

Hardening of Hearts

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6:20am, October 23rd, 2020

Themes in scripture that don't get much of my attention are usually ones I have a difficult time understanding and it takes time and effort that my lazy self doesn't want to put in. But because I want the truth of who God is and to know what is going on in me, I force myself to dig deeper regardless of how difficult or scary it may be that I may have to give up long-held assumptions and beliefs. The result of this process is often a deeper love for God, a clarity of my life, and a correction of my doctrine we are commanded to watch and preserve closely (1 Timothy 4:16). We are going to examine together one of the areas I've struggled with that starts with this question: Is the hardening of my heart something I do or something that God does?

Read the scriptures starting on page 2 as a start point. **Sklērynō**, the word we translate as "harden" from Strong's G4645 is described "to make hard, harden, to become obstinate or stubborn".

1. From reading the scripture references on the following pages, it is appears that in some places God hardens the heart and in other places, a person hardens their own heart. Since this cannot be a contradiction, how can both statements be true?
2. Based on the contexts of each passage, what is going on in the person's life whose heart is hardened?
3. Is there a remedy for a hardened heart? If so, what is it?
4. Can a disciple of Jesus have their heart hardened or is hardening only for those who do not believe in Christ?
5. Have you experienced a hardening of heart in your own life? How did you recognize that your heart was hardened/hardening? How did it resolve?
6. Are there precautions we need to take to recognize and avoid our hearts hardening?
7. What are effective ways of helping those around us with hardened hearts?

"They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?'" – Luke 24:32

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“But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into your hand, as he is this day.” – **Deuteronomy 2:30**

“If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother” – **Deuteronomy 15:7**

“Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had dealt severely with them, did they not send the people away, and they departed?”
– **1 Samuel 6:6** (Philistines in returning the ark)

“¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. ¹² He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. ¹³ He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel.” – **2 Chronicles 36:11-13**

“And you warned them in order to turn them back to your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey.” – **Nehemiah 9:29**

“He is wise in heart and mighty in strength—who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?”
– **Job 9:4**

“⁷ For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, ⁹ when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.” – **Psalms 95:7-9**

“Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.”
– **Proverbs 28:14**

“Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”
– **Isaiah 6:10** (referenced in Matthew 13:15, John 12:40, and Acts 28:27)

“O LORD, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not?”
– **Isaiah 63:17**

“²⁵ From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. ²⁶ Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.” – **Jeremiah 7:25-26**

“and because you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, every one of you follows his stubborn, evil will, refusing to listen to me.” – **Jeremiah 16:12**

““But they say, ‘That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’” – **Jeremiah 18:12**

“⁶⁴ “You will repay them, O LORD, according to the work of their hands. ⁶⁵ You will give them dullness of heart; your curse will be on them. ⁶⁶ You will pursue them in anger and destroy them from under your heavens, O LORD.” – **Lamentations 3:64-66**

“¹⁹ And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.” – **Ezekiel 11:19-20** (also in Ezekiel 36:26-28 and 18:31 for a new heart)

“But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him.” – **Daniel 5:20**

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⁵¹ And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ⁵² for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.” – **Mark 6:51-52**

¹⁷ And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?” – **Mark 8:17-18**

² And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” ³ He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” ⁴ They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” ⁵ And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ⁷ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,^[a] ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.’ ⁹ So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” – **Mark 10:2-9**

⁵¹ ‘You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³ you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.” – **Acts 7:51-53**

³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.” – **Romans 2:3-5**

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” ¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.”

– **Romans 9:14-18**

“Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” – **Romans 11:25**

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.” – **2 Corinthians 3:12-16**

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!”

– **Ephesians 4:17-20**

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ ¹¹ As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’ ¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵ As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” ¹⁶ For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷ And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.” – **Hebrews 3:7-19**

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The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

³ But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, ⁴ Pharaoh will not listen to you." – **Exodus 7:3-4** (God's prophecy)

¹³ Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. ¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go." – **Exodus 7:13-14** (Aaron's staff to a serpent)

²² So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. ²³ Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart." – **Exodus 7:22-23** (Water to blood)

¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said." – **Exodus 8:15** (Frogs)

¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said." – **Exodus 8:19** (Gnats)

³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go." – **Exodus 8:32** (Flies)

⁷ And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go." – **Exodus 9:7** (Egyptian livestock die)

¹² But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses." – **Exodus 9:12** (boils)

¹⁷ You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go." – **Exodus 9:17**

³⁴ But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. ³⁵ So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses." – **Exodus 9:34-35** (hail)

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them....So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me.'" – **Exodus 10:1, 3**

"But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go." – **Exodus 10:20** (locusts)

"But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go." – **Exodus 10:27** (darkness)

"Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land." – **Exodus 11:20**

"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD.' And they did so... And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly." – **Exodus 14:4,8**