

God's Freedom to Harden the Heart of the Sinner.

Romans 9:17–18

Romans 9:14–18 (NKJV)

¹⁴ What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, *“I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”* ¹⁶ So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, *“For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”* ¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

Introduction

One of the most difficult of all doctrines in the Bible to comprehend and to ponder is the doctrine of Sovereign Reprobation. It is sobering to think that God can and does confine people in their sin, never to escape but only to face the full fury of divine Justice.

If you want to know the God of the Bible, then you will come face to face with the God who can harden the human heart, and bind you in permanent unbelief and abandon you to the deserts of your sin.

It is not an easy doctrine, in fact, it is probably the most neglected of all doctrines in the Bible, more than Sovereignty or Election, more than the doctrine of Hell itself. And even among Reformed churches do you ever hear of the doctrine of Divine Reprobation. Most Christians do not have the stomach for it and pastors do not have guts for it or just don't believe it to be in the Bible.

Romans 9 is best known for its hard statements and unwavering commitment to God's freedom to do with sinful creatures as He wills. It is God's self-disclosure of who He really is and announcement of things that we would rather not consider.

But nevertheless it is sobering truth that one must consider and believe to have a full view of the God of the Bible.

Review

All of this is set in a larger context of Paul answering the question about Israel. What about them. What about the people of Israel. Has God's Word failed. Are His promises and covenants not true.

So Paul show that in the Divine Purpose of God, not all Israel as individual people were planned to be saved.

Just because you have Abraham has your father, or you are born a Jew does not guarantee salvation or the covenant, or the Promises

So He says it was Isaac not Ishmael, the Promise was to although they had the same father

And it was Jacob, not Esau, even though they both had the same mother and Father.

God's Choice was determined on His own purpose not what they did.

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says to Moses, *“I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”*¹⁶ So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy

Lesson

¹⁷ For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, *“For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”*¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

The Purpose

The Plan

The Purpose

17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh

The Scripture says to Pharaoh is an unexpected way of introducing Paul's quotation, for the Scripture had not been written at that time. The meaning, of course, is that God spoke the words in question (Exod. 9:16), but the way Paul puts it brings out the truth that these words would be embodied for all time in Scripture

Morris, L. (1988). [*The Epistle to the Romans*](#) (p. 360). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

What ever the Scripture says, God says

What ever God says, the Scripture says.

The Scripture carries the same weight of Authority as God.

It's called the the divine response in
Romans 11:4 (NKJV)

4 But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

Galatians 3:8 (NKJV)

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."

Galatians 3:22 (NKJV)

²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Galatians 4:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “*Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.*”

2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV)

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God.....

The Scripture and God do not separate in the Bible. When one speaks the other speaks. One is the other speaking

17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh,
“For this very purpose

εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο (again in 13:6; 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 6:22; Col. 4:8) means “just this (and nothing else)” (BDF 290[4]). It seems to stress the idea of purpose

Morris, L. (1988). [The Epistle to the Romans](#). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

2 Corinthians 5:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

¹⁷ For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh,
*“For this very purpose **I have raised**
you up”*

The meaning here appears to be to raise to one’s place in history, though some prefer the thought that he was preserved (through the plagues?), raised from sickness, or spared from being killed for his sins. None of these fits the context or the meaning of the verb as well as the first-mentioned view. Paul is speaking not just of Pharaoh’s survival, but of his whole place in history (cf. Cranfield).

Morris, L. (1988). [The Epistle to the Romans](#) (p. 360). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

Romans 13:1 (NKJV)

13 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

Paul now gives the reasons why God has raised him up and appointed him.

17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh,
“For this very purpose I have raised you up,

- 1. that I may show My power in you,
and*
- 2. that My name may be declared in
all the earth.”*

It is clear that God's purpose in raising up Pharaoh was 2 fold.

To show His Power

and

Make His Name known in all the World.

This was God, using Pharaoh for Self Revelation.

There is no doubt that the Power of God was on display in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

The Miracles of the plagues, the power of the deliverance, the cloud and the pillar of fire, the crossing of the Red Sea, were all amazing displays of the power of God for all to see.

In fact, as you read the account in the Book of Exodus, you get the clear impression that God intentionally hardened Pharaoh heart, so that He would not let the people go, so that He could do all the plagues He desired to do to show His Power.

Exodus 4:21 (NKJV)

²¹ And the Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.

And all of this to make is Name known.....

Make His Name known in all the World

Exodus 15:10–15 (NKJV)

¹⁰ You blew with Your wind,
The sea covered them;
They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

¹¹ “Who *is* like You, O Lord, among the gods?
Who *is* like You, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

¹² You stretched out Your right hand;
The earth swallowed them.

