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Teaching Notes

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## **The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart**

**Exodus 9; Romans 9**

### I. Overview of the Chapter: Three More Plagues

#### A. The Fifth Plague: The Plague on Livestock (vs. 1-7)

***Exodus 9:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: "Let my people go, so that they may worship me." 2 If you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them back, 3 the hand of the LORD will bring a terrible plague on your livestock in the field-- on your horses and donkeys and camels and on your cattle and sheep and goats. 4 But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die.'"***

***5 The LORD set a time and said, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this in the land." 6 And the next day the LORD did it: All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died. 7 Pharaoh sent men to investigate and found that not even one of the animals of the Israelites had died. Yet his heart was unyielding and he would not let the people go.***

1. Again, Pharaoh warned ahead of time... the grace of God!
2. Moses commands Pharaoh: God upholds Pharaoh's office, but shows His sovereignty over him by commanding him
3. Focus: Worship... "Let my people go so they may worship me!!"
4. Threatened judgment: a plague on livestock *in the field*
  - a. not every single solitary animal
  - b. else there would be none left for the seventh plague

The plague of hail:

**vs. 19 Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every man and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die.'"**

5. NOTE: This is now the second plague in which God makes a distinction between Israel and Egypt
6. Watch out for evangelical commentators being clever and acting like liberals:

Expositor's Bible Commentary:

"Normally the Egyptian cattle were stabled from May to December inclusive, during the flood and drying-off periods when the pastures were water-logged. Thus some of the cattle were already being turned out to pasture down south; so it must have been sometime in January. These cattle were then affected when they came into contact with the heaps of dead frogs left from the second plague and died of *bacillus anthracis*, the hoof and mouth disease. The Israelite cattle were exempted from the plague possibly because the delta would have been slower in recovering from the effects of the flood, which was further downstream. Also, the Israelites' different attitude toward corpses—they took precautions to deal with the heaps of dead carcasses—may have spared their own cattle."

**DANGER DANGER!!! Naturalistic explanations of what is presented in the Bible as a clearly miraculous plague and a clearly miraculous protection of Israel.**

7. Pharaoh sent envoys to discover if Israel had indeed been spared... this is a significant moment in the text
8. BUT Pharaoh's heart was "unyielding" or "hardened" and he refused to let the people go

B. The Sixth Plague: The Plague of Boils (vs. 8-12)

**8 Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from a furnace and have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh. 9 It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on men and animals throughout the land."**

**10 So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on men and animals. 11 The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians. 12 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.**

1. Again, like the third plague... this time there is NO WARNING AT ALL... God just acts

2. For the first time human lives are attacked and threatened... somewhat a foreshadowing of the most dreadful of all these plagues, the plague on the firstborn
3. The furnace from which the soot was taken was used to bake the bricks Israel had been making all these years... a stark reminder of Israel's years of bitter bondage, of the taskmaster's lash across their backs
4. The soot was thrown into the air in Pharaoh's presence... a very dramatic act of direct judgment
5. NOTE: here we also have a direct act of judgment on the magicians who had stood against Moses earlier... now they can't even stand up in front of Moses because of the painful festering boils on their skin
6. The Lord directly hardened Pharaoh's heart... more on that later

C. The Plague of Hail (vs. 13-35)

***13 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, 14 or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. 15 For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. 16 But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. 17 You still set yourself against my people and will not let them go. 18 Therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now. 19 Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every man and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die.'"***

***20 Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. 21 But those who ignored the word of the LORD left their slaves and livestock in the field.***

***22 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that hail will fall all over Egypt-- on men and animals and on everything growing in the fields of Egypt." 23 When Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; 24 hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. 25 Throughout***

*Egypt hail struck everything in the fields-- both men and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. 26 The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were.*

*27 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. "This time I have sinned," he said to them. "The LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. 28 Pray to the LORD, for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don't have to stay any longer."*

*29 Moses replied, "When I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands in prayer to the LORD. The thunder will stop and there will be no more hail, so you may know that the earth is the LORD's. 30 But I know that you and your officials still do not fear the LORD God."*

*31 (The flax and barley were destroyed, since the barley had headed and the flax was in bloom. 32 The wheat and spelt, however, were not destroyed, because they ripen later.)*

*33 Then Moses left Pharaoh and went out of the city. He spread out his hands toward the LORD; the thunder and hail stopped, and the rain no longer poured down on the land. 34 When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts. 35 So Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.*

