

Pharaoh's Hardened Heart

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[0 : 00] even more brutal. And then what we've seen last week and this week is through the ten plagues, God proceeds to show Himself to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians and to the Israelites and ultimately to the whole world as we read this text today. Now, last week, Pastor Nick's sermon focused on what the plagues are all about.

And he said the plagues are ultimately about God magnifying His name in His judgments and in His salvation. But today we're focusing on the same narrative, chapters 7 through 10, but we're focusing in particular on the character of Pharaoh and Pharaoh's response to God over the course of the plagues. I want to begin by reading from the account of the first, the beginning of the plagues in chapter 7. So that's page 49. I'm going to read chapter 7 starting at verse 1.

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 look down to verse 14.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened. He refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he's going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. And you shall say to him, The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness. But so far you have not obeyed.

Thus says the Lord, By this you shall know that I am the Lord. Behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.

[2 : 34] And the Lord said to Moses, Say to Aaron, Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and vessels of stone. Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned to blood. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them as the Lord had said. Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile.

Out of the night that covers me, black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul. In the fell clutch of circumstance, I have not winced or cried aloud.

Under the bludgeonings of chance, my head is bloody but unbowed. Beyond this place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade. And yet the menace of the years finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how narrow the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul.

[4 : 30] So wrote William Ernest Henley in 1875 in a poem entitled *Invictus*, which means unconquered or invincible.

At the age of 12, Henley had contracted tuberculosis. He battled the effects of that throughout his life. One of his legs had to be amputated below the knee, and he endured multiple surgeries on his other foot in order to save his remaining leg. He wrote the poem while recovering in the hospital.

Now, many people have actually found this poem very inspiring as an expression of confidence and resilience in the face of adversity. Winston Churchill quoted it in a speech. Nelson Mandela recited it when he was imprisoned. U.S. prisoners of war in North Vietnam passed it along to each other.

School children recited it at the Democratic National Convention in 2016. But the poem is not just an expression of human resilience. It's also an expression of unyielding self-reliance.

Not just defiance in the face of difficult circumstances, but defiance in the face of death and judgment and ultimately in the face of God. I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul.

[5 : 54] Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber, was also inspired by this poem. He chose it as his final statement before his execution. And *Invictus* could well have been the motto of the character that we're looking at this morning, Pharaoh. Pharaoh boasted that he was invincible. Not just the master of his own fate, but the sovereign ruler over all of Egypt. He even claimed to be the incarnation of a God. The son of the sun god, Amun-Re. And yet what we'll see this morning is that in the face of the one true God, Pharaoh was not invincible. He was not the captain of his fate. He was not the master of his soul. He was a mere mortal who stood under the righteous judgment of the one true God.

This morning, I want us to consider two lessons that we can learn from the character of Pharaoh. Now, over the centuries, people have approached the character of Pharaoh from a variety of angles.

Perhaps someone could look at the negotiations between Pharaoh and Moses and write something about political diplomacy. I haven't found that yet. There's a lot about the philosophy of divine and human causation. Some people have debated, what about the plagues? To what extent were they natural events? To what extent were they direct supernatural occurrences? What about the magicians?

Well, you know, were they just playing tricks, or were they accessing spiritual powers? But here's the question I've asked myself this week. If Moses was writing these chapters of Exodus, or retelling aloud the story of the plagues to the Israelites after they had left Egypt and as they were journeying through the wilderness, what would Moses have wanted the children of Israel to learn from the character of Pharaoh?

I think there are two primary lessons for the Israelites back then and for us today. And the first one is this. God is sovereign even over a man like Pharaoh.

[8 : 26] God magnifies His name not only despite Pharaoh's hardened heart, but even through Pharaoh's hardened heart. Now, according to the ancient Egyptian religion, Pharaoh's heart was supposed to be pure.

The ancient Egyptians believed, not very differently from any of us, that the essence of a person is found in their heart. And they also believed that after death, your heart would be weighed.

The god Anubis would weigh the dead person's heart on a scale, balancing it against the feather of righteousness. So, one scholar writes, anyone whose heart was weighed down with misdeeds would be annihilated, while anyone whose heart was filled with integrity, truth, and good acts would be escorted to heavenly bliss. And according to the Egyptian religion, the Pharaoh was the incarnation of the sun god, the manifestation of the sun god. And he supposedly had a pure heart, light as a feather.

