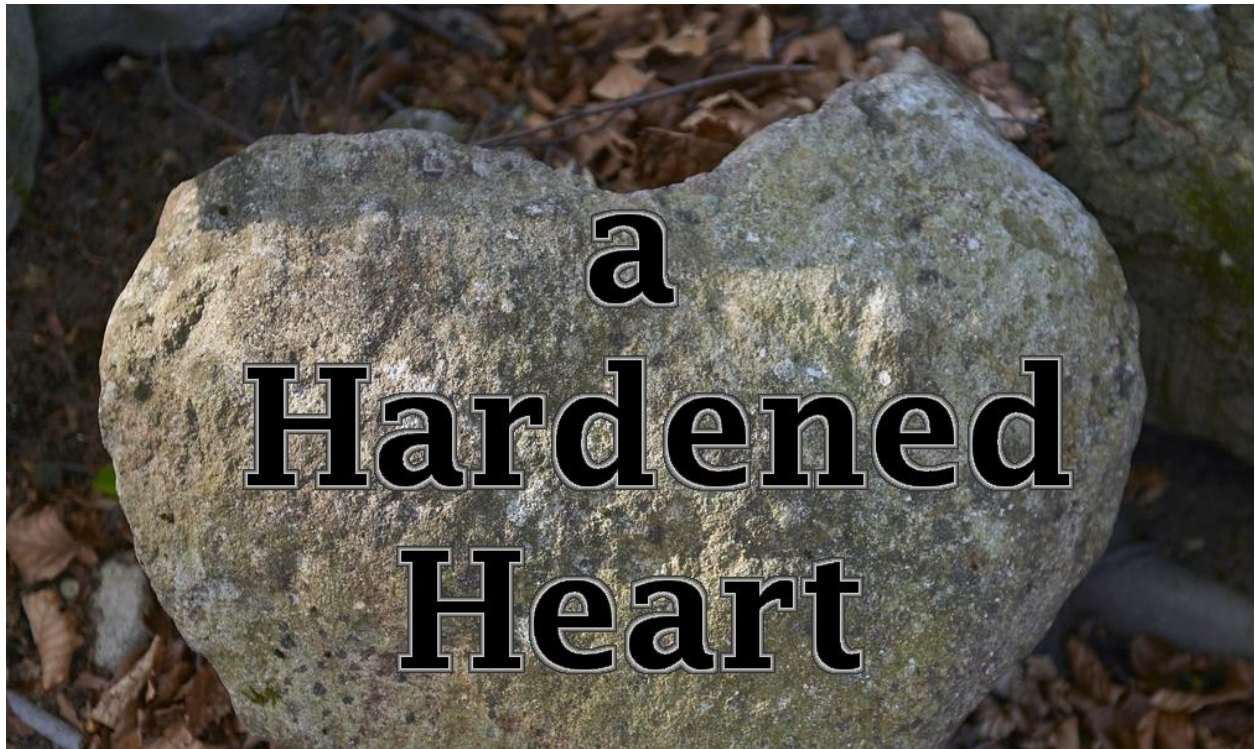




A Hardened Heart
By Daniel Deininger
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In the story of the Exodus, the narrative mentions Pharaoh's heart being hardened a total of 20 times, with 10 instances attributed to God and 10 to Pharaoh himself.

Here's a breakdown:

- **God Hardens Pharaoh's Heart (10 times):**
God is said to directly harden Pharaoh's heart in Exodus 4:21, 9:12, 10:1, 10:20, 10:27, 11:10, 14:4, 8, and 17.
- **Pharaoh Hardens His Own Heart (10 times):**
Pharaoh's heart is described as becoming hard or he is said to harden his own heart in Exodus 7:13, 7:14, 7:22, 8:15, 8:19, 8:32, 9:7, 9:34, 14:5.

The Hardening of The Heart
By Craig Scott, UCG Pastor in North Carolina
<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/hardening-heart>

The hardening of the heart is a biblical way of indicating a spirit that is **stubborn, obstinate, resistant, self righteous, unmerciful, and [the most dangerous of all] oblivious to their own spiritual condition...** Hard heartedness is offered up in scripture as an explanation for the unbelief of humanity at large, but also as a warning to the household of God. Hardness of heart is a spiritual condition that can creep up on you and cause you to miss out on the glory and inheritance of the first-fruits.

1. [Romans 9](#) is where hardheartedness among unbelievers is addressed. The example of hard heartedness given is the Pharaoh of Egypt.
2. [Hebrews 3](#) is where the Church of God is warned about their own hardness of heart. The example given is indifference and disregard for the weekly Sabbath.

