

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

What Does the Bible Say?

# What Is the Issue?

- The Bible says: 1) Pharaoh's heart was hardened; 2) Pharaoh hardened his heart; and, 3) God hardened Pharaoh's heart
- What is the explanation? Does the Bible contradict itself?

# What Is the Issue?

- John Calvin (1509-1564) taught that all mankind are predestined by God apart from their own free will; man does not choose to be saved or lost; God chooses for man

# What Is the Issue?

- The hardening of Pharaoh's heart is a favorite "proof text" used by Calvinists today to promote Calvin's theory of predestination (Romans 9:17-18)

# What Is the Issue?

## John Calvin on Romans 9:17-18

“We are accordingly to take two points into consideration here, first, Pharaoh’s predestination to destruction ... and second, the purpose of his predestination ... his character was given to him by God ... Paul’s purpose is to make us accept the fact that it has seemed good to God to enlighten some in order that they might be saved, and blind others in order that they might be destroyed ... Paul does not inform us that the ruin of the ungodly is foreseen by the Lord, but that it is ordained by His counsel and will” (*Commentary on Romans*, John Calvin, 1539, pages 206-207)

# What does the Bible say?

- There are 20 verses that mention hardening – 19 for Pharaoh and one for the Egyptians: 4:21; 7:3, 13-14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34-35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 13:15; 14:4, 8, 17.

# What does the Bible say?

- There are three Heb. verbs that are used for hardening: *chazaq* = firm, strong, strengthen (12 times - 4:21; 7:13, 22; 8:19; 9:12, 35; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17; note “hold” in 9:2), *kabed* = heavy, weighty, burdensome (6 times - 7:14; 8:15, 32; 9:7, 34; 10:1; note “heavier” in 5:9 and “honored” in 14:4, 17, 18), and *qasha* = hard, difficult, stubborn (2 times - 7:3; 13:15)

# What does the Bible say?

- There are 10 times when the subject of the hardening is God (4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17) and there are 10 times when the subject of the hardening is Pharaoh (7:13-14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35; 13:15)

# What Does the Bible Say?

## Pharaoh's Heart Was Hardened

“And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as Jehovah had spoken” (Exodus 7:13; note v. 14)

“And the magicians of Egypt did in like manner with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as Jehovah had spoken” (Exodus 7:22; note v. 23)

# What Does the Bible Say?

## Pharaoh's Heart Was Hardened

“Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and **Pharaoh's heart was hardened**, and he hearkened not unto them; as Jehovah had spoken” (Exodus 8:19)

“And **the heart of Pharaoh was hardened**, and he did not let the children of Israel go, as Jehovah had spoken by Moses” (Exodus 9:35)

# What Does the Bible Say?

## Pharaoh Hardened His Own Heart

“But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, **he hardened his heart**, and hearkened not unto them, as Jehovah had spoken” (Exodus 8:15)

“And **Pharaoh hardened his heart** this time also, and he did not let the people go” (Exodus 8:32; note 9:7)

# What Does the Bible Say?

## Pharaoh Hardened His Own Heart

“And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, **he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart**, he and his servants”  
(Exodus 9:34)

# What Does the Bible Say?

## God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart

“And Jehovah said unto Moses, When thou goest back into Egypt, see that thou do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in thy hand: but **I will harden his heart** and he will not let the people go” (Exodus 4:21)

“And **I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt”  
(Exodus 7:3)

# What Does the Bible Say?

## God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart

“And **Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh**, and he hearkened not unto them, as Jehovah had spoken unto Moses” (Exodus 9:12; note v. 14)

“And Jehovah said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for **I have hardened his heart**, and the heart of his servants, that I may show these my signs in the midst of them” (Exodus 10:1)

# What Does the Bible Say?

## God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart

“But **Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he did not let the children of Israel go” (Exodus 10:20)

“But **Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he would not let them go” (Exodus 10:27)

“And 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” (Exodus 11:10)

# What Does the Bible Say?

## God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart

“And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he shall follow after them; and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host: and the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah. And they did so”  
(Exodus 14:4; note v. 5)

# What Does the Bible Say?

## God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart

“And **Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh** king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: for the children of Israel went out with a high hand” (Exodus 14:8; note v. 17)

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- ◉ Divine foreknowledge: “I know...” (3:19; 11:1; etc.)
- ◉ Divine counsel: “I will...” (4:21; 11:1; etc.)
- ◉ Divine purpose: “That you may...” (7:3-5; 9:16; 10:1-2; 14:4, 17-18; Rom. 9:17)

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Yes, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Is this Calvinism? No. Paul's point in Romans 9:17-18 is that Pharaoh was chosen to serve the purpose of God and to show God's power, not that Pharaoh lacked free will. And, God can even use unbelievers to accomplish his will.

