

EXODUS

THE GOD WHO RESCUES

SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 7:1-7

To understand more about the dynamics between Moses, Aaron, and Pharaoh.

Read the Text:

“And the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. 2 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. 3 But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, 4 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. 5 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.” 6 Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD commanded them. 7 Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.” (Exodus 7:1-7, ESV)

Study the Text:

Who is Who?

Verses 1 through 7 of chapter 7 are once again summative in that they summarize what has essentially already been stated in Exodus 4:14-16, but with some slight differences. This time, instead of Aaron communicating to the people, he will communicate to Pharaoh. Beyond that, instead of the people merely accepting God’s plan, the goal now is to bend Pharaoh to God’s will. Below are a few important details.

LIKE A GOD

In verse 1, God tells Moses: “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.” There are a couple of reasons this is significant. For one, it is demonstrative of the way God communicates to people through prophets. God typically will raise up a prophet to speak to His people and demonstrate His power through not only word, but deed (i.e. miracles). In the same way, Moses will be imbued with God’s power to speak authoritatively and to perform miracles and Aaron will serve as Moses’ voice as the prophet (likely because of Moses’ fear of not being eloquent in speech).

More than that, however, there is likely something else at play. At this point in time, Egypt was an immensely powerful nation and Pharaoh was seen as a god before the people. He would be addressed with divine terms and worshipped and revered by the Egyptians. Bear in mind, Egypt was polytheistic, meaning they did not believe in and worship *one* God, but *many* gods. So this is a bit of a flex on God’s part. The man who is seen as a god before his people will suffer Moses as God before him. The false god king will be toppled by the real God through the agency of a mere man.

HIS LAND

Notice also the language used to describe Egypt in verse 2: “...to let the people of Israel go out of *his land*.” This is not the first time this language has been used to describe Egypt (Ex. 6:1, 11; 11:10). Again, there are likely a couple of reasons for this language. For one, it reflects the ownership of Pharaoh over the people. As the divine ruler of his people, he is not only seen as the leader of the people, but the *owner* of them. Beyond

that, God refers to the promised land as “your land” (Ex. 23:26, 33; 34:24). The “his land/your land” language makes clear to Moses that Egypt is not where they belong. They are truly foreigners in Egypt and belong elsewhere. Moses, Aaron, and the Israelites belong to the land that God promised to Abraham: *Canaan* (Gen. 12:7; 15:18; 17:8).

A HARD HEART

Again, there is language of God’s hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. There has already been evidence of his hardness of heart in Exodus 5:1-2, when he initially balks at the idea of letting the Israelites go. More clarity is needed on what this means, though. The word “harden” (Heb. *Hiqšâ*) means “to give courage,” not “to make cruel.” In other words, it isn’t that God will make Pharaoh’s heart cruel or evil; God doesn’t need to do to Pharaoh’s heart that which is already true of it. It means that God is giving Pharaoh’s heart strength to continue to do his own will, and not the will of anyone else (God included).

Often these passages are seen as God somehow making Pharaoh commit evil acts, but that isn’t the case. God is simply strengthening Pharaoh to carry out his already present, evil desires. As the stakes get higher and higher (because of the multitude of plagues that will soon befall Egypt), Pharaoh will need strength to be resolved to his own plans, plans which will inevitably result in his destruction. If, hypothetically then, God did not harden his heart, it doesn’t mean that Pharaoh would do the right thing. It just means that he maybe wouldn’t have had the courage to do what wanted all along. One should not blame God for the evil schemes of pharaoh, nor should we apologize for God’s actions. Pharaoh, and only pharaoh, is complicit in his sin, and he is given five different opportunities to repent in the process before succumbing to his demise.