Today we will walk through both sections of scripture. In the process learning how hard heartedness happens, and how it can affect us.

God Role in The Hardening of the Heart

[Romans 9:1-6](#) it grieves Paul [the Jew] that his own flesh and blood people who had so many good things of God showered upon them have failed. But their failure does not mean God's plan and purpose has failed. It has always been **God's plan to draw out a smaller subset of people [a remnant] from the larger group based on His mercy, and on faith.** In Paul's day that remnant of Israel will form the nucleus of the Church of God and would broaden out to include all nations and peoples.

[Romans 9:6-9](#) Abraham had more sons than just Isaac [IE. Ishmael]. But God carried forward His plan and purpose only through Isaac because Isaac was the son God had promised would be born to Sarah. It was not because Isaac was of better quality than Ishmael. God had decided in advance this was the plan and Abraham [and the whole family] had to submit to God's will in faith.

[Romans 9:10-13](#) Jacob was selected and not Esau... but not because Jacob was better.

Was God unfair to Esau? No, nothing was stopping Esau from choosing Godliness, he received the same instruction and example from his parents as Jacob. He could have chosen to submit himself to God's will... but he didn't.

Question: in what way did God hate Esau?

To love one and hate the other is an biblical idiom that really means *set one above the other*. For example scripture says a person who is totally devoted to God "should hate his mother and father"... clearly that means prioritizing God over mom and dad... because hating your parents would violate the 5th commandment [scripture cannot be broken].

How did God "hate" Esau... by allowing him to go his own way, do his own thing... Esau didn't receive the birthright because he wasn't really interested in it. But God did him no harm... Esau was wealthy, had lots of land, servants, etc. But with regard to God Esau was hardhearted.

[Romans 9:14-18](#) God's plan and purpose is to work with a small subset of people and leave the vast majority of humanity to their own devices [People's hearts become hard when left to their own devices... a process which Paul reviews extensively in [Romans 1](#)].

Some might say "*that's unfair... God should work the same way with everyone*". I think it seems especially unfair to many because they don't understand the plan of the first and second resurrections... plus, they believe the unbiblical teachings about the immortality of the soul and eternal punishment in hell...

Hardness of heart and unbelief serve a very important purpose in God's plan: they provide a witness in history to the hopelessness of humanity without God's intervention.

A Case Study in Hardening of the Heart

The Pharaoh of Egypt serves as the prime example of hardness of heart. We'll see in a few minutes that hardening of the heart is not God over-riding the freedom of an individual to choose **but rather a matter of God simply letting human nature run its course**. Pharaoh was already evil, proud, arrogant, obstinate... "the human heart in its natural state is wicked, self delusional, and hostile to God". And that's the natural state of your heart too! Without God's intervention you are just as hopeless as the next person.

Jeremiah 17:9 KJV - The heart [is] deceitful above all [things], and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Romans 2:29 NKJV - but [he is] a Jew who [is one] inwardly; and **circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the Spirit**, not in the letter; whose praise [is] not from men but from God.

Is this why it was important that Moses' sons were circumcised?

[**Romans 9:19-24**](#) God says "in mercy I will work with this person and leave that other person to their own devices"... How is that unjust?

As a whole, humans are allowed to run their lives as they see fit. And they are perfectly happy with that arrangement. For the vast majority of people God isn't actively working in their lives to prepare them for the resurrection that occurs when Christ returns... and they prefer it that way... because God's way is hard. The average person wants God to leave them alone [except when they want a blessing or rescue from some trial... which the generous spirit of God often supplies].

God isn't stopping them from seeking repentance, or obedience, or salvation. They stop themselves through their stubborn insistence on their own traditions, or their proud demands for self government, or willful ignorance of God's instruction. The sorry state of humanity is theirs for the very reason that God leaves them alone.

In this way they are considered vessels of wrath and destruction. **Their lives serve God's purpose in showing the results of human freedom and self government when God does not intervene: which is futility, confusion, the dead end of death.** The vessels of mercy are those with whom God does intervene. Their lives show the results of repentance, obedience, faith, humility: which is a glorious future of eternal life.

DD - What a blessing to know God's way!

The Hard Heart of Pharaoh

In Hebrew thought everything is attributable to the all powerful God... because He always has the sovereign choice to act or not act. And so the Pharaoh's hardness of heart was the result of God's decision... in this case to do nothing. Scripture describes the hardening of Pharaoh's heart from two angles:

Hazoq - [Exodus 4:21](#); 7:3; 9:12,35, 10:20,27; 11:10, 14:4, 8, 17 - these are all instances where the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is attributed to God. (read **9:12,35**)

Exodus 9:12 KJV - And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.

