Pharaoh, How's Your Heart?

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[0:00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Exodus and Exodus chapter 7.

Exodus chapter 7, and if we read again at verse 14. Exodus 7 and verse 14.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened. He refuses to let the people go. Pharaoh's heart is hardened.

He refuses to let the people go. How's your heart? But you're not a stranger to this question.

How's your heart? I was first asked this question by Allison's father, who is now my father-in-law. And when Kenny said to me, Murdo, how's your heart?

[1:12] I thought to myself, well, it's not what it should be. And it's not what I want it to be. But thankfully, it's not what it once was.

Because like every unconverted friend, my heart was once a hardened heart. There was a time in my life when I had no care or concern for Christ or the gospel or for church.

I had no thought of eternity. I had no interest in the gospel. I wasn't even going to church. And as my good friend, he's now my good friend, J.C. Ryle, he says, the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.

And the problem of the heart is that my heart and your heart, it needs to be concerned about sin. It needs to be cleansed from sin. It needs to be committed to the Savior.

So, my friend, how's your heart? How's your heart? As you know, that's the question Jesus asks us in the parable of the sower. And as you know, Jesus, he often spoke to us in parables.

[2:19] He spoke to the crowds that followed him in parables. And the parables were to be the test of all his hearers. Because how you hear affects your heart.

How you hear affects your heart. And that's what Jesus emphasized and explained in the parable of the sower. That the sower is the preacher of the gospel. The seed is the word of God.

But the thing is, the parable of the sower isn't actually about the sower or the seed. The parable is about the soil. And onto what type of soil the seed fell.

And the question Jesus asks us in the parable of the sower is this question. How's your heart? How's your heart? But you know, this morning as we come to Exodus chapter 7, I want us to ask Pharaoh that very question.

I want us to ask Pharaoh in this chapter, Pharaoh, how's your heart? Pharaoh, how's your heart?

And what we've learned about Pharaoh previously, and also in this passage, is that Pharaoh had a heedless heart, a hollow heart, and a hardened heart.

Pharaoh had a heedless heart, a hollow heart, and a hardened heart. So Pharaoh, how's your heart?

And we see first of all that he had a heedless heart. A heedless heart. Look at verse 1 of chapter 7. It says that, Now whenever we resume a study in the book, of a book in the Bible, and we resume a study after a short break, so we finish just before the end of the year, and we're resuming today.

But you know, when we resume a study, I always have in my mind of what it's like when you watch the next episode of your favorite TV program, whether it's on Netflix, or iPlayer, or whatever it's on. Because as you know, each episode, it will always begin with the statement, previously on.

Previously on, and then there's a recap of what's been happening in the storyline so far. And I always think that that's how we should begin here with the next chapter in the book of Exodus.

[4:53] Because the story so far is, as D.L. Moody often put it, I've quoted him quite often, he said that, Moses spent his first 40 years thinking he was a somebody.

The next 40 years learning that he was a nobody. And in his final 40 years, which we're looking at now, his final 40 years, he discovers what God can do with anybody.

During his first 40 years, Moses was a prince in Egypt. During the next 40 years, Moses was a pauper in Midian. And now in these last 40 years, Moses is a prophet to Israel.

He's a prophet to Israel. Because when the Lord called, commissioned, and commanded Moses at the burning bush to rescue and redeem the children of Israel from slavery and bondage in Egypt, like we all would, Moses reacted to the Lord.

He responded to the Lord by saying, Who am I? Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? And understandably, Moses was anxious.

[6:02] He was apprehensive about what to say to Pharaoh. The king of Egypt. But the Lord reminded and reassured Moses, saying to him, Who has made man's mouth?

Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore, says the Lord, therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.

But you remember that in order to strengthen and support Moses, the Lord reunited Moses with his older brother Aaron. And as brothers, Moses and Aaron, they hadn't seen one another for the best part of 70 years.

But the Lord reunited them, and as brothers in arms, they went to serve the Lord and seek to save the Israelites from slavery. And with that, everything, you'll remember, everything looked so positive and promising and progressive.

Things were moving forward because openings were being made and obstacles were being removed and opportunities were being given. And then when Moses and Aaron, when they first appeared before Pharaoh, they speak with such confidence and conviction.

[7:18] They say to Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord. And they spoke as prophets to Pharaoh who were powerfully preaching the word of God. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Let my people go.

And as servants of the Lord, Moses and Aaron, they expected the Lord to move and to do mighty and miraculous things. They expected the Lord to powerfully penetrate this hard-hearted Pharaoh and bring him to surrender and submit under the authority of the Lord

But as you know, that's not what happened. Because if we were to ask Pharaoh back in chapter 5, this question, Pharaoh, how's your heart? We would see that Pharaoh had a heedless heart.

