

THE ABILITY OF GOD TO HUMBLE US

INTRODUCTION:

So...is all this *talk* of humility making us any humbler? Easier said than done, right?

So far... --We've seen humility's view of sin...and humility's view of self

--We've seen humility's response to seeing God

--We've seen humility in the life of Jesus...and the death of Jesus...and the teaching of Jesus

This morning we are going to look at God's ability to **humble us**. Take your Bibles and turn to Job 40:11-14. Part of what makes God...God...is that He can humble "**every one**" (and any one) that is proud—and **bring him low**. He reinforces that thought by saying, 'if **you** can do that'—if **you** can make the proud humble—then I will say to you, "thine own right hand can save thee." In other words, 'you can save yourself; you are God!'

No one but God can do that, though, can they? There are several examples in the Bible of God bringing down the proud. The one we are going to look at today is probably the most familiar and features the show-down between Moses and Pharaoh—which was really a show-down between **God** and Pharaoh.

1. God told Moses that He would humble Pharaoh

Please take your Bibles and turn to Exodus 1. Before we get into the **statements** made by God to Moses, I want us to consider... A. The situation of God's people

i. The place

God's people—the children of Israel—were in Egypt. Why? Because many years before this—400 years plus—Joseph's brothers had hated him so much that they sold him to a group of Ishmeelites that were on their way to Egypt. Unbeknownst to the brothers who sold him, Joseph ended up being promoted to the second highest position in all of Egypt, outranked only by Pharaoh.

God had revealed to Joseph—through a dream that Pharaoh had—that a severe famine would be coming. Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of gathering up food during the seven good years before the famine—then distributing food during the seven years of famine. His brothers—and eventually his whole family—ended up relocating to Egypt and being taken care of by Joseph.

Look at v 1 "Now these are the names of the children of Israel, **which came into Egypt**; every man and his household came with Jacob." (Jacob's name was changed by God to Israel).

ii. The plight

Drop down to v 6 and follow along as I read through v 11. Now v 14 "And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage..." God's people were being cruelly treated and were slaves in Egypt.

iii. The power of Pharaoh

Now look at v 16 "And he— [the king of Egypt in v 15] said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, **then ye shall kill him**: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live."

How powerful was the king of Egypt? Powerful enough to order the killing of people he didn't like! In v 19, we see him referred to as "Pharaoh." Please know that Pharaoh is a **title**—not a name. It means "great house" and is what the Egyptians called their kings. The Pharaoh that put **Joseph** in charge of the **corn distribution** in Gen 41 was **not the same Pharaoh** that ordered all the **Hebrew baby boys killed** here in Ex 1.

It is also **not the same** Pharaoh that 80 year old Moses—along with his 83 year old brother Aaron—would be confronting and giving a message to, from God.

To recap, here's the situation: Two old men—Moses and Aaron—go to the most powerful *man*... of the most powerful *nation* in all the world with a message from God. What was the message? "Let your entire labor force—the builders of your cities—that has served your nation for 430 years—go!"

What happened the first time they presented this message to Pharaoh? Look at Ex 5:1-2. Not only did Pharaoh flippantly say, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go," he also *punished* the people by making them *work harder*! How? Instead of *giving them* the straw needed to make bricks, they had to *gather their own straw*—and still make the *same number* of bricks!

How did that go? Not good! Look at Exodus 5, beginning with v 20-21.

"They" is the officers of the children of Israel. Basically, they were saying, 'You're making us stink in the eyes of Pharaoh—so much so that they are likely to kill us!'

Now vs 22-23. Moses complains, 'You're people are getting treated *worse* than they were before! And why did you send me to lead them out of Egypt when Pharaoh isn't budging at all!'

Can we feel like that sometimes? Can we feel like God is *fighting* us—instead of *helping us*? Here's a couple of good reminders: 1) God is always in control—even when the enemy seems like they are.

2) Don't judge the end from the beginning. The *difficulty* in the beginning should not make us think that the end-result won't be worth it!

Moses shouldn't have felt this way, though, because of ... B. The statements of God's power

On several occasions God states that He will "stretch out His hand" and "smite" Egypt before Pharaoh will let them go.

i. Before the first encounter with Pharaoh

Turn to Exodus 3:19-20 "And I am sure that the king of Egypt **will not let you go**, no, not by a mighty hand. ²⁰ And I will stretch out my hand, and **smite Egypt with all my wonders** which I will do in the midst thereof: and **after that** he will let you go."

Here we see God telling Moses—before he went to Pharaoh the first time—that Pharaoh would not willingly let God's people go. God knew Pharaoh's heart was hard—and knew there would be a "struggle" (although it wasn't really a struggle for God)!

God knew He would have to flex His muscle, so to speak, but *then* Pharaoh would let the people go.

Turn now to Exodus 7 where we see God giving Moses a similar statement...

ii. Before the second encounter with Pharaoh

--Vs 3 "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and **multiply my signs and my wonders** in the land of Egypt."

I'm going to come back to what it means when God says, "I will **harden Pharaoh's heart**" in just a minute. For now, I want you to notice that God says He is going to **multiply His signs and wonders**.

--Vs 4 "But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, **that I may lay my hand upon Egypt**, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt **by great judgments**."

'Pharaoh won't listen—and I'm going to have to take drastic measures to get my people out of Egypt.'

--V 5 "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, **when I stretch forth mine hand** upon Egypt, and **bring out the children of Israel** from among them."

Again, we see God emphasizing that He would be using great power to convince Pharaoh to let His people go. God was going to *bring Pharaoh down*—and He was going to *bring His people out*!

