

**The Hardening of
Pharaoh's Heart Predicted
&
Moses' Narrow Escape
from Death**

Exodus 4:19 – 5:23

Introduction

- Exodus chapter 3:1 – 4:18 picked up the history when Moses was 80 years old.
- We learned about Moses attempted refusal to accept God's call to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

- In our passage for today we learn about the events that occurred after Moses accepted God's call.

God tells Moses to leave Midian and return to Egypt (4:19)

Exodus 4:19 And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead."

- Moses is no longer being sought for his murder of an Egyptian.

- It was common practice in the ancient world, as it sometime is in the modern world, for a new government to cancel criminal penalties imposed by a previous government.
- The Pharaoh in power when Moses committed murder was now dead, along with any others who might have

- had legal standing and the desire to press the case (remember - 40 years have passed!).

Moses obeys God and takes his wife and sons with him to Egypt (4:20)

²⁰ So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

- Moses now has two sons – Gershom and Eliezer (1 Chron. 23:15).

God tells Moses He will harden Pharaoh's heart (4:21-23)

²¹ And the LORD said to Moses, "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. ²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel

is my firstborn son, ²³ and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.'"

- Moses is told a second time that God would harden Pharaoh's heart so that Pharaoh would not cooperate (Exo. 4:21).

- God had already told Moses that Pharaoh would not cooperate nor let the Israelites go (Exo. 3:19).
- It will require God to smite Egypt with all his “wonders” [plagues] before Pharaoh would be willing to let the Israelites leave Egypt (Exo. 3:20).

- In His mercy to Pharaoh, God instructed Moses to warn Pharaoh that if he refuses to allow Israel, God's "firstborn son" [the Israelites] to leave Egypt, God would kill Pharaoh's firstborn son (Exo. 3:23).
- This warning and promise is fulfilled in the 10th and final plague.

On the way to Egypt, Moses narrowly escapes death (4:24-26)

²⁴ At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. ²⁵ Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" ²⁶ So he let him alone. It was

then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.

- Moses had failed to have one of his two sons circumcised (perhaps Eliezer). This was disobedience to the covenant requirements God had made with Abraham (Gen. 17:10-14). Failure to obey covenant stipulations required that the offender "be cut off" from the Israelite nation.

- To be “cut off” from the nation most likely means “killed” (compare Exo. 31:14; Lev. 20:2-5).
- Notice that Zipporah knew exactly what to do to save Moses’ life.
- Perhaps Moses had Gershom, his first son circumcised, and Zipporah may have strongly reacted to such an operation of her 8 day old son.

- Perhaps she had refused to let Moses circumcise her second son?
- God was merciful to Moses. God allowed Zipporah to circumcise Eliezer, thus sparing Moses' life.
- God does not excuse or tolerate deliberate sin in the lives of His people even if the sin occurs in an attempt to make a spouse happy!

- God expects our loyalty and obedience to His stipulations to trump our loyalty to anyone else. (see Deut. 13:4, 6-11)

Moses and Aaron's successful meeting with the elders (4:27-31)

²⁷ The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. ²⁸ And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him

to do. ²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. ³⁰ Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹ And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that

he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.

- Aaron is told by God to go see Moses. Aaron meets with Moses “at the mountain of God,” which is Mt. Sinai, and Moses explains to Aaron his role in helping him in the task God had assigned to Moses.
- Aaron agrees to cooperate and

- together they go to Egypt and meet with the Israelite elders.
- The elders of Israel did not ask Moses about the “name” of God as Moses thought they would (see Exo. 3:13).
- When the elders saw the “signs” (miracles) God had given Moses they

- were convinced God had sent Moses to deliver them (Exo 4:30-31).
- Remember: Aaron is to say only what Moses tells him to say. Moses receives information from God and then tells Aaron what to say.

Their first encounter with Pharaoh and Pharaoh's negative response (5:1-5)

Exodus 5:1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'" ² But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?"

I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."

- Pharaoh is told God's demand (Exo. 5:1)
- Pharaoh denied that the LORD (Yahweh), the God of Israel, had any authority over him (Exo. 5:2).
- Pharaoh refuses to let Israel go.

³ Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." ⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens." ⁵ And Pharaoh said, "Behold,

the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!"

- The request is made the second time to Pharaoh with the added statement that if Pharaoh does not comply, God may punish the Israelites for their failure to worship Him as instructed (Exo. 4:3).

- Pharaoh refuses and scolds Moses and Aaron for keeping the Israelites from their labors (Exo. 4:4-5)

Pharaoh increases the Israelite work load as punishment for the request (Exo 5:6-19)

⁶ The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, ⁷ "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. ⁸ But the number of bricks

that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle.

Therefore they cry, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.'⁹ Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words."

¹⁰ So the taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the

people, "Thus says Pharaoh, 'I will not give you straw. ¹¹ Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least.'" ¹² So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. ¹³ The taskmasters were urgent, saying, "Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw."

¹⁴ And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?" ¹⁵ Then the foremen of the people of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, "Why do you treat your servants like this?" ¹⁶ No

straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' And behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people."¹⁷ But he said, "You are idle, you are idle; that is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.'¹⁸ Go now and work. No straw will be given you, but you must still deliver the same number of bricks."

19 The foremen of the people of Israel saw that they were in trouble when they said, "You shall by no means reduce your number of bricks, your daily task each day."

The Israelites' distress and anger at Moses and Aaron (Exo 5:20-21)

²⁰ They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; ²¹ and they said to them, "The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

Moses blames God for the distressing situation (Exo. 5:22-23)

²² Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? ²³ For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all."

- Moses seems to have forgotten that God has already told him twice that Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go unless God made Pharaoh let them go.
- Perhaps in anticipating Pharaoh's stubbornness, Moses did not expect the cruel retribution against the Israelites as a result of his mission.

- Moses evidently expected God's promised deliverance would occur relatively quickly, and would not involve setbacks or disappointments.
- Moses reveals to all readers how he was unreasonably impatient with God. He had not yet learned that God's methods and timing only

- sometimes coincides with our expectations.

Next time:

God declares War on Egypt and Pharaoh!

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