

THOMAS MANTON



# THE HARDENING OF THE HEART

SERMONS ON EXODUS 4:21

THOMAS MANTON



# THE HARDENING OF THE HEART

SERMONS ON EXODUS 4:21

# **The Hardening of the Heart**

Sermons on Exodus 4:21

**by Thomas Manton**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[SERMON I - Exodus 4:21](#)

[SERMON II - Exodus 4:21](#)

## SERMON I

"I will harden his heart, that he shall not let my people go." -  
Exodus 4:21.

I have spoken of the hardness of heart as it pertains to humans. Now, I will discuss the judicial hardness that is inflicted by God. We have a notable example of this in the case of Pharaoh. He was raised up by God so that His power could be demonstrated through him. Pharaoh was born into the world and elevated to royal status, all so that the world would witness what God can do against a stubborn and defiant individual. The apostle applies this example in Romans 9:17, where it says, "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Therefore, this instance is worth examining. In this passage, God informs Moses of this beforehand to strengthen him against any discouragement. Moses was going to deal with an obstinate creature, but it was something that God had foreseen and predestined: "I will harden his heart, that he shall not let my people go."

The point or doctrine is that God plays a role in the hardening of unyielding sinners. You can understand it in the form of a proposition, for the benefit of those who are weaker in faith. Doctrine: God Himself is involved in the hardening of obstinate sinners.

The hardness of Pharaoh's heart is mentioned about fourteen times, and three times it is said that he "hardened his own heart": Exodus

8:15, "When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said." Also, in verse 32, "And Pharaoh hardened his heart at that time also, neither would he let the people go." And again, in chapter 9:34, "And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, and the hail, and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and all his servants." In all the other instances, it is attributed to God Himself. Man hardens, and then God hardens. When God blinds a person, He first closes their own eyes. Likewise, when God hardens someone, He first makes their heart stubborn and inflexible. Pharaoh, in hardening himself, is accused of two things: he disregarded the judgment (Exodus 7:23, "And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also") and he scorned the warnings (Exodus 8:15, "He hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said"). The same actions are also attributed to God (Exodus 7:13, "He hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said"). To clarify this, I will: (1) provide some observations from the story, (2) show you how God hardens, and (3) explain the causes of it. I. I will provide some general observations from the story, as the story of Pharaoh gives us a clear picture of a hardened heart.

1. There is an actual contest between the hardened heart and God to see who will prevail. The contesting parties are God and Pharaoh. (Refer to the first sermon on Mark 3:5.)
2. The sin that hardened Pharaoh and led him to this contest was covetousness and the pursuit of self-interest. Jacob's seventy descendants who came to Egypt had multiplied to six hundred thousand fighting men, not counting children. It seemed difficult for Pharaoh to let go of such a large group of people who were used as slaves, along with their livestock. This is not only a lesson for rulers, that they should not retain anything that goes against God's will due to their interests and political reasons, but also for individual Christians. No matter how much profit and advantage we may see in sin, it will eventually result in certain

loss. If God asks for our right eye or right hand, we must be willing to give them up. It is dangerous to deny God anything. If He demands Israel and all the livestock, then let them go. Even the most delightful interests, the dearest pleasures, and the most lucrative occupations must be abandoned if they are unlawful. There is often a conflict between self-interest and duty, pleasure and obedience, profit and God's command. But it is better for our own faith to be the one commanding and achieving victory rather than relying on God's power alone. As stated in 1 John 5:4, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." The author speaks of keeping the commandments in verse 3, and immediately after, he speaks of victory over the world. The world is the great enemy of the commandments, and until it is overcome, a Christian cannot find true comfort. They will continue to struggle against God, just as Pharaoh did, and disregard every message.

3. Pharaoh's part in this contest involves treating God with contempt and scorn, while God's part is characterized by mercy and condescension. Pharaoh treats God with contempt and scorn, as seen in Exodus 5:2, "And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel do? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." These are words of profane contempt. "Who is the Lord?" as if to say, "Am I not the king of Egypt? Who is my equal, let alone my superior and lord?" "I know not the Lord." But Pharaoh will come to know God in a significant way before God is finished with him. Notice the words "I know not" and then "I will not." Hardness of heart is a common consequence of blindness. Errors of the mind lead to errors of the heart. "I will not know, I will not listen to it." Pharaoh doesn't care about his duty, nor will he consider or weigh God's will concerning him. The eyes affect the heart. Pharaoh did not consider the consequences of dealing with God, and as a result, he increased the burdens on the Israelites. On God's part, however, the contest is managed with kindness and compassion. God knew from the beginning that Pharaoh's heart

would be hardened, and He could have immediately destroyed him. Instead, God gives him frequent warnings and opportunities for conviction. He wants people to be convinced before they are punished. Preceding mercy demonstrates the righteousness of subsequent wrath. Throughout the story, God presents the first miracles before Pharaoh, followed by more miracles upon him. Every judgment is threatened before it is executed; God explains what He will do to warn Pharaoh. In one particular plague, it is worth noting that God not only threatens judgment but also sends a gracious warning for Pharaoh to bring his livestock inside: Exodus 9:19, "Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die." This shows that God does not delight in the ruin and destruction of His creation. It also makes Pharaoh more deserving of condemnation and spares those among the Egyptians who still have some fear of God. However, the primary purpose is to harden Pharaoh even more, as stated in Exodus 10:1, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these my signs before him." Moses might have said, "Lord, then I should never go to Pharaoh," but God says, "Go in unto him, for I have hardened his heart." God continues to provide the means, even though He denies grace. The wicked must be admonished, even if they refuse to be reformed. In the hardening of sinners, God usually follows this pattern: through His mercies and the means of grace, they are both convinced and hardened at the same time. There is always new material for glorifying God and hardening the individual.

