

from Dr. Nolan:

In 2002 I received this handout forwarded by a (late) friend whose biblical insights I respect. I do not know his source, which appears to be quite conservative. Nonetheless, this interpretation preserves the biblical motif that God does not control a human being's freedom of choice; God did not override Pharaoh's will/heart as the Creator never coerces neither despots nor the righteous. Human freedom of choice is an aspect of humans being made "in the image of God." We are not created as mere puppets of God, whether for good or for evil.

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Yahweh said He would harden Pharaoh's heart. What does this mean and how does it affect Pharaoh's salvation, and that of others like him?

This is one of the "hard sayings" in the Bible that cause some confusion. If Yahweh indeed hardened Pharaoh's heart, then He would be responsible for Pharaoh's sin. Even worse, if Yahweh is the cause of Pharaoh's sin, Yahweh would be grossly unfair to punish Pharaoh for that which He Himself had done.

Ten times it is said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and ten times that Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart.

"And Yahweh said unto Moses, When you go to return into Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in your hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go" (Ex. 4:21).

This verse appears to make Yahweh responsible for Pharaoh's acts. The character of Pharaoh, which is revealed in the following chapters, shows that he is neither humble nor meek. His arrogance is obvious:

"And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus says Yahweh, Elohim of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is Yahweh, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not Yahweh, neither will I let Israel go" (Ex. 5:1-2).

Nothing here about Yahweh hardening Pharaoh's heart. We see a picture of an arrogant ruler who gives heed to no one and thinks only of himself. He proudly ruled the mighty nation of Egypt and could do whatever pleased him. No one questioned his whims or orders.

(An aside here to point out that Aaron became the spokesman for Moses. Aaron played the part of the "Logos," the "Dabar," the "Word," and spoke the words of Moses to Pharaoh. He is a direct type of the Savior, the "Logos," Who is called "the Word" in John 1:1. Aaron became the high priest just as Yahshua also became our "High Priest," Hebrews 8:1. Moses became as Elohim to both Aaron and Pharaoh to deliver Israel out of bondage. In Revelation we learn that Yahweh delivers His people from the bondage of this world through His Son Yahshua. A remarkable analogy.)

But how did Yahweh harden Pharaoh's heart? Did He in some way interfere with his character, his thinking, his attitude? The simple answer is that Pharaoh was determined not to free his Israelite slaves, allowing them to go to a wilderness to worship some "Israelite deity" when Egypt was full of pagan deities.

The existence of the true Mighty One became evident by a series of increasingly supernatural demonstrations. The plagues were against the deities of Egypt and became more severe and traumatic. **The implacable refusal of Pharaoh to admit to the power and authority of Yahweh resulted in a progressive hardening of his heart.**

Yahweh simply brought conditions about that forced Pharaoh to choose. Guided by his own ego, his choices resulted in the progressive hardening of his heart.

As Dr. Bullinger states in the Companion Bible, the same sun that melts the butter also hardens the clay. The situations that challenged Pharaoh revealed his true colors. An arrogant Pharaoh continued in error and Yahweh gave him up in error.

If mankind rebels against Yahweh's word and continues in his own sinful ways, not accepting the way of truth, Yahweh eventually, after warning them, will allow them to follow their own pernicious ways. They refuse to listen and speak lies:

"Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1Tim. 4:1-2).

Pharaoh's attitude should be a warning for us that we not grieve the Holy Spirit, but think twice about what Yahweh would have us do. Many may find themselves in league with the "man of sin" who will come at the end of the age, being the grand product of Satan. He will lead many astray by his devious ways:

"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause Elohim shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2Thess. 2:10-12).

A proverb says, "No sin persisted in, no matter how small, remains small." Once we have turned our mind away from obedience to Yahweh, this attitude grows and becomes an avalanche in our lives, sweeping away all righteousness:

"Wherefore Yahweh also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of Yahweh into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause Elohim gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain Elohim in their knowledge, Yahweh gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom. 1:24-28).

MAN HARDENS HIS OWN HEART.