

## A Quick Wit And A Stiff Neck by Laura Shaw

God has gifted me with a quick, dry wit. Constantly, I hear catch phrases that ring in my mind and cause it to answer. It's a blessing and a curse. Some people are drawn to it; others probably run the other direction as soon as they see me just to avoid it. If you could be inside my mind for one day, I guarantee you would either be greatly entertained or incredibly concerned. ANYWAY, I'll get to the point of why I'm mentioning it. One new day, I woke up with excruciating pain in my neck. While issues with my neck are common, this day was worse than normal, as it wouldn't even relent to the pain medicine. Halfway through the morning, Wit spoke up: ***"What a pain in the neck!"*** I chuckled in my mind. Later in the day, she spoke up again: ***"You stiff-necked woman!"*** That one wasn't quite as funny to me, of course, as it refers to the Israelites who continued to turn away from God.

As I awoke that next morning, the pain woke with me. I couldn't even move my neck from side to side without a wince. I was thankful for Mrs. Wit's humor to keep me amused along the way. What amazes me is that God often uses these little illustrations in life to strike me and remind me of Himself. After spending time in prayer, the Holy Spirit reminded me of some unconfessed sin in my life. I was quick to deal with it. Then He brought to my mind some areas of complacency and unbelief. I gave those over. Then a tucked away verse woke up my memory: ***"Do not be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."*** That sent me on a trail of trying to figure out what this means to a Christian, and more importantly, to me:

***"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As has just been said: 'Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.'" Hebrews 3:12-15***

Time after time I've read this verse, but what the Lord showed me on that enlightened day is that it is possible as a mature believer to turn away from Him with sin or unbelief. Before, when I've envisioned ***"turning away from the living God,"*** I've thought of a BIG turning away, kind of like the prodigal son. I picture a monumental decision to leave the Christian life to seek my own pleasure. While that is certainly a possibility here, I don't believe it is the only one. It says, ***"BUT encourage one another DAILY."*** Wow---I can actually deal with a sinful, unbelieving heart on a daily basis?!?!? One of the things about sin is that it can sneak up on us.....it is deceitful. It wants to make us believe that we will be unaffected from the repercussions of a wishy-washy lifestyle, but read on: ***"We have come to share in Christ IF WE HOLD FIRMLY TILL THE END the confidence we had at first."***

We WANT to share in Christ, don't we? Do we still have the confidence ***IN*** Him to live rightly ***BEFORE*** Him? Micah 6:8 says, ***"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*** To walk humbly requires a daily giving over of ourselves. If we're not careful, sneaky sin can convince us that we don't have time to do this or that it's not necessary....we can become a "stiff-necked" people, if you will. So what is the answer for us? The answer is found in Psalm 95:2-8a:

***"Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods; In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. COME—let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care. TODAY, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...."***

Let's stretch our necks out for Him today, noticing His creation on the left, His blessings on the right, and His provision right in front of us. As He shares this with us, may it renew in us the confidence to hold firmly Today all the way to the end. Amen.