1. Back to direct confrontations and warnings in Pharaoh's presence
2. Notice how God designates Himself in verse 13: "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews"
  - a. at the beginning of the confrontation, Pharaoh had said "Who is the Lord, that I should listen to Him and let the slaves go? I do not know the Lord" Now he is getting a thorough education
  - b. God strongly identifies with Israel here, as He did earlier when He said "Israel is my firstborn son..." He is here the "God of the Hebrews"
3. The "full force" of God's plagues threatened here... which should have caused Pharaoh to sit up and take notice... what has already happened is scary enough! However, it is not the "full force" as God Himself points out

*vs. 15 For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth.*

vs. 14 The Hebrew says the plague is sent “against your heart”... specifically directed at Pharaoh’s person, and against the hearts of all his officials and people!!

4. The Purpose is CLEAR:

***vs. 14 so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth.***

***vs. 16 But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.***

God has saving intentions to the ends of the earth... He does all of this for the glory of His name

Piper: “Why didn’t God make short work of Pharaoh?”

“In Exodus 9:16 God speaks to Pharaoh a word that lets hi (and us) know why God is multiplying His mighty acts into ten plagues, instead of making short work of Egypt’s stubbornness in one swift catastrophe. This text is so crucial that the apostle Paul quotes it in Romans 9:17 to sum up God’s purpose in the exodus. God says to Pharaoh,

“But for this purpose I have caused you to stand (or ‘appointed you’), to show you my power, *so that my name might be proclaimed throughout the earth.*” Romans 9:17 says, “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, *so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.*”

“So the point of the exodus was to make a worldwide reputation for God. The point of the ten plagues and the miraculous Red Sea crossing was to demonstrate the incredible power of God on behalf of His freely chosen people, with the aim that this reputation, this name, would be declared throughout the whole world. Is it not clear, then, that God has great pleasure in His fame?”

5. (vs. 18-19) God declares ahead of time what the plague will be... and He warns Egypt to take precautions... again, amazing grace from the Lord

Note: no plague like it = no God like Him

6. (vs. 20-21) Separation between Egyptians that fear the Lord and obey His word and those who do not!!

7. (vs. 22-25) The terrible plague is described... terrifying thunder, monster hail storm, beating down and destroying everything not under shelter; also electrical part described... an attack of fire with the hail, most probably lightning

Lit. “fire ran along or toward the ground”... perhaps fires started by this plague

8. (vs. 26) God clearly and miraculously spared the land of Goshen where Israel was

9. (vs. 27-28) Pharaoh, obviously shaken by this plague, asks Moses to pray to stop the thunder and hail. “We have had enough!!!” He even acknowledges personal sin, and justifies Israel. He promises to let the people go.

NOTE: Some evangelical churches would call Pharaoh “repentant” and “converted” at this point, would baptize him and make him chairman of the elders or deacons!

Moses sees through it completely:

***vs. 29-30 Moses replied, "When I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands in prayer to the LORD. The thunder will stop and there will be no more hail, so you may know that the earth is the LORD's. 30 But I know that you and your officials still do not fear the LORD God."***

The narrative proves Moses to have been right:

***31 (The flax and barley were destroyed, since the barley had headed and the flax was in bloom. 32 The wheat and spelt, however, were not destroyed, because they ripen later.)***

***33 Then Moses left Pharaoh and went out of the city. He spread out his hands toward the LORD; the thunder and hail stopped, and the rain no longer poured down on the land. 34 When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts. 35 So Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.***

## II. The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart, and God’s Sovereign Purpose

### A. The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart Predicted by God

***Exodus 4:21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go."***

***Exodus 7:1-6 Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. 2 You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country. 3 But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, 4 he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on***

***Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. 5 And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it." 6 Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them.***

B. Every single sign God did connected to Pharaoh's hardened heart

1. The staff into a snake

***Exodus 7:10-14 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. 11 Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: 12 Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. 13 Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said. 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go.***

#1: The Nile into blood

***Exodus 7:21-23 The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt. 22 But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said. 23 Instead, he turned and went into his palace, and did not take even this to heart.***

#2: The plague of frogs

***Exodus 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.***

#3: The plague of gnats

***Exodus 8:19 The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.***

#4: The plague of flies

***Exodus 8:32 But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.***

#5: The plague on the livestock

***Exodus 9:7 Pharaoh sent men to investigate and found that not even one of the animals of the Israelites had died. Yet his heart was unyielding and he would not let the people go.***

#6: The plague of boils

***Exodus 9:12 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.***

#7: The plague of hail

***Exodus 9:35 So Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.***

#8: The plague of locusts

***Exodus 10:1-2 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them 2 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 10:20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.***

#9: The plague of darkness

***Exodus 10:27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go.***

NOTE: Does Pharaoh still have “free will” here???

