



Ten Plagues:

Saved Through Judgment

Part 1: Exodus 7-11

Bro. Kory Cunningham

We will have a two-part message as we look at the ten plagues, which will take about three weeks. We will particularly do nine of the plagues for the next two weeks. On Wednesday, all of the staff gathered together for our team meeting this week. It is designed for the staff to get aligned with the mission of the church, talk about weekly task that need to be done, share ideas, and cover issues that may come up. It is just a really neat time for all of us to get together and get on the same page to continue through the week. One of the things we implemented several months ago was to do the daily readings for that particular day to begin our weekly meetings. We encourage you from the pulpit to do the readings, and we as a staff want to make sure that we are doing the daily readings as well. We don't want to tell you to do something that we aren't doing ourselves. One of the ways we remind each other about them is by reading them on Wednesday mornings, and then we pray together. So this past Wednesday, we were getting ready to start the team meeting and I began to read in Exodus chapter 8. Immediately, one of our staff members stopped me and just blurted out, "I've got a question." I'm not going to tell you who this particular girl is because I don't want to embarrass our children's Preschool Director, so I'm not going to mention her name. ☺ She said, "I was really

confused this week by the daily readings because you told us that Monday would be review, Tuesday would be in Mark, and then we would go through Exodus, read, and then study. This week it has been all Exodus straight through." I said, "Yeah, that's true because the next two weeks we will be preaching the ten plagues, and those are covered in five chapters, 7-11, and then chapter 12 will be the tenth plague. So we are going to have to read at a quicker pace and cover more material. So for the next two weeks, we will just be reading through the nine plagues." To which she responded, "Are you kidding me? We are going to have to read through the nine plagues for the next two weeks?" I said, "I know...if you feel bad, think about me. I have to preach about the nine plagues for the next two weeks." Then she said, "Well I could preach the sermon for you; it's pretty easy. It goes like this: God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and say let my people go. Moses goes to Pharaoh and says that. Pharaoh says no and then there's a plague. Then it repeats again, nine different times with different animals and different stuff. It's a little repetitive. It's the same thing over and over again!"

Perhaps this week as you were reading through those beginning plagues, you were kind of sensing that...*I remember this from when I was little, I have the narrative, and I know what happened. God sends Moses, Pharaoh says no, bad plague happens, and then it repeats again. I've got this story down. Can we move on? Can we get to something more applicable? Can we get to something that's a little more central to the message of Exodus?* To be honest, that was a little bit of my thought going into the preparation for these two weeks; *I've got to preach the nine plagues. There is not going to be a lot of great stuff out of the nine plagues.* So I went into my study, dreading, and reading through them over and over again, trying to figure out what God really wanted me to say to you from His Word. As I began to study and think through it, it dawned on me that this is not just some material to skip over. This is actually the central event of Exodus. This is what the whole story has been building up to. I love all the emphasis on Moses and leaders, and all the cool things we have been learning. But this isn't a section to skip over; it is the main event. This is the part of the story that Israel has been retelling for thousands of years. This is the story that Israel will remember as the time God showed up and

showed out, and rescued them through great judgment. This is that part. This isn't something to read through quickly. It is something for us to stop and look at, and think about what these plagues really show us about who God is. So for the next two weeks, I want to go over those nine plagues, and then Bro. Ricky will tackle chapter 12 on Easter Sunday, which is the tenth and final plague. This is where the lamb is slaughtered and the Passover happens. Of course, all of that has to do with Christ. I encourage you to invite all of your friends to Easter Sunday because it is going to be awesome. It lined up perfectly because we are going to be at the gospel on Easter!