4. The first plague upon Pharaoh's heart is deception. Moses works miracles, turning Aaron's rod into a serpent, rivers into blood, and bringing forth frogs. Yet, the magicians also perform the same wonders. God allows these magical tricks to occur, leaving Pharaoh in his stubborn error. It is likely that what the

magicians did was not real but a mere illusion of the senses. However, the Lord does not expose the deception because His immediate purpose is not to shame Satan but to harden Pharaoh. Therefore, He permits the devil to imitate the true miracles without being discovered. It is disheartening when people choose false teachers for themselves, and God allows them to be blinded. As Hosea 4:17 says, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." These individuals may possess some abilities, persuasive speech, gifts of prayer, and they may even produce common effects. These things blind people, and their hearts become devoted to familialism and antinomianism. Let them be left alone, as seen in Exodus 7:22, "The magicians of Egypt did the same with their enchantments, and Pharaoh's heart was hardened." This was one way in which his heart was hardened; the magicians performed the same miracles as Moses and Aaron. God allows people to be hardened by their own choice.

5. God did not lack in providing Pharaoh with sufficient means of conviction. The magicians turned their rods into serpents, but "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods" (Exodus 7:12), displaying God's supreme power. Although the magicians could bring forth frogs, they could not deliver Pharaoh from them. God may allow the devil to add to the judgment, but providing relief is an act of mercy. The magicians could contribute to the plagues, but they could not deliver Pharaoh from them. The devil can bring a plague more readily than he can remove it. This was enough warning; there was enough difficulty to harden them and enough light to convince them. Furthermore, the magicians were confounded in their own craft. In Exodus 8:18, it is said, "And the magicians tried to bring forth lice with their enchantments, but they could not." They attempted to bring forth lice but were hindered by God's will. Those who could bring forth frogs could not bring forth lice. The more possible the miracle, the more embarrassed the magicians were. This was a simple miracle. Any excuse for Pharaoh was eliminated when



they confessed, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). Yet, Pharaoh's heart remained hardened. Many will not be won over to the truth even by the confessions of those who led them astray. Moreover, the magicians themselves were afflicted with boils (Exodus 9:11-12), indicating that if a hardened heart goes to hell, it is not due to a lack of light but a lack of grace. We can marvel not only at the plagues themselves but also at their effectiveness. To what level of obstinacy will a person reach when left to endure plagues? Throughout all this time, Pharaoh's heart remained hardened.

6. Note that during one of the plagues, Israel could have stolen away whether Pharaoh willed it or not. In Exodus 10:22-23, it is written, "And Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." They not only lost the light of the heavens but also candles and torches. The air was thick with dense clouds, mist, and vapors that could easily dampen and extinguish them. While they were under the grip of three days of darkness, the Israelites could have stolen away and journeyed three days into the wilderness before anyone could have pursued them. However, God had more miracles to perform. When dealing with a hardened heart, He does not leave inconspicuously but departs with honor and triumph. This was meant to be a public demonstration and an indication to the world. As 1 Samuel 6:6 asks, "Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?" The Philistines took heed of this, and it will be our condemnation if we do not.

7. Throughout all these plagues, I observe that Pharaoh occasionally experienced devout moments. In a hardened heart, there may be some moments of remorse, but no genuine

repentance. We hear him confessing, "I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (Exodus 9:27). And in Exodus 10:16-17, he says, "I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you; now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that He may take away from me this death only." Likewise, in Exodus 12:32, he says, "Go, serve the Lord...and bless me also." Hardened sinners may have moments of remorse and sensitive touches, leading to faint intentions of reform. But what was lacking, and what reveals that it was not true repentance, was:

[1.] It was only elicited by present horror. Job 27:10 questions, "Will he always call upon God?" A stagnant pond can release water just as a fountain can, but only drop by drop and through force. Proverbs 5:11-13 describes the outcome of mourning when one's flesh and body are consumed, saying, "And you mourn at the last when your flesh and your body are consumed, and say, 'How I have hated instruction and my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me.'" The lecherous person may experience moments of penitence. A criminal on the rack will readily confess. Men frequently make vows. Oh, that people would uphold their promises of repentance when they are well, just as they made them when they were sick!

[2.] The aim of all these moments was ease and safety. Pharaoh's cry was not, "Take away iniquity," but "Take away this plague." Natural offerings of ease are found in hypocrites. Esau sought the privileges of the birthright with tears, not because he sold it but because he lost it. Human nature may be aware of present evil.

[3.] These moments were fleeting. The good impulses of a hardened heart do not last long; they pass through and disappear like a flash of lightning. Pharaoh's remorse for the frogs and grasshoppers quickly faded like a passing cloud. Until true repentance is present, remorse will inevitably be short-lived, as it is an unpleasant form of penance. Heated water becomes colder afterward because it becomes rarefied.

After a slight thaw, it will freeze harder. After each respite, Pharaoh's heart was hardened anew. This is the disposition of those destined for destruction.

[4.] Because his purposes fell so short and were so feeble compared to what God expected. When a hardened heart cannot prevail against God, it tries to negotiate with Him. First, Pharaoh gave permission: "Go, sacrifice to God in the land" (Exodus 8:25). Then, "I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness, only you shall not go very far away" (verse 28). Later, in chapter 10:11, he says, "Go now, you who are men, and serve the Lord," while their children were to remain as hostages. Afterward, in verse 24, he says, "Go, serve the Lord, only let your flocks and your herds be detained; let your little ones also go with you," while their cattle were to serve as collateral and their flocks and herds as compensation if they did not return. But God would not compromise even a single hoof. A hardened heart yields to God only partially. Pharaoh bargained with Him, offering various conditions. First, they could sacrifice in the land, then go a little way, a three-day journey. Next, he would keep their children, followed by their flocks and herds. A hardened heart never fully meets God's demands; the devil is reluctant to release his grip. How often do people negotiate with God in performing duties that go against their affections or are detrimental to their interests? In 2 Kings 5:18, Naaman says, "In this thing may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow myself in the temple of Rimmon—when I bow myself in the temple of Rimmon, may the Lord pardon your servant in this matter." They have their reservations and seek excuses in certain matters. These are nothing but deceitful pangs. Pharaoh frequently goes back on his words and retracts every concession.

