

## Lessons in Adversity: Moses and God's Assurances (Exodus 6:28-7:13)

"The most tremendous judgment of God in this world is the hardening of the hearts of men."  
~ John Owen

### I. Investigation: An Examination of Exodus 6:28-7:13

#### A. Introduction

Exodus 6 and 7 highlight that no person or country will share in God's glory. All praise and honor belong to Him. Despite serving as the most powerful man on the globe, Pharaoh is no match for the Lord. In God's sovereignty, even Pharaoh ultimately performs the Lord's bidding (cf. Romans 9).

#### B. Moses Objects a Third Time (6:28-30)

Despite the Lord's assurances, Moses still questioned how Pharaoh would listen to him based upon his speech difficulties (cf. 4:10; 6:12). Whether or not these verses are a recapitulation of Moses' complaint in 6:12, the underlying issue is Moses' unwillingness to submit to the Lord's will!

For a man who has struggled with a difficulty in speaking, Moses appears to be rather articulate and verbose! Moses sins in three ways:

- Moses discredits God's creation. God made His lips.
- Moses discredits God's promises. The Lord instructed Moses what to say (4:11-12).
- Moses discredits God's provisions. The Lord already mentioned that Aaron would assist him (4:14-16).

#### C. The Lord Assures Moses of the Outcome (7:1-7)

vv. 1-2 - The Lord gives Moses divine authority by making Moses like God. Remember that Pharaoh considered himself to be divine. One scholar writes, Pharaoh was "the strong-man king, God's representative on earth, the image of the high-god, the superior intellect" (Redford, "The Concept of Kingship during the Eighteenth Dynasty" in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, 173).

v. 3 - "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" - Why would God cause someone to resist His will and then hold that person accountable for the sin He prompted? Such actions seem to portray a sadistic God who manipulates free moral agents like puppets.

#### *Overview*

Four times the Book of Exodus mentions Yahweh hardening the heart(s) of Pharaoh and/or the Egyptians (4:21; 7:3; 14:4, 17). An additional six verses describe the Lord as having done so (9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8).

One scholar notes that the "ancient Egyptian texts teach that the heart is the essence of the person, the inner spiritual centre of the self. Pharaoh's heart was particularly important because the Egyptians

believed it was the all-controlling factor in both history and society” (Currid, *Exodus*, 1:113-114). More specifically, Egyptians believed that the gods Anubis and Thoth weighed and recorded the weight of a person’s heart after death. If the heart was light, the person would be ushered into eternal life. If the heart was heavy, then the person would be consumed by the god Amemit (cf. Ritner, “The Cult of the Dead,” in *Ancient Egypt*, 132-47).

#### *Assessment*

- Previous Egyptian rulers understood the Lord’s sovereignty, and they recognized they were subject to the Lord’s judgment (Gen 12:10-20; 41:39).
- Pharaoh’s response in 5:2 displayed his own arrogance (also, cf. 10:3). To release the Israelites, Pharaoh would have to have acknowledged Yahweh’s authority over Israel—an affirmation Pharaoh would not accept. Yahweh anticipated Pharaoh’s attitude in 3:19.
- Pharaoh also demonstrated his disregard for God’s glory (cf. 9:30). As seen in Exodus 5, he viewed “worshipping the Lord as a waste of time and called God’s messenger a liar (vv. 8-9, 17)” (Coover Cox, “Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart,” *BSac* 163 [2006]: 297).
- The Book of Exodus mentioned that three times Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15, 32; 9:34).
- Six times Yahweh issued a demand and a warning to Pharaoh, providing ample opportunity for Pharaoh to free the Israelites. Each time, Pharaoh refused (5:2; 8:1-4; 8:20-23; 9:1-5, 13-14; 10:1-11). It should be observed that in the 7th plague, the Lord even declares that He could have taken Pharaoh’s life (9:15).
- The reason the Lord did not just obliterate Pharaoh and the Egyptians was because of a greater purpose—His glory (cf. 9:15-16)! The deliverance of the Israelites was not simply to free His people.
- The prolonging of the judgment through the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart allowed for a vivid display of the Lord’s power (cf. 7:3-5). Ironically, one scholar notes that the hardening allowed us to know more about Pharaoh and more about the Lord (Coover Cox, “The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart,” 311)!
- As noted by one scholar, “Any yielding on Pharaoh’s part was born out of expedience and panic, not a genuine fear of Yahweh . . .” (Chisholm, “Divine Hardening,” 429).

#### *Conclusion*

The Lord’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart must be viewed in light of Pharaoh’s sinfulness and unwillingness to repent. One scholar states it well: “Whether accomplished directly or indirectly, this hardening was an element of divine judgment whereby God exhibited His justice and sovereignty. The objects of such judgment were never morally righteous or neutral, but were rebels against God’s authority. Divine hardening was never arbitrarily implemented, but was in response to rejection of God’s authoritative word or standards” (Chisholm, “Divine Hardening,” 411).

v. 5 - “In chap. 6 the Lord uses the phrase ‘I am LORD’ to the Israelites five times (6:2, 6, 7, 8, 29). Beginning with chap. 7, the Lord uses the same phrase to the Egyptians also five times (7:5, 17; 8:22; 14:4, 18)” (Hamilton, *Exodus*, 114).

The revelatory title encompasses, not only Israel’s history, but also Egypt’s narrative. In fact, for the Book of Exodus the “entire redemptive history is compressed into the one great self-revelation of God,

the same formula can apply to all the various manifestations of his power and authority” (Dodd, *Exodus*, 118).

“extend my hand” - This phrase served as a symbol of deliverance (cf. Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8).

v. 7 - The author could have highlighted their ages to recall how much time has elapsed since the Lord protected Moses as an infant, how long the Israelites have waited for a deliverer, or the level of maturity now reached by Moses.

#### D. Moses and Aaron Encounter Pharaoh a Second Time (7:8-13)

v. 10 - As seen in verse 6, Moses and Aaron finally do just as the Lord had instructed! While the signs and wonders vary throughout the 10 plagues, the message remains the same. This verse also indicates that Moses and Aaron are not at liberty to alter the message in any fashion. They are only messengers of God’s Word!

v. 11 - Throughout the 10 plagues, Moses encounters the magicians and defeats them (7:22; 8:14; 9:11). Magic played a major role in Egyptian religion. Rather than yield to the Lord, Pharaoh demonstrates his defiance by relying upon his own resources. And yet, the Egyptian ruler’s wisemen, sorcerers, and priests prove no match before the Lord and His messengers.

v. 12 - As noted in last week’s notes, the snake was a symbol of Pharaoh's authority.

## II. Intersect

A. Doubts concerning ourselves nor doubts about the Lord should hinder our obedience to the Lord.

Ephesians 6:19-20 -

B. No matter our talents and abilities, the “spiritual results” of any ministry is dependent upon the Lord. As noted by Martin Luther, “Only the Word of God is entrusted to Moses, not the responsibility of making Pharaoh soft or hard by preaching.”

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 -

C. Nothing is outside the purpose of the Lord’s will, not even the heart of a king!

Romans 9:17 -

“Whenever a divine thing is cast into the heart, or thrown upon the earth, it swallows up everything else, and though the devil may fashion a counterfeit, and produce swarms of opponents as sure as ever God is in the work, it will swallow up all its foes.”

~ C. Spurgeon