

Check Your Neck

“But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their ancestors, who did not trust in the LORD their God.” Exodus 32:9

Are you a hardheaded? Is there something that God has told you to do or not to do that you pretty much have been refusing to obey? There is perhaps no other group of people in God’s family who suffer the most than those who, despite the teachings, encouragement and warnings of God, refuse to humble themselves and submit to His will. If you are going through tough times in your personal life, marriage, home, finances or on your job, you may want to “check your neck” and see if you are guilty of being stiff-necked.

The term “stiff-necked” was a term quite familiar to the Jews in the Scripture. It was derived from an agricultural phrase related to the use of oxen for plowing. The plow was usually drawn by two oxen. As the plowman required but one hand to guide the plow, he carried in the other an "ox-goad." This was a light pole, shod with an iron spike. With this, he would prick the oxen upon the hind legs to increase their speed, and upon the neck to turn, or to keep a straight course when deviating. If an ox was hard to control or stubborn, it was "hard of neck," or stiff-necked. Hence, the figure was used in the Scriptures to express the stubborn, untractable spirit of a people not responsive to the guiding of their God.

Being stubborn to the will of God has always been a “serious” sin with serious consequences. The Bible says in 1 Samuel 15:23, that rebellion is just like witchcraft in the sight of God. Just think, when you are stiff-necked, you are pridefully and stubbornly telling God (to His face), “*NO! I do not believe you, trust you, and nor will I obey you.*” You might be thinking, I would never be foolish enough to do something like that. Nevertheless, unfortunately, many of us have been or are guilty of doing that exact thing. Here are some ways we show a stubborn rebellious stiff-necked spirit:

- You are ALWAYS right (*even when you are wrong. It’s my way or...*)
- Refuse to listen to anyone (*members, church leaders, spouse, etc.*)
- Repeated pattern of misbehavior
- Make excuses for your shortcomings
- Lashing out at others
- Prayer without *true* repentance

The root cause of being stiff-necked is, like most sins, “pride” and the only solution is to recognize your rebellion, humble yourself, repent and submit to (obey, do) what God has been telling you to do. Stop making things hard for yourself and others. Don’t be hardheaded. Ask God to soften your heart and help you become more receptive and obedient to His word.