Pharaoh had a heedless heart. Pharaoh was unaware of the Lord. He was uninformed about the Lord. And he was unacquainted with the Lord.

Pharaoh was unaware, uninformed, and unacquainted with the Lord. Because Pharaoh responds by saying, he says, Who is the Lord? Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice and let Israel go?

[8:36] I do not know the Lord. And moreover, I will not let Israel go. You know, my friend, Pharaoh had a heedless heart.

He was unaware of the Lord. The Lord didn't come into his consideration. He was uninformed about the Lord. No one had told him about the Lord. And because of that, he was unacquainted with the Lord.

Pharaoh didn't know the Lord. He didn't know the Lord. You know, he was unaware that the Lord was good, glorious, and gracious.

He was uninformed that the Lord was powerful, personal, and pastoral. He was unacquainted with the Lord as someone who was regal, righteous, and redeeming.

He was able to redeem his people. My friend, Pharaoh didn't know the Lord. He had a heedless heart. And as you know, there are many people like Pharaoh.

[9:39] There are many people, and they're living on our doorstep. They're living on our doorstep, and they're unaware of the Lord. They're uninformed about the Lord. They're unacquainted with the Lord.

They're completely heedless. They have a heedless heart. And they're heedless about sin, and salvation, and the Savior. They're heedless about heaven, and heedless about hell.

They have a heedless heart. But you know, there are also many people, and they have a heedless heart, and yet they've been brought up hearing the gospel all their life.

And you know, that's what I was like as an unconverted friend. And maybe you're like that too today. Maybe you're unaware, uninformed, and unacquainted with the Lord.

And maybe in your own mind, you just want to follow the Lord on your own terms. You set the terms and conditions of Christianity. You want to know the Lord, but not actually live according to the Lord's way, or will, or word.

You know, that's what I was like. And yes, we can come to church, we can enjoy church, we can be comfortable in church, but we're still not saved. And that's the most important bit.

We need to be saved. There needs to be contrition of sin. There needs to be confession of the Savior. There needs to be commitment to salvation. And you know, it always reminds me of what the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans chapter 10.

Because there were many in the church in Rome at the time, there were many who had a heedless heart. They attended church, but they had a heedless heart. They were unaware, uninformed, and unacquainted with the Lord.

And Paul says about them in Romans 10 that they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. They had a zeal for God. They loved coming to church.

They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. They didn't know the Lord. They had a heedless heart. They were unaware, uninformed, and unacquainted with the Lord. They came to church.

[11:46] They enjoyed church. They felt comfortable in church, but they weren't committed to Christ. They weren't saved. They were still lost. And Paul explains to the church in Rome that as a pastor, his heart's desire is that they'll be saved.

That's his heart's desire. His heart's desire is that they will believe in their heart and confess with their mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord. And you know, you'll never guess that my heart's desire as your pastor is that you'll be saved, that you will believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Because the promise of the gospel is whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. That's what Paul says in Romans 10. And Paul asks the question, all these questions about how shall they hear without a preacher?

How shall the preacher preach unless he is sent? And then he says, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

And what Paul meant by that was just what Jesus meant by it. How we hear affects our heart. How we hear affects our heart.

[13:11] How we respond to what we hear affects our heart. And so we're asking Pharaoh, Pharaoh, how's your heart?

It's a heedless heart because he's unaware, uninformed, and unacquainted with the Lord. But we're also told that it's a hollow heart. That's what we see secondly.

So a heedless heart and a hollow heart. A hollow heart. Look at verse 4. It says, 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.

commanded them. Now Moses was 80 years old and Aaron 83 years old when they spoke to Pharaoh. Now as the passage reminds us there in verse 7, Moses was 80.

[14:19] Aaron was 83 when they spoke to the king of Egypt, to Pharaoh. They weren't young men. They weren't immature. They were men who were elderly.

They were in their 80s. But neither were they men who were retired or resting or relaxing as servants of the Lord. But these men, as we've seen before, they were resisted.

They were refused. They were rejected by Pharaoh. Because when Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, as we said, they preached with passion and with power.

They presented the mission and the message of the Lord. They proclaimed the word of God with conviction and confidence. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, let my people go.

And as we said, Moses and Aaron, they expected the Lord to do mighty and miraculous things. They expected the Lord to change Pharaoh's heart there and then. They expected the Lord to make Pharaoh, this king, submit and surrender his life to the Lord, the covenant king.

But that's not what happened. Because Pharaoh, he resisted, he rejected, he refused the request to let the people go. And of course, when Pharaoh didn't heed the word of the Lord, Moses and Aaron, they were disappointed.