¹³ You in Your mercy have led forth

The people whom You have redeemed;
 You have guided *them* in Your strength
 To Your holy habitation.

- ¹⁴ “The people will hear *and* be afraid;
 Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.
¹⁵ Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed;
 The mighty men of Moab,
 Trembling will take hold of them;
All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away.

Joshua 2:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹ and (Rahab) said to the men: “I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard *these things*, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He *is* God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

NOTE:

It is important to note that God is a God who desires to Reveal Himself. He is not as the Deist teach... a creator who creates and then leaves,

His desire in all of creation is that He is known and the His Glory is known.

Psalm 19:1–3 (NKJV)

- ¹ The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
- ² Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
- ³ *There is no speech nor language*
Where their voice is not heard.

Romans 1:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

It is also important that we understand that God desire a full Revelation of Himself. Not just what makes us comfortable.....He not only wants to show

his grace and mercy and love, but also his Holiness Justice and Wrath.

We see this in Romans 9 clearly.

Romans 9:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ For He says to Moses, *“I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”*

Romans 9:22–23 (NKJV)

²² What if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

We get the full spectrum of light with God revealing all of His Character.

In Exodus 32 and 33, We see how this worked with our study of verse v15

Romans 9:15 (NKJV)

15 For He says to Moses, *“I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.”*

Moses had already been personal witness to God’s Power in creation thru the plagues and crossing of the Red Sea

Moses saw the justice of God and wrath of God displayed in the killing of the firstborn and the slaughter of the 3000 at Mt. Sinai. So He was getting an imperfect picture of God. An incomplete picture. So then God tells Moses that, He is also a merciful and compassionate God and lets His Goodness pass before him. He didn’t need to see the justice or wrath, or Holiness. He had been personal witness to that from the Burning bush forward. But what he did not understand, see and appreciate was the goodness, mercy and Grace.

The Glory of God is not one part of his character but all of His character..

I The Purpose

II The Plan

18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

This verse is a conclusion made from the verse 14-17.

The over arching theme is that God can do what ever He wants with his fallen creation.

He can have mercy

or

He can harden.

These verses are an answer to the question in v 14

Romans 9:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!

This is so important to understand.

The God can do with His fallen creation as He wills.

He can have mercy or He can not.

18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

The verse clearly assumes that God is responding to sinners. Fallen humans

He can have mercy which assumes they are getting what they do not deserve.

He can harden, which is judgment, which is what they deserve.

So when we consider the hardening portion of this verse, which is the hardest for people to grasp, we have to understand the we are talking about sinless people here. Honest pure and righteous people
....NO

We are talking about sinful God hating idolators. In both Israel and Pharaoh.

With Israel He had Mercy on most of them. He had compassion on them hearing their cries in Egypt and in mercy delivered them.

He had mercy on them at the Mt. and only killed 3000 when all of them should have died for the idolatry and immorality.

When considering Pharaoh, He gave him exactly what He deserved. He was a sinner and idolater. He did not deserve mercy or life.

But when many come to this text, they like to make the point that sure God hardened His heart, but only in response to Pharaoh hardening his heart.

The emphasis is on Pharaoh hardening his heart, not on God hardening.

It is an attempt again at getting God off the hook for a perceived wrong. As if God has done something wrong by hardening the heart.

Well, let's look at this for a minute.

The Bible does talk of Pharaoh hardening his Heart, But not before God specifically says that He would do the hardening.

Exodus 4:21 (NKJV)

²¹ And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But **I will harden his heart**, so that he will not let the people go.

Exodus 7:2–3 (NKJV)

² You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land. ³ **And I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

These 2 verses are before any of the events in Egypt begin.

This is God saying that he will Harden Pharaoh's heart long before the first plague. Long before Moses and Aaron stand before Pharaoh.

This is not just a prophecy but a specific indication of who is hardening.

God did not prophesy that Pharaoh will harden his own heart, but rather that God will harden Pharaohs heart.

Exodus 4:21 (NKJV)

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Exodus 7:2–3 (NKJV)

² You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land. ³ **And I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

We find out later in the passage that what God said He would do, He did.

Exodus 9:12 (NKJV)

¹² But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

Exodus 10:1 (NKJV)

Now the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him,

Exodus 10:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.

Exodus 10:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go.

Exodus 11:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart,

and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

Exodus 14:8 (NKJV)

⁸ And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness.

But in fairness to the text, it does say that Pharaoh's heart did grow hard, or he hardened it.

Exodus 7:13 (NKJV)

¹³ And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.

