
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Was God being fair when He "hardened Pharaoh's heart"?**

Exodus 7:3-5

3 [God said] I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

4 But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

5 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them."

Here is God Himself promising that He will command Pharaoh to let Israel go out of Egypt, but He will harden Pharaoh's heart and Pharaoh will not obey.

Two questions come to mind when we read this passage:

- (1) Was God hardening Pharaoh's heart by some mysterious, miraculous method?
- (2) Was He being fair and just in His dealings with Pharaoh?

THE CAUSES

First, let us examine all the causes which contributed to Pharaoh's heart being hardened.

The Bible teaches there were three causes that resulted in Pharaoh's heart being hardened:

- (1) God was said to harden his heart (Exodus 7:3).
- (2) The magicians of Pharaoh helped harden his heart (Exodus 7:22).
- (3) Pharaoh himself is said to have hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:32).

Now ... if I were to say to you that God alone hardened the heart of Pharaoh, I would not be telling you the truth. But when I say that God, the magicians and Pharaoh himself together hardened Pharaoh's heart, then I am "speaking where the Bible speaks."

THE PROCESS

Now, let's consider the process which each of these people used to harden Pharaoh's heart.

(1) God hardened Pharaoh's heart by making a demand of Pharaoh that was against his political and financial interests and against his pride as king of the world's greatest government.

Moses was instructed to go to Pharaoh and say:

Exodus 7:16

16 ... "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness"; ...

Now there's something about demanding a man to do something that makes him sort of rebellious. God is not asking Pharaoh to consider it as a request. God is demanding that Pharaoh obey.

Furthermore, it's not good politics for a king to let about two million slaves slip right out from under his control. Again, it's bad financing to allow all this cheap labor walk right off the job and to walk away from building the king's treasure cities. And again, the king's pride is at stake. It just doesn't look very good to have all your subjects march right out from under your control.

So, God, by requiring a difficult command from the king hardened Pharaoh's heart. God knew before He gave the command what Pharaoh's reaction would be, but God did not take unfair advantage of Pharaoh and He did not operate mysteriously, nor miraculously upon Pharaoh's heart to harden it.

There was one other thing that God did that resulted in Pharaoh's heart becoming hard. When Pharaoh became stubborn and rebellious, God would send plagues upon the land to demonstrate His supreme power. When Pharaoh would seemingly repent, God would remove the plague and this cause Pharaoh's heart to harden. Notice:

Exodus 8:15

15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.

When Pharaoh saw relief given to the land and when he saw that God had removed the plague, he would change his mind and become hardened in his heart, that is, he became more and more determined that he would not obey God's demand. Pharaoh was interpreting God's mercy as meaning God was weak and unable to enforce His demands. And so, because God sent temporary periods of relief He contributed to Pharaoh's heart being hardened.

(2) The magicians hardened Pharaoh's heart by the magic they used in imitating God's miracles.

Exodus 7:22

22 Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said.

When Pharaoh saw his own magicians duplicating some of the plagues sent by God, Pharaoh concluded that God was nothing more than a good magician. Pharaoh's heart was hardened by these court magicians, not because they worked a mysterious miracle upon his heart, but because they led Pharaoh to draw a false conclusion about God.

(3) Pharaoh hardened his own heart with pride.

Exodus 5:2

2 And Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go."

Pharaoh was like many people today – he was too proud of himself; he considered himself so great and powerful that it was not necessary to obey exactly what God said.

So it was that God, the magicians and Pharaoh himself hardened Pharaoh's heart. God was not taking unfair advantage of Pharaoh.

APPLICATION

Now ... let's make an application from this information.

Romans 9:17

17 For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very 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."

God raised Pharaoh up to demonstrate His power to all the world. Whatever Pharaoh decided to do, God was going to have His way and would be glorified.

(1) If Pharaoh had decided to OBEY God, all the nations on earth would have "sat up" and taken notice. All the nations on earth would have thought, "The God of heaven must be a powerful and wonderful God if even Pharaoh would obey His commands."

(2) But if Pharaoh had decided to DISOBEY God, He would send plagues upon the land of Egypt and He would force Pharaoh to release Israel. Again, all the nations on earth would have "sat up" and taken notice.

Either way Pharaoh turned, God was going to have His way and would be glorified. Pharaoh was raised up by God to glorify God and God was glorified, but Pharaoh, by choosing to disobey, lost his fame, his wealth and his soul.

In the same way, God has placed every man, woman and child on this earth to glorify Him and He will be glorified.

(1) If you obey God, He will be glorified and you will in the process save your own soul.

(2) But if you disobey Him, He will still be glorified, but you will in the process lose your own soul.

As in the case with Pharaoh, you have a choice to make. Won't you learn a lesson from the case of Pharaoh and choose to glorify God by obeying His commands. If you choose to disobey, God will still be glorified in the end, but you will suffer eternally. Why not choose to glorify Him by obedience and in this way save your own soul.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. If you would like to speak with someone from the congregation in person, you may call **405-589-4184** or you may leave your name and number at the sound of the tone and one of our brethren will be glad to call you back. We also invite you to visit our web site www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

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