8. Over time, his hardness develops into rage and pure malice. In Exodus 10:28, he exclaims, "Get away from me! Take heed to yourself, see my face no more; for on the day you see my face, you shall die." Like vessels left to settle, they turn sour and

bitter; likewise, Pharaoh began to reach his lowest point. Just as animals become mad and ferocious after prolonged torment, it was the same with Pharaoh. People first disregard the truth, then become hardened against it, and ultimately persecute it. A river, when dammed up for a long time, swells and overflows, breaking down its banks and barriers. Similarly, wicked individuals rage when their consciences cannot withstand the light, and their hearts refuse to yield to it.

9. Eventually, Pharaoh is willing to let them go. After much struggle, God may obtain something from a hardened heart, but as soon as it is given, it is retracted. It is like fire struck from a flint—hard to obtain and quickly extinguished. Hosea 6:4 says, "Your goodness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away." Many may display some semblance of goodness, at least at times, but it does little to improve them, nor does it change their condition. It becomes a great snare and stumbling block to them, as its unsoundness is revealed through its inconsistency.
10. The last mention we hear of Pharaoh's heart being hardened was shortly before his destruction. Exodus 14:8 states, "And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel." Pharaoh begrudges his own concession, as if he had yielded too much. Hardness of heart does not leave us until it has brought about our complete and final destruction. God always blinds when He intends to destroy. No one is hardened except to their own ruin. Just as God, who loves His own, loves them until the end, God, who hates those who are hardened, hates them to the end. Pharaoh was first plagued and then destroyed. This is the outcome of it all, as Job 9:4 says, "Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?" The beginning is deception and illusion, the middle is obstinacy, and the end is ruin.

11. How God hardens. This is a point that requires explanation. God is not and cannot be the author of sin. If God were to cause it, then man would sin out of necessity, and his punishment would be unjust since he would be acting under compulsion. God has not forced anyone to sin, and being good, He cannot be the cause of evil. If God were the immediate author, it would not be a sin, for everything God does is good.

How does he harden the heart, then? Let me answer that—(1.) Negatively; (2.) Affirmatively.

1. Negatively. In explaining this matter, we must avoid extremes. Some say too much about it, while others say too little.

[1.] We must not say too much, lest we tarnish and blemish the divine glory.

(1.) God does not infuse hardness and sin as He infuses grace. All influences from heaven are sweet and good, not sour. Evil cannot come from the Father of lights. God does not force anyone to do evil.

(2.) God does not incite the inward inclination to sin; that is Satan's work. He does not persuade it; it has no command, approval, influence, or impulse from heaven. When it comes to man's sin, we must understand that all sin is a result of the corrupt soul of man, influenced by the incubus of hell. It is like milk poured into the womb of their hearts, where it curdles like cheese.

[2.] We must not give it too little importance. God does not harden by mere foreknowledge, as other sins are not attributed to Him in the same way. He is not said to kill, steal, or do wrong, as He is said to harden. There is a distinction between God's involvement in this sin and others. It is not merely a matter of manifestation, where He demonstrates the hardness through plagues and judgments. Some argue that God hardened Pharaoh by the frequent judgments, revealing how hard his heart was. The prayer we use to ask God to prevent our hearts from being hardened indicates its meaning. We

do not say, "Lord, do not show how hard I am through Your many judgments upon me," but rather, "Lord, do not harden my heart, do not lead me into temptation, do not incline my heart to any evil thing." And this does not apply in other cases, such as when Sihon, the king of Heshbon, refused to let the Israelites pass by him, and his spirit was hardened by the Lord (Deuteronomy 2:30). There was no lengthy process to make it evident that he had a hard heart. Similarly, in Joshua 11:20, it is said, "For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle." So, there is something more than a clear manifestation through continued judgments that indicates hardness. It is not simply idle permission (for there is also His decree and a judicial action of providence), as if God were like the heathen god Jupiter, feasting in Ethiopia while things were in disorder in Greece. Some think that God has no more to do than a man standing on the shore watching a sinking ship when he could have helped it. But there is more to it than that. Nor is it solely due to the withdrawal and suspension of grace. While that is true, it is not the complete picture. It is like a captain leaving his soldiers in the midst of battle, allowing them to fall into the hands of the enemy. God concurs not only by permission and patience but also by action and power. He does not create hardness, but He does and wills the things that contribute to the hardening of the sinner. Alongside His decrees, there is His judicial sentence and an active providence in relation to it. Many factors contribute to the hardening of the heart, all of which God wills and intends, but justly. The wicked willingly take these occasions, and Satan tempts them out of his own malice. However, none of this can happen without God's will. There is at least a permissive intention. If God did not overrule it, then He would not be an omnipotent God. There is a supreme power governing and ordering everything that happens in the world. It was God's will that Pharaoh should be hardened so that He might accomplish His providential purposes, as stated in Exodus 9:16, "But indeed for this 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." If it were only a matter of idle permission, then it could be said that He

allows the heart to be hardened rather than actively hardening it, as the phrase suggests.

