

## Doctrinal Summary of The Heart: Hardened by Volitional Response

In Exodus 7:3, God tells Moses that He will harden Pharaoh's heart in order that His signs and wonders would be multiplied in Egypt.

"But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and wonders in the land of Egypt."

The word "harden" is translated from the Biblical Hebrew word אִקְשֶׁה ("aq-sheh") which more literally means, "I will cause the action of something to be made more firm." The "something" which God said He would cause to be made more firm is the heart of Pharaoh. Since the heart refers to the storage place of all of man's beliefs (i.e. morality, protocols, and norms and standards), God was telling Moses that He would cause the beliefs within Pharaoh's heart to be made more firm than they already were. Notice that God would cause Pharaoh's heart to be made more firm but that He wouldn't make them more firm Himself; God never supernaturally went into the heart of Pharaoh and manipulated his beliefs. But He did bring about circumstances that forced Pharaoh to respond to Him.

Through Moses and Aaron God relayed His command to let the Israelites go to Pharaoh. Each time God sent them to Pharaoh He gave Pharaoh an opportunity to change his beliefs regarding the God of Israel and the norms and standards of Pharaoh's kingdom and its Hebrew slaves. Pharaoh did not revere God, nor honor Him as God within his belief system. Neither did Pharaoh see the need to remove his slave nation from Egypt and risk the Hebrews becoming a threat to his own kingdom. So, when God gave the command to let the Israelites go, Pharaoh relied on a series of beliefs (specifically, his perspective of God and his norms and standards concerning his kingdom and its slaves) to be the basis for his decision to reject God's request.

Each time that God instructed Pharaoh to let His people go Pharaoh continued to affirm his belief system and reject God's request as a result of heart that did not revere God. This, despite the plagues that God used as signs and wonders to show His power and might to Pharaoh. So, God caused Pharaoh's heart to be hardened by providing the command and subsequent plagues, but Pharaoh caused his own heart to be hardened (cf. Ex. 8:15) by ignoring the signs and wonders of God and choosing to reject God's command. That is until the final plague took the life of his firstborn son. Not only did God manifest His power in each of the plagues but He also showed His righteousness in judging the iniquity of Pharaoh and His omniscience in knowing precisely what circumstance would be necessary in order for Pharaoh to change his beliefs about the God of the Hebrews and choose to let God's people go (cf. Ex. 12:31-32).

The hardening process of one's heart is contingent upon man's choice to let God be the authority over him or not. When man rejects God as the authority over him then he darkens his heart (cf. Rom. 1:21), becoming unable to see truth because his ungodly belief system is developed by his flesh. If that is not corrected then he will become calloused towards God and His standards (cf. Eph. 4:19), willfully consenting to ignore any evidence or information which might contradict his belief system. The only antidote for a calloused and darkened heart is to recognize God as God, accept His Son as Savior, and be renewed in the spirit of the mind in the new self (cf. Eph. 4:22-24). Often times, this begins with a drastic change in his life's circumstances which are allowed in his life in order to cause him to recognize God's existence. At that point, he may choose to repent and honor God as God or choose to hold more firmly to his present belief system and, thus, harden his heart.