Instead of starting with plague one, plague two, and so on through nine; I want to begin by stepping back and asking a question. Why did God do it this way? Why did God bring about ten plagues on Egypt in order to rescue Israel from their captivity? I mean, God could have done it anyway in the world, right. He is the sovereign Lord of the universe. He could have taken them through the backdoor and put all of Egypt to sleep. He could have just made Pharaoh change his mind and tell him to let His people go. But why did God specifically do it this way? It's because I think God is going to take full credit for the event of the Exodus, and primarily, the ten plagues. I think we will see that the reason God did it this way is because He is putting His glory on display, both through the salvation of Israel (and this is a little tougher), but through the condemnation and the destruction of Egypt. And both things display the glory of God. The goodness, the kindness, the love, and mercy of God display His glory. But also, His justice, His wrath, His condemnation, and His vengeance reveal to us the glory of God. In the Exodus event, we see that God saves His people through judgment, wrath, and condemnation. We will see how that ultimately relates to the cross and to the gospel.

I have two big themes that we are going to think through. First, we will see how God is Lord over Pharaoh, and secondly, how God works all of this out for His glory. We will look at the hardening of the heart and the different events. But before we get there, I want to read the verses 1-7 of Exodus chapter 7. We will see God's glory displayed through saving the people

through great acts of judgement. That is what the ten plagues are really all about.



Scripture

"And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring My hosts, My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them." Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD commanded them. Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh."

God Hardens Pharaoh's Heart

The first thing we are going to have to wrestle with when it comes to the ten plagues is the whole hardening of Pharaoh's heart issue. I am really glad that Dad went to Brazil and left me to preach about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (I think he may have planned that out). The first thing we will see is that the ten plagues reveal that God is Lord over Pharaoh. What is the deal with God hardening Pharaoh's heart? The whole point behind it is for God to show that He is Lord over Pharaoh. He is the sovereign One, not Pharaoh. He will make that very clear in giving us insider information when it comes to the resistance of Pharaoh to God's will. God will tell us

the state of Pharaoh's heart. He will tell us what was going on behind the scenes, and not just how Pharaoh acted, but his motivation in what was going on and why he did what he did. I want to read again the firsts couple of verses in the text. Verse 2 says, "*You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land.*" That sounds great; go on mission, tells Pharaoh to let His people go, and then it says, "But..." Listen to what God says, "*But I will harden Pharaoh's heart...*" God doesn't say to go to Pharaoh and tell them to let His people go, but Pharaoh is going to be so stubborn and wicked that he is not going to do and you just need to keep on because I will eventually overcome him. God doesn't say that. That is true, but God doesn't say that. Right off the bat, before Moses even goes into the presence of Pharaoh, God says you go and tell him to let My people go, but I just want you to know the reason why he is not going to let the people go. It is not just because he doesn't want to; it is because I am going to harden his heart. That is tough! That is a little hard to swallow. The reason Pharaoh is not going to let the people go is because God is going to harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. I have done tons of reading on this whole deal of God hardening Pharaoh's heart. I have read different commentators and scholars, people I respect. What most of them did was to dance around it a little bit. In a nutshell, they would say that God says He is going to harden Pharaoh's heart because his heart was already hardened. So Pharaoh's heart is hardened, so God just says He is going to harden it. So if you really think about it, the reason why the ten plagues happened is all blamed on Pharaoh, no blame to God. This is completely a Pharaoh thing, and God really had nothing to do with this. But when you read the text and a verse like this, it seems like God wants us to know that it is not just Pharaoh, but that He is also behind what happens in the ten plagues. I mean, He says, "*I will harden his heart.*" He is telling Moses, 'this is going to be a Me thing. I am the God of the universe, I am sovereign, I am Lord over Pharaoh, and I'm about to do something to him so that I can bring about judgment on him and the people. This is Me. I am doing this; I am going to harden Pharaoh's heart.'

I remember when I was in seminary class many years ago. One of the things I remember my professor saying that stuck with me was, "You

know, God tends to be a lot less concerned with His press report than we are." I think that is so true. As communicators of God's Word and followers of God, we often like to take what God says and then become the middlemen and women who say, "Well, yes, He said that, but He really meant this. You need to know what He really meant, but what He really said." We tend to try to soften everything so that people would look at something like this and say that what this really means is something completely different than what God says it means. But what you notice about the God of the Bible is that He is not so concerned about how everyone is going to perceive what He says and how He acts. He just says truth that we are supposed to hear and understand, and we are supposed to wrestle with, not try to bend, to twist, to make it more suitable for the masses.