2. Affirmatively, let us consider how God does harden. The inward process is remarkable, just as God's drawing of sinners is secret. But if you ask me by what means it is accomplished, I answer:

[1.] By abandonment, by taking away the restraints of grace, thereby letting them follow their own desires. Man, in terms of his inclination to sin, is like a greyhound held by a leash or collar. When the hare comes into view, remove the leash, and the greyhound runs after the hare with great fervor, according to its innate disposition. People are held in check by the restraints of grace, and when those restraints are removed, they are left to their own desires and engage in excessive indulgence. Thus, God took away His good Spirit from Saul (1 Samuel 16:14). Take away the pillar that supports the house, and the house falls on its own. God withdraws His grace, and then everything falls into ruin. It is like darkness following the absence of light. In this, God is not to be blamed.

(1.) Because He is indebted to no one. He may give His grace to whomever He pleases and withhold it as He wills. He is not obligated to give or continue it; He is free to bestow or withhold. Man sins when he does not hinder sin because he is bound to hinder it as much as he can. For example, when the people profaned the Sabbath, and Nehemiah did not restrain them, he sinned (Nehemiah 13:17).

(2.) He knows how to turn the greatest evil into the greatest good, something that man cannot and should not do since he is under a rule. We must not do evil so that good may come of it. There is just condemnation for those who hold such views (Romans 3:8).

(3.) There is an actual forfeiture. God is not bound to continue grace; in fact, He is bound by justice to withdraw what has been given. When men stop their ears, God may shut them. But...

[2.] By handing them over. He delivers them into the power of Satan, who works upon their corrupt nature and hardens it. Satan stirs them up as the executor of God's curse, just as the evil spirit had permission to deceive Ahab (1 Kings 22:21-22). There is a permissive intention, not an effective one; Satan is the efficient instrument, while God is the judge. God permits Satan to incite and stir up their evil natures. They grieve His Spirit, and then God withdraws and leaves them to an evil spirit, as in the case of Saul (1 Samuel 16:14). The light of the Spirit of the Lord is gone, and then Satan fills them with rage, fury, and cruelty. It is said, "An evil spirit from the Lord," because he was sent by God to punish Saul for his sins.

[3.] There is an active providence that arranges and presents such objects that, when encountered by a wicked heart, make it harder. God turns the best things that the wicked enjoy into stumbling blocks and means of their downfall and destruction. Sometimes, it is through natural comforts (Jeremiah 6:2). Sometimes, it is through correction and discipline, which only lead to greater stubbornness. Sometimes, it is through spiritual ordinances and advantages, where the most spiritual means have no effect on them. Sometimes, it is through the withdrawal of the Word and means of grace and the prayers of His people. Sometimes, it is through the arrangement and manipulation of deceitful false teachers. All these occurrences do not happen without providence. Just as all things work together for good for those who love God, all things work for the worst for the wicked and unrepentant. Providences and ordinances have been known to twist the Scriptures to their own destruction. Some are condemned to worldly happiness, which entangles them and leads to their downfall. If we seek to find the sin, God will provide the occasion. Let me give an example with Judas: Christ had reproved him for begrudging Mary's generosity, and afterward, he sought an opportunity to betray Jesus. Judas was driven by wrath and greed, and when a person is resolved, God, in His providence, allows them to find a fitting opportunity. The priests, alarmed by the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection, which led many to believe in Jesus, were



contemplating how to seize Him. Then, Judas appeared and asked them, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?"

Let us heed the example of Pharaoh and ensure that this great judgment does not befall us. Even the Philistines, though otherwise a blind and ignorant people, were affected by it. Their idol Dagon was shattered, and they were struck with tumors repeatedly, prompting them to seek guidance. Their diviners said to them, "Why do you harden your hearts like the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When God had worked wonders among them, didn't they let the people go, and they departed?" God does not take pleasure in judgment; He has set up Pharaoh as a precedent for all future generations to fear. God does not want us to learn at our own bitter cost, but to take example from others. He who does not heed warnings from others will be more severely punished. In times of judgment, it is better to learn from the examples of others than to become examples ourselves. If your life were nothing but a reenactment of Pharaoh's story (for there is certainly a striking parallel between this case and the path of every obstinate sinner), how great would your judgment be! God was angry with Belshazzar because he did not take heed of Nebuchadnezzar's example, saying, "And you, his son Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this." You have known and heard about how God dealt with Pharaoh; God has a quarrel with some of you because of your lusts and vanities. Do you think you can withstand His warnings with peace and tranquility? Perhaps your lusts may not bring you immediate ruin so that you may be further hardened in them, but be assured that God will have the final say. I leave it to you to judge what your condition will be when you come under the weight of His displeasure. Don't you sometimes have pangs of conscience regarding your eternal state? Doesn't your conscience tell you that you are not as diligent in making peace with God as you should be? Each time such thoughts arise, you grow more distant from God if you do not respond to them. Conscience will remind you of these warnings when you lie on your deathbed, and then you will mourn your neglects and wish that your magicians and old companions were far from you. Then you will

want to send for Moses and Aaron, but it may be too late. When God shows mercy, His last mercies are the best, and the further He goes, the sweeter He becomes. And when God punishes, His last punishments are the most severe, and the further He goes, the more bitter they become.

Now I will present two considerations:

1. Regarding the evil of a hardened heart.

[1.] It is a contest with God, not only with His greatness and power, but also with His goodness and mercy. Therefore, it is bound to end poorly for us. Before God erupts in fury, He deals with us in a gentle and condescending manner. He pleads with His own creation, saying, "Hear and give ear; do not be proud, for the Lord has spoken: Give glory to God before He causes darkness, before your feet stumble on the dark mountains. While you look for light, He turns it into the shadow of death and makes it dense darkness."

[2.] A hardened heart makes us rebels against God and slaves to everything else. We become wedded to something inferior. We become our own Pharaohs, unwilling to let ourselves go. As 2 Timothy 3:4 says, "lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God."

[3.] It is, in itself, the most severe of all judgments.

[4.] It never comes alone; it brings other judgments along with it.