But one thing we see in this narrative is that the one true God judged otherwise. Chapter 7, verse 14, the Lord said to Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened.

Now, from chapter 4 all the way to chapter 14, there are a total of 20 statements, roughly depending on how you count them, about Pharaoh's heart being hardened. Sometimes it says Pharaoh's hardened his own heart. Sometimes it says Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Sometimes it says the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. There are two different Hebrew words that are translated the same way in our English Bibles as hardened in reference to Pharaoh's heart. Now, the word in chapter 7, verse 14, appears eight times over the course of these chapters, and it's a word that is commonly translated heavy or dense. So, in chapter 5, verse 9, the same word refers to heavy work, burdensome labor.

[10 : 39] In chapter 9, it refers to heavy hail. Chapters 8 and 10, it refers to dense swarms of flies and locusts. So, this word in chapter 14, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, you could literally translate it, Pharaoh's heart is heavy. And what that means in the Egyptian context is Pharaoh's heart is heavy with evil. It's not pure and light as a feather. It's weighed down with evil. The one true God has weighed Pharaoh's heart and found it wanting. But Pharaoh claimed not only to possess divine purity of heart, he also claimed to possess divine sovereignty. In other words, he claimed to be in charge, invincible. In Pharaoh's mind, he could do whatever he wanted with the people who lived within his borders. He could do whatever he wanted with the Israelites. He could enslave them. He could tell them to make more bricks without straw. He could beat them. He could do whatever.

He ruled over Egypt with absolute authority. There were no checks and balances. One scholar writes, the Egyptians believed that Pharaoh's heart was the all-controlling factor in history and society. But once again, what we see in this narrative is that the one true God judged otherwise. Pharaoh was not pure, and Pharaoh was not ultimately in control.

From God's vantage point, which is the only vantage point that ultimately matters, Pharaoh was not invincible. And what we see through this whole story is that God is in complete control even over Pharaoh's own heart. Look back at chapter 4, verse 21.

I skipped over this verse when I preached on this chapter. Some of you might have noticed that. But I wasn't trying to avoid it. Chapter 4, verse 21, the Lord says to Moses, When you go back to Egypt, do before Pharaoh all the miracles I've put in your power, but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

Even before the plagues began, God declared in advance that he would harden Pharaoh's heart. And that one by one through the ten plagues, God would demonstrate the emptiness and powerlessness of all the gods of Egypt. That's what Pastor Nick talked about in his sermon last week.

[13 : 26] That each of the plagues targeted one or more of the false gods that the Egyptians worshipped. They worshipped the Nile River. That was one of the major gods. The Nile was seen as the giver and taker of life.

When the Nile water turns to blood, God's showing, the Nile is not worthy of your worship. And one by one, God is knocking down the idols of Egypt and saying, I am the only true God worthy of your worship.

So God declared that he would harden Pharaoh's heart, that he would demonstrate the emptiness and powerlessness of the gods of Egypt, and ultimately he would set his people free.

And many times, such as chapter 7, verse 13, it says something like, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them as the Lord had said. God's word was being fulfilled.

His plan was being carried forward. Now, the verb translated hardened in 421 is the other main verb that appears throughout these ten chapters or so in reference to Pharaoh's heart.

[14 : 35] It appears a total of twelve times, and it's a word that commonly means to make strong. So it's, now, it's not as if Pharaoh's heart was previously soft and God added something to harden it from the outside.

Okay? It's not as if Pharaoh's heart was previously pure and God put a few drops of poison in Pharaoh's heart to make him act in an evil way. No. The Bible is always very clear.

Sin does not originate with God. Sin originates with us. And in Pharaoh's case, you can go all the way back to chapter 3, verse 19, where God says to Moses, I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go.

No. Not by a mighty hand. In other words, no human power, no human force will be able to persuade or force the king of Egypt to let the Israelites go.

Pharaoh was dead set against the liberation of God's people from the very beginning. So, Mike Wilkerson puts it this way.