Who is Pharaoh?

So from the onset, God just tells Moses, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." We will see why He did it and for what purpose. Eighteen times throughout this book, it said that Pharaoh's heart is hardened. So this is not like a side note. This is not a little mention in the footnotes; this is a big thing. God is telling us to pay attention to the idea of Pharaoh's heart being hardened. So we really need to think through why in the world God would harden his heart, or why Pharaoh would harden his own heart, or why his heart was just simply hardened. But before we begin looking at the Scripture, I want to begin at the starting point and ask a question. Who is Pharaoh? This is a good starting point; because before we get to upset with God, let's just think about who Pharaoh is. He is not an innocent, great man who is doing really good things for all the people. That is not Pharaoh. He is the epitome of wickedness. Pharaoh is wickedness itself. If you went into the presence of Pharaoh, you wouldn't feel happiness, you would feel hate and anger and wickedness. That is who Pharaoh was. Pharaoh is now having the Hebrews serve him and build his kingdom through whips and chains. He murders people. He is from a succession of other pharaohs who killed the babies of Egypt. Not only that, but he thinks he is divine. He has exalted himself so high that he assumes that he has a god status, and all the people come to worship Pharaoh. So Pharaoh has made himself his own

god and the god of the people. Here is a created human being, made in the image of God, who is taking the role of playing God. He is the supreme ruler in his own mind. He is doing horrible things to many, many people. That is Pharaoh. He is evil. His heart is black and cold. That is who Pharaoh is.

It is important to notice that it is not saying that God went and got this guy who is perfect and innocent and then makes him into this scoundrel. No, God is taking a very wicked ruler and working in his life to harden him even further, so that the fullness of the plagues would happen, and the fullness of God's justice would happen so that He could execute what Pharaoh really deserved, which is death. That is what we are going to see, that we are not starting with this innocent man who is trying to do good; we are starting with a man who is wicked. What I want to say is that God can do with sinful man whatever God wants to do. He is God, and we gave up our rights in the garden. When we rebelled against the creator of the universe, we gave up our rights to say what God could or couldn't do. We are sinful people, and God can do with sinful people how He wants to do. We will clearly see that in the book of Exodus.



Who is Responsible for Pharaoh's Hard Heart?

The next question I want to get to is who is responsible for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Who is responsible for his hard heart? We will have three categories of possibilities:

1. **Pharaoh** - Is Pharaoh responsible for hardening his own heart?
2. **God** - Is God responsible for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart?
3. **Mystery** - The Bible just doesn't say.

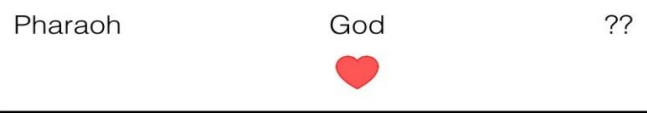
When we go through these Scriptures, the Bible will say it was either Pharaoh, God, or it just simply was. In other words, it doesn't credit who actually hardened his heart. I want to walk through various Scriptures to see who is behind the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Is it true that God doesn't want credit for any of this and we have just misunderstood that, and we can say it was just a Pharaoh thing, the Exodus was just a Pharaoh thing, the plagues were just a Pharaoh thing, and God wanted nothing to do with it? Or, is God behind it? Is He doing this to display the glory of His justice, the glory of His wrath, the glory of His condemnation on a man and a people who so deserve it?

- **Scripture References**

Let's start with chapter 4:21, which is the first time we hear about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart:

*"When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. **But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.**"*

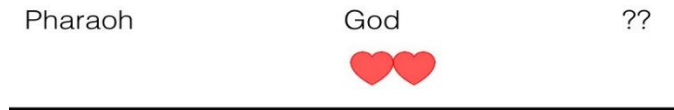
God is telling Moses to go, but the reason why Pharaoh will not let the people go is not just because of him, it is because God will actually harden his heart. God takes the first responsibility for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. God says, 'I am doing it for My purpose, for My reasons. So I just want you to know Moses, when you go I am behind this.' He is giving Moses insider information. So the first tally is for God.



