

Doctrine of the Hardened Heart

1. The heart of an individual may become hard in the sense that it is not sensitive to spiritual matters and will not receive counsel nor respond to the known will of God.
2. By nature at birth and then by choice the heart is hardened. Individuals can harden their own heart by the choices they make and the responses they give to a situation illustrated by the Pharaoh of the Exodus Generation.

- *Exodus 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.*

Special Note.

The heart of a person is not normally hardened all at once but by consistency. As the sun first warms the mud and then hardens it more firmly day by day so the heart of a person can become adamant against the Lord.

- *Exodus 8:32 And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.*

3. God does no wrong when He confirms someone in their decision to reject His will. If a person hardens their God against the gospel, God will also harden their hearts.

- *Exodus 7:13 And he [God] hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.*

- *Exodus 10:20 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.*

- *Exodus 10:27 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.*

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

4. The Creator knows the innermost thoughts and intents of the heart of His creatures so that no one can deceive the Lord. No one has to tell the Lord the heart of someone else is hardened for He knows already.

- *Exodus 7:14 And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go.*

5. The heart may become hardened through a variety of means.

- Rejection of the supernatural. *Exodus 7:22 And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the Lord had said.*

- An insensitivity of emotions. *Exodus 8:19 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 the Lord had said.*
- Anger. *Exodus 9:7 And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.*
- Failure to hear or listen to the gospel. *2 Kings 17:14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God.*

6. There are degrees of a hardened heart.

- *Exodus 9:34 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.*

7. Because of His omniscience God knows who will harden their heart against Him before the opportunity to do so arises.

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

Special Note.

God's foreknowledge is rooted in His sovereign decrees and election. God does not come into knowledge based upon foreseen decisions. Rather, He ordains the beginning from the end. *Romans 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*

8. God will sovereignly use even a hardened heart to serve His own purposes and thus be glorified. Either in sin or in righteousness God will be glorified.

- Pharaoh. *Exodus 10:1 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him:*
- Sihon. *Deuteronomy 2:30 But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day.*

9. It is a mistake to believe that miracles and signs and wonders will cause the heart of a person not to be hardened apart from the secret softening work of God the Holy Spirit.

- *Exodus 11:10 And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.*

10. When the heart of a person is hardened they express a will to power which includes mutilation and or murder.
- *Exodus 14:8 And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.*
11. Despite the natural depravity of the heart God still holds individuals responsible for the condition of their own heart. Individuals are said to harden their own hearts.
- *The Philistines. 1 Samuel 6:6 Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?*
 - *Zedekiah. 2 Chronicles 36:13 And he [Zedekiah, king of Judah c. 597 BC] also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel.*
 - *Israelites. Nehemiah 9:16 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments,*
12. A hardened heart leads to physical and spiritual bondage.
- *Nehemiah 9:17 And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.*
13. A hardened heart will sometimes literally manifest itself through bodily mannerisms such as the hunching of the shoulders and the stiffening of the neck when confronted with evil or a particular behavior which is contrary to the known will of the Lord. There is a physical manifestation of the hardened heart.
- *Nehemiah 9:29 And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them ;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.*
14. No one has ever prospered by hardening their heart against the Lord.
- *Job 9:4 He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?*

15. When the heart is hardened natural loving instincts vanish. Mothers murder and or physically abuse their children.
- *Job 39:16 She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear;*
16. It is possible for a person to know they are the object of divine judgment and plead that God change the heart.
- *Isaiah 63:17 O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance.*
17. The heart can go from bad to worse in the hardening process. There are depths of sin which are deeper still.
- *Jeremiah 7:26 Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.*
18. In a moral universe judgement comes because individuals harden their own hearts.
- *Jeremiah 19:15 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.*
19. The way of the transgressor is hard.
- *Daniel 5:20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:*
20. Even the disciples of Christ can have their hearts hardened when they do not consider the Lord in all of His power and glory.
- *Mark 6:52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.*
 - *Mark 8:17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened?*
21. In the matter of salvation no one can come to faith apart from divine mercy and grace. God does not hesitate to declare that He blinds eyes and hardens hearts so that individuals are not converted or healed.

- *John 12:40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*

22. A natural evil consequence of a hardened heart is unbelief, and vice versa.

- *Acts 19:9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.*

23. Christians are commanded to exhort one another daily to good works lest the heart become desensitized and hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Sin's deceitfulness is the pleasure it brings and the illusion there will be no personal accountability for attitude and actions.

- *Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*