[16 : 02] What we see in the plague narrative is that God is ultimately sovereign over Egypt, even over the heart of its king. And God did not violate Pharaoh's will in bringing about the occasions for his sinful heart to be further exposed and increasingly hardened.

In other words, God strengthened Pharaoh's heart, which was already heavy and weighed down with evil. And the result was Pharaoh persisted in his stubborn rebellion against the Lord.

That's what it means when it says, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. It's a strong statement.

It's a scary statement. It's framed in the active voice. It's a manifestation of God's judgment on Pharaoh. Pharaoh. Someone else wrote one of the ways that God punishes sin is to allow the sin to continue and to take its destructive course.

You know, every day, God shows extraordinary mercy to this world by restraining all kinds of people from doing all kinds of evil that in their hearts they want to carry out.

[17 : 29] I mean, even, how many times have you wanted to do something and you got distracted or you couldn't find the person so you didn't say what you wanted to say to them?

All kinds of things. Every day, God in His providence prevents the world from devolving into utter chaos. And God does most of this without even anyone asking Him to.

And most of the time without us even recognizing it. It's called common grace. Every single one of us here has experienced it and benefited from it.

And yet, in God's divine justice, God does not always restrain every evil inclination of every human heart.

Isn't it often true that the more God mercifully restrains our evil inclinations and protects us from the consequences of our sin, the more we try to deny that we actually have evil inclinations?

[18 : 48] And that might be the worst deception of all. And so, sometimes, God chooses to give us over to our evil inclinations, to harden our hearts in the direction we're already headed, to put on display the exceeding sinfulness of our sin.

And it's not a pretty picture. God does not restrain Pharaoh from continuing in his evil ways. God does not immediately wipe Pharaoh out.

God deliberately keeps him alive and sustains him, even gives him strength in Pharaoh's ongoing willful rebellion against the Lord. But the irony is, the harder Pharaoh tries to resist God's purpose, the more he ends up serving it.

That's what God says in chapter 9, verse 15 and 16, which is a key part of the plague narrative that helps us understand what's going on.

Moses says this to Pharaoh on behalf of, or God's, Moses is speaking on behalf of the Lord, saying, thus says the Lord, he's saying this to Pharaoh, verse 15, for by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence and you would have been cut off from the earth.

[20 : 17] But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. See, Pharaoh and his hardened heart was not merely an obstacle to God's plan to magnify his name.

He became one of the means through which God magnified his name. Because with every successive plague, God was publicly toppling one more Egyptian idol and revealing himself more and more completely as the only true and living God worthy of our worship.

And he was revealing this to the Israelites, to the Egyptians, and ultimately to future generations, including us. God is going to show his glory to the world, and he is going to carry out his plan of salvation for his people whether you want him to or not.

Even if you are dead set on exalting yourself above Pharaoh, above God, like Pharaoh, you will not ultimately be able to stop God's plan no matter how hard you try.

God is sovereign. He rules even over someone as stubborn and unyielding as Pharaoh. Now, if you are stubbornly resisting God, this is a terrifying warning.

[21 : 59] You may end up a slave to your own worst tendencies, but you will not succeed in resisting God's ultimate plans. But if you are being severely mistreated or persecuted like the people of Israel were in Egypt for the sake of obedience to God, this truth can actually bring great comfort and confidence.

Imagine being a Christian right now in North Korea. America or in an area controlled by ISIS. Do you see how this truth that God is sovereign even over a man like Pharaoh could actually be a source of great comfort?

Sometimes God's people come face to face with tyrants like Pharaoh who are obstinate and unyielding in their opposition to the Lord and their hostile persecution of God's people.

And God wants His people to know that He is not surprised and that despite their boasting, the Pharaohs of this world are not stronger than the Lord Jesus Christ who will ultimately triumph over them.

There are two Psalms that specifically speak about the ten plagues. One of them is Psalm 105 and it's a psalm of confident praise.

[23 : 38] It begins this way, O give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the peoples, sing to Him, sing praises to Him, tell of all His wondrous works, glory in His holy name.

Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice, seek the Lord in His strength, seek His presence continually. Remember the wondrous works that He has done, His miracles and the judgments He uttered, O offspring of Abraham His servant, children of Jacob His chosen ones.

