**He Hardened His Heart**

*Exodus 7:3*

**Introduction**

1. God’s plan to deliver the Israelites included Him hardening Pharaoh’s heart.
2. This verse, like others (cf. 2 Peter 3:15-16), can be twisted to our destruction.
3. That is exactly what the Calvinists have done.
4. But what does it mean that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart?
5. Unconditional election and reprobation (Calvinism)

A. The Statement in their Creed.

* “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. These angels and men thus predestinated and fore-ordained are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose and the secret council and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto.” (Confession of Faith, chap. 3 secs. 3, 4, 5.)
* Apparent proof – Exodus 9:16 – The only reason Pharaoh was in power was for God to diminish him. (Calvinists would say this concerned God’s fore-ordination of Pharaoh being eternally reprobate – not of the elect, predestined for damnation.)
  + Where is the indication of eternal individual whereabouts? – Pharaoh was used to fulfill a purpose of God!
  + This He accomplished by hardening Pharaoh’s heart – Exodus 7:3.
    - Calvinists would say that Pharaoh was of the eternally reprobate, and that God foreordained his wickedness and hardness of his heart.
    - In other words, Pharaoh had no choice! God hardened his heart by direct operation because it was His fore-ordination that Pharaoh be eternally reprobate.
  + God, they claim, did this by sending plagues on Egypt to force Pharaoh into sinning – Exodus 3:19-20.
    - They will say because God knew Pharaoh wouldn’t let them go that it was by His fore-ordination that Pharaoh was eternally reprobate.
* So what happened? Was God’s fore-ordination for Pharaoh’s individual eternal whereabouts, or for another purpose? 🡪 Calvinists say eternal dwelling and point to Romans 9:17-18.
  + Did God create Pharaoh with a hardened heart thereby pre-determining him as one eternally reprobate?

C. Romans 9 (Calvinistic proof or not?)

* Romans 9-11 deal with the fruition of God’s plan to bring salvation to mankind (both Jew and Gentile) through faith in the promise, which is Christ.
  + 9:1-5 – The Jews were the chosen fleshly people of God as the means of carrying about the promise of the Christ.
    - Israel rejected the One who came through their nationality for the purpose of saving them (cf. 10:1-4 – They didn’t want salvation to be for all through Christ, but for them through the Law. This wasn’t God’s plan!).
    - Why were they accursed from Christ? (Nothing could do that – 8:35, 38-39) Including God! But they could separate themselves by their sin – Isaiah 59:1-2.
  + 9:6-13 – The will of God was not thwarted when fleshly Israel rejected the Christ. The promise was not to fleshly Israel, but to spiritual Israel (which fleshly Israel could be a part of).
    - Isaac was not a son by natural means, but by the promise of God. It was through his lineage that the Christ would come (because it is of promise!).
    - Even with Jacob and Esau it was of God’s purpose, not of anything else (their works, but His will before they were even born).
      * *“Purpose of God according to election might stand”* – The election was not a matter of an individual’s salvation, but of a nation’s power!
      * Jacob loved, Esau hated – spoken by God several hundred years later (Malachi 1:1-5) and referred to the nations of Israel and Edom!
  + 9:14-16 – There is no unrighteousness with God because salvation was never to be attained through fleshly Israel, but through promise. Spiritual Israel was God’s people!
    - He chose Isaac not Ishmael; Jacob not Esau (to carry out His will). And He chose Christ as the way to salvation, not fleshly Israel.
    - His will was salvation through Christ, which Israel rejected. This is God’s will! Therefore, there is no unrighteousness with Him for He chooses the way to salvation, not man!
    - They rejected the way to salvation, so God rejected them. Not fore-ordination of elect or reprobate, but their own free-will and God’s righteous reaction.
  + 9:17-18 – The example given of Pharaoh followed the same argument. Pharaoh’s rise and fall was not a matter of personal salvation, but of God’s will to deliver Israel and bless the world through them!
    - There is no inclination of fore-ordination of eternal reprobation (Pharaoh had a choice!)!
    - God gave Pharaoh a command and He disobeyed. Which God used to His own glory in the presence of all the earth!
    - His will was to harden Pharaoh to show His power, and His mercy on the Israelites!
      * This could not have been done by direct operation of God! – James 1:13-15.
      * How did it occur?? 🡪

