

A Hardened Heart Exodus 4:21-23/ ROMANS 1

This week on Wed. night we are going to look at the last two plagues that the Lord brought on Egypt

A) See the introduction to the Passover

B) We are also going to see something that many people don't realize about the Story of

1) the Exodus out of Egypt

C) From Egypt to Kadesh Barnea – the doorway to the promise land it was only an 11 day Journey.

But God purposely takes the Israelites on a Journey in the Wilderness

A) That will take them a year to get to Kadesh Barnea

B) In the course of that year God will bring them to There will be seven distinct stops

C) There is purpose/lesson behind each one of these stops –

D) We will look at the first two stops this Wed and begin to learn what the Lord was doing in his people

1) How that relates to our walks with Jesus as well

D) So we have some great stuff to look at this Wednesday – Hope you can join us.

But Today we are going to unpack one of the most confusing ideas in the book of Exodus –

A) Maybe all of scripture

B) The Fact that we are told in the book of Exodus that God hardened Pharaoh's heart

C) People hear that – think not fair – that mean he didn't have a choice?

D) Today as we unpack this idea I want to answer 5 important questions

#1 What does it mean that God hardened Pharaoh's heart ?

#2 How and why did it happen?

#3 Can this still happen today?

#4 Is this something that believers should be worried about?

#5 Can it be avoided ?

²¹ And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. ²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. ²³ So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.'" Exodus 4:21-23 **Pray**

Question: How many of you know someone or have someone in your life that is really stubborn.

A)Someone who just insist on having to learn things the hard way?

B)They are experts in the school of HARD KNOCKS

C)How many of you are married to someone like that ?

That is a good description of Pharaoh the Supreme Ruler of Egypt

A)EGYPT was the **LONE super power** in the World at this time.

B)Theme of the book of Exodus is Rescue – 400 yrs of bondage

C)God was going to rescue them out of that bondage

D)Exodus is a picture of the greater rescue mission that the Bible points to -

1)Jesus come to rescue man from the bondage of sin / Satan

Now in the process of rescuing his people out of the bondage of Egypt

A)God Would deal with the most powerful man in the World by sending a series of 10 plagues... Egypt

B)Those 10 plagues would come over several mths

C)But note this: the heart of God in dealing with Pharaoh and the Egyptian people was

1)that they would come to know Him as the one true God

D)We noted this Wednesday that God mentions 6 different times in the midst of the 10 plagues – **I am going this so that you will come to know that I am the Lord**

He says that six times in the midst of the 10 plagues

A)And the Word know in the Hebrew is the Word Yadah = perceive and know by experience –

B)Literally - To know in Relationship

C)That is God's end game in the midst of this whole process –

1)It is always his heart with People – I want you to know me

The apostle Peter speaks of a day that is coming upon mankind – a day of Judgment 2 Peter 3:10

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 2 Peter 3:10 NKJV

A)This is going to be the ultimate end to planet earth God is going to create a new heavens and new earth.

B) Sometimes as people see how corrupt and godless our world is becoming they think –

1) bring it on Lord - When?

C) The Lord answers that question in 2 Peter as well when he says this: ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. **2 Peter 3:9**

D) His heart and the reason why he delays – He wants more people to come to Know him –

1) NONE TO PERISH

So that is what is happening throughout those several months where God is dealing with Egypt

A) Part of his heart through the plagues is to get people's attention - - know Him

B) He wants the people of Israel as well as the Egyptians to Know that He is the Lord –

1) to perceive No other gods like Him - One true God

C) And He wants them all to come to Know Him

But here in Exodus 4 in the early stages of this story God makes a statement to Moses –

A) that on the surface might seem to contradict that idea when he says: V.21 – look again ----->

“When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.

First question we want to answer - #1 What does it mean that God hardened Pharaoh's heart ?

A) Here in the early stages of the Exodus story God lets Moses in on how this is going to unfold

B) When he says in V. 4 You go back to Egypt say to Pharaoh let God's people go –

1) and I will do wonders through you – before Pharaoh

C) But note this Moses: It is not going to be easy – not going to be a piece of cake

D) Pharaoh is going to be resistant – He is going to harden his heart against me

That is a phrase that we saw this past Wednesday is mentioned 8 times in the course of the 10 plagues.

A) Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord – or Pharaoh's heart grew hard.

B) Pharaoh is very resistant to God and his request

C) But here we read that God told Moses in the very beginning Exodus I will Harden Pharaoh's heart

Exodus 4:21 Harden is the Hebrew word Hazaq = to fortify or to strengthen

A)God is saying I will fortify and strengthen Pharaoh's resistance against me

B)God repeats this in Exodus 7:3 before the plagues even begin

Important to understand that both Exodus 4:21 and 7:3 are prophecies.