Hebrew a very strong word... “abah”... “to be willing, to choose, to consent”. BUT his unwillingness directly tied to God’s prior hardening of Pharaoh’s heart

SUMMARY:

***Exodus 11:10 Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.***

Hardening tied to ALL of the plagues, not just the last ones!

#10: the plague on the firstborn

NOTE: no hardening statement here!!! Of course... Pharaoh did let them go this time

One more, though:

***Exodus 14:3-4 Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.' 4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." So the Israelites did this.***

***14: 8 The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly.***

C. What is the “hardening of heart”?

1. Like the beaten path into which the seed cannot penetrate
2. A refusal to yield, to be submissive, to respond, to move according to God’s command
3. Hebrew word “hazaq” = “to be strong, hard”
4. Same as God’s “strong hand” which compelled Pharaoh

***Exodus 6:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."***

***Exodus 10:19 And the LORD changed the wind to a very strong west wind, which caught up the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea. Not a locust was left anywhere in Egypt.***

***Exodus 10:20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.***

James Weldon Johnson, in a sermon on the Prodigal Son: “Young man, young man, your arm's too short to box with God.”

D. Common way of thinking about the hardening of heart:

“In all, there are ten places where ‘hardening’ of Pharaoh is ascribed to God (4:21, 7:3, 9:12, 10:1, 10:20, 10:27, 11:10, 14:4, 14:8, 14:17). But it must be stated just as firmly that Pharaoh hardened his own heart in another ten passages (7:13, 7:14, 7:22, 8:15, 8:19, 8:32, 9:7, 9:34, 9:35, 13:15). Thus the hardening was as much Pharaoh’s own act as it was the work of God. Even more significant is the fact that Pharaoh alone was the agent of the hardening in the first sign and in all the first five plagues. Not until the sixth plague, as KD carefully

pointed out, was it stated that God actually moved in and hardened Pharaoh's heart..." (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

Christian website: "God's desire, in this situation, was to show the world His mighty power. He allowed this hostile, arrogant, and stubborn Pharaoh to push the situation to the extreme. He only hardened Pharaoh's heart in the direction Pharaoh had already chosen for himself."

Another Christian author: "Wasn't God unfair in hardening Pharaoh's heart? God was very patient with Pharaoh and gave Pharaoh plenty of opportunities to repent, and in the end God simply gave him what he already wanted."

In other words: God won't harden anyone's heart against their will, but always waits to see what they will do, and merely confirms in them the hardening they have already chosen for themselves.

E. Paul's Teaching in Romans 9... based on Exodus 9:13-16

***Exodus 9:13-16 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, 14 or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. 15 For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. 16 But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.***

***Romans 9:14-18 What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! 15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.***

John Piper's conclusion: Romans 9:18 teaches unconditional hardening

Seven reasons, one mystery:

"One mystery: People who are hardened against God are really guilty. They have real fault. They are really blameworthy. They really deserve to be judged. AND God decided who would be in that condition. If you demand an explanation for HOW this can be—that God decides who is hardened and yet they have real guilt and real fault—there are pointers in the Bible. But they will not satisfy the natural, fallen human mind."

Seven reasons why Romans 9:18 teaches unconditional hardening:

1. First, *that's what the words most naturally mean*. "He hardens whomever he wills," says that his will and not our will is decisive in hardening. To be sure, our will rebels and is hard against God. But the natural meaning of these words is that God's will is decisive beneath and behind our willing without nullifying the importance of our will.

2. Second, *the exact parallel with mercy shows that the act of God in hardening is as unconditional as the act of God in having mercy*. Verse 18 says, "He has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills." So if we believe that God's showing mercy is unconditional, the most natural way to take the parallel is that the hardening is unconditional.

3. Third, *this is in fact exactly what Paul infers from God's words in verse 15*, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy." Paul draws out of this in verse 16, "So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy." If that is what "I have mercy on whom I have mercy" means, then it is probably what "I harden whom I harden" means, namely, "It depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who hardens."

