



Exodus

Freed to Worship

Exodus 4:20-31

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Sunday Evening Service

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Exodus: Freed to Worship

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Opening Comments

- Turn to **Exodus 4**
- We are continuing our study: **Freed to Worship**
- Last time, we got to verse 19 of chapter 4
- Moses has finished his conversation at the burning bush
- We went back and told his father-in-law that he was going back to Egypt
- And the Lord speaks to Moses again encouraging him to go by telling him that everyone who wanted to kill him had died in the 40 years that he has been in Midian
- In the rest of chapter four we see a brief account of Moses' journey to Egypt
- In these next few verses we will look at one difficult statement, a family reunion, and one peculiar event
- Amen??!!

Teaching

- **Exodus: Freed to Worship**
- Let's begin
- **Exodus 4:20**
- Moses had two sons; Gershom and Eliezer
- The rod of God is the rod that Moses had in his hand while he was talking with God at the burning bush
- It is the rod that God told Moses to use as he was performing the miraculous signs to the elders of Israel and to Pharaoh
- And now what is to some a difficult statement
- **Exodus 4:21**
- Some struggle with this verse and others like because to them it appears that Pharaoh had no choice
- And their feeling about this is that God is not fair
- First, God is never unfair **Psalm 11:7**
For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright.

- God always does the right thing, even when we don't understand

Isaiah 55:8-9

For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD.⁹ "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

- To accuse God of being unfair is to accuse Him of evil, and there is no evil in Him – He is only light, perfect goodness
- A careful study of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart reveals some interesting things
- There are roughly 20 references to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exodus
- Turn to **Exodus 7**
- This is the first occurrence – says that God will harden Pharaoh's heart
- And in this verse God is proclaiming what is going to be the outcome of the His work in Egypt to deliver the people of Israel
- But if we look at the actual events as they are described in Scripture, we get a different picture
- In chapter 5, Moses and Aaron go in to Pharaoh, tell him, God says, 'Let My people go!'
- Pharaoh doesn't respond well
- While it doesn't say anything about his heart, we would all say that Pharaoh's heart is hard toward the people of Israel
- Pharaoh responds by increasing the workload of the Israelites
- And then the Israelites turn against Moses because life suddenly got harder
- And then Moses has a crisis of faith that God addresses by reminding Moses who God is and reminding Moses of his calling
- At the beginning of chapter 7 God reminds Moses of the things He said earlier and then sends Moses back to Pharaoh
- **Exodus 7:10-13**
- Notice it doesn't say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart here
- When Moses performed the miraculous sign of his rod turning into a serpent, and then the magicians imitated it, Pharaoh's heart became hard

- Pharaoh's heart was predisposed to being hardened to anything that claimed to be greater than himself
- The very same sign was shown to the elders of the people of Israel and they believed God
- It is said, 'The same sun that softens the wax, hardens the clay.'
- Pharaoh was given the choice the same choice as the people of Israel
- Moses a little did the sign of water into blood and we see Pharaoh's response
- **Exodus 7:22-23**
- This is another chance for Pharaoh to repent and believe
- Then the Lord called for the second plague – the plague of frogs – Pharaoh's response
- **Exodus 8:15**
- And this goes on and on
- It is not until the sixth plague in chapter 9 that we see that God hardened Pharaoh's already hard heart
- Torn back to chapter 4
- God knew in advance what Pharaoh was going to do, and so verse 21 is prophetic of what would happen
- Some would have us to believe that God has chosen some people to be saved and others were chosen to be lost
- I do not see this view of God in Scripture **2 Peter 3:9**
The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
- Even the most famous of verses says so **John 3:16**
For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- It wouldn't be very loving of God if He created some people so that they would die in their sins, without a chance to be redeemed
- The fact is that God is calling to all people all the time
- Every time we respond to God, and believe Him, our heart is softened
- When we choose not to respond or we respond against His grace, our heart is hardened
- What this teaches us is that there comes a time in the life of the hard-hearted that God begins to give them what they desire for themselves

- If someone resolutely resists God and hardens their heart to Him, at some point God will help them harden their heart toward Him
- Pharaoh is a warning to everyone of all generations – do not harden your heart
- The writer of Hebrews quoted **Psalm 95:7b-8** three times
Today, if you will hear His voice:⁸Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as *in the day of trial in the wilderness...*
- God gives every human the choice, not to harden our heart toward Him
- Pharaoh was determined to reject God and oppress God's people
- God is patient, but His patience is not eternal, at some point judgment comes for the hard-hearted
- How do you know if you are hard-hearted?
- Simply put, you don't care what God says, you are going to do what you want to do, and you could care less what God thinks about it
- If you care what God thinks about your life, then you are not hard-hearted, maybe hard-headed, but hard-hearted
- Once Pharaoh reached the point where he was beyond redemption, God determined to use him as an illustration of God's great power and authority
- Pharaoh, at that time was the most powerful man on the planet
- In many way Pharaoh considered himself to be divine – born of the gods
- God would use this prideful, hard-hearted man to show God's people for thousands of years, that no human nor nation can stand against Almighty God
- The Lord then tells Moses what to say to Pharaoh
- **Exodus 4:22**
- The Lord is claiming a very special relationship with Israel
- God chose Abraham out of all the people in the world and used him to create a nation of people for God's own purposes
- We refer to the Jews as the Chosen People of God, and rightly so
- God established an intimate relationship with a nation of people, something He had never done before, nor since
- As Christians we also have a special relationship with God, but it is on an individual basis determined by faith in Jesus Christ

