

Extraordinary Power

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[0 : 00] On Boxing Day 1944, a Japanese Imperial Army intelligent officer, Hiro Onado, was dropped off at Laban Island of the Philippines during World War II.

He and three other soldiers were ordered to do all he could to hamper the Allies on the island, including destroying the airstrip and the pier at the harbor.

The order also stated that under no circumstance was he to surrender or to take his own life. He took the order to heart, so he spent 29 years hiding out in the Philippine jungle after the war was ended in August 1945.

Until his former commander traveled from Japan back to the island to relieve him from his duty by the Emperor's order in 1974.

For 29 years, Onado and his companions carried out guerrilla activities and engaged in several shootouts with the local police.

[1 : 12] They had many pieces of evidence that the war has ended. The first one was in October 1945, when he saw an airdrop leaflet announcing that Japan had surrendered.

But their heart was not convinced and decided to stay hiding. One of his companions surrendered in 1950, and another one was killed in 1954.

Onado finally lost his last companion in 1972 after another shootout. In February 1974, a young Japanese university jobber, Norio Tsuzuki, came to the island to look for him, wanting to listen to Lieutenant Onado, wanting to listen to Lieutenant Onado.

When asked by Suzuki, why would you not come out from the jungle? Onado said he was waiting for his superior officer to relieve him of his order.

So both government organized for his former commander to travel back to the island to order him to surrender formally. The stubborn refusal of hero or another to surrender for 29 years caused constant disturbance and trouble for the locals on the Philippines island.

[2 : 38] They stole their crops, they killed their livestock, and even some farmers too. Today's chapter, we will also witness a nation being assaulted by a series of disasters, and a leader who, despite these disasters, exacerbated the suffering of its people by repeatedly refusing to choose what is good and right.

We will learn about Pharaoh and the plate, but most of all we will learn about the power and mercy of God, and what will it take for you to surrender all of your life to God.

Last week in chapter 3 and 4, we saw how God called and equipped Moses for the task he is about to do, by promising that he will be with him always.

After a couple of chapters of going back and forth, we finally see Moses go up to Pharaoh in chapter 5 to deliver God's demand.

He approached Pharaoh with his brother Aaron and proclaimed to him in chapter 5 verse 1, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, say, let my people go so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.

[3 : 55] Moses. They did an incredible boat at risking their life to make such a demand upon Pharaoh, but they did it without compromise.

And there is no mention of Moses in this world. They were speaking for God. Moses finally realized that and took to his heart that God's liberation of his people would be fulfilled through God's power, not his.

Moses was full of fear and self-centeredness before meeting the living God, but God helped him to repent of his pride. He is now confident and focused on God's power and began to die to himself.

In the New Testament, we see the disciples of Jesus experience the same kind of changes before and after the cross and the resurrection.

They were changed because they have met the living Christ and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Disciples of Jesus Christ were transformed because they have met the great I Am.
[5 : 11] If you are a Christian, are you living a transformed and transforming life? Are you growing? How have you been surrendering your whole life to live a life that centers on glorifies and honor God?

When Moses approached Pharaoh, he did not come to negotiate. He came with a simple command that based on the authority of the living God. He delivered to Pharaoh God's demand, let my people go so that they may worship me.

Now it was Pharaoh's turn to encounter the power of the living God. How would he respond? Would he be transformed like Moses? Would he have changed of heart and obeyed the demand of God? Moses' faith has increased through his interaction with God as God transformed his heart and his willingness to trust and serve him.

When it comes to Pharaoh, his story will witness an exact opposite dynamic. Pharaoh's heart became like Moses' heart, hardened by self-love and pride.

[6 : 24] But unlike Moses, Pharaoh's heart proceeds on a path of further hardening. Pharaoh's heart never softened. Instead, it becomes increasingly resistant to God's love and will.

He stubbornly refused to yield his heart towards God. During his first encounter with Moses and Aaron, in Pharaoh's response to God's demand to free his people and allow them to go to worship him, we can see the starting condition of his heart.

Pharaoh responds with contempt in Exodus 5, verse 2, saying, Who is the Lord that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go.

Pharaoh's reply seems blatant disrespect to God's message. How dare he speak like that to our almighty God? But the statement of, I do not know the Lord, is a true statement of where he is at. Before his encounter with God, he considered himself a son of God, and no one tells him what to do. Pharaoh had not previously encountered God or his message.

[7 : 42] In many ways, he was just like the rest of us in this regard. When many of us first heard God's message through the scripture, some would have a similar reaction to this claim on our life.

Like Pharaoh, we say in our hearts, Who is the Lord that I should obey him? And I do not know the Lord. Every person who does not know God begins in the same position that Pharaoh occupied, inclined not to accept God's truth.

But God was not done with Pharaoh or any one of us. That is just the beginning. God responded to Pharaoh's confession of ignorance of him by unleashing a series of events that were meant to ensure that Pharaoh and Egypt would know the Lord.

I will speak about those events of how God revealed his power to Pharaoh and his people in detail later. But let's keep looking at Pharaoh's heart now. We saw in Exodus 5, verse 2, that Pharaoh is like a lot of us.

