

Lesson 12 – Exodus 7-14

Our Scripture today is the same as last week's Scripture, Exodus 7:14 through chapter 14. In this study "harden" it is mentioned 19 times. About half of those times it is God who does the hardening, the other half it is Pharaoh himself who hardened his heart. The question before us is which came first, the chicken or the egg?

<p>Did Pharaoh first harden his heart and then God hardened it even further, or did God harden his heart before all this began?</p>
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We cannot decide this question simply by reading and examining the story. God knows which came first. But we can know from the passage that Pharaoh's heart was set on his gods in opposition to everything Jehovah said. This was his heart even before God began to work with Moses to approach him and set the Israelites free.

So, Pharaoh's hard heart is his own doing. God simply withdrew his grace and mercy each time Pharaoh adamantly refused the voice of God. In other words his heart was hard and against God, but became even harder each time he resisted the Spirit of God.

This is no different than God's work within the hearts of men today. All men are born into sin. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Paul said that before Christ transformed our hearts, we were hardened toward God. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We walked according to "*the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now is at work in the children of darkness.*" (Eph. 2:1-4) We were objects of wrath just like all mankind. BUT GOD... who is rich in mercy because of his great love, made us alive. He brought us to repentance and by grace gave us the faith to trust Christ.

God's grace is available to every man but many harden their hearts at the offer of God's mercy. The longer they resist him and rant against him, though He is patient, he will begin to withdraw his convicting Holy Spirit from them, thus hardening their hearts even more. There comes a time when that grace and offer of salvation is withdrawn and men are left to their own hard hearts and hard choices, and therefore based on their own will and choice they are lost. God only hardens a man's heart when he continually and persistently resists God's word. This is what happened to Pharaoh.

Warnings Against Hardened Hearts

The hardening of the heart against God is a process. We are all born with a hard heart. We need a new heart. We are all sinners. We are all in rebellion against God. We all followed the “*prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedient*” before we met Christ. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All we like sheep have gone astray. The change in us takes place by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. When we resist, refuse, quench the Holy Spirit; when we are stubborn, rebellious, self-willed and stiff-necked our hearts become ever increasingly hardened to the voice of God, until the day when God removes his Spirit and we no longer feel sin or conviction and are lost.

Genesis 6:3

Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years."

1 Samuel 15:23

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. **Because you have rejected the word of the LORD**, He also has rejected you from being king.

Proverbs 29:1

Whoever remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed--without remedy

Isaiah 5:20 (KJV)

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Matthew 12:30-32

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, any sin and blasphemy can be forgiven. But blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

John 6:70

Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!"

John 17:12

While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

Acts 7:51

You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

See our Word Study on “Hardness of Heart”

What is the Unpardonable Sin?

There is a point at which God say, “Enough!” and withdraws his convicting Holy Spirit from man so that he is no longer willing or able to repent of his sin. He gives him up and over to his desires. He gives him over to his sins. He hands him over to Satan and his kingdom. God has not resisted the will of man, he simply allows him to go his own way without the aid of God’s mercy and grace. This is exactly what the hardhearted sinner has asked for. At this point he has rejected Jesus Christ, the only means of salvation and there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking forward to judgment. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.

When that happens a person no longer desires God, ceases to feel conviction about sin, turns the truth of God into a lie, and turns truth inside out and upside down – good becomes evil, light becomes darkness, sweet becomes bitter, love becomes lust, foolishness becomes truth, and God becomes his hated enemy. He call the work of God the work of the devil. Therefore he becomes vessels fit for destruction and the wrath of God abides on him.

“Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Matthew 12:31-32)

“Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation.” (Mark 3:28–29).

“Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven” (Luke 12:10).

Examples from Scripture

1. Cain – Jude 1:11
2. Sodom and Gomorrah – Genesis 18:20, 19:24
3. Pharaoh – Exodus 7-14
4. King Saul – 1 Samuel 15:23
5. Judas Iscariot – John 6:70, 17:12
6. Elymas, the sorcerer – Acts 13:6-8

None of us in this life can read any man’s heart. We do not know who is really and truly saved, born again, and who is not. God knows. Born again people have a new heart that longs to please God. They do not and cannot harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit who lives in them. True believers preserve to the end; fake believers do not preserve. Jesus said to let the wheat and the tares grow together. He will sort it out.

Romans 1:18-32 – An Example of Hardening Against God

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who **suppress the truth** by their wickedness,

19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but **their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.**

22 Although they claimed to be wise, **they became fools**

23 and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God** for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 Therefore **God gave them over in the sinful desires** of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

25 They **exchanged the truth about God for a lie**, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

26 Because of this, **God gave them over to shameful lusts**. Even their women **exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones**.

27 In the same way the men also **abandoned natural relations** with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so **God gave them over to a depraved mind**, so that they do what ought not to be done.

29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,

30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;

31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.

32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 9:11-23 – All Hearts Are Hard: But God Softens Some.

11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that **God’s purpose in election might stand**:

12 not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”

13 Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

14 What then shall we say? **Is God unjust? Not at all!**

15 For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

16 It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.

17 For Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and **he hardens whom he wants to harden.**

19 One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?”

20 But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ □”

21 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?

22 What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience **the objects of his wrath**—prepared for destruction?

23 What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the **objects of his mercy**, whom he prepared in advance for glory—

Adjectives Describing Rebellion	Results of Rebellion
➤ Stiff-necked	✓ Hardened
➤ Stubborn	✓ Blinded
➤ Willful	✓ Darkened
➤ Rebellious	✓ Reprobate
➤ Resistant	✓ Reversed (inverted thoughts)
➤ Not Listening	✓ Deaf
➤ Obstinate	✓ Given up and over

Understanding the Sovereignty of God & Repentance

Are we saved by Election or by Free Will?

Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*

The superficial work of many of the professional evangelists of the last fifty years is largely responsible for the erroneous views now current upon the bondage of the natural man, encouraged by the laziness of those in the pew in their failure to “*prove all things.*” (1 Thess. 5:21) The average evangelical pulpit conveys the impression that it lies wholly in the power of the sinner whether or not he shall be saved. It is said that “God has done His part, now man must do his.” Alas, what can a lifeless man do, and man by nature is “*dead in trespasses and sins.*” (Eph. 2:1) If this were really believed, there would be more dependence upon the Holy Spirit to come in with His miracle-working power, and less confidence in our attempts to “win men for Christ.”

When addressing the unsaved, preachers often draw an analogy between God’s sending of the Gospel to the sinner, and a sick man in bed, with some healing medicine on a table by his side: all he needs to do is reach forth his hand and take it.

But in order for this illustration to be in any wise true to the picture which Scripture gives us of the fallen and depraved sinner, the sick man in bed must be described as one who is blind (Eph. 4:18) so that he cannot see the medicine, his hand paralyzed (Rom. 5:6) so that he is unable to reach forth for it, and his heart not only devoid of all confidence in the medicine but filled with hatred against the physician himself. (John 15:18).

O what superficial views of man’s desperate plight are not entertained! Christ came here not to help those who were willing to help themselves, but to do for His people what they were incapable of doing for themselves. “*To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house*” (Isa. 42:7)

For Further Study read: *The Bondage of the Will* by Martin Luther