and merciful for the rest of the people who are alive because they won't remember you anymore and you won't be able to stir up trouble anymore.

God leaves us warnings about stubbornness. Let's me turning to Jeremiah 23 and let's understand that Jeremiah here is talking to the Jews, but this applies to us today because, remember, we are spiritual Israel. Jeremiah 23, we're going to read two verses, 16 and 17. I'm going to read them out of the New Living Translation. He starts it off with a warning.

**Jeremiah 23:16.** *This is my warning to my people, says the [Eternal] Almighty ... (NLT)*

This applies to us today.

*16b) ... says the [Eternal] Almighty. "Do not listen to those prophets when they prophesy to you, filling you with futile hopes. They are making up everything they say. They do not speak for the Lord!*

*17) They keep saying to those rebels ... (NLT)*

Remember rebellion and stubbornness are tied together.

*17) They keep saying to those rebels who despise my word, 'Don't worry! The Lord says you will have peace!' And to those who stubbornly follow their own [evil] desires, they say, 'No harm will come your way!' (NLT)*

We see that in the Protestant movement and with the Catholics. We see them saying, "Once saved, always saved. Hey, if you take mass every day, you're cool. You're alright. You can do whatever you want." Look what happened to Israel for following this way. Despite this warning, look what happened to the Jews for not following this warning. Let's go to one final scripture in Malachi 4. Again, this tells us the ultimate fate of stubbornness because once the Great White Throne Judgment is over with, once the new heaven and earth come and everything is spirit, there will be no stubbornness. Stubbornness will not be in our vocabulary. It won't be there. Malachi 4, we'll read verses 1 through 3.

***Malachi 4:1. For, behold, the day [comes], that shall burn as an oven; ... (KJV)***

We know what this day is.

*1b) ... and all the proud, ... (KJV)*

And we might say stubborn.

*1 continued) ... and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that [comes] shall burn them up, [says] the [Eternal] of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. (KJV)*

That means the tree is totally gone. There are no roots. There are no branches. There is no trunk. There are no leaves. There is nothing. They're gone.

*2) But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and [you] shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. (KJV)*

Protected, safeguarded with plenty to eat and plenty of water, just being taken care of as God meant originally for Ancient Israel.

*3) And [you] shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, [says] the [Eternal] of hosts. (KJV)*

So, we want to make sure that we understand the scope of stubbornness and all that it entails. As we get closer to the Passover, we want to make sure that we recognize stubbornness in ourselves and we root that out. Let's make sure we do not succumb to the sin of stubbornness.