Back to verse 3 where we have the somewhat troublesome statement where God declares: "And I will **harden** Pharaoh's heart..." So what does that mean? I like the way a man named Ellicott explained it. He suggests there is a progression of hardening in Pharaoh's heart. Ellicott writes: "We may suppose that, at first, Pharaoh's nature was simply *not impressed*..." We saw that in attitude in Exodus 5:2 when Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD..."

Next, Ellicott suggests that “that after a while, he began to **be impressed**; but by an **effort of his will** controlled himself, and **determined that he would not yield**: thus “hardening his own heart;” There were times Pharaoh said, ‘Okay, okay—I’ll let the people go,’—but then changed his mind.

Finally, Ellicott says “God stepped in and ‘smote him with a spirit of blindness and infatuation,’ as a judgment upon him thus, finally, “hardening” him.”

Exodus 9:12 “And **the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh**, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had spoken unto Moses.” This verse—along with Exodus 10:20, 27, and 14:8—sometimes cause people to question the “fairness” of God. How can God **punish** Pharaoh for being hard-hearted against God when it says God **hardened** his heart? My take on it is this: Pharaoh had fought God so hard and for so long that he passed the point of no return.

It is an example, I believe, of **Romans 1:28** “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, **God gave them over to a reprobate mind**, to do those things which are not convenient;”

Pharaoh’s opportunity to humble himself came and went, it seems, and now God gave him what he wanted—a hard heart. Does that happen to people now? Is there a point when people have said “No” to God one too many times? I believe there is—but **only God knows** when they have gone too far. Since we **don’t** know, our responsibility is to urge people to **humble themselves** and repent.

That’s why God says, “**Today**, if you will hear His voice, **harden** not your hearts” (Heb 3:15)

God told Moses He **would** humble Pharaoh. Next... **2. God showed Moses that He could humble Pharaoh** Did God **do** what He **said** He would do? Did He **humble** Pharaoh—and free His people from Egypt?

He did, didn’t He? No need to spend a lot of time on this because we know the outcome. I do want to look at one passage, though. Please turn to Exodus 12:29 and follow along as I read through v 33.

You can almost hear the urgency and desperation in the voice of Pharaoh, “Rise up, and get you forth from among **my** people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said.”

Same with verse 33 “We be all dead men”—‘We are all going to die!’

Lastly—and this is important—**3. God told Moses—and us—why He humbled Pharaoh**

Why did God do all of this? Why was there this show-down with Pharaoh? Was there a purpose behind it?

Yes, there was a purpose and God doesn’t make us **wonder** why this all happened—He **tells** us why! First—and probably the most obvious—is... A. To display God’s power

Please turn to Exodus 9:16 “And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, **for to shew in thee my power....**” And, boy, did God show His power!

He turned water into blood...and brought frogs from the river into their homes...and turned dust into lice...and brought flies...and then disease on the both the **work** animals and the animals they raised to **eat**...and boils on man and beast...and hail...and locusts...and darkness...and then the 10th plague—the death of the first born!

God wasn’t done showing His power, though, because even after Pharaoh **did** let God’s people go, he again changed his mind and chased after them to bring them back to Egypt. In one final act of displaying His power over the Egyptians, God parted the Red Sea and His people walked through on dry ground we are told in Ex 14:21-22. The Egyptians, of course, followed them.

God not only “took off their chariot wheels” (Ex 14:25)—He caused the water to return to its natural place. **Exodus 14:28** “And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there **remained not so much as one of them.**” Verse 30 says “...and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.”

Let's pause here for a moment. Let's not lose sight of the fact that God **can** humble **us** just as He humbled Pharaoh. God can "cast abroad the rage of His wrath and look every one that is proud, and bring Him low." That means Pharaoh...and Nebuchadnezzar...and Saul of Tarsus...and me...and you.

God **can** humble us—but He wants us to **humble ourselves**! Remember, it is not a compliment to you if God needs a 2x4—or 10 plagues—to get you to submit to His will!

In Ex 9:16 we see a 2nd reason God humbled Pharaoh. The first was to display His power, the second is...

B. To declare God's name

"...and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."

The idea, of course, is **not** that people were to just walk around saying God's name. The **name** of God is connected to what God **does**. It is interesting to realize that after this, God often referred to Himself as "I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Because the gods (little "g") of the Egyptians were no match for God—and Pharaoh himself was no match for God—God wanted His fame and name to be broadcast throughout the earth.

God hasn't changed, has He? He **still** desires that His name be declared throughout all the earth. Are we doing that? We should be, right? But what should we declare? Here are a few suggestions:

--We should declare His **works**, what He has done.

Psalms 71:17 "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I **declared** thy wondrous works."

--We should declare His **judgments**, what He will do.

Psalms 119:3 "With my lips have I **declared** all the judgments of thy mouth."

--We should declare His **attributes**, what He is like.

Psalms 40:10 "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have **declared** thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation."

--We should declare **His righteousness**, the way to be saved.

Romans 3:26 "To **declare**, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of Him which believeth in Jesus."

--We should declare what He **has done for us**, both in our life and in saving us.

Psalms 66:16 "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will **declare** what He hath done for my soul."

May God help us be better "declarers" of who He is and what He has done!

So what does God want us to do in light of what we have heard from His Word today?

1. First and foremost, we need to submit to God's way of being saved. Man has thoughts about how to be forgiven and go to heaven, but those ideas and thoughts don't matter. What matters is what **God says**, and God says we need to be born again. Are you born again? Are you trusting you—or Jesus? "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart!"

2. Second, if you are a child of God, are you declaring His name? "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!" Share with others what He has done for you! People might argue with what God says—but they can't argue about your testimony! Ask God to give you boldness in proclaiming it!