

# Moses and Pharaoh: A Clash of Titans

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## INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, we contrast the lives of two great characters of the Old Testament: Moses and Pharaoh. One was a man of low degree who rose to great heights; the other a man of high degree who fell to great depths. Let us learn from their examples (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

*Romans 15:4 (NASB95) — 4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

*1 Corinthians 10:11 (NASB95) — 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

Appearing to Moses in a burning bush on Mt. Horeb, God said, “I have seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt. I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and bring them to the land of promise” (Exod. 3:7-9).

*Exodus 3:7-9 (NASB95) — 7 The Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. 8 “So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. 9 “Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.*

Commissioning Moses, God said, “Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt” (Exod. 3:10).

Though initially hesitant, Moses complied with God’s command. Afterwards, Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let My people go...’” However, Pharaoh refused, saying, “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” (Exod. 5:1-2).

*Exodus 3:10 (NASB95) — 10 “Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.”*

*Exodus 5:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 And afterward Moses and Aaron 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.”*

With the stage thus set, God unleashed ten plagues upon Egypt: water to blood, frogs, flies, gnats, pestilence upon livestock, boils on man and beast, thunder and hail, devouring locust, darkness and death of the firstborn.

These disasters were designed to break the stubborn will of Pharaoh, to execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, to demonstrate the surpassing power of the Lord, and to bring about the deliverance of the Hebrew people from Egyptian servitude (Exod. 6:1-9; 12:12; Num. 33:3-4).

*Exodus 6:1-9 (NASB95) — 1 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land.” 2 God spoke further to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord; 3 and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them. 4 “I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. 5 “Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. 6 “Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. 7 ‘Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 ‘I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the Lord.’” 9 So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage.*

*Exodus 12:12 (NASB95) — 12 ‘For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the Lord.*

*Numbers 33:3-4 (NASB95) — 3 They journeyed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the next day after the Passover the sons of Israel started out boldly in the sight of all the Egyptians, 4 while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn whom the Lord had struck down among them. The Lord had also executed judgments on their gods.*

## MOSES WAS FAITHFUL

Moses demonstrated faith in God: choosing properly, enduring adversity, keeping His commandments, trusting His promises (Heb. 11:23-29).

*Hebrews 11:23-29 (NASB95) — 23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.*

Moreover, Moses proved faithful as a servant (Heb. 3:1-6), as a prophet (Exod. 7:6; Num. 12:6-8), and as one who followed God's pattern (Exod. 25:8-9, 40; 40:16).

*Hebrews 3:1-6 (NASB95) — 1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; 2 He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. 3 For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. 4 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. 5 Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; 6 but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house— whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.*

*Exodus 7:6 (NASB95) — 6 So Moses and Aaron did it; as the Lord commanded them, thus they did.*

*Numbers 12:6-8 (NASB95) — 6 He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. 7 "Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; 8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?"*

*Exodus 25:8-9 (NASB95) — 8 "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. 9 "According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.*

*Exodus 25:40 (NASB95) — 40 “See that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.*

*Exodus 40:16 (NASB95) — 16 Thus Moses did; according to all that the Lord had commanded him, so he did.*

## PHARAOH WAS REBELLIOUS

God sent Moses to Egypt, carrying the command, “Let my people go!” Yet, God warned him to not expect an immediate positive response from Pharaoh: “I will harden his heart...” (Exod. 4:21-23; 7:1-7).

*Exodus 4:21-23 (NASB95) — 21 The Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. 22 “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Israel is My son, My firstborn. 23 “So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve Me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.” ’ ’ ”*

*Exodus 7:1-7 (NASB95) — 1 Then the Lord said to Moses, “See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. 2 “You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. 3 “But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 “When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. 5 “The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.” 6 So Moses and Aaron did it; as the Lord commanded them, thus they did. 7 Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.*

Pharaoh’s stubbornness and rebellion was evident from their first meeting (Exod. 7:8-13).

*Exodus 7:8-13 (NASB95) — 8 Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 9 “When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Work a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.’ ” 10 So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the Lord had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. 11 Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. 12 For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. 13 Yet Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said.*

Moses demonstrated God's power by turning the waters of the Nile into blood. When the magicians of Egypt seemingly duplicated the miracle, Pharaoh's heart was hardened (Exod. 7:20-25).

*Exodus 7:20-25 (NASB95) — 20 So Moses and Aaron did even as the Lord had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood. 21 The fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt. 22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said. 23 Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this. 24 So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile. 25 Seven days passed after the Lord had struck the Nile.*

Moses demonstrated God's power by sending frogs upon the land of Egypt. Pharaoh pled for mercy, saying to Moses, "Entreat the Lord that He remove the frogs." Yet, when He did so, Pharaoh hardened his heart (Exod. 8:1-15).

*Exodus 8:8-15 (NASB95) — 8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, "Entreat the Lord that He remove the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord." 9 Moses said to Pharaoh, "The honor is yours to tell me: when shall I entreat for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, that they may be left only in the Nile?" 10 Then he said, "Tomorrow." So he said, "May it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God. 11 "The frogs will depart from you and your houses and your servants and your people; they will be left only in the Nile." 12 Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the Lord concerning the frogs which He had inflicted upon Pharaoh. 13 The Lord did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, the courts, and the fields. 14 So they piled them in heaps, and the land became foul. 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not listen to them, as the Lord had said.*

Moses demonstrated God's power by sending a plague of gnats. Unable to duplicate this miracle, the magicians said, "This is the finger of God." In response to their failure, Pharaoh's heart was hardened (Exod. 8:16-19).

