

## ROMANS 9:14-18

Once again, as our study in Romans 9 continues, it is a must that we keep our "Israel glasses" on. This reminder shouldn't be necessary as the context of the chapter is clearly national election and not individual. Unfortunately, there are those who want to see individual election, when there is none, because of a preconceived bias. The history of Israel continues in God's election of the NATION as the focus is now on the exodus from Egypt. As the previous section highlighted the patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the history of Israel - now the history of Israel is highlighted through the exodus in the persons of Moses (vs. 15) and Pharaoh (vs. 17).

"This whole section of Romans 9 is not about individuals 'getting right with God.' It is not about individual eternal destinies. It is about the divine action in human history as God unfolds his plans to prepare for and send Jesus the Messiah to bear the sins of the world. The 'hardening' of Pharaoh and 'mercy' on Moses are not about them going to heaven or hell, but about their roles in those unfolding plans for Israel through whom 'all nations of the earth will be blessed'. In context, the verse does not mean that God made Moses repent but stopped Pharaoh from doing so. God would rather that Pharaoh had 'returned from his ways and lived,' but what God did was to confirm Pharaoh in the path he had chosen and strengthened his resolve to act on his evil inclinations even when sheer prudent self-interest would have militated against it." *Paul Marston and Roger Forster, God's Strategy in Human History, pg. 261*

### 4 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

The question about "**is there unrighteous with God?**" is not questioning God's righteousness determining an individuals eternal destiny, but, as the context show, is God unrighteous to choose the NATION of Israel to work out His purposes for the world and NOT choose another nation/people.

The context is the previous verses where God's choosing is that of one nation instead of another nation. The choosing has NOTHING to do with individual election to heaven or hell, but God's election of Israel to work out His plan for the world through Jesus.

Is God unrighteousness? The answer is unequivocal. NO, God is not unrighteousness to choose the NATION of Israel over other nations.

Deut. 7:6 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.  
 7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:  
 8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

### 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

This quote comes from Exodus 33:19:

19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; **and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.**

NOTICE, the context of Exodus 33 is the nation of Israel!

5 For the LORD had said unto Moses, **Say unto the children of Israel**, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.  
 13 Now therefore, I pray thee, **if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way**, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: **and consider that this nation is thy people.**  
 16 For wherein shall it be known here that **I and thy people have found grace in thy sight?** is it not in that **thou goest with us?** so shall **we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.**  
 17 And the LORD said unto Moses, **I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight**, and I know thee by name.  
 18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

The grace and mercy being shown in Exodus 33, and referenced in Romans 9:18, is God's favor upon the NATION of Israel, that He will be with them, as well as Moses, as Moses leads them. There is no warrant whatsoever to state that this is God's sovereign election of individuals to heaven or hell.

**16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.**

God chose to bestow His blessings based on mercy and not on works. Although this is certainly applicable to individuals, Titus 3:5,

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”

But the choosing of Israel is in view here and Israel’s choosing is not based on any merit of their own but on God’s mercy and grace, Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

**17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.**

"raised thee up" means to his throne not from birth, Exodus 9:16.

“And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth,” Exodus 9:16.

“The Scripture saith to Pharaoh. Ex 9:16. It is not said that Pharaoh was born for, but was raised to the throne for a particular purpose. That purpose was that I might shew my power in thee. It is not said that God raised him up to destroy him. His power might have been shown by Pharaoh yielding to his power. Pharaoh's conduct made it necessary to abase him. Here, again, the election is not of an individual to destruction, but of a man to be a king for a particular purpose. The destruction came upon him because, in that position, he resisted God.” People’s New Testament Commentary

The purpose of God raising Pharaoh to the throne of Egypt was to reveal His power and that the entire world might know that the God of Israel is the one true God - i.e. Joshua 2:9-11.

- 9 And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.
- 10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.
- 11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

**18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.**

**Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy**

God also has “chosen” to show “mercy” to individuals based, not on sovereign divine election before the foundation of the world, but on those who accept the Lord.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy,” Proverbs 28:13.

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon,” Isaiah 55:7.

“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all,” Romans 11:32

**and whom he will he hardeneth**

This is a reference from Exodus 9:12 but it is often suggested this is also a reference to Exodus 7:13.

“**He hardened**” in Exodus 7:13 is an unfortunate translation and give the erroneous impression that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:13

"And **he** hardened [חזק chazaq] Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said." (KJV)

"Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said." (NASB)

"And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said." (NKJV).

"Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said." (ESV)

"and the heart of Pharaoh is strong, and he hath not hearkened unto them, as Jehovah hath spoken." (YLT)

"Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had said." (NIV)

Pharaoh's hardened his heart as he rejected God, Exodus 3:19; 5:2.

"And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand."

"And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go."

"The Hebrew word [*chazaq*] does not carry any of the evil or cruel connotations conveyed by the English phrase 'hard-hearted.' The phrase 'strengthened his resolve' would perhaps be a nearer English equivalent than 'hardened his heart.' The renderings in the main text of the KJV, RV, and RSV of 'harden' when it refers to pharaoh are therefore unfortunate. Elsewhere the most common rendering is one such as 'strengthen.' Paul Marston and Roger Forster, *God's Strategy in Human History*, pg. 270

"And he hardened Pharaoh's heart - הכראת בעל האזנה עי אש ויחזק לב פרעה - 'And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened,' the identical words which in Exodus 7:22 are thus translated, and which should have been rendered in the same way here, lest the hardening, which was evidently the effect of his own obstinate shutting of his eyes against the truth, should be attributed to God." Adam Clarke's Commentary

Daniel Gracely makes the point:

"When Exodus 7:13 is properly understood, it changes the whole tenor of the exodus narrative. Again, remember that the phrase, 'The **LORD** hardened his heart' does not appear until Exodus 9:12 (after the sixth plague). This means that the states *seven* times that either Pharaoh's heart was *strengthened* (i.e. KJV 'hardened') or that Pharaoh strengthened his own heart, before it ever states that the **Lord** strengthened Pharaoh's heart. Would not this fact suggest, when we arrive at Exodus 9:12 to find the Lord strengthening Pharaoh's heart, that this activity of the Lord is, while at the least, the Spirit's ceasing to strive with Pharaoh any longer, also and arguably more than just this - namely, the Lord's allowance for the Enemy to more intensely affect Pharaoh's heart?...In fact, one could argue that the omission of any suggestion that the Lord 'hardened' (*strengthened*) Pharaoh's heart prior to Exodus 9:12 is really an argument for Pharaoh acting in unqualified free will."

