

Series: God Saves #1445

**Title: Romans 8.29b; Exodus 1, 2, 5
Double Predestination and Pharaoh**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. While listening to this radio broadcast and internet podcast do you sometimes wish you could interrupt me and ask a question or make a comment? You know you can always write to me, because you hear the email and mailing addresses given, but you are very busy and immediately after listening you have to rush off to do other things. And, besides that, it is in the flow of what you hear that you'd like to speak up. Afterwards you forget everything you heard, so there's no use in writing to me then!

Well, I have a solution for you. On Thursday night, May 25, 2023, in just a couple of weeks, I will be hosting a video call in which you can ask questions and make comments. Let's make use of the technology available to us and let's talk! ZOOM is free and easy to use. That, and a link I will email you, is all you will need. We will begin at 7PM and go for an hour or so, probably a bit longer, depending on how many join us and how talkative you are. This is designed to be a relaxing environment in which we talk with one another as if we've been friends for a long time. Feel free to eat your dessert and drink your coffee or tea, too! Could you send me some in advance, please. (Just kidding!) **7PM US Eastern Standard Time, Thursday, May 25** via ZOOM. Email me today to reserve your spot. mark@godisministry.org, that's m-a-r-k@godisministry.o-r-g. Thanks!

If you have been with us, then you know we are ready to talk about God and the Egyptian Pharaoh. This is the second, powerful illustration Paul the Apostle and author of the Book of Romans has that we are using to talk about the other side of predestination, that is what God does with people whom He does not save from their sin. When some people read about God hardening the heart of Pharaoh all the way back in the second Book of the Bible Exodus, they imagine Pharaoh to be an innocent ruler, a man who basically wants to do good, a politician who is trying to be fair to the early Jews, yet God is mean and unfair to him, planting unbelief, deceit, sin and even evil in his heart such that Pharaoh opposes God (as God intended all along). Under this view, the Pharaoh is made out to be some sort of innocent victim.

But is that really what happened? Is that really what God hardening Pharaoh's heart means? Let's turn to the ancient, yet always relevant text, and find out, shall we? I want to give us some context to the interaction between God, through Moses and Aaron, and the Pharaoh and so I will begin our reading at Exodus chapter 1, and verse 8. I hope you will join me in the text at Exodus 1, beginning in verse 8.

"Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ He said to his people, 'Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. ¹⁰ Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land.' ¹¹ So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so [the Egyptians] were in dread of the sons of Israel. ¹³ The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; ¹⁴ and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them." Let's pause here.

It does not come as a surprise to the reader of Genesis that the Israelite people are slaves down in Egypt. Listen to what God said to Abraham in Genesis 15, verse 13, **"God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.'" God said it and it happened, exactly as He said it would. And here the descendants of Abraham are, toiling away under the hand of the Egyptians. Verse 10: taskmasters are appointed and the Israelites struggle with hard labor. Verse 13: the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to "labor rigorously." Verse 14: "they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them."**

This Pharaoh was smart. As the Bible tells us, he knew the Israelites were growing in population and could rise up and join forces with Egypt's enemies, toppling this regime. So he put God's people to work. And in the next series of verses, which I will not take time to read, Pharaoh also identifies the Hebrew midwives and instructs them to murder the new born sons of the Hebrew women. Ancient abortion. Sadly, the Pharaoh's murderous instincts – the killing of precious babies - would fit right in with today's politicians. All of this, making the slaves work harder and wiping out new born sons – was all an attempt to preserve the Pharaoh's power and reign. Whoever this particular Pharaoh was (and that's a fascinating discussion I would like to have at a later time), he was one nasty man.

But this Pharaoh is not the Pharaoh of the hardening heart, because this man dies. I will pick up the Bible reading in Exodus chapter 2 and verse 23. Exodus 2.23, **“Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died.”** Ah OK, so the first Pharaoh we have been reading about his died. However, that did not mean the oppression of the Israelites was any less. The new Pharaoh (Pharaoh being a title and not a personal name), the new Pharaoh was just as harsh. Verse 24, **“And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. ²⁴ So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.”**

Life is still bad. Israel remains under bondage. They cry out. And, note this, God hears. Holy God, way up in heaven, heard their groaning and God remembered His covenant with the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (whom we recently discussed). I love this, verse 25, “God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.” God hears. God remembers. God sees. Do you need to hear that today? Friend, God hears you. God remembers you. God sees you. Take comfort. Rest assured. This is for you.

In Exodus chapters 3 and 4 God calls Moses, and trains him, preparing His choice servant for the demanding task of leading God's people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. Obviously, these chapters merit much study and discussion. It really is my goal and intention to walk through the life of Moses with you someday. But, for now, I have to discipline myself to focus on God and Pharaoh as Paul intends in Romans 9. So, let's go to Exodus chapter 5 and the beginning of the contest.

I want to read verses 1-4. Exodus 5, beginning in verse 1, **“And afterward Moses and Aaron (who is Moses' brother) came and said to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.’ ² But Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and besides, I will not let Israel go.’ ³ Then [Moses and Aaron] 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, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.’ ⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, ‘Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get *back* to your labors!’”**

Interesting statement here from the Pharaoh, “Who is the Lord?...I do not know the Lord.” Again, how similar to the position of our rulers today! Pharaoh does not know the Lord and he is not about to let the people go. In fact, Pharaoh sees this asking for permission to go into the wilderness and worship God as an excuse by lazy slaves to take some time off. Even though Moses and Aaron did not ask for a full blown departure from Egypt, all they wanted was a three days' journey into the wilderness, the Egyptian King denied permission. “Get back to work,” he exclaims.

And if you read the rest of Exodus 5 you will see the conditions get even worse for God's people. They end up needing to make bricks by finding their own straw! Asking for time off is a dangerous endeavour with a taskmaster lacking in benevolence. He or she may interpret taking a few days off as you not working hard enough. This might be your experience with your boss, and this being Friday reminds you how much you need the weekend! Take heart. It is here! And this means we will return to Pharaoh, Moses, Aaron and most importantly God on Monday. I hope that you are catching the context for what is to come. Pharaoh's heart, it seems to me, is already hard. Would you agree?

We have much yet to discover, so enjoy the weekend, email me about May 25, and then join us Monday because God Is!
---END---