Chapter 7:3 says:

*"**But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you.**"*

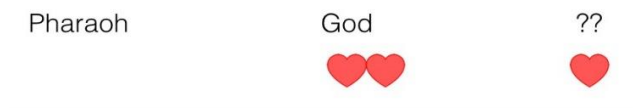
Again, this is God doing this to Pharaoh. So the first two times we hear about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, it is God doing the hardening.



Then verse 13 of chapter 7 says:

*"Still **Pharaoh's heart was hardened**, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said."*

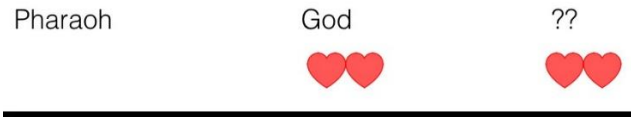
This is the even where Aaron has the staff and throws it down in the presence of Pharaoh and the magicians and it turns into a serpent. Pharaoh was asking for power, and staff to snake is power. So the magicians do the same thing. By their secret arts, they make snakes appear out of staffs, like ha, we could do that too. But then, the snake that came from Moses' staff goes and swallows all the other serpents up! Can you imagine that scene? "See, my magicians are good! Oh....ok, ok!" God is showing him He has the power. But the Bible says after that event Pharaoh's heart was hardened. So we don't know if it was Pharaoh or God, so we will put it in the question mark category. Notice what it says at the end, *"...as the LORD had said."* I think that's a hint to say that God wants to make sure we remember that God is behind this; He is orchestrating what is happening in Pharaoh's life.



Then in chapter 7:14:

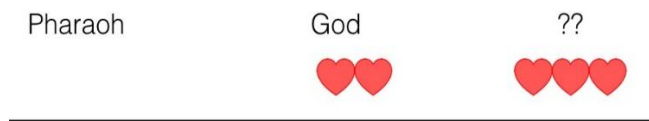
*"Then the Lord said to Moses, **Pharaoh's heart is hardened**; he refuses to let the people go."*

This is another category where we just don't know. It just says that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and we don't know if it was God or Pharaoh.



After the plague of Moses turning the Nile from water to blood, we see this in chapter 7:22:

*"But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret art. **So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened**, and he wouldn't listen to them, as the Lord had said."*

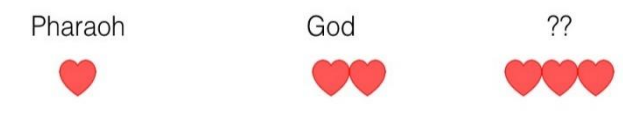


Again, it is a category where we aren't really sure; it just remained hardened.

And then we go to the frogs came and went. It says in chapter 8:15:

*"But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, **he hardened his heart** and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said."*

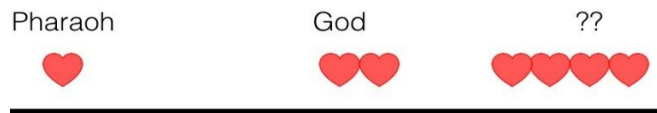
So the first time in the Exodus event, it says that Pharaoh is the one who hardened his own heart. So that is one for Pharaoh, one for God, and three we aren't sure about.



In the next scene after the gnats in chapter 8:19, it says:

*"Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But **Pharaoh's heart was hardened**, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said."*

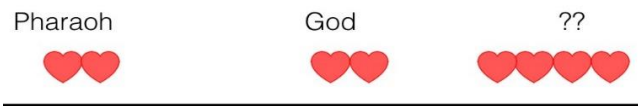
So again, we aren't really sure; it just says his heart was hardened.



