

PHARAOH'S HARD HEART

I. GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART

No less than nine statements attribute the hardening of Pharaoh's heart to God.

- A. **Exodus 4:21** *"Jehovah said to Moses, 'When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But **I will harden his heart**, so that he will not let the people go.'"*

Before Moses even left Midian, God told him He would do this.

Exodus 9:12 *"**Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh**; and he did not heed them, just as Jehovah had spoken to Moses."*

He hardened Pharaoh's heart in response to the sixth plague.

Exodus 10:20 *"But **Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he did not let the children of Israel go."*

Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart in reaction to the eighth plague.

Exodus 10:27 *"But **Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he would not let them go."*

It happened after the ninth plague.

Exodus 14:8 *"And **Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh** king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness."*

The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart after the tenth plague, when the Israelites were on their way out of the country.

- B. **Exodus 7:2-5** *"Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land. And **I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them."*

God put hardening the king's heart together with the multiplication of signs and wonders. He said that Pharaoh's heedlessness would lead to great judgments against Egypt.

Exodus 10:1-2 *"Now Jehovah said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh; for **I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants**, that I may show these signs of Mine before him, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I am Jehovah.'"*

If Pharaoh had agreed right away to release the Hebrews, there would have been no need to redeem Israel with an outstretched arm and great judgments.

Exodus 11:9-10 *"Jehovah said to Moses, 'Pharaoh will not heed you, so that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.' So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and **Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land."*

As God readied Moses for the tenth plague, He again explained that resistance would emphasize His own might.

Exodus 14:4 *"**I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am Jehovah.' And they did so."*

The Almighty said that this would bring honor to Himself.

- C. **Romans 9:14-17** *"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.' So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.' Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."*

Other Scriptures make clear there are conditions to obtain divine mercy. This passage merely asserts the fact that it is within God's sovereignty to dispense mercy at His own discretion and that hardening is the opposite of mercy.

- D. **2nd Corinthians 2:16** *"Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?"*

The fragrance of Christ is to some the aroma of death and to others the aroma of life. It is the same odor, but is perceived differently. The same heat that melts wax also hardens clay while the reaction depends on the substance.

II. THE MAGICIANS HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART

God was not alone in hardening the heart of the Egyptian king. There was human influence upon him, as well.

- A. **Exodus 7:11-13** *"But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And **Pharaoh's heart grew hard**, and he did not heed them, as Jehovah had said."*

Pharaoh's heart was hardened when his enchanters were able to duplicate the sign performed by Aaron.

Exodus 7:22-23 *"Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and **Pharaoh's heart grew hard**, and he did not heed them, as Jehovah had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither was his heart moved by this."*

Again, his heart grew hard when the magicians were able to replicate the first plague. He chose to see the power of the dark arts as equal to the power of the God of heaven.

- B. Exodus 8:18-19** *“Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, ‘This is the finger of God.’ But **Pharaoh’s heart grew hard**, and he did not heed them, just as Jehovah had said.”*

Even when these sorcerers failed to imitate the third plague, openly acknowledging God’s handiwork, Pharaoh’s heart was still hard! This implies he was committed to his opposition against the Almighty. Nothing would sway him.

- C. 2nd Timothy 3:8** *“Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith.”*

Although the Old Testament never records the names of the Egyptian magicians, Hebrew tradition remembered them, and Paul, by inspiration, acknowledged the accuracy of that tradition. The apostle stated they were guilty of resisting truth and those who do likewise still are corrupt in their minds and disapproved in faith. There will also be resistant souls who are eager to help others resist truth.

- D. Deuteronomy 13:1-5** *“If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’ — which you have not known — ‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for Jehovah your God is testing you to know whether you love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after Jehovah your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from Jehovah your*

God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which Jehovah your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.”

Even when the signs and wonders of the false prophets come to pass, they are still to be rejected because they contradict Jehovah. God permits these enticements to test our love for Him.

- E. **2nd Thessalonians 2:9-12** *“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*

Those who are disinclined to believe what is true, those who do not love truth, those whose pleasure is bound up in unrighteousness are those who believe the lie, those upon whom unrighteous deception is effective. God lets Satan have this power of lying wonders, as displayed by the Egyptian magicians, so that every soul is free to choose.

III. PHARAOH HARDENED HIS OWN HEART

Three statements attribute the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart to Pharaoh, himself.

- A. **Exodus 8:13, 15** *“So Jehovah did according to the word of Moses. And the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courtyards, and out of the fields. ...But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, **he hardened his heart** and did not heed them, as Jehovah had said.”*

Pharaoh’s hard heart on this occasion was a response not to God’s severity in the second plague, but to the relief God provided from that severity.

Exodus 8:31-32 *“And Jehovah did according to the word of Moses; He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his*

people. Not one remained. But **Pharaoh hardened his heart** at this time also; neither would he let the people go.”

As with the second plague, so with the fourth. Pharaoh hardened his own heart when he perceived that calamity had passed.

Exodus 9:34 “And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, **he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart**, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as Jehovah had spoken by Moses.”

Likewise, the seventh plague. When the disaster was done, the king changed his mind.

- B. Exodus 5:2** “Pharaoh said, ‘Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know Jehovah, nor will I let Israel go.’”

Since the first time Moses and Aaron entreated Pharaoh to release the Hebrews, before the plagues ever began, the Egyptian king defied the living God. That was his character. How God proved Himself over and over merely deepened the man’s resentment and defiance.

- C. Hebrews 3:14-19** “For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’ For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

That a command is given by God, “Do not harden your hearts”, necessarily implies said command can either be obeyed or disobeyed, and that it is within the ability of the individual to choose. Those who opt for a hardened heart are guilty of rebellion, of sin, of disobedience, of unbelief.

- D. **Proverbs 28:14** *"Happy is the man who is always reverent, but **he who hardens his heart** will fall into calamity."*

The choice is ours to receive happiness or calamity either through reverence or hardening.

- E. **Zechariah 7:12** *"Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which Jehovah of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from Jehovah of hosts."*

A stone-cold heart comes by refusal to hear God.

- F. **Proverbs 4:23** *"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."*

Beloved, you are the custodian of your own heart.

- G. **James 1:14-15** *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren."*

Never blame God for temptation. Never blame Him for choosing to yield to temptation. Never suggest He hardens a person's heart without that person's full co-operation.

CONCLUSION

- A. **Acts 19:9** *"But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus."*

Hearts are still hardening whenever the gospel is resisted.

- B. **Acts 2:36-38** *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.' Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them,*

'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

Let the gospel cut your heart and obey that gospel!