[5.] It is a great hindrance to the spiritual life. (See the sermon on Mark 3:5.)

2. Regarding the parties who may experience it, it is not limited to the openly wicked but can also affect, to some extent, God's own children. God may harden in two ways—as a judge and as a father, as a form of punishment and as a form of correction. In terms of punishment, there are two ways—total hardening and final hardening. Some are completely hardened and have no

softness in their hearts, yet they are not finally hardened. The dreadful sentence of obduracy has not yet been passed on them, as it may have been on others during their lifetime, when God leaves them to follow their own counsel without any check or restraint from providence, or any intention to reclaim them. I will now speak of these three kinds—God's general hardening of the wicked, His final hardening, and His partial hardening of His own children.

## SERMON II

"I will harden his heart, that he shall not let my people go." -  
Exodus 4:21.

First, let us consider God's hardening of wicked men in general as a judge. The causes of it are as follows:

1. Ignorance: Light and love make the heart tender. Light, in particular, deserves our attention. Light brings about tenderness as it reveals sin and makes us aware of it, especially the vibrant light of the Spirit. In Romans 7:9, Paul says, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The sense of guilt and punishment quickly appeared before him. It is similar to how worms crawl in a dungeon as soon as light enters. In Jeremiah 31:19, we read, "After I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Instruction leads to remorse and awakens people from their dull complacency. However, as long as people remain in ignorance, they are foolish and insensible. People can remain in this state for a long time, but eventually, God can remove the scales from their eyes, "open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18). Nevertheless, willful and affected ignorance, when people willingly choose to be ignorant and err in their hearts despite

having powerful and enlightening motives, is exceedingly dangerous. The present evidence of this danger lies in the fact that the worst sinners usually become sensible of their condition when they approach death. At that moment, their minds are cleared from the fog and mists of lust, and their conscience, being awakened, recognizes the weight of sin upon them. Most of them wish they had lived in strict obedience to God's will.

2. Unbelief: There is hardness of heart against the light and offers of the gospel when Christ is presented but not received. This hardness is caused by ignorance, particularly affected ignorance. Additionally, there is hardening of the heart against the truth that was once received out of a love for temporal peace, liberty, and the safety of life and possessions. This hardness is a result of unbelief and a lack of sufficient awareness and vision of the future world. It arises from the allurements and importunities of the flesh, seeking satisfaction in the present world and denying or disbelieving in the blessedness to come. If people truly believed in heaven and hell, they would be more inclined to follow God's leadings and less swayed by the enticements of the flesh. The fact that this unbelief is a cause of hardening is evident from Jesus reproaching His disciples for their unbelief and hardness of heart in Mark 16:14: "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen."
3. Sinning against light, whether through omission or commission, provokes God to allow us to become even more hardened. Commission of sin is easily understood, but it is also true with regard to omission. James 4:17 says, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The sad effects of this sin will reveal itself. (See Sermon on Mark 3:5.)
4. Custom in sinning. (See Sermon on Mark 3:5.)

5. Even small sins can bring about this judgment and harden the heart, just as great sins do. It is difficult to determine which has a greater effect. While great sins immediately take control, small sins gradually and imperceptibly do so. In Psalm 19:13, it says, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me." A small sin can gain the upper hand over a sinner and subdue them over time. Once established through constant custom, it becomes challenging to break free from its control, just as a person addicted to vanity and foolish delights. These sins do not exercise dominion over the enslaved soul until they gain strength through repeated acts. However, a single act of presumptuous sin weakens the Spirit and gives significant advantage to the flesh, almost leading to complete conquest. Therefore, at present, little sins do not harden the heart as much as greater sins. (See Sermon on Mark 3:5.)

All of these causes contribute to the hardening of the heart and making it as hard as a stone. Yet, from these very stones, God can raise up children for Abraham.

## SERMON II

Secondly, let us consider God's final hardening, when God leaves individuals to perish and no longer deals with them. I will now demonstrate: (1) That such a dispensation exists, and (2) the causes behind it.

1. That such a dispensation exists. [1.] It is a common occurrence for God to abandon individuals to perish in their sins, irreversibly, even before death, and to no longer respond to their pleas. This is evident from various passages of scripture. Revelation 22:11 states, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." When individuals persist in obstinacy despite numerous warnings and calls, it is customary for God to abandon them to their desires, allowing them to become ripe for damnation. Ezekiel 3:27 says, "He that

heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear; for they are a rebellious house." It is as if God is saying, "Let them do as they please; I am resolved." Sometimes their condition becomes irreparable. This is evident because when God has given up on them, how can they repent and turn away from their sins? God's judgment has been pronounced. Psalm 115:11 declares, "Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest." God has taken an oath to condemn and destroy them. Even if they were to experience anguish of conscience and remorse, God would pay no attention to it. Proverbs 1:26-27 states, "I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you." Hosea 5:6 adds, "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord, but they shall not find him, he hath withdrawn himself from them." When individuals have neglected God's appointed times and find themselves facing death, they may desperately seek comfort and pardon. But instead, the Lord turns them away, saying, "No, you wanted nothing to do with me." Psalm 81:11-12 states, "But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me: so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels." Instead of receiving compassion, they are mocked and abandoned to their sinful ways and worldly companions. In John 8:21, Jesus says, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins." This can occur before death because grace is confined to a specific time. Isaiah 55:6 advises, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." And that time is not always as long as a person's life. In Luke 19:42, Jesus laments, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." The day of grace is bright but short. We encounter many individuals who, when their measure of iniquity is full, God ceases to call, expect, and wait for their repentance. It is true that the exact time is not known by anyone, either by

themselves or by others observing them. We cannot determine the number of calls because circumstances vary, and the intensity of warning varies as well. The Lord's dispensations exhibit great diversity. Therefore, everyone must employ the means and continue to warn until the end. All we can say in general is that after God has concluded dealings with them and no longer expects any good from them, He may allow them to live to manifest His justice, just as He hardened Pharaoh's heart, yet allowed him to live in order to display His power through him: Exodus 9:6 says, "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." You may survive your final hardness as a testimony to God's justice in the world.

