

Hardheaded

(You Say That Like It's a Bad Thing)

It's a tough assignment, speaking to a hostile audience. Ezekiel realized this: *"But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted"* (Ezekiel 3:7). Lesser men bow out.

Many elders, preachers, and teachers have faced an audience that hates the Message. Your tone, apologies for human feebleness or empathy toward their error does not matter; some people will just not listen. Worse, their looks are often the precursor to acts of hatred (1 Peter 3:16; Acts 7:59).

However, God always equips those whom He calls into service (2 Peter 1:3) so He prepared Ezekiel: *"Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house"* (Ezekiel 3:8-9).

How should a Christian respond to an angry audience? First: with the understanding that we have at our fingertips the answers to every question of life (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It does not originate with us (we are not the authority) but we will be held accountable if we choose not to teach it (Ezekiel 3:16-21). Second: with just as much stubbornness as opponents of truth, we must reciprocate in our undying efforts to reach out. I understand that one has to be economical and wise about pursuing the rebellious (Proverbs 26:7; Matthew 7:6) but just quitting after the least bit of pushback is the solution of a coward (Matthew 10:28). Had Jesus quit, the world would still be lost (Luke 19:10). First-Century Christians *"loved not their lives unto the death"* (Revelation 12:11). That's stubbornness.

We have a mandate: *"As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse – for they are a rebellious house – yet they will know that a prophet has been among them... You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious"* (Ezekiel 2:5, 7). The excuse that they won't hear is just that: an excuse.

We are the watchmen of New Testament Israel (cf. Ezekiel 3:16-21). We **must** be unyielding, resilient, diligent and focused when it comes to teaching a lost and dying world. In this regard, we must be like Ezekiel – **hardheaded**.