

The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 – “Of God’s Decree”,
Message # 15 – “God’s Hardening of Pharaoh”, Presented in the
Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall,
on November 14th, 2021.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 7 – What are the Decrees of God?

Answer: “The Decrees of God are, His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 8 – How doth God execute His Decrees?

Answer: God executes His decrees in the works of creation and providence.

And, I would add – The Redemption of His people, and the judgment of the wicked, through our Lord Jesus Christ)

Paragraph 3 – By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.

1) Matthew 25: 34 1st Timothy 5: 21

2) John 12: 37-40 Romans 9: 6-24 1st Peter 2: 8-10 Jude 4

Paragraph 5 – Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto.

1) Romans 8: 30 Ephesians 1: 4-6 Ephesians 9: 2 2nd Timothy 1: 9

2) Romans 9: 11-16 Romans 11: 5, 6

Romans 9: 17 & 18 - “For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘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.’”
“Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.”

1. God’s hardening of any person’s heart flows out of His decree that He will be glorified in His Justice in regard to that person.

We have been looking at the most eminent example of God’s hardening that we find in the Bible; that is, Pharaoh king of Egypt. Pharaoh fulfilled God’s decreed purpose of proving that He was right in judging Pharaoh for his not letting the children of Israel go when God commanded him to do so. God it says in Romans chapter 9, raised him up to show His power in him. This “showing his power in him” was His hardening Pharaoh’s heart. When Pharaoh hardened his heart sinfully resisting God’s word to him through God’s messengers, Moses and Aaron, God hardened his heart.

This was God’s decreed purpose from eternity past. This was why He raised Pharaoh up, that He might show His power in him, and that His name may be declared in all the earth; which it has been. Pharaoh was free to sinfully resist God’s commands, and he freely did so. But the exercise of his sinful choices (the free exercise of Pharaoh’s will) only demonstrated that God’s power was greater than his, to defeat all of his purposes which were against the people of God. God declared it to all the world that it was futile for Pharaoh, or any man for that matter, to resist Him or oppose Him. God did not show Pharaoh any saving mercy, but judged him and the nation of Egypt with His plagues, and He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea.

2. What specifically is this hardening that God does? In Pharaoh’s case did this mean that God positively infused hardness into his heart, so that he was unable to do what God was commanding him to do? The wording of the various passages might make it seem to be so. But

actually, it was the case that each time after Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God and His will, that God in turn hardened Pharaoh's heart.

And, further, we have seen that Pharaoh was able to repent according to His own will, in Exodus 9, after the plague of the hail. But it was not a true repentance.

Chapter 9, verse 27 – “And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, ‘I have sinned this time.’ “The Lord is righteous, and my people and I are wicked.” “Entreat the Lord, that there may be no more mighty thundering and hail, for it is enough.” “I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.”

In verse 34 of chapter 9, it says – “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.” “So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the Lord had spoken by Moses.” Then in chapter 10, verse 1, the Lord says 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, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord.”

3. How then should we define God's Hardening so that God is not seen as the author of sin?

If it is not infusing hardness in the heart, what is it? I believe that we should understand it in this way. It is a progressive just judgment in time and space, based upon His eternal decree concerning that particular person, whereby He gives that person over to the sinful thoughts and tendencies of their own heart, to exalt themselves, and to do their own will. He will righteously and deliberately lead them into situations where they will be tempted, and they will be overcome by that temptation, to sin against Him. He makes them hard in relation to Himself.

A. A progressive Judgment in time and space based upon His eternal decree.

Romans Chapter 2, verses 5 & 6 – “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds.”

B. The sinner is given over to the sinful thoughts and tendencies of their own heart.

Romans 1: 21-25 – “Because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” “Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.” “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever.”