B. God’s Blessings and Afflictions.

* They have the capability of softening or hardening hearts.
* Softening – James 5:13
* Hardening – 1 Timothy 6:6-10; Job 2:9 (Job’s wife.)
* When afflicted, Pharaoh promised to let the people go, but when it was taken away he regained his rebellious heart. He abused the afflictions to the hardening of his heart – Exodus 8:15, 31-32; 9:34-35.
  + It is not that Pharaoh had no choice, but that he chose wrong.
  + He hardened his own heart via his pride/arrogance and lack of recognition of God!
    - Exodus 5:1-2 – Moses and Aaron’s first encounter with Pharaoh.
      * He did not submit to Almighty God, but exalted himself above Him in defiance.
      * He was in a place of power and was willfully ignorant of God’s transcendence and the fact that he was placed there by HIM!
* When there is an honest heart it always submits to God and His word, but a dishonest heart will always harden and turn away.
  + 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 – God’s word smells differently to different hearts.
    - How does it smell to you?
    - What really happens when God hardens a heart? 🡪
      * Exactly the same as the above passage. He gives His word, and that has two possible reactions, softening or hardening. Obedience or Rebellion. The aroma of life or death. 🡪

**(PART 1 END)**

1. The Gospel Hardens Hearts

A. The Gospel is God’s power to save.

* Romans 1:16-17 – God has chosen salvation by means of the gospel!
  + This is available for everyone – Titus 2:11

B. However, some allow it to harden their hearts.

* Romans 1:21-26 – They knew God but rebelled against Him by seeking their own desires.
  + God gave them up (v. 28 – *“gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting”*).
  + It was not God’s decision for them to be this way, but because of free-will God allowed it. God does not force obedience!
* 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 – God does not force men to be anything. The rejection of His word of truth causes strong delusion.
  + Their strong delusion was not a process of God impeding them from knowing the truth, but their own unwillingness to accept it.
  + Why didn’t they accept it? They *“had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*
  + John 3:19-21 – Those who love the truth come to the truth and receive the benefits of such. The ones who love darkness reap the consequences of such.
* Ephesians 4:17-19 – The Gentiles gave THEMSELVES over to lewdness.
  + This was accomplished because they were willfully ignorant and blinded their heart with their desire for sinful things.
  + *“blindness of their heart”* – *“hardening”* (NASV) – the covering with a callus (Thayer).
  + This hardening of the heart was to the extent that they were past feeling!
    - The walking in unrighteousness produced no shame in them!

C. How God’s word works…

* Hebrews 4:12-13 – His word is able to reveal how we really are.
  + When God’s word is read or spoken, the ones hearing it are being given divine instruction.
  + If they heed the divine instruction their intentions are exposed as good and pure – ready to serve God.
  + If they reject the divine instruction their intentions are exposed as bad and corrupt – unwilling to submit to God.
* John 12:44-50 – The word will be the ultimate Judge. It is that which is able to judge any because it is an unchanging and living standard that has appeared to all men!
  + The word is everlasting life to those who obey it, but condemns those who refuse it, just as the Hebrew writer wrote (cf. Hebrews 5:9).
  + Just as Jesus said (cf. Mark 16:16).
* Final Example:
  + Acts 2:37; 7:54 – The word having two effects on the heart (similar to hardening and softening). (cut)
    - The message was the same – Acts 2:36; 7:51-53 – You killed the Christ, who is the means by which you can be saved!
    - Some translations use different words to describe the effect the word had on the heart (pierced, pricked, cut…).
    - Some commentators even try to make a firm distinction between the meanings.
    - It is simple. The same message was preached. Some received it while others did not.

**Conclusion**

1. God has not pre-determined our eternal destiny.
2. Paul wrote, *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”* (Philippians 2:12).
3. Don’t let your heart become hardened to God’s word. Receive it and be saved by it!