And the Psalm goes on to narrate many of God's works, but including the ten plagues in detail. That's the first lesson for God's people.

God is sovereign even over a man like Pharaoh. God magnified His name even through Pharaoh's stubbornness. So remember God's wondrous works and His great power and praise Him with confidence.

Now the second lesson for God's people is this. Don't harden your heart like Pharaoh did.

[24 : 55] Again, imagine the people of Israel after they've left Egypt and Moses is writing the book of Exodus or retelling aloud these stories to the people. And what does he want them to learn from the character of Pharaoh?

And from the statements over and over that Pharaoh hardened his heart or the heart of Pharaoh was hard or the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Well, they needed to remember that God was sovereign even over someone like Pharaoh.

That would give them confidence in the face of adversity and opposition. That would give them resilience. But they also needed to know that even as God's redeemed people, that they too were prone to harden their hearts, to become stubborn.

They needed not only confidence in the face of external adversity and opposition, but also humility in the face of their own internal spiritual and moral weakness.

as I said earlier, there are only two psalms that speak specifically about the plagues. Psalm 105, a psalm of praise to God for His sovereignty, and the other psalm is Psalm 78, which is a rebuke to the people of Israel for their stubbornness.

[26 : 16] If you look at Psalm 78, it's a long psalm, but if you go to verse 37, Psalm 78, verse 37, describes the Israelites in the wilderness, and it says, their heart was not steadfast toward God.

They were not faithful to His covenant. If you go down to verse 41, it continues, how often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert.

They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power or the day when He redeemed them from the foe, when He performed His signs in Egypt and His marvels in the fields of zone.

And then the psalm goes on to speak about the ten plagues one by one. Here's the point of Psalm 78. The Israelites forgot God's judgments on Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt, and as a result, their hearts were not steadfastly oriented toward faithfulness to God.

They too began worshiping idols. Psalm 78 basically says, remember the plagues so that you don't harden your heart like Pharaoh hardened his.

[27 : 36] It's the same warning we heard from the book of Hebrews in the New Testament. Today, if you hear God's voice, do not harden your hearts. Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

You see, the Bible says that every one of us is vulnerable to the hardening effects of sin. Even God's redeemed people who have been given a new heart, right?

If we've come to faith in Jesus, He's given us a new heart, taken out our heart of stone, given us a heart of flesh, but we are still in danger of becoming stubborn and resistant against the Lord, and God gives us warnings and exhortations to protect us so that we don't end up where Pharaoh ended up.

But we need to have the humility to recognize that Pharaoh's condition is not just a problem for a few tyrants who rule over nations of the world.

The problem of a hardened heart is something that we need to take very seriously for each one of us. Now, the book of Exodus does not hold out much hope for Pharaoh, but the Bible says there is hope for you if you will listen to God's voice today and not harden your heart.

[29 : 16] So, what I want to do is to do what Hebrews 3, 13 tells us to do, to exhort one another so that we are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. And what I want to do is show you five specific ways that Pharaoh's hardened heart manifested itself in order to warn us and guard us against falling into the same patterns.

So, let me give you these five specific ways that through the narrative of Exodus 7 through 10 we see Pharaoh's hardened heart manifesting itself. First, Pharaoh ignored God in his prosperity and he raged against God in his adversity.

For much of his life God had prospered Pharaoh. He was on top of the world. He was the ruler of one of the most powerful nations of the ancient world. He could appreciate great architecture. He could enjoy delicious food.

He could accomplish great exploits. And he denied the reality of God. He says, who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?

I don't know the Lord and I won't let his people go. Pharaoh had no interest in seeking God. He had everything he could want and that was all that mattered to him. Pharaoh. And then God afflicted Pharaoh with one painful plague after another.

[30 : 49] And so Pharaoh couldn't simply ignore and deny the reality of God anymore, but as time went on, he becomes increasingly hostile toward God's messengers.

The last two plagues, the eighth and ninth plague, he drives Moses and Aaron out of his presence. Chapter 10, verse 11, it says Moses and Aaron were driven out of Pharaoh's presence.