When we begin our respective journey to find out more about God, we begin this journey with an ignorant and resistant heart. But let's see what happened to his heart as God revealed himself through the power of the plagues.

[9 : 10] As each successive plague comes upon Egypt, Pharaoh's heart has only one reaction. It becomes hardened to God.

That is an oversimplification of what is transpiring in Pharaoh's heart. In his commentary, J.A. Mottia points out that when it comes to Pharaoh's heart and his progressive hardening, we encounter at least three ways to describe this process.

First, in Exodus 7, in verse 13, it tells us that Pharaoh's heart become hard. And verse 14, the Lord says Pharaoh's heart is unyielding.

Then in verse 23, Pharaoh did not take the first plague to heart. He did not allow his heart to be touched. Then if we go over to chapter 8, from verse 15 to 32, it declared that Pharaoh's hardened his own heart.

So verse 19 states that Pharaoh's heart was hard, just as the Lord has said. And finally, when we come to chapter 9, verse 7, it says that Pharaoh investigated the truth of God's word, yet his heart was unyielding.

[10 : 36] So there's this statement in verse 12 that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. We can see in chapter 9 and even chapter 10 that Pharaoh even admit and confess that he has sinned.

But all aspects of Pharaoh's heart come to a culmination in Exodus 9, 34 to 10, verse 1, where Paul had just read out for us. But I'll read that again. Exodus 9, verse 34.

When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again. He and his officials hardened their hearts. So Pharaoh's heart was hard, and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the Lord has said through Moses.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his officials, so that I may perform these signs of mine among them.

There are two perspectives to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, Pharaoh and God. By his moral choice, Pharaoh let his heart become increasingly set in its way, getting more stubborn and committed more and more irreversibly to a cause of cultural genocide regarding the Israelites.

[11 : 59] Pharaoh is responsible for the hardening of his own heart through his action and choice. God has revealed himself to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh chose to respond with rebellion.

And with each rebellion, Pharaoh's heart becomes more stubborn in its wickedness. His heart becomes more brutal and rigid with each sinful choice he makes.

From God's perspective, as a moral ruler of this world, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is nothing more than a statement that the point of no return has been reached.

Pharaoh's own choice had made his heart so hard that the only justly, due consequence is to judge that his heart is hardened. And God took the full responsibility as creator of everything in this world to say, I have hardened his heart.

The story of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart revealed to us that there is a point at which God will no longer endure or bear our rebellions towards him, but rightfully judge us for what we are.

[13 : 20] After repeated rebellions, whereby Pharaoh hardened himself against the revelation of God, God judged him for his disobedience and sealed his heart of stone.

Don Carson's book, For the Love of God, which I was using for my devotionals earlier, it says that God has not hardened a morally neutral man.

He has pronounced judgment on a wicked man. Hell itself is a place where repentance is no longer possible. God's hardening has the effect of imposing that sentence a little earlier than usual.

God's hardening and Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart are mutually complementary. The dynamic at work in Pharaoh's heart are not unique to him, but revealing a general truth about God and his sovereignty over every human.

God is never complicit in instigating or causing sin, but he is not required to stop us from having what we desire, even if it is sinful.

[14 : 40] The cycle of hardening that we see in Pharaoh's heart is not limited to those who do not believe in God.

Christian can also become entangled in self-hardening cycle, whereby the hearts become stubborn towards God. We build up a tolerance to a particular sin in our life.

We try to limit our obedience. Instead of throwing ourselves into God's service, we try to limit what we do.

What's the least I can get away with? How far do I have to go? Why should I have to deny my feelings? Rather than suffering for doing the right thing and obeying God, we all want comfort and self-glorification.

And we get entangled in a temporary, momentary release that sin gives us. When it comes to obedience, the writer of Hebrew told us that in chapter 5, 8 to 9, that although Jesus was the son of God, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

[15 : 58] And once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. Jesus obeyed God even to the point of death on the cross.

God convicted us of our sin by Jesus' death and softening our heart by sacrificing his own son to bear the judgment of our rebellions.

God become, Jesus become the source of eternal salvation for all who committed their whole life to obey him. What happened to the heart of Pharaoh teaches us about the power and sovereignty of God's will.

It reminds us that the significant changes between the believers and unbelievers are not the absence of sin, but rather the presence of God's grace in softening, convicting, and renewing the believers' hearts.

Pharaoh's continuous rebellions and disregard towards God's call to turn to him to lead to severe consequences. A series of disasters before Egypt in 10 plates.

[17 : 20] Exodus 7-10 covers the first 9, and the next week we'll talk about the last plate. So what do these plates teach us about God?

The plate serves many purposes, and God refers to the plates in chapter 7, verse 3 as signs and wonders. The Bible tells us that signs and wonders are often performed by God for a very explicit and truthful purpose.

First, there were a tool of judgment upon Pharaoh and Egypt for rebellions against God and the abuse of God's people.

Secondly, they are tools of authentication. They often serve to validate an authenticated message of God's messages. The plates conveyed to Pharaoh that Moses that Moses was a representative of the Lord working with his authority.

