

DESIDERATA¹
HOW A HEART GETS HARD
ROMANS 11:1-10

BIG IDEA: A tender heart toward God is of immeasurable value.

- I. **HARDNESS OF HEART STARTS WITH SPIRITUAL DRIFT. VERSES 1-3**
1. Israel enjoyed divine favor
 - God selected Abraham
 2. Israel possessed divine promises
 - God made a covenant with Abraham
 3. Israel rejected divine prerogatives
 - Israel spurned their God-things
 - **Verse 3 is a quote from Elijah in 1 Kings 19:10, He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."**
 - They rejected the **prophetic office:**
 - They rejected the **holy altar(s)**--NOTE: **Morris:** *There was, of course, to be only one altar in Israel (Deut. 12:13-14), but it seems that from time to time other altars were regarded as acceptable (Exod. 20:24; Judg. 6:24-26), and particularly would this be the case in the northern kingdom when it would be difficult for people to go to Jerusalem to worship (cf. I Kings 18:30).*
 - BUT, note that **not everyone** drifted...
 - 4. So who rejected whom?
 - Bumper Sticker: *If you feel far from God, guess who moved.*
 - **Question in Verse 1, I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! Answer in Verse 2, God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.**
 - **Quotation from 1 Samuel 12:22, For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own.**
 - **NOTE: Drift took place over generations.** *My friend D. A. Carson made an interesting observation in a personal conversation we had. He said that one generation believes a truth, the next generation assumes a truth, and the third generation denies a truth. Practically speaking, this means that every Christian family, church, and network or denomination is always a few generations, at most, away from death or heresy.²*
 - **NOTE: We must arrange life so that sin no longer looks good to us.³**
- II. **HARDNESS OF HEART CAN BE PREEMPTED BY GOD. VERSES 4-6**
1. There is evidence for divine preemption
 - Elijah's remnant
 - Paul's remnant
 - **Godet:** *...the indestructible existence of a believing remnant at all periods of their history.*
 - **Note Verse 4, "I have reserved for myself.... Martin Luther:** *He does not say: When they were all cast away, seven thousand men were left over, or: When Nebuchadnezzar of the devil took them away, he left me seven thousand men, but: I myself kept them back, I who took them, i.e., the others, away.*
 2. There is grace for divine preemption
 - Grace is antithetical to works. **Verse 6, And if by grace, then it is no longer by works;**--i.e., once you **understand** grace you understand that there is no place for works in salvation.

¹ *Desideratum: Something considered necessary or highly desirable.*

² Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Church* (Wheaton: Crossway Books: 2008), 55.

³ John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 70.

- Works empties grace of meaning
- III. HARDNESS OF HEART IS A CONSEQUENCE OF JUDGMENT. **VERSES 7-10**
1. Judgment is unimpressed by misguided zeal
 2. Judgment starts with cognitive impairment (brain freeze!)
 - **Morris:** *The passive may well ascribe the hardening to God (the passive was often used as a reverent way of avoiding the name of God). But, while it is certainly true that God did the hardening in verse 8, it is the people who do the stumbling in verse 11 and it is possible that the passive here is a neutral expression which may be taken either way. In either case we must remember that those who failed God did not do so because they had been hardened but they were hardened **because they had failed him.***
 - **FOOTNOTE ON PHARAOH: Romans 9:16-18** *It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸ Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.* NOTES: 1) In all fairness to God, **before** the Book of Exodus says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, two times it is mentioned that "*Pharaoh hardened his heart*" himself (**Exodus 8:15, 32**). Only **after** that does the Bible say that **God** hardened Pharaoh's heart. So Pharaoh set the sails of his heart and God then filled them with wind. 2) But, nevertheless, God could have applied mercy to this man's heart if He wanted to. Look how God wonderfully saved Paul who was a violent persecutor of the church! Why did God do it for Paul but not Pharaoh? I don't know. God just says, "*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy.*"
 - **Romans 11: 8** quotes a combination of two verses: **Deuteronomy 29:4** and **Isaiah 29:10**.
 - *Psychologists who study incompetence say that the first result of incompetence is the inability to perceive my incompetence. Maybe spiritual growth involves an increased capacity to diagnose the true condition of my soul.⁴*
 3. Callousness: **1 Timothy 4:1-2** *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. ² Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. "Seared"=*kaustariadzo*, to brand with a red-hot iron; of a slave mark with a brand; figuratively, of destroying the function of conscience *cause to be insensitive, make unfeeling, harden...**
 4. **Verses 9-10** are a quote from **Psalm 69:22-23**.
 1. **Mark Twain:** *Your conscience is a nuisance. A conscience is like a child. If you pet it and play with it and let it have everything it wants, it becomes spoiled and intrudes on all your amusements and most of your griefs. Treat your conscience as you would anything else. When it is rebellious, spank it—be severe with it, argue with it, prevent from coming to play with you at all hours, and you will secure a good conscience; that is to say, a properly trained one. A spoiled one simply destroys all the pleasure in life. I think I have reduced mine to order. At least, I haven't heard from it for some time. Perhaps I have killed it from over-severity. It's wrong to kill a child, but, in spite of all I have said, a conscience differs from a child in many ways. Perhaps it's best when it's dead.⁵*

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⁴ John Ortberg, "The Sin Tamer," *Leadership Journal*, Spring 2009, 32.

⁵ Christopher Silvester, ed., *The Norton Book of Interviews* (NY: W. W. Norton and Co., 1993), 86.