*Exodus 8:16-19 (NASB95) — 16 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats through all the land of Egypt.'" 17 They did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff, and struck the dust of the earth, and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt. 18 The magicians tried with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not; so there were gnats on man and beast. 19 Then*

*the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said.*

God sent a great swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh and upon all the land of Egypt. Afterwards, Moses made supplication to the Lord on behalf of Pharaoh, resulting in their removal. Yet, once again, Pharaoh hardened his heart, and would not let the people go (Exod. 8:30-32).

*Exodus 8:30-32 (NASB95) — 30 So Moses went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the Lord. 31 The Lord did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants and from his people; not one remained. 32 But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.*

Moses demonstrated God's power by sending severe pestilence upon the livestock in Egypt. Despite this terrible loss, the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go (Exod. 9:1-7).

*Exodus 9:1-7 (NASB95) — 1 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and speak to him, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 2 "For if you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them, 3 behold, the hand of the Lord will come with a very severe pestilence on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks. 4 "But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel." ' " 5 The Lord set a definite time, saying, "Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land." 6 So the Lord did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died. 7 Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not even one of the livestock of Israel dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.*

Moses demonstrated God's power by causing boils to break out upon the bodies of man and beast. The magicians of Egypt, who valued personal cleanliness and ceremonial purity, could not stand before Moses. Yet, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses (Exod. 9:8-12).

*Exodus 9:8-12 (NASB95) — 8 Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for yourselves handfuls of soot from a kiln, and let Moses throw it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh. 9 "It will become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and will become boils breaking out with sores on man and beast through all the land of Egypt." 10 So they took soot from a kiln, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses threw it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on man and beast. 11 The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians as well as on all the Egyptians. 12 And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.*

Moses demonstrated God's power by sending a destructive plague of hail. Afterwards, Pharaoh confessed, "I have sinned..." and asked Moses to make supplication on his behalf. However, when the thunder, hail and rain ceased, Pharaoh hardened his heart, he and his servants, and he did not let the people go (Exod. 9:33-35).

*Exodus 9:33-35 (NASB95) — 33 So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread out his hands to the Lord; and the thunder and the hail ceased, and rain no longer poured on the earth. 34 But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. 35 Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses.*

Informing Moses of the coming plague of locust, God said, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them..." (Exod. 10:1-2, 18-20).

*Exodus 10:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, 2 and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the Lord."*

*Exodus 10:18-20 (NASB95) — 18 He went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the Lord. 19 So the Lord shifted the wind to a very strong west wind which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea; not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt. 20 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.*

Moses demonstrated God's power by sending thick darkness over the land of Egypt. Pharaoh partially relented, permitting the Israelites to depart, but not their livestock. Partial compliance with the Lord's will was not enough; God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was unwilling to let them go (Exod. 10:24-29).

*Exodus 10:24-29 (NASB95) — 24 Then Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, "Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you." 25 But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice them to the Lord our God. 26 "Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve the Lord our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the Lord." 27 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go. 28 Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in the day you see my face you shall die!" 29 Moses said, "You are right; I shall never see your face again!"*

In the tenth plague, God smote the firstborn of man and beast, bringing death upon the land of Egypt. Yet, Pharaoh's heart remained unrelenting and unchanged (Exod. 11:9-10).

*Exodus 11:9-10 (NASB95) — 9 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt." 10 Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; yet the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go out of his land.*

The last occurrence of this phrase led to the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the waters of the Red Sea: "Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." And they did so" (Exod. 14:1-4).

*Exodus 14:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea. 3 "For Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' 4 "Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord." And they did so.*

## CONCLUSION

Like Moses, we should be faithful (Luke 12:42-44; 1 Cor. 4:1-2).

*Luke 12:42-44 (NASB95) — 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? 43 "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 44 "Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.*

*1 Corinthians 4:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.*

Unlike Pharaoh, we should be receptive (James 1:21-25).

*James 1:21-25 (NASB95) — 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.*



The Bible speaks of those who harden their hearts, necks, and minds (Mark 6:51-52; Prov. 29:1; 2 Cor. 3:14).

*Mark 6:51-52 (NASB95) — 51 Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, 52 for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.*

*Proverbs 29:1 (NASB95) — 1 A man who hardens his neck after much reproof Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.*

*2 Corinthians 3:14 (NASB95) — 14 But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.*

What causes such callousness and hardening? It is the inevitable result of rejecting the truth, and persisting in a state of sinful and willful rebellion (Prov. 28:13-14; Eph. 4:17-24).

*Proverbs 28:13-14 (NASB95) — 13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion. 14 How blessed is the man who fears always, But **he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.***

*Ephesians 4:17-24 (NASB95) — 17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, **because of the hardness of their heart;** 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

God rewards us according to our works, rendering to each according to his/her deeds (Rom. 2:5-11).

*Romans 2:5-11 (NASB95) — 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to each person according to his deeds: 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.*

If we, like Pharaoh, refuse to comply with the commands of the Lord, continuing in a state of defiant disobedience, God Himself will send a strong delusion, that we must be condemned (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

*2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 (NASB95) — 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.*

Therefore, let us obey God, while there is time and opportunity; let it be today, lest we be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:12-19).

*Hebrews 3:12-19 (NASB95) — 12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, 15 while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me." 16 For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.*