A)God who knows all things, who sees, who knows the beginning and the end

B)is telling Moses what the end result of all of this is going to be

**C)This is how this is going to play out- Ultimately I am going to meet Pharaoh in his resistance
1)and fortify his decision – by hardening his heart**

D)For my Ultimate plan and purpose

IN much the same way: We learn in the book of Revelation that God is going to destroy the world – burn fervent heat

A)And all who follow the Anti-Christ are going to be thrown into the lake of fire.

B)The rest of the book of Revelation shows how and why that happens –

C)But throughout the whole 7 year tribulation period there are continual warnings –

D)Countless chances to repent – but we know how the story ends –

1)a significant amount of people perish

So Chapter 4 is the Big Picture: God is telling Moses how the story is going to end.

A)He gets specific – Points to the 10th plague which we will look at this Wednesday -

B)Angel of death Passes over Egypt and takes the first born of every house that is not covered by blood

C)That becomes the breaking pt for Pharaoh.

**D)Question does this mean that Pharaoh has no choice or that he is just a pawn in the hand of God
1)to fulfill his purpose? No**

#2 How and why did it happen?

A)Here is what we understand in the book of Exodus

B)There is a progression that we see in Pharaoh's resistance of God.

C)We are told 8x in the story of the 10 plagues that Pharaoh hardened his own heart toward God –

D) That is where this starts – Pharaoh’s own heart – stubbornness – rebellion

1) And what we learn from the original language is that there is a progression in his response.

Examples: Turn to Exodus 7

A) The first time we read that Pharaoh hardened his heart is in Exodus 7:13

B) It takes place when Aaron throws down his staff and it becomes a serpent: -

1) Magicians do likewise – Aaron’s snake eats theirs

¹³ And Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said.

C) The word hard used here in the Hebrew is the word: *hazaq* - Strengthen make firm.

1) Very strong Word – Strong response

D) Become solidified in your stubbornness – dig in your heels not budging

The next morning there is another encounter ¹⁴ So the LORD said to Moses: “Pharaoh’s heart *is* hard; he refuses to let the people go. ¹⁵ Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water, and you shall stand by the river’s bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand. V.16

¹⁶ And you shall say to him, ‘The LORD God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness”; but indeed, until now you would not hear!’ ¹⁷ Thus says the LORD: “By this you shall know that I *am* the LORD. Behold, I will strike the waters which *are* in the river with the rod that *is* in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood. ¹⁸ And the fish that *are* in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river.”

So it happens: The Nile is turned to blood.

A) Pharaoh’s magicians can’t reverse it but they duplicate it – turn another body of water into blood

B) Then we read of Pharaoh’s response in V.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.

C) **Pharaoh’s heart grew hard** – once again the Word used in the Hebrew is *hazaq* - Strengthen make firm.

Very strong Word – Become solidified in your stubbornness – digging in not budging

A) So apparently he is not impressed by the miracle because his magicians could do the same thing -

B) He hardens his heart against the Lord who wants Pharaoh to come to know him –

1) But Pharaoh is Not having it - Both times his resistance is VERY strong -

Now The 3rd time we see where Pharaoh hardens his heart takes place in Ch. 8 after the 2nd plague/ Frogs

A) Once again his magicians duplicate bring more frogs

B) Pharaoh pleads with Moses for relief – please take away the frogs –

The relief comes – and that is when we read: ¹⁵ **But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.**

A) Just as the Lord had said: Pharaoh is fulfilling the prophecy –

B) This time a different word is used – word used here for hardened is the word – Kaved = **to become heavy**

1) or make dull – become indifferent

C) Sort of being “whatever” – not impressed

The difficulty goes away the desperateness calms down –

A) He grows indifferent to what God is trying to do in his life

B) We see that happen with people all the time – desperate they want to make deals with God –

1) **I promise... I will never.....**

C) Relief comes – or God gets them out of the jam

D) Heart becomes indifferent to the Lord – not desperate any more.

1) That happens several times with Pharaoh in this story

Now the 4th time that we see that Pharaoh hardens his heart also takes place after the 3rd plague – Lice
Looked at last week

A) Recall unlike the first two the Magicians can't reverse the plague and they can't duplicate it -

B) So they said to Pharaoh – **this is the finger of God! – His doing**

C) They are trying to get Pharaoh's attention – this is a power that is beyond us –

1) maybe you should pay attention

D) That is when we read of Pharaoh's 4th response: **V.19 " But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said.**

Once again the word used to describe the phrase grew hard is hazaq - Strengthen make firm. Very strong Word – Become solidified in your stubbornness – dig in not budging

A) Meaning it is stronger than the previous response –

B) There is a progression Pharaoh's heart goes from being dull – indifferent to deliberate