They were deflated. They were devastated. Devastated that Pharaoh had resisted and refused and rejected the Lord. But notice, they didn't resign.

They didn't retire. They didn't rest. They didn't relax as servants of the Lord. They didn't give up. They didn't go home. No, they got on with the task that the Lord had commissioned and commanded them to do.

And you know, my Christian friend, we can actually learn from the example of Moses and Aaron. And we'll see it as we go through the ten plagues. They keep going back. Moses and Aaron don't give up.

And you know, we can learn from them because no doubt there are times when we encounter and we experience resistance, refusal, rejection to the gospel and we want to give up.

[16:40] Especially when we invite someone to come to church or we invite them to Christianity Explored or we invite them to a fellowship or we invite them to something that may make them hear the gospel.

But when they say no, you feel like Moses. You feel like Aaron. You feel disappointed. You feel deflated. You feel devastated. And like me, there are also times when you're actually praying for an opportunity, praying for an opportunity to speak.

And we should be praying for opportunities to speak to people and invite people. But we fail to use our opportunities sometimes. They're presented to us and we fail to invite someone to church or introduce them to Christianity because of, we fail because of fear.

The fear of refusal. The fear of resistance. The fear of rejection. But you know, what we need to always remember, and this is what I have to have in my head, is that it's not you that are refusing.

It's not you that are resisting. It's not you that are rejecting. It's Jesus. And if anyone knows what it feels like to be rejected, it was Jesus.

[17:52] He's described in the Bible as someone who was despised and rejected by men. And maybe you've never invited anyone to church. Maybe you've never even thought of inviting someone to church or your neighbor or introducing them to Christianity.

And you don't do it because of fear. We're all afraid. I'm afraid. We fear refusal. We fear rejection. We fear resistance to the gospel.

And you know, I know how you feel when you have those feelings of fear and those feelings of even failure. Because you know, believe it or not, when it comes to Christ and Christianity, many people say no to me.

I don't know why, but they do. They say no. I try and invite them to come to church or Christianity Explored or a testimony evening or invite them to come to Christ for salvation.

And they say no. And over the years, many people in this congregation and the community and other places, they've said to me, no. No way. Not just now. Not ever.

[19:03] And yes, you can feel disappointed and deflated and devastated because your heart's desire is that they'll come, that they'll be saved.

But you know, God's Word reminds us and reassures us that we're not called, commissioned, and commanded to convince them or even to convert them. That's the Lord's work.

Our call, our commission, our command is to ask anyone. Ask anyone and encourage everyone to come and know the Christ of Christianity.

If they say no, if they say no, well, it's fine. But we continue to love them prayerfully and patiently. We continue to love them prayerfully and patiently.

And sometimes that's hard, even heartbreaking, especially when we're wanting them and we're willing for them and we're waiting on the Lord to save those whom we love. And we love them so much that we want them to be saved.

[20:06] But you know, my friend, do not fear refusal or resistance or rejection. The worst someone can say to you when you ask them to come to church or come to this or come to that is no.

And if they say no, fine. And don't feel disappointed. And I'm saying this to myself when I say it. Don't feel disappointed, murder. Don't feel deflated. Don't feel devastated. Continue to love them patiently.

And prayerfully. Continue to love them patiently and prayerfully and keep going back. Don't give up on them.

Don't go home. And you know, that's what I look at this, these next chapters that are coming up in the book of Exodus. And that's what we see with Moses and Aaron. The Lord tells him, go back to Pharaoh.

Go back to Pharaoh. Go back to Pharaoh. Keep going back. Love them patiently and prayerfully. But you know, for Pharaoh, he didn't heed the mission.

[21:08] He didn't heed the message of Moses and Aaron. Not only because he had a heedless heart, but also because he had a hollow heart. And we see that in this passage because when Moses and Aaron returned to Pharaoh's palace, according to the Lord's commandment, Aaron throws down his staff on the ground and it becomes a serpent.

And instead of responding and surrender and submission to the Lord when he sees the staff becoming a serpent, Pharaoh calls in his men. He calls in the wise men and the sorcerers and the magicians.

He calls in the priests of Egypt and all these magicians he's got in Egypt. And when they come in, they all come in and they throw down what seems to look like a staff on the ground.

and it becomes a snake. Which immediately raises the question, how did they do it? I mean, we all know how Aaron did it.

The Lord was with them. We all know how Aaron's staff became a serpent because the Lord did it. But they didn't have the Lord on their side. So how did they do it? In this commentary on the book of Exodus, my late Old Testament professor, and I'll go with him because he was my professor, John L. Mackay, he states that the magicians weren't magicians at all.