Exodus 9:35 KJV - And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses.

Kabed - [Exodus 7:14](#); 8:15,32; 9:7,34; [2 Samuel 6:6](#) - these are all instances where the hardening of heart is attributed to Pharaoh hardening his own heart. (read **8:15,32:9:32**)

The forces operating on the Pharaoh were his own stubbornness, obstinacy, pride in his own greatness, and disregard for the obvious working of God's mighty power. Be warned: these are the same factors which are at work in you and me... because we too are susceptible to a hardening of the heart.

The Active Role of Satan

Another factor contributing to hardness of heart [which we have not yet included] is the presence of lying spirits.

[Exodus 7:3, 13,14, 22](#) ... the magicians here appear to be tapping into the powers of spiritual wickedness at work in our world. They deceive the Pharaoh into pridefully thinking the gods of Egypt were just as powerful as this unknown God. At their prompting he hardens his heart.

God allows humanity to be exposed to lies, deception, and trickery. Satan is not allowed to do anything he wants. He can only do what God decides to allow. Satan is allowed lie, deceive and trick people... which is accomplished though false teachers [false prophets] and by appealing to our pride: *"you don't need God to tell you what to do... you're just as capable of discerning good from evil as He is... cut your own path in life...you're not going to die forever, your immortal spirit will live on"*. People love the lie.

[1 Kings 22:4-28](#) the kings heard the truth and they also heard to lie and they had to chose. God did not force them to go into battle... they chose to go... because they loved the lie. They knew what they wanted to hear even before the words were spoken. **People love the lies they are being told today!**

[2 Corinthians 4:1-6](#) this is the sorry condition of all humanity... unless God intervenes in mercy and compassion to draw them out of it.

Note: the NT uses the imagery of blindness more frequently than hard hardheartedness but they both make the same point on a spiritual level.

Hard hardheartedness As A Warning to the Church

The root causes of hardness of heart are:

Deception - the influence of Satan, accepting deceptive lies and false teachings

Pride - my way of understanding reality makes perfect sense, why should I change? In this category I would place self-righteousness, stubbornness, lack of forgiveness, and an inability to see yourself as you really are and submit yourself to a change of heart

Disobedience - I'll follow my own rules for life. "I hear what you say God and some of it I agree with, some of it I don't... so I'll do the parts that make sense to me and just ignore the rest".

Here are some examples of hardness of heart in the NT:

[Mark 3:5](#) - an example of very religious people who were zealous for the law but angry with someone doing good. Because they were doing it in a way that did not fit their own vision of how things ought to be... and its considered hardness of heart.

[Mark 6:52](#) - sincere religious people who were unable to grasp the meaning of what God was doing... and its characterized as hardness of heart.

[Mark 8:17](#) - sincere religious people... but they are missing the big picture and being influenced by false teaching [the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod].

[Mark 16:14](#) - unwilling to believe the works of God because what He was doing because the way they were happening did not fit neatly into the picture they had in their mind.

Hardness of Heart Can Cause You To Miss Out

[Hebrews 3](#) the context is remaining faithful and obedient to Christ. Christ is greater than Moses, but obedience to Christ is not an alternative to Moses, He is not leading you in a different direction than Moses. He is leading you into obedience, specifically referring to the Sabbath.

[Hebrews 3:7-11](#) the reference here is to testing of Israel in the wilderness and their disobedience to the Sabbath instructions regarding a day of rest [[Exodus 16](#)]. Their disobedience and disregard the simple instructions God gave them was going to keep them from entering into the rest of the promised land.

The rest here is biblical typology that refers to 1) the Sabbath day itself 2) the land of promise [Canaan] 3) the inheritance of those who attain the first resurrection.

[Hebrews 4:1-9](#) the warning is about hardening of the heart towards the Sabbath day... AND the warning is directed not to the vast realm of unbelievers... but to the people of God. In chapter 10:25 God's people are again warned not to neglect the Sabbath.

[Hebrews 4:11-13](#) work hard to enter into the rest that is the inheritance of the sons of God which will be yours when Christ returns.

Conclusion: a person with a hardened heart is unlikely to hear this message and consider that it applies to them... its one of the great ironies of preaching. But, I ask you to go before God and ask Him to show you where you may have developed hardness of heart. Awareness and confession is the first step toward setting the situation right.

God's stated desire for His people is this: "let me take from you your heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh"... "circumcise your heart"... so that it is no longer hard... but soft, flexible, merciful, compassionate, dedicated, faithful, obedient, and humble. **Ask Him and He will do it.**