After the fourth plague of the flies, it says in chapter 8:32:

*"But **Pharaoh hardened his heart** this time also, and did not let the people go."*

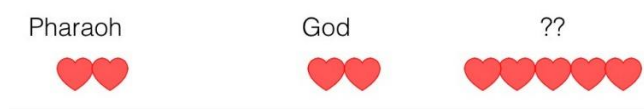
So clearly, that was Pharaoh's fault. He was the one rebelling against God. Pharaoh did this. He was acting wickedly, he wasn't trusting the Lord, and he was rebelling against the Lord.



After the animals die, it says in chapter 9:7:

*"And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But **the heart of Pharaoh was hardened**, and he did not let the people go."*

So again, we don't know so we will put that under the question mark category.



After the boils in the sixth plague, it says in chapter 9:12:

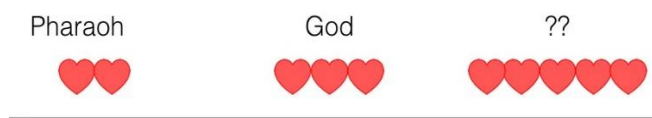
*"But **the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh**, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses."*

So God is taking credit here. After this sixth plague, I think it seems like Pharaoh is ready to let the people go. He is probably thinking; *Get out of here people, I'm ready to let you go. It's over. I've got boils on me, just go!* But what happens? God steps in and hardens his heart so that he wouldn't let them go. Why would God step in? Pharaoh is ready to let them go. This is a win; this is what they want! But God never wanted His people to be delivered through boils in a sixth plague. He always wanted His people to be delivered through blood in a tenth plague. It is not just about mercy and grace for a people; it is also about justice and condemnation, and a person and a people (Egypt and Pharaoh) getting what they truly deserve, which is death. So God doesn't stop at six. He steps in and hardens Pharaoh's heart so that it would continue and He could eventually bring the tenth and final plague, just as God had planned from the beginning.

Then after the hail, it says in chapter 9:34-35:

*"But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, **he sinned yet again and hardened his heart**, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses."*

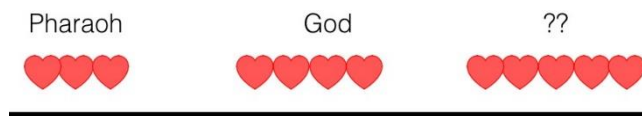
So again, that is on Pharaoh this time. After this seventh plague, Pharaoh is sinning. He is not repenting, he is not turning, and he is not letting the people go. He is in sin by hardening his own heart. So the blame is Pharaoh's here. It is his fault. He is a rebellious sinner who is acting that way before a holy God. Instead of listening and obeying, he is disobeying. The blame is Pharaoh's and he is called a sinner in this action.



In the next scene, before the locusts come and destroy everything, it says in chapter 10:1:

*"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, **for I have hardened his heart** and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them..."*

This time, God says it is Him. Last time it was Pharaoh, now God will step in and harden his heart for him so that he would continue through these plagues.



After the locusts had destroyed everything, it says in chapter 10:20:

*"But **the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he did not let the children of Israel go.*

So for the fifth time, God is hardening Pharaoh's heart, He is the one doing this.



In the next scene after darkness goes over the land, it says in chapter 10:27:

*"But **the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he would not let them go."*



That is six times the Lord has taken credit for it. It seems like around plague six or seven, Pharaoh is ready to let them go. But God says it is not time. The full punishment, the full justice had not been served on Egypt

and Pharaoh. So He hardens his heart so He can bring about ten plagues, not four, six, or eight. It is always going to be about rescuing a people through death. That is what is happening. God is leading him to this, so God takes responsibility for hardening his heart. So six times it is God, three times it is Pharaoh, and five times, we aren't sure about. But I would argue those questionable lean more towards God because after they say his heart was hardened, they say, "...as the Lord had said."