[22:31] He said, the magicians came prepared because the ability to paralyze cobras by putting pressure on a particular area of their neck.

They would have made a snake appear as stiff as a staff until it was let go and thrown on the ground. And the jolt of hitting the ground, he says, being thrown on the ground, would have broken the paralysis.

And he writes, confusion would have reigned in Pharaoh's court as snakes slithered everywhere. But the confusion didn't last for long because as we read in the passage, Aaron's snake swallowed Pharaoh's snakes.

And when that actually happened, when the snakes were all swallowed by Aaron's snake, Pharaoh still has a heedless and a hollow heart.

He's unwilling to appreciate and to accept defeat. He's unwilling to submit and surrender. He's unwilling to appreciate and accept the evidence before his very eyes that the Lord is God.

[23:47] The Lord is God. And you know, there are many like Pharaoh who have a heedless and a hollow heart. They see the evidence of creation around them and they refuse to believe.

They see the evidence of Christianity in the life and the change in someone's life. They see the evidence there, but they refuse to believe. And they hear the gospel and they say, well, I don't want to submit.

I don't want to surrender my heart to the Lord. I don't want the Lord to rule and reign in my life. That's okay for you, but it's not okay for me. I don't need the Lord in my life.

Because, well, life is what you make of it. It's all about health and happiness. My friend, health and happiness in life are important, but there's much more to life than that.

Health and happiness are important, but there's much more to life than that because, do you know this? You were made for much more than that. You were created, as we were seeing in Christianity Explored last Monday, you were created to glorify God.

[24:56] You've been created for much more than that. You were made to experience and enjoy the fullness of life. That's why Jesus came. He says, I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.

So, Jesus came that you will have the fullness of life, not just health and happiness, but also eternal life. That you will experience this full life by coming to trust in the promise of Jesus Christ.

Coming to trust in the promise of eternal life through Christ. that's what life is all about. That's what it's all about.

And that's what they were presenting to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh had a hollow heart. Pharaoh, how's your heart? It was a heedless heart, a hollow heart.

And then lastly, we see a hardened heart. A hardened heart. A heedless, a hollow, and a hardened heart. Look at verse 14, or 13 and 14.

[26:05] It says there, still, hasn't changed, still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened. He refuses to let the people go. I mentioned to you before that the 18th century preacher, Adam Clark, he famously said, and I'm sure we've heard the quote before, the same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay.

The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. In other words, the Word of God, it either humbles you or hardens you. Your response to God's Word either humbles you or hardens you.

And that was certainly true of Pharaoh because as we go through the story of the Exodus, we're repeatedly given a report on the condition of Pharaoh's heart. That it was not only a heedless heart and a hollow heart, but it was also a hardened heart.

In fact, we're told 15 times, 15 times in this story, this narrative of the Exodus that Pharaoh had a hardened heart. But you know, the question which has often caused debate and a lot of discussion is who hardened Pharaoh's heart?

[27:30] Who hardened Pharaoh's heart? Because sometimes in the narrative we read that Pharaoh hardened his heart. But there are other times when we're told that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.

And we see that actually in verse 3, where it says in verse 3, but I will harden Pharaoh's heart. And it leaves us with the question, well, who hardened Pharaoh's heart?

Of course, when you consider the original Hebrew of these phrases, you discover that they're actually very different in meaning, which is very important. Because when it says in verse 3, I will harden Pharaoh's heart, it literally means that the Lord is going to make Pharaoh's life hard by performing all these plagues in Egypt.

And we'll see how he makes his life hard. The Lord was going to bring, we'll call them providential plagues into Pharaoh's life.

And he was going to bring them into his life so that he will believe and confess that the Lord is the living and true God. Not the gods of Egypt, but that the Lord is the living and true God.

[28:52] And that's what the Lord does. The Lord does that in your life and my life. The Lord brings providential plagues, we'll call them, into our lives. Things that we never thought possible, maybe sins or sicknesses or sufferings or sorrows.

And we'll look at this more as we go through it. He brings these things into our life in order to bring us to himself. Everything that takes place in your life, my friend, is not to drive you away from the Lord, but to drive you to him.

To bring you to believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Therefore, when it says, I shall harden Pharaoh's heart, it doesn't mean that he made his heart so hard that he couldn't respond to the gospel.

No, the Lord wanted him to respond. That's why he made his life heart. He brought providential plagues into his life so that he would respond by believing and confessing that the Lord is the living and true God.

But, you know, instead of believing and confessing, we're told, as we read there in verse 14 and verse 13, is that Pharaoh hardened Pharaoh's heart.