GREAT ACTS OF JUDGMENT

God also foreshadows the coming plagues that Moses will enact by God’s power in verse 4: “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.” In verse 5 he reiterates this by suggesting he will “stretch out” His hand against Egypt, a common personification of God and His acts of judgment against a person or group of people. Zephaniah 2:13 says, “And he will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and he will make Nineveh a desolation, a dry waste like the desert.” In Ezekiel 25:13, God says: “I will stretch out my hand against Edom and cut off from it man and beast,” and then in verse 16 He says, “I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines.” That God will “stretch out His hand” against Egypt can only mean one thing: judgment. And this judgment will culminate in the death of every firstborn child in the kingdom without the covering of the blood of the Passover lamb.

A NOTE ON AGE

After verse 6 reports the obedience of Moses and Aaron to do “just as the LORD commanded them,” verse 7 gives us a small note of how old Moses and Aaron were when they went to speak to Pharaoh. Moses was 80 years old, and Aaron was 83 years old. When you factor in that after the exodus out of Egypt the people of God spent roughly 40 years in the wilderness coupled with Deuteronomy’s account that Moses was 120 years old when he died, it all adds up. 80 and 83 years was considered quite old in the ancient world and that both of these men had survived and gained the collective wisdom of living as long as they had, they probably carried a bit more respect among the people by mere virtue of their age. Adulthood began at 20 years of age, and 40 years was the length of time it took for a generation to die off. That Moses had already lived for two generational cycles (and would live through a third cycle before he died) was significant. Beyond that, it’s important to note that Moses’ most important work in his life began two thirds of a way through his entire lifespan. It’s never too late for God to call someone into His service.

What About Now?

One takeaway is the importance of understanding that God does not need to make people choose to do bad things in order to bring judgment upon them as is sometimes suggested. Pharaoh's heart was hardened to do that which he already desired. All have sinned and fallen short; we've no need for God to help us in our sinful endeavors (Rom. 3:23). Another takeaway is the fact that God called Moses into service late in his life. God does not place a shelf life on human beings. Age is not a factor for Him. He will call and use who He desires regardless of who they are, how old they are, and what their past looks like.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Exodus 7:1. What will Moses and Aaron be like to Pharaoh? What does this mean?

2. Read Exodus 7:2. What words will Moses speak to Pharaoh and what message will Aaron deliver to him?

Day Two

1. Read Exodus 7:3-4. What will God do to Pharaoh? Will it make a difference?

2. Read Zephaniah 2:13 and Ezekiel 25:13, 16. What does the outstretched hand of God mean in these passages? How does this connect to Exodus 7:4?

Day Three

1. What does it mean, according to the notes, for God to "harden Pharaoh's heart?" What does it *not* mean?

2. Read Exodus 7:5. Who will know that Yahweh is God, and why?

Day Four

1. Read Exodus 7:6. What did Moses and Aaron do?

2. Read Exodus 7:7. How old was Moses and Aaron, respectively, when they were tasked by God to go and speak to Pharaoh?
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Discuss the Text!

Week 13 Discussion: It's Not Too Late

One of the big takeaways in this passage is subtle but important; Moses and Aaron were respectively 80 and 83 years old when God called them into the most important service of the Old Testament. Simply put: God does not care about your age. He will call you if He desires to call you, and He will do so when He desires to do so. Truly, the Psalmist was correct when he said: "Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him" (Ps. 115:3). If He desires to call you two thirds of the way through your life, He will do so, and He will equip you to do that to which He has called you. Talk as a group about how this shapes (or reshapes) the way you view God using you for His kingdom and glory.

1. Icebreaker: What is the "prime age" for living in your opinion? Why?
2. Do you believe you are too young or old for God to use you? Why?
3. Do you ever put limits on yourself because of your age?
4. What are the strengths of young people in the church?
5. What are the strengths of older people in the church?
6. If you could be used by God in any role or capacity, what would it be? Share with the group.

Takeaways:

1. Moses and Aaron would be used by God to bring judgment onto Egypt for Pharaoh's hardness of heart.
2. Pharaoh's heart will be further hardened by God, which simply means God will strengthen Pharaoh's heart to do what he has already set out to do.
3. Moses and Aaron were 80 and 83 years old when God called them to this task.