Exodus 7:22 (NKJV)

²² Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.

Exodus 8:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the Lord had said.

Exodus 8:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This *is* the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had said.

Exodus 8:32 (NKJV)

³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.

Exodus 9:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go.

Exodus 9:34 (NKJV)

³⁴ And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants.

Well, I’m sure when someone reads this, a number of questions would come to the mind.

I mean, what are we to make of all of this. Is this just tit for tat, God hardens then Pharaoh hardens or Pharaoh hardens so God hardens/ Is Pharaoh Hardening his own heart or is God hardening it.?

Is God creating unbelief and refusal to obey in Pharaohs heart?

Or Is God creating evil in Pharaoh?

Or Is God causing Pharaoh to do what is evil?
Or Is God making Pharaoh do something he would not normally do otherwise, if God had not hardened his heart
and
Is God just in doing this. Isn't this Wrong?

In answer to this, we need understand that this is not the only time in Scripture where this has occurred. Sometimes it will use different wording but it means the same thing.

Example

Acts 19:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

Hebrews 3:13 (NKJV)

¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called “*Today*,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

both of these verses the verbs for hardened are passive. Acts 19:9 does not tell us what did the hardening or caused it.

Hebrews 3:13, says sin is the agent.

Often in the Old Test the Jews are referred to as a stiffed neck people

Nehemiah 9:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ “But they and our fathers acted proudly,
Hardened their necks,
And did not heed Your commandments.

¹⁷ They refused to obey,
And they were not mindful of Your wonders
That You did among them.
But they hardened their necks,
And in their rebellion
They appointed a leader

....

Psalms 95:8 (NKJV)

⁸ “Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion,
As *in* the day of trial in the wilderness,

But there are other times when it is clearly God doing the hardening.

Romans 11:7–8 (NKJV)

⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ⁸ Just as it is written:

*“God has given them a spirit of stupor,
Eyes that they should not see
And ears that they should not hear,
To this very day.”*

Deuteronomy 2:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ “But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as *it is* this day.

Joshua 11:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, *and* that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Isaiah 63:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ O Lord, why have You made us stray from Your ways,
And hardened our heart from Your fear?
 Return for Your servants' sake,
 The tribes of Your inheritance.

Matthew 13:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ He answered and said to them, “**Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.**”

John 12:39–40 (NKJV)

³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

⁴⁰ *“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,
 Lest they should see with their eyes,
 Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,
 So that I should heal them.”*

2 Thessalonians 2:10–12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will

send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Romans 1:24–28 (NKJV)

²⁴ **Therefore God also gave them up** to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶ **For this reason God gave them up** to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, **God gave them over to a debased mind**, to do those things which are not fitting;

In our passage, it is clearly talking about the active role plays in the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh.

Even in Exodus we have the first two announcements of what God will do to Pharaoh

Exodus 4:21 (NKJV)

²¹ And the Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But **I will harden his heart**, so that he will not let the people go.

Exodus 7:3 (NKJV)

³ **And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart**, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

Then you have the fulfillments of it, that God is doing.

Exodus 7:13 (NKJV)

¹³ And Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.

Exodus 8:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the Lord had said.

So again we ask the question, What is going on here.

Is cause creating evil or causing Pharaoh to do evil

First, comparing Scripture with Scripture we note God does not tempt men with evil
He does not cause people to sin

James 1:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Second

All men are born sinners and born blind and naturally to not come to the light and are naturally rebellious.

John 3:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Third,

God does not have to create evil or unbelief in the heart of pharaoh, because it is already there... in abundance.

Fourth,

God not actively creating evil, He is just (Romans 1) giving them over to their own depravity.

Fifth,

It would be perfect just for God to actively harden your heart as a means of punishment for sin. He has done nothing wrong if He hardened all our hearts and sent us all to Hell.

What we have in this text is God abandoning Pharaoh to his own naturally rebellious heart.

You could read it this way.

Romans 9:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He abandons .

Morris, L.

His hardening always presupposes sin and is always part of the punishment of sin. God could kill the sinner immediately when he sinned, but he usually does not. But he shuts him up to the effect of his sin, so that the person who hardens himself is condemned to live as a hardened person. God does not harden people who do not go astray first (cf. Jas. 1:13).

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Here are couple of closing thoughts

1. Hardening of the Sinner does not determine the Guilt of Man — He is not taking innocence people and Hardening them so that they will be evil and guilty
2. Hardening of the Sinner does not make man Guilty. — He is already is. He is born a sinner natural rebellious
3. Hardening of the Sinner only makes Guilt Certain.

It takes an already guilty man and makes is justice certain.

Romans 9:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.