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- The verses in Exodus say that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, but one must read the whole context to see how the Lord did it.
- Some verses actually show how the Lord did it in the same verse!

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- The issue is not: Did the Lord harden Pharaoh's heart? The issue is: How did the Lord harden Pharaoh's heart?

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- How did the Lord harden Pharaoh's heart? Did the Lord do it directly and apart from Pharaoh's free will (choice)? No. Did the Lord do it indirectly and in conjunction with Pharaoh's free will (choice)? Yes.

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Fact #1: Pharaoh “hardened his heart” shows that he exercised his own free will choice.
- Fact #2: The Lord said he would harden Pharaoh's heart showing that the Lord did something as well.

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- God hardened Pharaoh's heart by giving him the circumstances to be hardened: God's words, demands, miracles given through Moses (Ex. 4:21; 7:3-4; 8:15, 32; 9:14 [inner man, mind, will, heart; NKV]; 9:34-35; 11:10; 14:1-8), the time between one miracle and another (Ex. 8:10; 9:5, 18; 10:4; 11:4), the magicians' reaction (8:19; 10:7), etc.

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- God placed Pharaoh and others in circumstances where they chose to be hardened. God provided the circumstances and thereby (indirectly) hardened Pharaoh's heart.
- God was patient: “endure with much longsuffering” (Rom. 9:22)

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Pharaoh hardened his own heart when he chose not to obey God's word (Ex. 8:15; 9:34). Pharaoh was not a victim of an arbitrary, capricious God! Pharaoh was not forced by God against his will to be hardened.

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Remember, the same word of God that hardened Pharaoh's heart, softened the hearts of others including some of the Egyptians who went with Israel (Ex. 12:38).

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Note in the case of the plague of hail, that some Egyptians feared the word of the Lord and brought their cattle in, and some did not (9:20-21). This shows that they, like Pharaoh, had free will to respond to the word of the Lord.

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Illustration: The same sun that hardens clay, softens butter (the outcome is tied to the materials, not the sun). The same gospel that saves some, damns others (Lk. 8:11-15; 2 Cor. 2:16; Acts 17:32-34).

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Pharaoh was stubborn before it is said that God hardened his heart (Ex. 2:23; 3:9,10; 5:2).

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Pharaoh exercised his free-will all throughout this event (9:17, 20, 21, 27,30,34)
- If God is forcing Pharaoh to be hardened, how do you explain God's words in 10:3?

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Note the comment on this incident by the Philistines in 1 Sam. 6:6. Pharaoh was hardened just like Sihon King of Heshbon and others; all were accountable and responsible for their decisions (Deut. 2:30; see also Josh. 11:20).

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- God provides the circumstances for hardening to those who do not want to obey God (Ezek. 20:25-26; Rom. 1:24,26,28; 2 Thess. 2:10-11; 2 Cor. 4:4).

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- God provided the occasion for Pharaoh's heart to be hardened, but Pharaoh himself was the direct cause of his hardened heart.

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- Examine these other verses to see how God hardens hearts (2 K. 17:14; 2 Chron. 36:13; Neh. 9:16,17,29; Isa. 6:9-10; Dan. 5:20; Mt. 13:14-16; Mk. 6:52; 8:17; Jn. 12:37-40; Acts 19:9; Rom. 11:7-8; 2 Cor. 3:13).

# The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

- ◉ God can also open a heart! But how? Directly? No. Through his word (Acts 16:14).

# What Is Your Heart Condition?

- There are two possible responses to the revealed will of God and the sovereignty of God: obedience (open hearts) or disobedience (hard hearts)

# What Is Your Heart Condition?

- Are you open-hearted or hard-hearted (Ezek. 3:7; Psa. 95:8; Heb. 3:8,13,15; 4:7)?