- The Jews are part of God’s Chosen People based on heritage
- That by no means is to mean that all Jews are saved and go to heaven
- Since the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ Jews are saved in the same manner as non-Jews
- The Apostle Paul, a Jew, wrote in the monumental letter to the

Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, *“The just shall live by faith.”*

- While all the Jews are God’s Chosen People, they must choose to believe in the Messiah Jesus if they are to go to heaven
- This all would have been very difficult for Pharaoh to accept
- He was accustomed to thinking of himself as the son of the gods
- His position, authority, and power all confirmed this false truth
- It would be strange to Pharaoh that the Hebrews, a whole nation of slaves were the firstborn son of God
- Pharaoh’s view off the Hebrews was different than God’s
- This is a word for all of us – no matter what the world thinks of you – God sees you differently **Galatians 3:26**

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

- Paul elaborated on that in **Romans 8:14-17**

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

- If the world tries to tear you down, remind yourself what God says about you
- And no matter what life brings, God’s opinion of us never changes
- And to that I say, ‘Praise God!’
- **Exodus 4:23**
- The first half of that verse is the basis for the title of this series
- The word ‘serve’ there can also be translated
- God wants Pharaoh to set His Chosen People free so that they are free to worship Him and serve Him with their whole lives
- That is God’s desire for all His people

- He wants us to be free from anything that would hinder us from serving or worshipping Him
- Just as the Israelites were being freed from the bondage of Pharaoh, we, as Christians were freed from bondage
- And Paul tells us we need to be careful not to get taken into bondage again **Galatians 5:1**

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

- The second half of the verse reminds us that God will do whatever is necessary to freed His people
- Will warn Pharaoh in advance that the consequence for hardening his heart will be the loss of his own firstborn son
- Rebelling against God carries consequences commensurate with the command given
- Of course all this reference to the firstborn son should remind us of Jesus and an event that we will see later in Exodus – the Passover
- The death of the firstborn sons of Egypt depicts how seriously God takes sin
- At the same time the Hebrews who put the blood of the lamb over their doors, were spared, depicting God’s grace to those who will believe Him and obey Him
- They were saved by faith
- We are saved by the blood of the Lamb of God by the same faith
- Pharaoh’s refusal to yield his will to God would end up costing him his son
- the Lord finishes speaking to Moses and then the text takes an odd turn
- **Exodus 4:24**
- I don’t know about you, but as I read this I think, ‘Wait a minute! What just happened?’
- One minute God is talking to Moses about the amazing things that God is going to do through him and in the next God is going to kill Moses
- Don’t you feel like you are missing something from this account?
- This is one of those obscure verses that we sometimes come across in Scripture

- There are three primary interpretations of what is going on here
- The first is this has to do with the blood-guilt for killing the Egyptian forty years earlier – Moses had murdered the Egyptian and God was going to punish him for it
- The question is, ‘Why now?’
- The second interpretation, the weakest is that Moses was asking God to kill him
- Moses would later ask God to kill him **Numbers 11:14-15**
I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. ¹⁵ If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!”
- Elijah, Jonah, and Jeremiah all asked God to kill them – but He didn’t
- The third and possible best interpretation best fits with the verses that follow
- **Exodus 4:25-26**
- God had called Moses to lead the people of God into an intimate relationship with the Lord
- To do that Moses had to be leading his family in accordance with God’s will
- Circumcision was not optional for the Hebrews
- God gave the rite of circumcision to Abraham hundreds of years earlier as a sign of the covenant He had made with Abraham
- And every male who descended from Abraham was to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth
- At least one of Moses two sons was not circumcised
- The fact that Zipporah only circumcised one of Moses’ sons implies that the other one had been
- This has caused Warren Wiersbe to theorize that the Gershom, Moses firstborn son had been circumcised
- He suggests that Zipporah was so appalled by the ceremony that she resisted when it came time for Eliezer to be circumcised
- This also explains why Zipporah circumcised her son instead of Moses doing which would have been normal
- This may be a case where ‘Happy wife – Happy life!’ may have almost cost Moses his life

- The interpretation of that is not clear, but the emphasis on circumcision is clear
- And then just as quickly, the narrative goes back to God dealing positively with Moses
- **Exodus 4:27-28**
- Just as the Lord told Moses, Aaron met Moses
- Imagine that reunion after forty years
- **Exodus 4:29-31a**
- Moses did what God had told him to do
- And just like God said, the people believed
- This teaches us a few things that we don't want to miss
- Moses was afraid that the people wouldn't listen to him
- God had told him that they would, but it took some convincing for Moses to do what God was asking him to do
- God wants us to so trust Him that we would obey the instant we think we hear His voice
- That we would overcome our fears with faith in a God who knows the future and has the power to determine the outcome of our efforts
- Also, we shouldn't underestimate what God can do through a willing vessel
- Moses was convinced that he wasn't able to do what God was asking
- Asked God to send someone else
- We are absolutely able to do anything that God asks us to do

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

- We don't need to know why God would have us to do something
- We don't need to know how it is going to turn out
- All we need to know is that God is sending us
- God's grace will keep us anywhere His will takes us
- When Moses did what God told him to do, there was a response by the people
- **Exodus 4:31b**
- The greatest need of the human heart is to know that there is a God in heaven who loves them and is concerned about them

- Worship is the natural and logical response by God's people to His grace and goodness
- Someone who is struggling to worship God has lost sight of just good He is and just how amazing His grace is
- Will close with a verse out of the gospel of **Matthew 5:16**
Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
- Part of our role as Christians is to reflect God's goodness and grace out into the world around us
- To do that we need to regularly be reminded of those things ourselves
- God is good and His grace is amazing!
- **Amen?!**
- God bless you