

Lenten Devotional 2020

Saturday, March 7, 2020
Day 10, Exodus 10

Remembering Rescue

“...that you may tell your children and 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.” (Exodus 10:2)

I used to feel upset by the biblical claim that God kept hardening Pharaoh’s heart throughout the Exodus narrative. It just seemed unfair to me. I suppose I thought that if God hadn’t hardened Pharaoh’s heart that Pharaoh would have let all Israel go early on. Of course, as I’ve studied more I’ve come to know that this isn’t the case.

When Scripture says God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, that should be read with the times it says that Pharaoh hardened his heart, and that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened. At no point should we understand God as responsible for Pharaoh’s heart over Pharaoh’s personal responsibility. We can read this in parallel with the Judas narrative in the Gospels. It was part of God’s plan that Judas would betray Jesus, Satan enters Judas, but Judas can never say, “I had no choice,” or, “the Devil made me do it.” Judas made his choices un-coerced. So does Pharaoh. If anything God solidifies Pharaoh’s already hard heart.

So, a good question would be why he does even this? In part, to quote N. T. Wright, “to make him fit for judgment.” But, also because God has bigger plans for this episode of Israel’s corporate life. In the quote above God tells Moses that the people of Israel will be telling their children and grandchildren about all this. This is not bragging! This is about the formation of a people with their God. YHWH wants a strong covenant with his people. So they will intentionally remember (Passover) the way their God powerfully and totally (not without the women or the cattle) delivered them from slavery.

When we begin to see how this translates to us as God’s people today we are reminded that we tend to be half-hearted like Pharaoh. What I mean is that we often compromise with our sin. So, we want everything in our lives to be happy and run smoothly, but we want our sin to be left alone. God doesn’t do half measures. He wants us fully delivered. This means that he has to do a heart transplant on us—which is what the work of the Spirit is. As that is being done, we see sin being eradicated in our lives.

Like the ancient Israelites, it is important for us to remember these moments of redemption. We need to mark them and tell them to our children. We need to share them with our neighbours. When we do this we are better prepared to turn to the Lord in times of troubles and hold fast to the covenant with our God.

Prayer

Our rescuer and redeemer, help us to give up our half measures in favour of your full deliverance. Help us to remember and rehearse the salvation you have given us in Jesus Christ and the way you go on rescuing us day by day. Amen.