C) Not going to heed the word of his counselors –

And this is what we see going on in Pharaoh's heart over this whole several month period of the plagues

A) He has Moments of Sorrow – saw on Wednesday there are moments **where he even confesses his sin**

B) But there is never true godly sorrow that leads to repentance

1) Worldly sorrow is – **This hurts – I feel bad – or oh no I got caught**

C) But godly sorrow – leads to repentance – a change of mind – a change in the heart –

1) that leads to a change in attitude and direction

D) Pharaoh never experiences that

So in the course of the Plagues we read 8 times where we are told that Pharaoh hardens his heart

A) Or that his heart grew hard

B) I am going to put them on the screen for you with the word uses so you can see the progression

1) All the times

C) So Note this: From chapter 7-chapter 9:7 the first 5 plagues

1) we read six times where Pharaoh hardened his heart

D) Sometimes Hazaq – other times Kaved

Now watch this: During plague #6 The Boils – this is the first time that we read in Exodus 9:12 **And the Lord hardened pharaoh's heart**

A) Hazaq – became fortified or strengthened

B) After Pharaoh hardens his own heart on 6 different occasions – God finally says ok –

1) I am going to affirm your decision

C) Here is what is happening/God is meeting Pharaoh in his resistance and affirming what was in his heart.

D) You want to resist me – Ok – **My Spirit is not always going to strive with man**

Now Don't forget God had given Egypt 400 years – To turn to him

A) they were exposed to Yahweh in the days of Joseph – saved from the famine –

B) Became an even greater nation

C) But never truly followed the Lord – 400 yrs pass and God sends 5 plagues on them – on Pharaoh

D) His heart is I want you to know me – resistance More -resistance more and resistance – finally –

God says: I have a plan to set my people free – get on with the story of redemption.

A) This could have gone two ways: One you turned repented – let them go and followed me

B) The other way is you resist and I have to destroy you –

1) Since that is the path you have repeatedly chosen – so now we are going to speed up the process

C) I am going to meet you in your resistance and harden your heart

Now again put this side by side on the Screen –

A) There are two more times where Pharaoh hardens his own heart – for a total of 8x

B) Starting in Chapter 10 – We see God is doing the hardening we see 5 more times in the plagues –

1) God is affirming his decision

C) God is meeting Pharaoh in his resistance – to carry out his plan to get his people out of Egypt.

C) So that is what is happening here: The How and the Why?

Brings us to question #3 Does this still happen today?

A) Yes and NO - Turn to Romans 1 – Move through this quickly

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Creation points to a creator – Worshipped served

A) Men reject the evidence of Creation

21 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.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. describes Homosexual and lesbian lifestyles

This is what Paul is saying: Another example of how God responds to people's resistance to him.

A) He gives them over to the path that they want to walk in –

B) He says – you want to ignore me and resist me – Do what is right in your own eyes – Go for it

C) See how that works on for you. Sin brings sorrow and pain and unfulfillment.

D) In a Similar way he is meeting people the same way that He did with Pharaoh –
1) allowing their hearts to become harder- More resistant to him

E) But always with the Hope – like we see in the story of the prodigal son –
1) they might come to their senses – realize – Sinned – need to come back

Ok I want to show you a Fav picture: My Dog Red.

A) My dog is an amazing dog – Your dog is amazing too – BUT MY DOG IS AWESOME – BEST

B) Fiercely loyal – great personality – 11.5 yrs old – we've had him since 6 mths

C) Everyday when I come home from work – he greets me at the door with hugs and kisses –
1) Denise opens the door races out to my truck – greets me hugs and kisses

D) My kids didn't even do that – when in their teens – I came home I was lucky to get a “Hey Dad.”

But Red – He is my buddy. –

A) My Kayaking companion – Amazing Dog

B) But he is also really quirky – He loves for our family to all be together

C) If Denise and I are down stairs together he is with us. –
1) If Denise gets up and goes upstairs – he follows her – stand at the top... bark
1) Get up here with us – Dad!

Or is he stays with me and Denise goes up stairs he will stay at the bottom of the stairs and bark –

A) Get back down her Denise

B) Spins and barks when someone leaves our house

C) Protective of his food. – Guarding a pot of gold
1) So Amazing but also quirky dog

But he is also very Stubborn

A) I take him on walks everyday – He always wants to pick the route- usually he wants to pick the longest route

B) If there is not time for that route – a tugging match ensues –

C) Now there is one thing that he does on his walks that is crazy

D) Did you know that a dogs hearing is 4x greater than that of a human being

We hear things at a distance of 20 feet away –

A) Dogs hear things that are 80 feet away

B) So when I am walking – and a car is coming – he often starts pulling toward the street –

1) like he wants to play chicken with the car.

C) I have to literally hold him back – No.....