Let's jump past the Exodus event and go to three more verses in chapter 14, verses 4, 6, and 17:

*"Then **I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." And they did so." (v.4)*

*"And **the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh** king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness." (v.8)*

*"And **I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians**, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen." (v.17)*

These verses tell what happens after the Israelites leave Egypt. God comes and hardens Pharaoh and the Egyptian's hearts so that he would take them into the Red Sea and drown them all. God is saying, 'I want you to know why they chased after you. It is because I intervened, I hardened their hearts, and I led them into the sea. I lead them to their punishment. I lead them to their destruction.' This is God saying I am doing this! So if we line all those verses up, you can see the results.



So nine times, God takes responsibility and says I am the one who hardened Pharaoh's heart; 'the reason there were ten plagues was because of Me. The reason they went into the Red Sea was because of Me.' There

are only three times where Pharaoh hardens his own heart. If you put those five question marks together with that, there are only eight against God's nine. God is taking more responsibility for the Exodus, and the drowning of the Red Sea, then Pharaoh.

Revelation in the Ten Plagues

The question is why...why is God giving us this insider information? I don't know all the answers. This is a mystery in some degree. I am just trying to wrestle through this with you because this is hard for me to swallow just as it is for you to swallow. But we see that God gave us insider information. He did not have to tell us anything about Pharaoh's heart. He could have just said that Pharaoh resisted, Pharaoh didn't let the people go, and Pharaoh chased after them. Instead of just telling us Pharaoh's actions, God tells us Pharaoh's motivation and his heart.

1. God is Lord over Pharaoh

He wants us to know that in many cases, what was behind that was God, as the sovereign Lord of the universe, being Lord over Pharaoh. So the reason He gives us insider information about the heart is because He wants us to know that He is Lord over Pharaoh. He is sovereign over even this situation in Egypt's history, and in Israel's history. He wants all the people to know that He is ultimately behind it. He wants us to know that He is sovereign Lord.

Think about the proverbs. Proverbs 21:1 says, "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He will." You can see that played out very well in the Exodus in Pharaoh. Pharaoh's heart is like a river in the hand of God, and He is controlling it where He wants it to go. He wants it to go, not to six plagues, not to eight plagues, but all the way to ten plagues.

• Why Ten Plagues?

So why does God tell us all this insider information? I think the reason is because at some point people are going to ask why it took ten plagues.

Why didn't Pharaoh just listen after the third plague? Why did Pharaoh just not let the people go after the boils? Why did Pharaoh just not let the people go after the locusts? Why did Pharaoh remain in his rebellion all the way until the tenth plague? If that question comes up in Israel or in the future, God wants to make sure we know the answer. The answer is not because that is what Pharaoh wanted to do. The answer is because God hardened his heart because God wanted to get glory over Pharaoh in His justice and condemnation of him and of Egypt. It is clearly in the text, God wants us to make sure we know that He is ultimately responsible for the reason why there were ten plagues rather than one, two, or three. God takes a man who is playing God, who is acting like God, who is murdering people, and He puts His thumb even further in his rebellion so that He could carry out the full weight of His wrath on Pharaoh and the Egyptian people. God wanted this to go all the way to the tenth plague because He didn't want Israel to run away from Egypt through boils. He wanted them to escape through blood.

It was a rescue mission, but it was a rescue mission through judgment. We need to see that what God is doing in the Exodus is not just showing His glory for how He rescues people. He is also displaying His glory for how He pours out His wrath on people. Both of those are ways for God to be glorified. So how is this the case? Let's look at the purpose behind the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. I don't have to guess at this, God actually tells Pharaoh the purpose of Him hardening his heart. In Exodus 9:16, which is repeated in Romans 9, it says, "*But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that My name may be proclaimed in all the earth.*" God is saying there is a purpose behind raising Pharaoh up. It was a purposeful act. The purpose was to show Pharaoh His power. God had raised Pharaoh up on his throne and he was a wicked ruler. So now, God will show him His glory and power. He will prove to Pharaoh and his people that Pharaoh was not God, that the Egyptian gods were false gods, and that He alone is God, the LORD who rules over the universe. And He will do it by showing His great power, not in a couple of plagues, but in ten plagues that end with the death of Pharaoh's son.