[2.] It is a just dispensation. It is fair for God to accept the rejection and depart, no longer engaging with their hearts, when they reject Him despite all the melting entreaties of His grace. He commands, but they refuse to obey. He is willing, but they are unwilling. He entreats, but they refuse to listen. He wishes: Deuteronomy 5:29 states, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" He laments: Psalm 81:3 declares, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" Yet, they refuse to join Him. He is grieved that His offer of grace is not received, yet they will not lament. It is only just that a person should be left to their own choice and miss out on salvation for which they did not care. If, after warnings, convictions, and entreaties, a person chooses to remain in filthiness, then they shall remain filthy. In hell, conscience will absolve God, saying, "I have brought all this upon myself."

[3.] It is a merciful dispensation for the rest of the world. We are forewarned about these matters, not so that we may despair (which would be a negative outcome), but so that we may, out of love for our souls, take heed not to resist grace and turn our backs on our own mercies. It is a merciful and paternal warning to respond early and

acknowledge the God of our mercies. Delay is what undoes the whole world. Thus, this is the best remedy for delay.

2. The causes of it. [1.] Sinning away the light of nature. By nature, individuals possess some knowledge of good and evil. There are common principles that people adhere to, such as acknowledging the existence of God and the necessity to worship Him, refraining from wronging others, and abstaining from immoral acts. Even pagans would instinctively oppose these principles. Romans 2:14-15 states, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts." However, when individuals suppress the light of nature and prevent truth from breaking forth into a holy lifestyle, it provokes God to abandon them to hardness of heart. Nature reveals many sins that can be avoided based on the reasons and considerations that nature presents. Yet, when individuals disregard reason and allow their lusts to reign freely, God leaves them with a carnal and foolish heart. Although individuals cannot convert to God by the light of nature alone, they can still practice many duties and avoid numerous sins based on that light. The Gentiles were left with unsound and foolish minds. When individuals commit gross sins against the light of nature, their conscience loses its sensitivity and tenderness. Ephesians 4:19 describes them as "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Hearts that are prejudiced against godly things may become as hard as stones.

[2.] Rejecting God's numerous calls: Proverbs 29:1 says, "Whoever remains stubborn after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy." God may tolerate our behavior for a while after a few reprimands, but when we repeatedly ignore reproof and refuse to change, God may give up on us. We don't know the exact number of times Christ will extend His patience or how many calls we have



before reaching the point of irreversible hardening, but when there are frequent warnings, we are in danger. Be cautious not to forfeit your own blessings by disregarding the earnest pleas of the Word and the Spirit. When God persistently urges us to listen and obey, and we resist and reject His Spirit, God will eventually grow weary and withhold the same amount of grace as before. Isaiah 63:10 states, "But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore, He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them." Unfortunate is the anger of love. Genesis 6:3 says, "Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh.'" Even the pagans acknowledged that the gods of cities and nations would forsake their altars and temples due to the provocation of the inhabitants. The more calls and convictions of this nature that we resist, the more difficult and unlikely it becomes to bring a sinner back to God. Every day, the sinner becomes increasingly wicked and profane. Resisting the voice of conscience is sorrowful, but wearying and grieving the Spirit is dreadful. Ezekiel 24:13 declares, "In your wickedness is depravity; because I wanted to cleanse you, but you were not cleansed, you will not be cleansed from your impurity again until I have satisfied My wrath against you." God places them in the fire until their hearts begin to warm, and then He lets the sun remain upon them.

[3.] Blatant hypocrisy. This is a constant lie, a contempt for God, a habitual and deliberate suppression of the voice of conscience. Their outward appearance and profession reveal what they should be, and if they truly were what they appear to be, all would be well. People have enough knowledge to adopt the form of religion, but they have enough sin to resist its power. Therefore, their judgment is even greater. Their entire lives consist of constant rebellion against the light, and they are left to perish due to their own self-deception. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11 explains, "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie." Carnal Christians who have not experienced genuine faith and sincere repentance are given up by God to be deceived by every empty pretext.

[4.] Falling away from received grace. People are not only influenced, but they begin to have a taste of grace. Those who merely adopt some profession of godly things but later regress into licentiousness, vanity, and worldly pursuits are abandoned by God to a greater extent than others. Hebrews 6:4-6 states, "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace." They bring more dishonor to God and tarnish His reputation. The devil has greater influence over them, similar to a prisoner who has escaped but is recaptured and subjected to even stronger chains. 2 Peter 2:21-22 states, "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: 'A dog returns to its vomit,' and, 'A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.'" They themselves become more incapable of embracing God's ways again. It is impossible for them to renew themselves, and their rebellion grows into deliberate malice. Hebrews 10:26 warns, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left." Grace will not pardon them, and the Mediator will not intercede for them. Apostates are the greatest enemies of their own profession. As Hosea 5:2 says, "The rebels are knee-deep in slaughter." They are the most contrary, malicious, and perverse in their cause.

[5.] Foolish despair (there is raging despair and foolish despair; the former occurs when conscience is terrified, while the latter when it is stupefied). This refers to when the habit of sinning is coupled with a passionate will. Jeremiah 2:25 states, "You say, 'There is no hope! I love foreign gods, and I must go after them.'" Jeremiah 18:11 adds, "But you say, 'It's no use! I love foreign gods, and I must go after them.'" Men do not usually deliberate on things that are impossible. Exodus 6:9 describes the Israelites, saying, "Moses reported this to

the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor." Lust is deeply ingrained, making it difficult for them to resist. Their case seems hopeless; they reach a point where they are beyond cure and beyond care. They become disheartened and submit to the power of their lusts. They resolve to persist in their sins and live as they please, rendering it futile to speak to them.