Daniel Gracely, [Calvinism: A Closer Look](#), pages 263-64

The primary focus of verse 18 is concerning God using the NATION of Israel for His purposes. This is the context of chapter 9 with the focus of this section on the history of Israel in the exodus narrative. The "hardening" is God's dealing with Pharaoh as king of a nation so "**that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.**"

"Again we may note that in this passage (Romans 9:14-24) 'election' is set forth in terms of nations or their representative rulers (like Pharaoh) considered as the agents of God's purpose in history; the passage is not saying anything at all about ultimate salvation in the world to come, and the phrase 'vessels of wrath' does not refer to individuals predestined from the creation of the world to everlasting damnation; it means nations (or their rulers in their representative capacity) who are 'raised' up to execute God's righteousness in this present age." *An Introduction to the Theology of the N.T.*, Alan Richardson, page 280

Trevor Bowen summarizes this portion as well as the entire chapter:

"Yes, Romans 9 clearly teaches God's sovereignty and the immutability of God's election. However, we have learned to be careful and not to interject our prejudices into the context. By exercising diligence (II Timothy 2:15; II Peter 3:14-18), **we have examined the context of the Old Testament passages quoted by Paul, so we could clearly see that God's unconditional election only applied to the role of nations in producing the Messiah, not the salvation of individuals** (Genesis 25:22-23; Malachi 1:1-4). "**bold added**, [http://www.insearchoftruth.org/articles/romans\\_9.html#romans9\\_17-18](http://www.insearchoftruth.org/articles/romans_9.html#romans9_17-18)

## The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

“To begin with, it is essential to note that three different Hebrew words [*chazaq, kabad, qashah*] are used in the biblical text for the ‘hardening’ of Pharaoh’s heart. Of the KJV appearances of hard/harden in the exodus narrative, one of these three Hebrew words is generally used to refer to those instances when the Lord ‘hardens’ Pharaoh’s heart [*chazaq*]; a second word usually alternates with this first word to state that either Pharaoh’s heart was ‘hard’ or that Pharaoh ‘hardened’ his own heart [*kabad*]; and a third word is mentioned but twice, once in Exodus 7:13 and again in Exodus 13:15, *forming a kind of introduction and summary*<sup>68</sup> to what God said *would happen*, and, in fact (as events proved), *what did happen* regarding Pharaoh’s heart in the course of the plagues. In both instances this 3rd Hebrew word appears to have a meaning of *hard, tough, stubborn, or indurate*. In fact, only this third Hebrew word really has a meaning of *hard/hardened....*”

“Second, it must be understood that the strengthening of Pharaoh’s heart ascribed to the Lord (as we will argue in the rest of this chapter) is merely that of *allowance*. That is, the Lord strengthened Pharaoh’s heart *by allowing the Enemy to strengthen Pharaoh’s heart*. Such strengthening by the Enemy would have been done by an intense campaign of thought-suggestion. And yet we must remember that, as strong as the Enemy’s thought suggestions are, Pharaoh himself decided upon his own heart’s intention (i.e. his will).”

“Now I find this tampering of God’s Word by the King James’s translators disturbing. One does not even have to be trained in translation work to see the problem. For example, since the Hebrew language of Exodus primarily uses two different words for the verb translated ‘to harden,’ why didn’t the KJV at least choose synonyms, such as *to harden* and *to stiffen*, in order to alert English readers that something was going on in the Hebrew language which they might want to investigate for themselves? Instead, all three Hebrew verbs were reduced in translation to one word, hardened, and this is undoubtedly the chief reason why English readers have thought for centuries that Pharaoh simply hardened himself along the same lines to which God had supposedly ordained him. For centuries, this translation error in the KJV has been promoting the idea that Pharaoh was little more than a marionette on strings acting out debase behavior for which he would be blamed, even though he was arguably under the command of an all-controlling Puppeteer....”

“Perhaps the most unfortunate translation in Exodus regarding the Pharaohic aspect of the exodus narrative is found in 7:13, a verse that has misled Christians for a long time. While the NAS is an improvement over the KJV, we will see that it too leaves something to be desired. One of the morbidly fascinating things I have observed, during my personal study of the exodus narrative, is how the KJV and NAS appear to approach Exodus 7:13 with a prejudice toward a Calvinistic interpretation. The KJV, for example, blunders with a total mistranslation: “And he hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” All major translations today, including the New King James Version (NKJV), as well as major Reformed authors like A.W. Pink, recognize that the original KJV (Authorized) translation of this phrase in this verse was a bastardization of the Hebrew. The New King James Version reads, “But Pharaoh’s heart grew hard,” and the NAS reads, “But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.” Notice that the word “he” was added into the KJV, indicating that another party besides Pharaoh was strengthening Pharaoh’s heart.”

Daniel Gracely, Calvinism: A Closer Look, “Pharaoh and the Hardened Heart.” chapter 14, pg. 250-251; 254;258-259; 259-260