

A Further Consideration of Romans 9:14-24

Introduction:

Key Verses:

Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Rom 9:19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

Theme: There are some key issues that we need to wrestle with in understanding God's justice in election.

I. Issue # 1 What are we to understand by Pharaoh's hardened heart?

A. There are 19 references in the book of Exodus of Pharaoh's heart being hardened.

B. There are 3 different Hebrew words translated into English as the word hardened.

1. The first word is used 13 times in Exodus referring to Pharaoh's heart.

The word means to be resolute. It also means to shore up or strengthen. It is quite similar to our word for the hardening of cement.

Thus Pharaoh's heart became like cement. Nothing permeated it or moved it. It could no longer be worked with.

2. The second Hebrew word that is translated "hardened" is used 5 times in reference to Pharaoh's heart. It means to make heavy. It is a word that is used elsewhere in connection with eyes that do not see and ears that do not hear.

3. The third Hebrew word that is translated "hardened" is used once in reference to Pharaoh's heart. The word means to be obstinate.

C. Observations concerning God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

1. The Scripture repeatedly refers to Pharaoh hardening his own heart.

Exo 8:15 (NASB) But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

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

Exo 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.

2. Pharaoh sinned and was accountable for his hardened heart.

Exo 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.

3. Pharaoh's hardened heart was in keeping with the plan of God.

Exo 7:13 And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

Exo 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

Exo 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said

Exo 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

God was not taken by surprise by Pharaoh's heart being hardened.

4. In eleven separate verses it is stated that God would or did harden the heart of Pharaoh.
 - a. These verses are meant to teach us that God's statement that Pharaoh's heart would be hardened was more than a

mere prediction.

- (1) God would harden the heart of Pharaoh.
- (2) God would withhold that which would be necessary to "soften" Pharaoh's heart.
- (3) Pharaoh had set his heart on a course that God would not change.
- (4) God did not place evil into Pharaoh's good heart.
- (5) Rather, God did not change Pharaoh's evil heart to good.

b. These eleven verses teach us that God is not ashamed of hardening Pharaoh's heart. Rather He wants all the world to understand He did it.

5. Here we learn great truths about God's grace.

a. First, it is not the circumstances of life that change men's hearts. Rather it is the grace of God at work in the hearts of people in the midst of circumstance.

- (1) No circumstance of life that a person will encounter will bring them to God apart from God's grace.
- (2) No circumstance of life can overthrow a person's trust in God if God is administering grace to that person.

b. Secondly, God's judgment is the withholding of His grace.

D. The scripture also gives us insight as to "how" Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

1. God hardens men's hearts by allowing the works of the evil one to prosper.

Exo 7:22 (NASB) But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

2. God causes men's hearts to be hardened by allowing them to

experience a measure of peace in the midst of their sinfulness.

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

Exo 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.

How often it is when people are in trouble they turn to God. However, when the crises passes so does their commitment to God.

3. God causes men's hearts to be hardened by withholding the grace to understand the benefits experienced by God's people.

Exo 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.

4. God allows men's hearts to be hardened through the company that they keep.

Exo 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.

David was very concerned about the kinds of servants that surrounded him.

Psa 101:6 Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

It was God's grace in leading David to have Nathan the prophet in his employ. What a blessing Nathan turned out to be.

5. Thus the Scripture warns us against hardening our own hearts.

Psa 95:8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

- II. Issue # 2 God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart is illustrative of how God normally works and is not to be understood as an exception to the rule.

Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

A. God hardened the hearts of the nations round about Israel.

Josh 11:18 Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings.

Josh 11:19 There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle.

Josh 11:20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

B. God hardened the hearts of the Jews that did not believe.

Rom 11:7 What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

Rom 11:8 just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY."

C. A person falls into one of two categories. Either they are one upon whom the Lord shows mercy or they are one whom he hardens.

Rom 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

III. Issue # 3 God's sovereign purposes are accomplished in the sinful acts of individuals

If God's purposes are done in those whom He hardens why does He still find fault with them.

Rom 9:19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

A. God's purposes are accomplished in the acts of individuals.

1. God's sovereign purposes are accomplished in the sinful acts of individuals illustrated in Pharaoh

Rom 9:17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED

THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."

2. God's sovereign purposes are accomplished in the sinful acts of individuals illustrated in Joseph's brothers.

Gen 50:20 "And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

- B. God is responsible for His purposes being accomplished in the sinful acts of individuals.

1. God is responsible for His purposes being accomplished in the sinful acts of individuals illustrated in Pharaoh.

Rom 9:17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."

2. God is responsible for His purposes being accomplished in the sinful acts of individuals illustrated in the life of Joseph

Gen 45:7 "And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.
Gen 45:8 "Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

3. God is responsible for His purposes being accomplished in the sinful acts of individuals illustrated in the crucifixion of Christ.

Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Isa 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

4. It is because God's purposes are accomplished in the sinful acts of individuals that we can say with confidence that all things work together for good to those who love God.

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to

them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

- C. God is responsible for His purpose being accomplished in the sinful acts of individuals but God is not responsible for the sinfulness that motivated their actions.
1. God finds fault with a sinful mankind that is hardened because their actions are truly sinful and their hearts are truly corrupt. Though their actions ultimately serve the sovereign plan of God their intention is just the opposite. They do what they do out of the worst of motives.
 2. Those evil motives come from their own heart.
 - a. The evil motives come from their own heart illustrated in Pharaoh

Exo 5:1 And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.
Exo 5:2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.
 - b. The evil motives come from their own heart illustrated in the brothers of Joseph

Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.
 - c. The evil motives come from their own heart illustrated in those who participated in the crucifixion of Jesus.

Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:
 3. God finds fault with wicked men because even though they have fulfilled His sovereign will, they have resisted His revealed will