- **To Show God's Power in Justice**

So why did God harden Pharaoh's heart, and why ten plagues? It was because He wanted to show Pharaoh His great power, and ultimately to show us His power in His justice. And the reason was so that His name, not Pharaoh's, would be proclaimed in all of the earth. Pharaoh was exalting himself against God's people and wouldn't let them go, so God raised him up and hardened his heart so He could show His power, and for an even bigger purpose to show His glory and His renown, and it wasn't just to Pharaoh, or Egypt, or Israel, but to the whole world. The whole world would know who God is, how powerful He is, and that He is God over all other gods.

We will see this clearly next week as we look at the plagues individually. We will see attacks, not only on their culture, but on their gods. God is saying He is the one true God, and the Exodus event (the ten plagues) will show His power in His justice, His pure wrath. It is as if God, as a Father, is coming to the rescue of His sons and daughters. But He isn't sneaking them through the backdoor. He is coming after those people who have harmed them, beat them, killed them, and acted wickedly against them. He is not just going to pull them out; He is going to go and take care of business on everyone who harmed them. He is not just a God of mercy, He is a God of vengeance and wrath, and He will do what is right for sinners, which is to condemn them, to destroy them, because that is the right thing to do for God is holy, holy, holy in His hate toward sin.

So God acted and hardened Pharaoh's heart so that He could bring ten plagues and show His justice and wrath to the people of Egypt, Pharaoh, and the world. God is glorified, not just in Israel's salvation, but also in the condemnation of Egypt. That is hard for us to swallow. We like the other part, but we are a little troubled with this. But clearly, God wants that to be the case. We know He did this, a purposeful act to show the world who He is by His great justice.

In Romans, Paul doesn't really soften this up. He quotes that verse in Romans 9:17, and adds another line to it in verse 18. He said, "Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens." That is

Paul's summary; God has mercy on whoever He wants and hardens whoever He wants. That is the application of the Exodus with Pharaoh. That doesn't really soften it, does it? Then Paul said 'who are you to say anything back to God? You are clay and He is the molder.' We are silent before God. God raised up Moses to be His rescuer and to be His grace and compassion towards the Israelites, but He also raised up Pharaoh to show His wrath and condemnation towards sin. In both ways, He is glorified because both are the right thing to do. God is a Father going after those who have hurt His sons and daughters.

2. God is Merciful and Just

Another thing the ten plagues reveal is that God is both merciful and just. In chapter 7:4, God said, "...*Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring My hosts, My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.*" When I read about the ten plagues, I read them through the lens of the Israelites most of the time. These are good things! The Israelites were cheering for the plagues, 'bring on another plague!' They were their rescue; go was destroying their enemy and rescuing them. It was good news; it was salvation! The children of Israel would sing about the plagues, they would be happy about the plagues; it was their rescue! They gloried in the ten plagues.

- **Mercy to One, Justice to Another**

But this week, I tried to think about them through the lens of Egypt. It looked totally different to the Egyptians. To them, these were not ten awesome plagues that brought salvation. These were ten plagues that destroyed them. They utterly ruined them. They were ten plagues of wrath, and justice, and condemnation, and punishment for all the wickedness they had been doing for hundreds of years. This was about destruction, not about salvation. In this verse, God is very clear that He was rescuing a people through judgment and destruction.

What I think we see first is that Israel, in the Exodus event, was getting what they didn't deserve. They were getting mercy and grace. They didn't deserve it. They were sinners as well, but they were getting God's grace, His mercy, and His rescue. On the flipside of the coin, we see Egypt getting

exactly what they did deserve: wrath, condemnation, and punishment for their sins. The truth be told, they all deserved the ten plagues, but God, in His grace and mercy, brought some through justice on the other side. One is saved and one is destroyed.

