

The Hardened Heart and the Power of God

In Exodus chapter 7, we find ourselves at a dramatic turning point in the history of redemption. Moses and Aaron are standing before the most powerful monarch on earth, demanding the release of God's people. As we look at this text, we see a fascinating interplay between the will of man and the sovereignty of God.

Understanding the Hardened Heart

In Exodus chapter 7, verses 1 through 3, the Lord tells Moses that He will "harden Pharaoh's heart." This can be a stumbling block for many. We might ask, "Is it fair for God to harden a man's heart and then judge him for it?"

To understand this, we have to look at the original language. There are actually two different concepts used here, though both are translated as "hardened." One means to "make stiff" or "strengthen," while the other refers to a heart that has become dense and unyielding.

Pharaoh first chose to harden his own heart against God. He set his course in rebellion. What did God do? He simply gave to Pharaoh what he wanted: a "stiffened" or "strengthened" heart. God will let you set your course, and sometimes He will even firm up your resolve in that direction.

- **For the Believer:** This is actually a blessing! When I first decided to follow Jesus, I was weak. But the Lord strengthened my decision; He "stiffened" my resolve to serve Him.
- **For the Rebellious:** It is a terrifying thing when God firms up a wrong decision.

Foreknowledge: God Knows the End from the Beginning

God tells Moses in Exodus chapter 7, verse 4, that Pharaoh will not heed them. This isn't God forcing Pharaoh to be a puppet; it is God's perfect foreknowledge. God exists outside of time. He knows the choices we will make before we make them.

Think of it this way: if you knew with 100% certainty which horse would win a race, you wouldn't bet on the loser. God, knowing who will respond to His grace, invests His love and Spirit in those who are His. The fact that you are reading this today, with a heart open to God, is a sign that He has invested in you. You are on the winning side!

The Counterfeit vs. The Genuine

When Aaron's rod turned into a serpent in Exodus chapter 7, verses 10 through 12, Pharaoh's magicians duplicated the feat. We must remember that Satan is a master counterfeiter. Just because something is "miraculous" doesn't mean it's from God.

However, a counterfeit doesn't disprove the genuine—it proves that a genuine exists! You don't have counterfeit twenty-dollar bills unless there are real ones.

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke chapter 11, verse 13)

If you come to God with a sincere heart, seeking His truth, He is not going to let a demon deceive you. A loving Father doesn't give a stone to a child asking for bread. You can trust the Lord to give you the genuine work of His Spirit.

The First Plague: Turning Water to Blood

In Exodus chapter 7, verses 17 through 25, we see the first great judgment. The Nile—the very lifeblood and "god" of Egypt—is turned to blood. The fish died, and the river stank.

Some people try to explain this away with lame theories about natural phenomena or planetary alignments. I prefer to just believe God. If He can create the universe, He can certainly change the molecular structure of water. This was a direct "get-to-know-you" session for Pharaoh, who had previously asked, "Who is the Lord?" By the end of this, he was starting to find out.

Practical Application

- **Check Your Heart:** Are you resisting a nudge from the Holy Spirit? Don't persist in hardening your heart, lest the Lord "stiffen" you in that rebellion.
- **Trust the Genuine:** Don't be afraid of the work of the Holy Spirit because of the "counterfeits" you see in the world. Seek the Lord with a pure heart, and He will fill you with the real thing.
- **Rely on His Strength:** If you've made a commitment to Christ, ask Him to "stiffen" your resolve today. Ask Him to make you unmovable in your faith.

A Challenge for the Believer

I challenge you this week to examine your "rods"—those things you rely on for security. Are you willing to cast them down before the Lord and let Him use them for His glory? Stop trying to fight the battles in your own strength and let God's power be magnified through your obedience.

An Invitation to New Life

Perhaps you are like Pharaoh today—you've been asking, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" Let me tell you who He is. He is the Creator who loves you so much that He stepped into human history.

Jesus Christ didn't just perform miracles to put on a show; He went to a Roman cross. There, He shed His precious blood to pay the price for every wrong thing you've ever done. He took your judgment so you wouldn't have to. And three days later, He rose from the dead! The resurrection is God's "Amen" to Christ's work, declaring Him to be God, Savior, and Lord.

If you harden your heart, you face the judgment of your own sins. But if you open your heart, He will wash you clean and give you a brand-new life. Will you choose Him today?