4. Fourth, *the parallel with Jacob and Esau shows that mercy and hardening are unconditional*. Paul said in verses 11 and 13, "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad . . . As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'" In other words, the context demands that Paul address not just the love and mercy part of God's sovereignty but also the hate and hardening part of God's sovereignty. The parallel with Jacob and Esau in verse 13 shows that the hardening and the mercy are unconditional.

5. Fifth, *the objection and Paul's answer to it in verse 19 show that Paul did not deal with God's sovereignty the way most people deal with it today*. Paul raises the objection: "You will say to me then, 'Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?'" Now at this point most people today say, God finds fault because his hardening is a response to our prior self-hardening.

For example, one popular, and usually good commentary, says,

"Neither here nor anywhere else is God said to harden anyone who had not first hardened himself." That Pharaoh hardened his heart against God and refused to humble himself is made plain in the story. So God's hardening of him was a judicial act, abandoning him to his own stubbornness. [note 1]

Let me say this calmly and firmly: That is exactly the opposite of what Romans 9:18 teaches. And the fifth reason that I say so is this: Paul could have so easily removed the objection of verse 19 that way, and he did not! The objector hears Paul say, "God hardens whomever he wills," and he responds, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" How easily Paul could have answered the objection with all the answers of modern man! And he didn't. Because they are the wrong answer. They turn his teaching right on its head. He said, "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?" Indeed he said more – but in a direction exactly the opposite of what people today (or then) expect.

6. Sixth, *verse 21 shows that Paul sees mercy and hardening as unconditional because he speaks of the objects of mercy and hardening as coming from the same lump of clay*: "Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the **same lump** (there's the crucial phrase!) one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use?" The stress is that it was not the nature of the clay that determined what God would do with it. It was the free and wise and sovereign will of the potter. He has mercy on whom he wills and he hardens whom he wills – from the same lump of clay.

7. Seventh, we read in *Romans 11:7*, "What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened." In other words the decisive issue in who is hardened and who is not is election, not some prior willing or running on our part, but God who elects. "The elect obtained it, the rest

were hardened" (11:7). "Jacob I loved, Esau I hated" (9:13). "He has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills" (9:18).

## Seeing what Paul saw in Exodus 9:

Now, where did Paul see this in the Old Testament? The answer in Romans 9:17 is that he saw it in the story of the Exodus where God hardens Pharaoh's heart. He quotes Exodus 9:16. So let's go back there and see what Paul saw.

You recall what is happening. God has sent Moses and Aaron to command Pharaoh to let his people go. Pharaoh refuses over and over, and God multiplies his wonders in Egypt with more and more miracles – ten plagues and then a great sea-splitting deliverance – to show that he is God and Pharaoh is nothing in his rebellion. Eighteen times Exodus refers to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart so that he does not let the people go.

Just before the verse that Paul quotes (Exodus 9:16) it says, for example, in Exodus 9:12, "But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them as the Lord had spoken to Moses." The key here is the phrase "as the Lord had spoken to Moses." When had God said to Moses that Pharaoh would harden his heart and not listen to them? Two times: one of them before Moses had ever arrived in Egypt (the other in 7:3 before any mention is made of Pharaoh's self-hardening).

In Exodus 4:21 Moses is preparing to go to Egypt, "And the Lord said to Moses, 'When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.'" The reason this is so important is that time after time you hear people say that God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart doesn't start until the seventh plague and is the result of his own self-hardening.

But that that is not true. God said to Moses before he ever arrived in Egypt: This is what I am going to do. I am going to harden Pharaoh's heart. And this is what happens in the very first meetings with Pharaoh, not just the later ones:

- Before the first plague. Exodus 7:13, "Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, *as the Lord had said.*"
- After the first plague. Exodus 7:22, "But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, *as the Lord had said.*"
- After the second plague. Exodus 8:15, "But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, *as the Lord had said.*"
- After the third plague. Exodus 8:19, "Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.' But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, *as the Lord had said.*"

And in every case what the Lord had said was, "I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go" (4:21; see 7:3). The point is this: whether it says Pharaoh hardened his heart (8:15) or that his heart "was hardened" (8:19) in each case it is happening "as the Lord had said," and what he had said was, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." Which means that behind "self-hardening" and behind the "being hardened" is the plan and purpose of God. It is not described as a response to what Pharaoh does, but as a sovereign rule over what Pharaoh does. Paul sees this and draws it out and states it in Romans 9:18, "[God] has mercy on whomever he wills, and *he hardens whomever he wills.*"