Chapter 10, verse 28, Pharaoh says to Moses, get away from me. Take care to never see my face again. On the day you see my face, you shall die. Pharaoh rages against God and God's messengers in the midst of his adversity.

And in the book of Revelation, chapter 16, God's future judgment on the world is depicted as a series of plagues reminiscent of the ones in Egypt.

Waters turn to blood, skies are darkened, locusts destroying locusts, painful sores, thunder and lightning and hail, but the consistent response of the people in the book of Revelation is indifference and hostility toward God.

[31 : 55] It says, they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory. People nod their tongues in anguish and curse the God of heaven for their pain. They did not repent of their deeds.

They cursed God for the plague of the hail. So here's a warning. How are you responding to God in your prosperity? If God's given you success and power and wealth and comfort, have you relegated God to the sidelines of your life?

Have you taken the credit for yourself when really it's ultimately all a gift? or if God has afflicted you, are you leaning into Him in prayer?

Jesus Christ is a merciful and compassionate and strong Savior. Or are you cursing God in your heart and becoming increasingly bitter and hostile toward God and toward His Word in your adversity?

Second, Pharaoh began by resisting God and His messengers. He ended by ruining his own people. From the very beginning, Pharaoh rejected the Lord and the Lord's messengers.

[33 : 12] He could care less about the Israelites, but over time, we see that Pharaoh's heart was not just hardened toward the Lord and the Lord's messengers and the Lord's people, but he was hardened and indifferent to his own people's suffering and even his own family's well-being.

The end of chapter 7 that we read at the beginning, the water in the Nile turns to blood. Pharaoh gets his magicians to do the same thing, however they do it, and his heart remains hardened.

And it just says, Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he didn't take it to heart. Pharaoh says, well, I have servants. They can go dig a hole and get me water and bring it to me.

This won't really bother me. Pharaoh didn't really care that all the Egyptians had to dig for clean water. But then one by one, the plagues gradually hit Pharaoh closer and closer to home.

First, the magicians in his court seemed to take Pharaoh's side. They can duplicate the plagues. Of course, they can never reverse them. But by round three, pretty early in the game, the magicians say, this is the finger of God.

[34 : 33] And it says, Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not listen to them. He didn't just reject Moses and Aaron. He even rejected his own magicians. When they said, this is the one true God.

And finally, in chapter 10, verse 7, some of his officials take initiative to plead with Pharaoh. They say, don't you yet understand? Egypt is ruined.

And finally, Moses threatens the tenth and final plague in chapter 11. Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die. Now, in those days, Pharaoh's firstborn represented his legacy, the future of his dynasty, his most treasured child.

Pharaoh's resistance to the Lord resulted in the ruin, not only of his own country, but even his own family. And again, this is a sober warning.

If you're refusing to take to heart God's Word, it's not just an issue between you and God.

[35 : 44] You may end up causing the ruin of those nearest and dearest to you without even realizing it. Your own family, even.

Third, Pharaoh is sorry about the consequences, but he's not sorry for his sin.

Several times along the way, Pharaoh pleads for relief as things get worse and worse. Starts with the second plague, chapter 8, verse 8. Pharaoh doesn't like all the frogs jumping up on him.

He says, plead with the Lord to take away the frogs from me and my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the Lord. Later on, plead with the Lord for there's been enough of God's thunder and hail.

Chapter 10, verse 17, when the locusts come, plead with the Lord your God to remove this death from me. Pharaoh pleads for relief. He doesn't like the consequences of his sin.

[36 : 56] Now, by the seventh and eighth plague, he even says, I have sinned. Chapter 9, verse 27, after the plague of hail.

Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, this time I have sinned. The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Plead with the Lord. There's been enough of God's thunder and hail.

I'll let you go. You shall stay no longer. And then 10, 16, after the plague of locusts, Pharaoh hastily called Moses and Aaron and said, I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you.

Interestingly, that's the very same language the prodigal son uses when he's coming home. May call into question the sincerity of his repentance, but that's another topic.

Now, therefore, forgive my sin, please, only this once. But I want you to notice two things about Pharaoh's supposed confessions. Number one, Pharaoh says, this time I have sinned.

