

God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart

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God Hardened Pharaoh's Heart (Ex. 4:21; 9:12).

Pharaoh Hardened His Own Heart (Ex. 8:15).

It appears in a number of scriptures that God intervenes at times to achieve a greater purpose. However, God's method of intervention is often misunderstood,

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ 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.' ¹⁶ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs (i.e. by human effort or intervention), but of God who shows mercy. ¹⁷ For **the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'Even for this same purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name might be declared in all the earth.'** ¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens (Rom. 9:14-18; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Although certain individuals, like Pharaoh during the time of Israel's exodus, are set apart for God's purpose, this does not mean they are mindless or incapable of making their own decisions. In Pharaoh's case, he was already a person determined to do whatever he felt necessary to achieve his goals, and he would stubbornly resist any attempt to change whatever course he was on (see study: Pride),

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ And he said to his people, 'Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; ¹⁰ come, let us deal wisely (shrewdly) with them, lest they multiply and it happen in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.' ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens ... (Ex. 1:8-11a; Ed. note in parenthesis).

This Pharaoh was already bent on evil before Moses began dealing with him,

Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah; ¹⁶ And he said, 'When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, **if it is a son, then you shall kill him;** but if it is a daughter, then she shall live (Ex. 2:15-16; emphasis added).

Because Almighty God can see the end of all things before they occur, He knew what this Pharaoh was going to be like before he was even born (Isa. 46:9-10; cf. Jer. 1:5). Therefore, as the scriptures dealing with Israel's exodus are examined, God did not have to intervene in order to influence his decisions. In fact the scripture, stating that

God hardened Pharaoh's heart, meant that God did not intervene in a manner that would make this Pharaoh change his mind, or begin treating the nation of Israel favorably. Whenever God provided relief following one of the plagues that befell Egypt, Pharaoh's stubborn and devious attitude quickly returned,

But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief (from the plague), he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the Lord said (Ex. 8:15; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Therefore, by God not intervening to change this Pharaoh's evil attitude, He was allowing Pharaoh to remain hardened. This is the manner in which the phrase "God hardened Pharaoh's heart" should be applied. This also helps explain what the Apostle Paul was saying in Romans 9:18,

Therefore He (Almighty God) has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens (allows to remain separated from Him) (Rom. 9:18; Ed. notes in parentheses).

When Almighty God extends His mercy, an individual can begin the process that leads to repentance of sin (Rom. 2:4b; Jn. 6:44; 65; Ac. 2:38). Once a person repents, they are no longer hardened in their attitude toward God and His commands. It is important to understand that God will eventually extend His mercy to everyone, but it will be according to His timetable. To date, the majority of mankind is not much different than Pharaoh in the sense they are still hardened to one degree or another,

But although he (Christ) had done so many signs before them (as happened also during Pharaoh's time), they did not believe in him. ³⁸ that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: 'Lord who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' ³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ⁴⁰ **'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and understand with their heart, lest they should turn (repent), so that I should heal (forgive) them'** (Jn. 12:37-40; cf. Ac. 19:9; Heb. 3:13; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

In conclusion, there is no contradiction in the scriptures related to Pharaoh. This king of Egypt was determined to do whatever he felt necessary to control and manipulate the nation of Israel. In the sense that God did not intervene to change Pharaoh's attitude, He allowed Pharaoh's heart to remain hardened, as it always had been.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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