Thirdly, let us consider God's hardening as a father, manifested through the highest form of paternal anger and displeasure. This may happen, as expressed in Isaiah 63:17, "Why, LORD, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so we do not revere you?" This is a partial hardening. There may be a withdrawal of grace, although some tenderness remains in the understanding, discerning between good and evil, in the dissatisfied conscience, and in the will that acknowledges God's ways. There is a general intent to please Him in all things. Nevertheless, the heart becomes lifeless and dull, lacking a disposition for holy things. They become less aware of the evil of sin, less delighted in the Word, less hopeful, less inclined to pray, less patient in afflictions, and less satisfied in communion with God. It is distressing when, to our perception, there is little difference between them and the wicked. There is hardness in a stone, just as there is hardness in a piece of wax. I will explain the causes of this condition and the means to cure it.

1. The causes of this condition are:

[1.] Sinning against conscience. There are sins that occur daily and unexpectedly, as well as sins of presumption, into which God's children may occasionally fall, but they inflict great harm upon their souls. Consider David's grave sin, which caused him to lose his free spirit and compelled him to plead for a fresh start, as if everything had to begin anew. In Psalm 51:10-12, he implored, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit,

to sustain me." Such sins bring about numerous consequences. Firstly, God's love is hindered, making Him less inclined to bestow His goodness upon them. Isaiah 59:2 states, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." This means that God's goodwill and favor are bound up and hindered from manifesting in the gracious effects that would bring comfort and peace. He does not actually forgive their sins or grant them spiritual benefits to the extent that He otherwise would. He withholds His hand and restricts the outpouring of spiritual blessings that He would otherwise abundantly bestow upon His people. Secondly, these sins greatly weaken the work of grace that has been wrought in their hearts. Their faith becomes lifeless, their love grows colder, their hope dwindles, and their spiritual life is interrupted and stagnant. Although the seed of God remains, it cannot flourish with the same vigor and effectiveness. Furthermore, they may never regain the same measure of the Holy Spirit they had before. 2 Chronicles 17:3 states, "The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him." This implies that Jehoshaphat had some blemish in his later years. In short, these sins drain their vitality and strength, much like a wound in the body. Just as a prodigal who squanders his resources after being set up is not entrusted with the same wealth again, God's children may not regain the same expansiveness of spirit, inward strength, and comfort they had before. Similarly, many individuals do not fully recover their health after a severe illness and carry the effects of the disease with them until death. Thirdly, acts of righteousness are interrupted. When the soul is disturbed, it is unfit for action. Duties may be neglected or performed in a perfunctory manner, exacerbating the disturbance and hardening the heart even more. Consider how David worshiped in a pitiable manner until God awakened his conscience through Nathan's rebuke. Prayer is hindered as well. 1 Peter 3:7 advises, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

[2.] Grieving the Spirit: Ephesians 4:30 says, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." All sin is a source of grief to the Spirit, especially immorality and bitterness. Compare this with verses 29 and 31, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." Now, grieving the Spirit causes a significant rupture in our grace and comfort, as the Spirit is our sanctifier and comforter. Speaking only of the latter, when the Spirit is grieved, we no longer have the same sense of God's love. Romans 5:5 says, "And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." Our prayers lack the same freedom and confidence we once had. 1 John 3:21 states, "Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God." We also lose our vibrant hope in glory and final redemption, as stated in Ephesians 4:30, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Moreover, we lack comfort in reproach, courage in affliction, strength to resist sin, and readiness and joy in obedience, all of which we once possessed. Thus, a Christian is like Samson when his hair is cut off—delightful communion with God is suspended, and they do not act as a servant in their master's favor.

[3.] Carnal freedom. When a person indulges the flesh excessively, the spirit or the better part of them becomes enslaved. Psalm 119:37 says, "Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word." Those who loosen the reins and give in to worldly vanity will soon find their hearts hardening and realize the need to seek revitalizing grace. Luke 21:34 warns, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life." Overindulging in worldly comforts binds and enslaves the heart, making us more resistant and disobedient to the Spirit's prompting and the counsel of His grace. Therefore, if we wish to guard against hardening our hearts, we must not give ourselves

too freely to worldly matters. Instead, we should rejoice in them as if not rejoicing, maintaining our liberty before God.

[4.] Pride and self-sufficiency. In 2 Chronicles 32:31, it is written, "But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart." Paul was allowed to be afflicted to keep him humble, as stated in 2 Corinthians 12:7, "Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me." When you trust in yourself, God leaves you to your own devices. Then you are like a glass without a bottom, shattered as soon as you slip from His grasp. James 4:6 says, "But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'" This verse does not primarily refer to moral humility or humbleness in our interactions with others, but to evangelical humility—a brokenness of heart and a sense of our unworthiness and weakness. Such humility is influenced by grace, while others are left to stumble and fail due to their presumptuous confidence. Therefore, if we want to avoid this judgment in any degree, we must guard against pride and spiritual complacency. Those who recognize their daily and hourly need for grace receive more of the Spirit's provisions and are more diligent in seeking God. Psalm 25:5 expresses this sentiment, "Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." Christ has taught us to ask for daily bread, daily forgiveness, and daily strength against temptations, in order to encourage us to spend frequent time with God and maintain a constant reliance on Him, which keeps the heart more reverent, tender, and serious.