But he does this all the time.

A) Now if on one of those times I said- look dog I am tired of fighting you –

B) You want to play chicken with the car – you think you know best –

1) and I let him go – and he gets run over and killed

C) You would think – You are so cruel Rob – how could you do that if you really loved your Dog

1) You would be right – that would be cruel

E) But he is a Dog – he doesn't have a moral compass – he doesn't have common sense – He has urges –

1) That is why he needs a leash

Now here is a picture of my son when he was a little boy. Cute right

A) When he was a little boy and we were walking in a parking lot – **or by a street or crossing a street – always hold my hand**

B) He never resisted that. – He trusted me – loved me – he knew I loved him –

1) he knew that my heart was to protect him – always

C) Now this is my son when he was in his 20's:

D) He is 36 now – Adult – man – is own two kids

D) I don't hold his hand anymore to cross the street – he is an adult

Now I am thankful that my son never really went through a period of rebellion against us or the Lord in his life

A) But let's say that he started showing signs of rebellion and resistance

B) Now because I love him – I would warn him – Son that path you are attracted to is going to bring pain

1) and sorrow – ruin

C) As long as he was in my house I would discipline him – because I love him when he would rebel

But if he continued to resist and rebel and harden his heart toward me his mom and the Lord –

A) I wouldn't lock him up in his room

B) If I did do that and you found out – you would think that is cruel – and wrong

1) Rob you need to let him live his life

C) Now if he continued in his rebellion – there would come a time –

1) where I would have to give him over to his choices

D) Not going to enable you in your sin and rebellion –

You want to live that way – reject God and do your own thing – GO FOR it

A) Many of you have had to do that – and your hope is that they would come to their sins – and return

B) I pray – Lord let them find their PIG PEN – FAST

C) My point is Yes this still happens today in a similar way all the time

D) People resist the Lord make their own choices and their hearts are growing hard – resistant

1) They are given over to pursue their flesh

#4 Is this something that believers should be worried about?

A) The book of Hebrews – Believers leaving Jesus back into Judaism

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

B) Sin brings deception that can lead to a hardening

V.14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” Hebrews 3:12-15

Reality – every day we all have choices to make in how we are going to respond to the Word of God

A) Are we going to let it do its work in us ? Obey it ?

B) Or are we going to resist it

C) Recall -Parable of the Sower? Farmer sows seed on 4 different types of soil

D) Hard path – no fruit – Stony ground – No depth doesn't last –

1) thorny ground – roots sprouts – withers choked out

E) Good soft ground – MUCH FRUIT

Jesus tells us that the seed is the Word of God –

A) The 4 types of soil = 4 different types of hearts – primary interpretation

B) Secondary interpretation – The soil represents – four different types of soil in the same heart

C) Four different responses to the Word of God – that one person can have

For Example: There are some people – Hear a message on grace – Preach it brother – Amen.

A)But the same man who responds positively to a message on grace

B)Can hear a message on his need to be a servant leader – resist

A)Because he wants to be a dictator in his home –

B)His heart is resistant toward how God wants him to lead his home as a servant

C)Or a wife who hears a message the grace of God and rejoices

1)but is resistant on the subject of Submission

Most Christians love to hear a message on the love of God –

A)But many are resistant – subject of tithing comes up – Help in the Nursery today!

B)But the more we resist – the more that we hinder the work that God is wanting to do in our lives –

C)Saved ? – yes - But the area of our resistance is going to REMAIN an area

1)of our lives that is not SANCTIFIED – Set apart to the Lord

D)It will stunt our spiritual growth!

#5 Final question: How avoid that happening?

A)How can we avoid having an area of our hearts from becoming hardened to the Lord

B)Question What is needed to make hard ground or soil – soft ? – Water!

C)There are two things the Bible likens to water. One is the Word of God and the other is the Holy Spirit

C)Ephesians 5:26 **likens the Word of God to water that washes and sanctifies**

D)And in Ezekiel 36:26 we are told that it is the Holy Spirit who takes a heart that is hard like stone

1)and turns it into a heart of flesh

2)A heart that is soft and responsive

So the way that we can keep our hearts soft toward the Lord is to stay in the Word consistently -daily

A)And stay open of the Ministry and leading of the Holy Spirit

B)And if there is something shared – that my heart seems to have resistance to it – uncomfortable w/?

C)Learn to ask these two questions: Is there something wrong with what is being said? –

1)If the answer is no

Then I have to ask a second question: What is wrong with me that this is bothering me so much.

A) Why do I have a problem with this?

B) What and How is God trying to challenge me?

David prayed: Psalm 139:23,24

**²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my concerns.**

**²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me;
lead me in the everlasting way.**

**LORD SEARCH ME – EXAMINE ME – I AM
OPEN**