In the New Testament, Jesus also used signs and wonders to authenticate his roles as a savior and confirm his divinity. The third purpose of the signs and wonders is they point beyond themselves to a more significant truth.

[18 : 42] The plates immediately revealed God's power. They answered Pharaoh's declaration back in 5, verse 2 that he did not know the God of Israel. Between 5 to chapter 11, God declared numerous times that the purpose of his action are so that Pharaoh and Egypt would know the Lord.

Those references are shown on the screen. In all these chapters in each of the plates, God constantly repeats, you will know that I am the Lord.

They also point beyond this immediate event to a greater truth about God's patience and not wanting anyone to perish but to come to repentance. God is powerful and is a God of mercy and salvation.

All these chapters are God's revealing himself. The purpose of the plate was to convey the knowledge of God not simply to Egypt or Israel but the world.

Later in chapter 34 of Exodus, it refers to God as a compassionate and merciful, slow to anger, lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations and forgiving wickedness, rebellions and sin.

[20 : 07] Yet, he does not leave the guilty unpunished. God is patient in his application of judgment. His compassion and mercy are demonstrated because he did not send down the full force of his plate until the seventh plate which he said in chapter 9, verse 15 will wipe Pharaoh and Egypt off the earth.

But before he does so, he said in verse 19, keep an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter because the hell will fall on every person and the animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field and they will die.

Pharaoh has shown no regards for the suffering of his people for six plates, repeatedly rebelling against God. This plate will take human life and the correct response means life and death.

And what was the response of the people at a time? Let's look at verse 20 of chapter 9. Those officials of Pharaoh who fear the word of the Lord hurry to bring their slave and livestock inside, but those who ignore the word of God left their slave and livestock in the field.

God provides Pharaoh and the Egyptians with ten plates to spark repentance in them. Those that God have chosen to show mercy respond accordingly and were saved and those refuse to hear the repeated warning and upset.

[21 : 58] God's patience and mercy are sharply contrasted and revealed by the stubbornness and cruelty of Pharaoh and his officials. The plates reveal that God is patiently merciful, but they also refuse a point of no return.

This plate a comfort assurance for those who trust in God and horrific certainty of judgment for those who do not.

In the gospel and the rest of the New Testament, the signs and wonders performed by Jesus and the gospel's very proclamation serve a similar ultimate purpose as the plates.

The gospel, like the plates, serves simultaneously to assure those who heed the word of the Lord. Those who trust God for his saving power and took the right action to respond will have life.

And remind those who ignore the word of the Lord that while God is patient, God will ultimately bring judgment upon those who reject Jesus Christ and fail to acknowledge what God is doing for and in their life.

[23 : 19] And at that time, only death remains. God said in chapter 9, 16 and chapter 10, verse 2, that one other purpose for these signs is to show that I may show you my power and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth and that you may tell your children and your grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them and that you may know that I am the Lord.

What happened to Pharaoh and those Egyptians who ignored God's word were designed for the future proclamation that the God we learn from the Bible is the only true God the world's creator. Like many cultures of today, Pharaoh and the Egyptians believed in many gods, the sun gods, the river gods, the harvard gods. Pharaoh was seen as a son of gods so his issue was why should I listen to your God when I have got my gods of my own?

He was saying, don't impose your belief on me. People are not offended if you tell them you are a Christian, choosing Christianity as a religion or spirituality as long as you do not proclaim that Jesus is the only way to God and only truth and relevant God.

the place are God's ways of distinguishing himself as the only true God and only relevant God and declaring that he is the only God worth obeying.

[25 : 08] God defeated the gods of Egypt and the gods of our culture that believe all religions are valid. Everyone has a right to live how they like.

Many people proclaim by their life choices that they are their own God. they determine who they are and how they will live their life. A lot of Christians also does the same.

They choose when, where, and how they worship God, as if being a Christian is all about themselves. To them, the gathering of believers is nothing to do with mutual encouragement of one and others.

others. Even being physically among believers, they will click in and click off without making any effort to interact or engage with one another.

God's confession. They may confess they have sinned when the sufferings and consequences of sin come, but go on sinning when the suffering are taken away.

[26 : 18] but deciding to become a Christian was only the beginning. It matters how you are living and growing in your obedience to God's words.

And more importantly, it's your motivation and your attitude behind those obedience. Jesus has come, has become the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

him because he learned obedience from what he suffered. He suffered the rejection of man, he suffered the cross, and ultimately the rejection of God on the cross.

By his death and resurrection, he bears the consequences and the punishment that our rebellion's stubborn hearts deserves.

The resurrection of Jesus is the most excellent signs and wonder that God performed. It means to point us to the powerful and merciful God, to acknowledge his patience in dealing with us.

[27 : 31] not all people who have seen God's signs and wonder will end up believing and fear God. Many will choose to stay stubborn like lieutenant or another or Pharaoh and his officials.

But to you who are here in prison today, because Jesus has fought for us and won, we no longer need to hide in the jungle of life.

Today, God's word has come to you to relieve you and to order you to surrender. It proclaim to us the name of God is Jesus Christ.

Hurry, today is your time to surrender and come inside Jesus to be saved. Don't stay out in the field and ignore God's word. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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