

Up From Slavery

A man / A people / A plan

Hard Hearts
and a Sovereign God?

Exodus 4:18-24

Exodus 4:18-23

¹⁸ Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Let me go back to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive.”

Jethro said, “Go, and I wish you well.”

¹⁹ Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead.” ²⁰ So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.

Exodus 4:18-23

²¹ The LORD said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. ²² Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, ²³ and I told you, “Let my son go, so he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.’”

The Problem Stated

- Isn't the God of Exodus distinctly different from the God of grace and mercy that we find in the New Testament?
- How can a God of love cause, or even allow, someone to go to hell?

A Partial Resolution

- To gain a real understanding of the biblical principle which is taught here we must take a look at the progression of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.

Text	Miracle / Plague	Response	Agency
Ex 7:13 &14	Aaron's staff	Heart became hard	Pharaoh
Ex 7:22	Blood	Heart became hard	Uncertain
Ex 8:15	Frogs	He hardened	Pharaoh
Ex 8:19	Gnats	Heart was hard	Uncertain
Ex 8:32	Flies	He hardened	Pharaoh
Ex 9:7	Livestock	Unyielding	Uncertain
Ex 9:12	Boils	The Lord hardened	God
Ex 9:34-35	Hail	He hardened	Pharaoh
Ex 10:1 & 20	Locust	I have hardened	God
Ex 10:27	Darkness	The Lord hardened	God
Ex 11:9	Firstborn	The Lord hardened	God

So . . .

- Pharaoh took the initiative in hardening his own heart:
 1. He resisted God's proclamation (5:1 ff)
 2. He refused to respond to the revelation of God's power (chapters 9-12)
 3. He refused God's provision of mercy (9:27-35)

So . . .

- It is not God's will that any should perish.
- God knows the hearts of individuals.
- We see the greatness of God's grace and mercy.
- God's love does not preclude justice.

To Go . . .

- Why is the issue of the sovereignty of God such a "hot button" issue for us?
- How do you resolve the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility?
- Why is it difficult for us to trust God to "judge justly" when it comes to these matters?
- Next week: Exodus 4:24-31