[38 : 00] The next time he says, forgive my sin, please, only this once. Even a very, very stubborn person can be argued into a corner and forced to admit that they were wrong just this once.

That doesn't actually mean you're repentant. If you say, it only happened once. It wasn't a pattern. It's not a character flaw. It was just a mistake.

But the Bible says that sin is never just a one-time mistake. Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

James says, sinful actions begin with our desires. Desire gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. All the unpleasant consequences.

Sin is rooted in our hearts, in our misplaced desires. And the only way to really change is to acknowledge and expose those idols of our heart.

[39 : 17] Pharaoh never does that. He only reluctantly admits just this once that he has sinned. Moses responds to Pharaoh's first confession of sin in verse 30 of chapter 9 by saying, I know that you do not yet fear the Lord God.

In other words, your confession is motivated not by a genuine reverence for God, but simply by a desire to get relief from unpleasant consequences. And of course, we see that when the plagues are removed, when the unpleasant consequences go away, Pharaoh immediately returns to his old ways.

When Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart. Are you sorry for your sin?

Or are you just sorry for all the pain it causes you? Have you come to realize that your sin is even worse than all the unpleasant consequences that follow from it?

That's what the Bible says. Fourth, Pharaoh is willing to negotiate, but not to surrender. Over time, Pharaoh makes some concessions.

[40 : 43] Chapter 8, verse 25, he says, go sacrifice to the Lord within the land. Then 8, 28, I'll let you sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness, only not very far away. Chapter 10, verse 11, let the men go.

The women and children have to stay. Chapter 10, verse 24, all the people can go, but your livestock have to stay. Pharaoh is willing to negotiate with the Lord as if they were peers, but he's not willing to surrender and acknowledge that God is not his peer, that God is God and Pharaoh is not.

And God does not meet Pharaoh halfway. God is not a negotiator. He will not compromise his standards. He is not your peer.

He alone is the immortal, invisible, only, wise God. But even more than that, he is the only God who shed his blood for you, who gave himself completely and without reservation, and laid his life down as a full and perfect and sufficient sacrifice for us so that we might be his completely without any reservations.

Charles Spurgeon said, God's demand is not that his people should have some little liberty, some little relief in the middle of their sin. No, that they should go right out of Egypt and go through the wilderness to the promised land.

[42 : 19] Christ did not come into the world merely to make our sin more tolerable, but to deliver us from it. He did not come to make hell a little less hot, or sin a little less damnable, or our lust a little less mighty, but to put all these things far away from us, to deliver us from death and hell and from the power of sin, to work, to give us joy and peace in believing in him.

Finally, five, Pharaoh asked for prayer, but he never prays. Pharaoh always wants someone else to deal with God on his behalf. He's always asking Moses, plead with the Lord.

Pray for me. It's not wrong to ask somebody else to pray for you. In the New Testament, James says, if you're sick, call the elders of the church to come and pray for you.

It goes on and says, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. This is a good thing when we're weak physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Sometimes we can hold on to and be held by the faith and prayer of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and that's a means of grace that God uses.

But if you're only asking other people to pray for you, and you're not dealing with God yourself, it's a sign that you're not right with God. Many times people have come to me, and in the course of a conversation have acknowledged that they have sinned in one way or another.

[44 : 00] And one of the questions I always try to ask is, have you confessed that sin to God? Sometimes the answer is no. And so I say, why don't you begin by confessing that sin to God?

I'm here to listen, and then I'll pray for you, that you would know God's peace and forgiveness and His strength and find the accountability you need and know His hope for the future.

You see, the way to get right with God is not to ask somebody else to pray to God on your behalf or deal with God on your behalf, but to turn to Jesus. The Bible says Jesus is the one mediator between God and humanity.

Admit that you're a sinner. Believe and receive the Savior. So we pray now.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that we can come to you in prayer in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

[45 : 20] We thank you that there is a sacrifice sufficient, complete to cover our sin. Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit who renews our hearts.

Your Holy Spirit who gives us a new heart and draws us to Christ, but who continually dwells within us and softens our heart and turns us to you.

We pray that we would hear your voice and not harden your hearts, not harden our hearts before you today.

We praise you. We bow before you. You are the King of glory. You are the only true and living God.

You are King forever. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.