

“The Hardening of a Human Heart!”

Exodus 7:1-7

Intro. – The Human heart has been called “a hard working marvel” – and that it is! The human heart beats an average of 75 times a minute. Breaking that down, we learn this amounts to 40 million times a year or 2.8 billion times in a 70 year lifetime. At each beat, the average human heart discharges four ounces of blood. Breaking that down, we learn that’s 3,000 gallons a day or 650,000 gallons a year. Wanting to capture your imagination, let me illustrate this further. Baptistry here has approximately 500 gallons = 6 baptistries a day, or 2,190 baptistries a year.

Yes, the human heart really is “a hard working marvel.” But what we’re going to look at in this text, is not the physical side, as much as, the soul side/spiritual side of our hearts. Our text, at best, has been a puzzling and often disturbing passage. It point blank says, God will harden Pharaoh’s heart. Note, it’s not a matter of God sticking Pharaoh with clogged arteries and coronary disease, but, it is a matter of God holding true to a predetermined plan, a predestined plan.

How can this be? Are we to think God has a predestined plan that could result in a hardened human heart?! Yes, we are! How can this be? Are we to think God has predestined our hearts – i.e. supersceding/excluded our choice and responsibility? No, we cannot! Then how can God harden a human heart without removing human responsibility and choice?

Purpose: to realize man’s choice is what causes God’s hardening of a heart

This is the intent behind this message to show how men’s choices result in the predetermined plan of God hardening a human heart. In other words, don’t blame God for hardened hearts, blame man for the choices that result in the hardening of human hearts

I WHAT IS THE HARDENING OF THE HEART?

- the best way to answer this question is to look at the results of a hardened heart:
- A. Consider the Case of Pharaoh
 1. Here is an individual who became stubborn, rebellious and unyielding to the will of God.
 2. Speaking through Moses/Aaron the Lord made abundantly clear His will = Pharaoh flat refused it!
- B. Consider the Case of Any Person
 1. Any person who becomes unyielding, stubborn, rebellious to the truth and God’s invitation through His Son, although through their own choices will result in a hardened human heart!
 2. Let me hasten to point out that such is a process – not an overnight happening:
 - a. Pharaoh’s case – took ten plagues that took place over a period of approximately one year
 - b. certainly true in each of our cases – when our hearts have been hardened it’s been over an extended amount of time, not something that happened immediately.
 - c. Illus. – preacher who preached a sermon entitled “796 Sins of Man!” – People responded well to this message... asked for copies etc. Preacher finally asked why? One honest member said, “We want to check and see if we’re missing any!”
 - d. choice not chance determines our destiny = choice of refusing God’s will = hardened heart!
 3. Connersville, IN, Fayette Co. fair (1982) man was beating his wife/girlfriend... After seeing this I believe I better understand what the Lord means by “hardened heart”...

II HOW CAN A HEART BE HARDENED?

- In Pharaoh’s case three distinct factors came into play:
- A. God Was a Factor
 1. Note – God made known His will to Pharaoh... Such was against Pharaoh’s political, financial and personal goals. Pharaoh did it HIS WAY...
 2. Refusing to hearken to God, Pharaoh was sent signs/wonders/miracles:

- a. this is where the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is noted
 - b. after first five plagues, Bible says Pharaoh hardened his heart...
 - c. note: not until sixth plague, states that God hardened Pharaoh's heart.
 - d. even after 6th plague – each resulting plague was God's opportunity for Pharaoh to repent
3. Pharaoh rejected God's mercy again and again; thus, after five plagues God's hardening begins:
- a. permissive = God gives time and space for choice of human opposition
 - b. effectively = continued revealing of God's will and rejecting drives the heart point no return!
 - 1) God's invariable law of moral government (predestined plan) those who choose to resist and rebel against the will of God will find it harder and harder to turn back.
 - 2) why statistically speaking very few become Christians later in life!

B. Magicians Were a Factor

- 1. Imitating plagues = attempt to consol Pharaoh... purely Satanic in nature
 - 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9 *"Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearing of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders."*
- 2. Omnipotence of God displayed such energy even the magicians were covered with boils (9:11).
- 3. Point/application = world/Satan seek to deceive us into thinking we can call our own shots...

C. Pharaoh Was a Factor

- 1. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart on God's part was only in conjunction with Pharaoh hardening his own heart – i.e. had he not hardened his own heart, God would not have hardened either.
- 2. Pharaoh was a thorough student – student of self interest rather than justice and truth!
- 3. Point/application = God gives us minds to use and by choice we use them:

Every person has two ends,
 An end to think with and
 An end to sit with.
 What we accomplish depends
 On what end we choose,
 Heads we win and tails we lose!

Bottom line = Pharaoh sinned by choice and continued by choice, until the moral law of God took effect resulting in a hardened heart that got to the point of no return!

III WHY CONCERN OURSELVES WITH HARDENED HEARTS?

- Here is the real application for us today (c.f. Romans 15:4 *"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."*)
- This and the fact that human nature remains unchanged confirms the principle learned from this text and apply to us in the following ways:

A. God Calls Us to Hear/Obey

- 1. This call (to the Gospel of grace) goes contrary to the flesh...
- 2. To refuse to heed God results in the hardening of the heart and ultimately in eternal separation.
- 3. Our attitude/response the call of God will determine the ultimate outcome of our hearts!

B. God Calls Us to Study/Grow

- 1. 2 Timothy 2:15 *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."*
- 2. 2 Peter 3:18 *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."*
- 3. To pursue emotionalism... union... at the expense of truth... or to represent truth spoken/practiced apart from the way our Lord... our result will be the same as Pharaoh.

C. God Calls Us to Make Disciples

1. Matthew 28:18-20 = making disciples = “teach, baptize and teach”
2. Why we can’t afford to have hardened hearts when it comes to evangelism/missions etc...
3. Our response/attitude to these matters will ultimately determine the outcome of our hearts.
4. Why concern ourselves with this? It’s what separates the men from the boys!

Conclusion: Former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, who was a former pediatric surgeon, has always had a special compassion for the helpless. It was heightened in 1968. His son, David, a junior in Dartmouth College, was rock climbing in New Hampshire. He drove a piton under a large rock on a cliff, but the rock loosened, sending David crashing 100 feet. Several hours later, the phone rang at the Koop home. “David has died,” the family was told.

After this event, whenever Dr. Koop talked to parents of dying children, his throat would tighten to the point he couldn’t get the words out. David’s death was keeping him from doing his job, he told his wife. “A doctor must never cry,” he said to his wife. She disagreed saying, “Now you can empathize.” As a result of this conversation, Dr. Koop now prays at the bedside of sick and dying children – a practice that has shocked some of his colleagues; yet, it is a practice he will never change. His wife was right, he can now really empathize!

Such, I believe summarizes this entire issue of, how can God harden a human heart without removing human responsibility? That’s the point. God won’t unless by choice, we choose to rebel against His will; unless by choice we choose first to harden our own hearts!

God wants and needs F.A.T. people: **F**aithful, **A**vailable, **T**eachable. Our God wants/needs tender, workable hearts; hearts recreated in His image through Christ Jesus His Son!