[5.] Carelessness and spiritual sloth. When we casually ignore the promptings of the Spirit and remain in a state of spiritual lethargy, He withdraws. Song of Songs 5:2-3 says, "I slept but my heart was awake. Listen! My beloved is knocking: 'Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one. My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night.' I have taken off my robe—

must I put it on again? I have washed my feet—must I soil them again?" And in verse 6, "I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had left; he was gone." God's children may suppress many pressing convictions and promptings in their souls, avoid the throne of grace and other good duties, and keep themselves away from God on frivolous pretexts. This unkind and ungracious behavior comes at a high cost. Neglecting the means of grace extinguishes the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 warns, "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt." Therefore, we should be more diligent in utilizing the means of grace. Mark 4:24 says, "Consider carefully what you hear," while adding, "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more." We must diligently obey the sanctifying promptings of the Spirit if we wish to avoid hardening our hearts.

## 2. The means to cure it:

[1.] Lament the evil and confess it before God, who alone can help us. We often complain about difficult times, the harsh treatment we receive from others, and the burdensome duties we must fulfill. But we seldom complain about what we should complain about the most—hardness of heart. The Lord is pleased with these complaints, as Jeremiah 31:18 testifies, "I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: 'You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because you are the LORD my God.'" We must take spiritual disorders to heart most deeply. God's children exhibit some degree of inflexibility and insensitivity. They are touchy, impatient when admonished, and disobedient to the Spirit's sanctifying promptings. They often become numb due to worldly pleasures and concerns.

[2.] Repent promptly and return to God. Psalm 119:60 urges, "I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands." And in Galatians 1:16, Paul declares, "To reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being." To emphasize this, we should consider the following:

(1.) We do not know when God might take advantage against us. He has not informed us of the number of times He will call before departing and leaving us to our own desires. However, He has instructed us not to delay and miss the present opportunity. Hebrews 3:7-8 says, "So, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.'" The command regarding time is as explicit as the command regarding duty. There is no season like the present one, the "now" (τὸ νῦν). Presuming that God will always wait is mere self-deception. Felix, for instance, had only one opportunity that we know of, and he foolishly postponed it to a more convenient time.

(2.) Each day spent in an unregenerate state brings us closer to destruction and places us at a greater disadvantage. Romans 13:11 states, "And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed." Apari, we may say; our damnation and final impenitence are also nearer.

(3.) Each call brings us even closer. Sins mature with each call, like iron that becomes harder with each heating and quenching. When people are frequently exposed to sermons, they eventually become impervious to them. The holy God will not cast His pearls before swine. Isaiah 55:6 implores, "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near."

(4.) Presumptuously persisting in sin with the expectation of repenting at some point in the future is perilously close to hell. You willingly remain under the devil's power. Life is uncertain. God may take you away while you are in the act of sin, as He did with Zimri, Cozbi, Korah, and their accomplices. Alternatively, He may deny you the opportunity to call for mercy at the time you envision, as death does not always provide a warning. Moreover, an apopleptic stroke, lethargy, or some other stupefying ailment may rob you of your reason. Let this shake you from your foolish presumptions.



[3.] Beware of the inclinations toward hardness when your heart begins to grow callous, such as:

(1.) When you no longer sense God's withdrawal, experiencing a suspension of His grace, comfort, and the leading of His Spirit, and your soul becomes dull. It is disheartening not to be aware of the Spirit's movements—when the bridegroom is taken away, as Matthew 9:15 warns, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast." Grace requires continual vigilance and attentiveness to God's dealings. Felt desertions are grievous, but those that go unfelt are even more perilous. It is an indication of some degree of grace not to be at peace without God.

(2.) When you scorn rebuke and not only commit sin but defend it boldly and obstinately, persisting in your transgressions. Jeremiah 6:10 laments, "To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it." Such people are unteachable and intractable; they perceive reproof as mere slander. In this, the devil achieves two victories: through the scorn and opposition directed at the reprover and through the hardening of the heart in the reprovved sinner, who becomes angry not at their sin, but at the reproof itself.

(3.) When the effectiveness of ordinances wanes. You attend church services and receive no benefit from them; you have access to many means, yet see no fruit. Isaiah 6:9-10 states, "He said, 'Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving." Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.'" The Word is powerful, but if it does not soften, it hardens.

(4.) When your worldly comforts become a snare. Malachi 2:2 warns, "If you do not listen, and if you do not resolve to honor my name," says the LORD Almighty, "I will send a curse on you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not resolved to honor me." Your table becomes a snare, your food turns into poison, your wealth becomes golden shackles that bind your heart to the world, and your honors swell your ego. Instead of seeing comforts as God's mercies and blessings and praising Him for them, dedicating yourself and your resources to His service, you fail to do so.

(5.) When corrections yield no fruit: Jeremiah 5:3 states, "You struck them, but they felt no pain; you crushed them, but they refused correction. They made their faces harder than stone and refused to repent." God keeps a record of every dispensation; afflictions are noted alongside blessings. Christians should make their greatest progress in Christianity under the weight of the cross.

(6.) When we are lazy and reluctant to invite Christ into our hearts. With our hearts filled with worldly comforts, we keep Him at the door, knocking, and refuse to let Him in. Revelation 3:20 says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." Similarly, Song of Solomon 5:3 declares, "I have taken off my robe—must I put it on again? I have washed my feet—must I soil them again?" This laziness and spiritual complacency are the causes and beginnings of hardened hearts.

(7.) When trivial and insignificant temptations overcome our sense of duty—when we are willing to transgress for a piece of bread or a handful of barley, when we sell our integrity for a pair of shoes. When we become like stones towards God's counsel, but like wax towards everything else.

(8.) When the heart becomes empty and superficial, for a frivolous heart will become a hardened heart. Alternatively, God may abandon

individuals to a reprobate mind and a lack of judgment. These are the warning signs and precursors of a hardened heart that we must be wary of and guard against.

-----

## MONERGISM BOOKS

The Hardening of the Heart, by Thomas Manton, Copyright © 2023

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions July 2023. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068