As I was beginning to think about this idea that the plagues have both justice and mercy, that they come together, almost kiss one another, and that one is condemned and one is being rescued in the same event, it points directly to the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ is the most pivotal event where God's justice and mercy kiss together, came together perfectly. On the cross, one human being got justice and wrath. At the same time, on the flipside of the coin, Christ's people, the ones who would claim His name, get what they don't deserve, they get to go free. They get rescued. They get grace and mercy. In the Exodus event, Egypt gets what Egypt deserves, and Israel gets what they don't deserve; they get mercy and grace and they get to walk out of there and into the wilderness.

The Cross Event

The cross event is similar, but it's different in that at the cross event, Jesus Christ got what He didn't deserve. He got the full wrath and condemnation of God for you and for me! He took on those ten plagues upon Himself. He took God's wrath upon Himself, and He didn't deserve it! So the full weight of God's justice and wrath towards sin was satisfied on His Son, Christ. He glorified Himself by showing He was a just God who deals with sin. At the same time, there was another part of His glory that through the cross event, there would be people who would get what they don't deserve. They would get grace, mercy, and forgiveness because the wrath of God would fall upon One so that it wouldn't have to fall on the many. That is the story of the cross!

Paul, eluding to just that in Romans 3:26, would say, "It (the cross) was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." In the Exodus event, God is showing Himself to be just. Yes, He would rescue Israel, but what about the Egyptians. Don't they deserve to pay for what they've done? God answers, 'yes, and I will pay them for it. I will give them vengeance and

wrath because that is what sin deserves.' So in the Exodus event, God shows Himself as just. But He also shows Himself as the justifier for people who don't deserve it, the Israelites. They walk free. In the cross event, the same thing happens. God shows Himself to be just. Will God deal with your sin? If you are going to be in Heaven, then how can God let you in if you have sin? God answers that on the cross, 'yes, I am just, and I am glorified in My justice because on the cross, I poured My wrath on My Son, Jesus Christ. I am just; I dealt with your sin in full.' Every part of your rebellion was paid for in full by Christ who died in your place for your sins. God is just and glorified in His justice as the great judge who can only do right. But He can also be the justifier of those who put their faith and trust in Christ. For those who put their faith and trust in Christ, the wrath that Christ took becomes your wrath, which God settled, in Christ, to your account. You get to walk out of the plagues, out of the cross, free, out of the tomb, as a person who is no longer under God's condemnation. You are under His mercy and His grace. The Exodus shows that God is both just and He is merciful. Both of those things go together. The cross of Christ shows the exact same thing. God is just, He deals with sin; and He is also the justifier, He pardons people through the death of His Son. He gives people what they don't deserve.

Eternal Place of Mercy and Justice

The Exodus and the cross show that, but there is another place that shows both the grace and mercy of God, as well as the wrath of God, and both of those things are glorifying to God. There are two places; one is called Heaven, and one is called Hell. In that place, we will see the fullness of both the Exodus and the cross, lived out forevermore; two people, either getting what they do deserve, or getting what they don't deserve. God is just, so He must punish sin. He shows it through the Exodus, He shows it through the cross, and the reality is that you will live in one of those two places, either with Christ in Heaven, forgiven in Him, or in Hell, forever paying for your own sin. God is going to execute His justice and His mercy. The question is which group will you find yourself in? Are you in the Egyptian group who gets what they deserve? Are you in the Hell group who gets what they deserve? No one is going to protest in Hell and say

God isn't fair. They are going to say they are there because they deserve to be. Or will you be in the Heaven group that says you are there only by mercy and grace because Christ took your sin?

Israel escaped because they didn't get what they deserved. Which group are you in? The final time comes at the end of the age or the end of your life, which group will you find yourself in? Will you be a person who gets what you deserve? Or are you a person who gets what you don't deserve, which is grace and mercy? If you don't know Christ, if you are not in that group that will have eternal life with Him forever, I encourage you to let this Exodus remind you that God is just. He will pour out His justice, but there is a place where justice and mercy have kissed. It is on the cross, and if you will claim Christ Jesus, you will be forgiven and free to live with Him forevermore.