



Does God Harden Hearts?

Forward

Jeremiah 32:17 powerfully proclaims God's **omnipotence**, illustrating that He is not just **all-powerful** but also **sovereign** over every aspect of existence. This divine attribute assures us that God can accomplish anything that **aligns with His nature**, from the grand act of creating the universe to the meticulous guidance of every event within it. Understanding this gives us profound confidence in His ultimate authority and wisdom.

PREFACE

It's a common misconception that God hardens a person's heart, leaving many—both Christians and non-Christians—puzzled. This confusion often arises from verses such as **Exodus 4:21**, where God informs Moses that He will harden Pharaoh's heart, as well as a reference in **Romans 9:17-18**. At first, it may seem unfathomable that God would take such an action. However, by exploring this topic through the lens of Systematic Theology, we can uncover profound insights and answer the critical question: "**Does God truly harden hearts?**" Understanding this will lead us to a deeper comprehension of God's character and His divine purposes.

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Our study will encompass these five relevant areas, followed by a Conclusion, in a progressive order to answer the question, “Does God truly harden hearts?”

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1. God’s Perfect Plan

As I reflect on this topic, I recall a thought-provoking insight from a theologian I encountered years ago. He proposed that a person’s soul might fear the experience of being born into this world even more than the act of leaving it. This apprehension stems from the soul’s innate understanding of God’s perfect design for “free will,” which empowers individuals to make choices that carry significant consequences for their eternal destiny. This understanding, though forgotten at birth, underscores the weight of our decisions and their everlasting impact on our journey.

Building on this perspective, God’s perfect plan for humanity involves a relationship with Him, offering salvation and purpose through faith in Him. This plan emphasizes that each person has a unique role and is part of a greater divine plan, as expressed in various Bible verses, such as **Jeremiah 29:11** and **Ephesians 2:10**.



2. Free Will

The second crucial insight is that God established His perfect plan from the very beginning by allowing Satan, disguised as a serpent, to enter the Garden of Eden, as described in **Genesis 3**. This pivotal moment ushered in Adam and Eve's first opportunity to exercise their "**free will**" and choose whether to embrace, obey, or reject God. Unfortunately, after turning away from God and ignoring His commands, the Holy Bible reveals that Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden and cast into the world we know today.

However, Genesis 4:25 offers a glimmer of hope, suggesting that God's call for reconciliation remains a constant presence. Following their exile, Adam and Eve ultimately responded to God's invitation, demonstrating that redemption was part of God's perfect plan for humanity from the very beginning. This message of perseverance resonates powerfully in **Ephesians 2:1-10** and **John 12:32**, reminding us that we, too, can triumph in the race of life, as **Hebrews 12:1-3** suggests, if we submit to and heed God's drawing.



3. The Condition of the Human Heart

Third, building upon the points previously discussed, as we examine the generations that have arisen since Adam and Eve, it becomes evident that humanity's heart reveals **a persistent coldness, a hardened nature**, and a tendency toward deceit, as powerfully illustrated in the following verses.

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else, and is **desperately sick**; Who can understand it?"

Mark 7:20-22 "And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the **evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.**"

Ephesians 4:18 "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the **hardness of their heart;**"

These verses indicate that humanity's heart is **incapable** of establishing a relationship with God without divine help.



4. Choosing

As the above scriptures revealed, the human heart will always choose the world. However, the promise of a new heart is first shown in **Ezekiel 11:19-21** and **Ezekiel 36:26-27**, and it is further developed in **Hebrews 8:10**. But how can someone obtain a new heart? In John 6:44, Christ Jesus reveals that only through the Father's "drawing" can anyone come to Him. It is essential to clarify that **God's 'calling'** and **'drawing'** are distinct: the calling refers to God's universal invitation, which is passive, whereas the drawing is an active and personal work of God, prompting an individual, through the Holy Spirit, to enter and soften their heart. This enables the person to make a **"free will"** decision to accept or deny Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. In reality, it is the only moment in time when a person is truly free to make a choice. The Holy Bible makes it clear: we are either slaves or prisoners to Satan or Christ Jesus. There is no in-between (**Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13**). However, **for that moment, a person's soul is totally free to make a decision that will determine the outcome.**



5. Example of a Hardened Heart

Years ago, Pastor Jerry Flanigan asked me to visit an elderly man in the hospital. Jerry explained that, despite all efforts, the man would only attend church on holidays, and thought it best for me to share the Good News of Christ Jesus with him once more. When I first walked into his hospital room, a sudden **cold** hit me. I immediately started shaking and could not even reach the bed. I turned around and left the room in shock. A nurse, noticing my condition, sat me in a chair, brought me a blanket, and waited with me until I regained my composure. Determined, I tried again. I walked back into the room, but again, the **cold** overwhelmed me, and I had to leave. This time, the nurse grew concerned. She assisted me to the waiting room, brought me a cup of coffee, and covered me with another blanket. After over half an hour, I was determined to make one final attempt. I went back in, again met by the same frigid sensation. It took everything I had just to get to the top of his bed and greet the man. I wanted to speak with him, but I was so **cold** I couldn't move my lips. Seeing he was asleep, I quickly exited, and after resting, I left the hospital without speaking to him.

Halfway home, **the Holy Spirit came upon me**. The Spirit told me that the **cold** I felt was the same **cold** the elderly man had towards receiving His gift of grace. I pulled the car over and wept. Just a moment of the **coldness of his heart** toward God was overwhelming.



6. Conclusion

Several biblical passages highlight the connection between the heart and the soul. For example, **Matthew 22:37** states, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This passage shows the unity of heart and soul in devotion to God. Further supporting this idea, the Bible also references the interconnectedness of body, soul, and spirit in **1 Thessalonians 5:23** and **Hebrews 4:12**. According to the theological position outlined in “The Condition of the Human Heart,” **humanity is born with a hardened heart**. This is due to being born into a fallen world. Significantly, the heart is softened only through accepting divine initiative. This is known as “**God’s Drawing**” (**John 6:44**), revealing the gift of grace through accepting Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Expanding on this, systematic theology shows that God does not actively harden hearts. Instead, He withdraws His influence, after which the human heart returns to its natural state.

Remember, **the purpose of creation was to give each soul the opportunity to accept or reject Christ Jesus**. In this context, the drawing of the Holy Spirit brings humanity into **accountability**. To accomplish this task, both light and dark, good and evil, had to exist to obtain the ability of a “**Free Will**” choice. As a result, choosing Christ Jesus softens the heart through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, while denying reverts the heart to its **natural hardened state**. In Pharaoh’s case, as noted in **Exodus 4:21**, God removed His hand, allowing Pharaoh’s heart to return to its **natural** state. **Pharaoh is not unique**, as God removes His drawing from all who have continually denied His drawing.