[30:09] Pharaoh hardened Pharaoh's heart. And Pharaoh hardened his heart by stubbornly refusing, resisting, and rejecting the Word of God.

And that's what it means there, to harden your heart. Pharaoh's heart is hardened. It's to stubbornly dig your heels in and refuse and resist and reject the Word of God.

And, you know, that's why Jesus described, first of all, in the parable of the sower, he describes a hardened heart. Jesus goes straight into it and says, this is the worst condition.

He said that the seed which fell by the wayside, it fell onto soil that had hardened over many years. And it was such a hard surface, says Jesus, that when the seed was sown by the sower, it just fell and it just lay there.

It could penetrate no deeper than the surface. And Jesus says, just like a bird ready to get its dinner, the devil comes and he just snatches the seed from off your heart.

Off the heart. He snatches the seed off the hardened heart. But, you know, we have to ask the question, well, how does a heart become a hardened heart? How does your heart harden?

If your heart is hard, how has it become hard? You're my friend, a heart becomes a hardened heart.

When you hear the good news of the gospel, week in, week out, month by month, year by year, decade by decade, sermon after sermon, funeral after funeral, warning after warning, and yet you stubbornly dig your heels in and you refuse and you resist and you reject the Christ of Christianity.

Yes, you might look at your watch and think, well, it's nearly time to go again, but, you know, let me tell you, you never leave church the same way that you came in. Every time you come in here, or every time you're watching online, you never leave the way you came in, because your heart is either hardening or softening.

The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay, and how you respond to the Word of God, it either humbles you or hardens your heart.

[33:00] heart. How you respond to the Word of God either humbles or hardens your heart. And so we'll ask Pharaoh, Pharaoh, how's your heart?

Pharaoh, how's your heart? It's a heedless heart. It's a hollow heart. And it's a hardened heart. But, you know, and as I said, Pharaoh's heart in the story of the Exodus, and this is what I want you to see.

If you're an unconverted friend or someone seeking the Lord, someone on the threshold, wherever you are, I want you to see in the story of the Exodus that it's a warning here.

It's a warning to us because as we'll see in the coming weeks, Pharaoh keeps hearing the Word. He keeps rejecting it. He keeps resisting it.

He keeps refusing it. His heart becomes even harder. Oh, my friend, don't have a hardened heart. Do not harden your heart.

There's a psalm which speaks about that, Psalm 95. It talks about not hardening your heart to God's Word. Because Pharaoh is a warning to all of us, not to make shipwreck of our soul, not to head down the highway to hell, because our heart has become so hard that we are resisting and rejecting and refusing this Christ of Christianity.

My friend, how's your heart? Please think about it. Please consider your heart and make sure it's not a hardened heart, but a healthy heart that follows and loves Jesus.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, we give thanks to Thee for Thy Word. We thank Thee, Lord, for the encouragement it gives.

We thank Thee, Lord, for the challenge it presents. But we also give thanks for the warnings that are scattered throughout it, where we see different people on the pages of Scripture who willfully refused and rejected and resisted the Lord, and that there will be warnings to us, to remind us not to follow in their footsteps, but to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to seek Him while He's to be found, to call upon Him while He is near, not to be a moment or a minute longer outside the kingdom, but to come on bended knee, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

O Lord, hear us, we pray, that Thou wouldst soften hearts, that many and everyone here would respond in faith and obedience to follow Jesus.

[36:10] Lord, watch over us and we pray, bless us, bless Thy Word to us, and go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing in Psalm 62.

Psalm 62, it's on page 294 in the Blue Psalm book. Psalm 62, we're singing from verse 5 down to the verse marked 8.

I love these words in Psalm 62. They are the confession of the Christian, of someone who has come to Jesus seeking forgiveness.

And this is David's confession where he says about Jesus, he says, My soul wait thou with patience upon thy God alone. On him dependent all my hope and expectation.

He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he. He only is my sure defense. I shall not moved be. And then there's this call in verse 8, you'll see it there, where David says to those reading his testimony, he says, You people place your confidence in him continually.

[37:33] Before him pour ye out your heart. God is our refuge high. So we'll sing these verses in conclusion of Psalm 62 to God's praise. I saw wait thou with patience upon thy God alone.

someone move the ing and have had End me hope and in hope Be my salvation is, and my sorrow is He.

Be on His, my sure defense, I shall not live in Thee.

In God my glory wasted, and my salvation sure.

In God the rock is all my strength, my refuge was secure.

[39:35] Keep me the pleasure of my death, in Him continually.

Before Him pour me out your heart, God is our refuge high.

In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Bye. Amen. abortion Alison. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[41:02] Amen. Amen.