

STIFFNECKED AND UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART

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Daily devotions written by Pastor Thomas Smith

“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

Stephen was giving his powerful defense of his faith in the Savior. His critics had falsely accused Stephen. They twisted his words and recruited false witnesses in an attempt to discredit his message of truth. Before the religious council, this man of God gave a summary of God’s dealings with Israel, including their habitual departures and idolatries. Stephen then spoke out boldly against the hypocrisy of the Jews and their role in crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ. In describing their stubbornness and carnality, he referred to them as being “stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.” Of course, they did not appreciate Stephen’s assessment. His critics began to cry out against Stephen with a loud voice, ran upon him, took him out of the city, and murdered him by stoning.

How could they be so blind, so deceived, and so cruel? The Spirit of God led Stephen to call them “stiffnecked.” This word is used several times in the Bible and is another way of saying “stubborn.” These Jews were obstinate. They were not willing to hear the truth. They were hardhearted and deceived. In Exodus 32:9, “...the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people.” God Himself calls them stiffnecked. They were not willing to listen to God or His messengers.

This is a dangerous place to be. They were resisting the message and the messengers,

but in reality, they were not willing to listen to God. Our text says of them, “ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.” In their stubbornness, they were unwilling to hear what God was saying. Though the Jews practiced circumcision as a sign of God’s covenant with Abraham, God was more interested in the condition of their hearts.

God wants our hearts to be yielded and submissive to His truth. The Scripture’s reference to them as “uncircumcised in heart and ears” means they were carnal and fleshly in their hearts and listening habits. They could not or would not hear because of the carnality of their hearts and minds. They were thus resisting what God wanted to do in their lives. Resistance to the preacher usually indicates resistance to God. Our attitude influences our ability to hear. If we are not careful, our stubbornness, pride, or carnality can cause us to resist what God is saying.