

Exodus 9
June 29, 2014

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: How do you know if you have a healthy heart physically? [Prepare for fun responses: “no news is good news” “it feels fine” “my doctor says I have a strong heartbeat”]

Q: What are the symptoms of an unhealthy heart? [chest pain, tightness in chest, shortness of breath, easily fatigued when getting up and around]

I think it’s fair to say that most of us have been educated on the warning signs of an unhealthy heart and when we should see our medical provider. In addition, many of us are educated on how to cultivate a healthy heart.

Q: What are some ways to help keep our heart physically healthy? [exercise regularly, eat lots of fruits and vegetables, etc.]

Q: So how do you know if you have a healthy heart spiritually? [it’s tender and open to His direction; when He convicts you of sin, you feel grieved and seek repentance, etc.]

Caring for our spiritual heart is similar to taking care of our heart physically. The more educated we are about the causes of a spiritually unhealthy heart, the more proactive we can be.

Transition: If you have joined us for the study of Exodus, we have been getting a case study on what a hardened heart looks like through Pharaoh. So today, I want us to be more intentional about studying how a hardened heart happens and make sure we have a roadmap to avoid it!

So here is the objective for today’s lesson: All of us can avoid a hardened heart toward God by recognizing the **SYMPTOMS**, understanding the **root cause**, and then acting on this knowledge by cultivating healthy habits to maintain a tender heart toward God. So let’s begin our study looking for symptoms of a hardened heart.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Ex 9:1-7 Plague #5]

Observations/Process Qs-

V.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.”’

V.2:

- If you **refuse to let them go and continue to hold them back**, [refusal to obey God]

V.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.

V.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.’ ”

V.5:

- The LORD set a time and said, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this in the land.”

V.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.

V.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.
- Q: What did you see in this section of verses that were symptoms of a hardened heart? [See yellow highlights]
- Q: Is it fair to say that God revealed Himself clearly to Pharaoh? [Yes. V.4, 6]

[Read Ex 9:8-12]

V.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.

V.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.”

V.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.

V.11:

- The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians.

V.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.
- Q: What did you see in this section of verses that were symptoms of a hardened heart? [See yellow highlights]

[Read Ex 9:13-35]

V.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,

V.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.

V.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.

V.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.

V.17:

- You still set yourself against my people and will not let them go.

V.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.

V.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.’ ”

V.20:

- Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside.

V.21:

- But those who ignored the word of the LORD left their slaves and livestock in the field.

V.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.”

V.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;

V.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.

V.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.
- [If question comes up about Egyptian animals being killed in 9:6 and now 9:25, read Cabal’s commentary at the end of these notes to help the class with two possibilities]

V.26:

- The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were.

V.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.

V.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.

V.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.

V.30:

- But I know that you and your officials still do not fear the LORD God.”

V.31:

- (The flax and barley were destroyed, since the barley had headed and the flax was in bloom.

V.32:

- The wheat and spelt, however, were not destroyed, because they ripen later.)

V.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.

V.34:

- When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, **he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts.**
- Q: If you had to identify the root cause of a hardened heart, what would it be? [**Rebellion**]
- Observation: The issue was God had revealed Himself over and over to Pharaoh. Pharaoh even acknowledged that the Lord was right and he was wrong, yet he refused to obey God. That's the heart issue of the gospel message. [Ask someone to read Rom 1:18-21 God has clearly revealed Himself since the creation of the world. His invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – *have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.* For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.] Then God manifested Himself in the personhood of Jesus Christ, in human form to walk among us. God has knocked Himself out to make Himself known!! Therefore, the only unpardonable sin that separates a person from God for eternity is *rejecting His Son, Jesus, who came to bring salvation to all who would receive Him.*

V.35:

- So Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.
- Q: What did you see in this section of verses that were symptoms of a hardened heart? [See yellow highlights]

LOOK:

Today we identified symptoms of a hardened heart as illustrated by Pharaoh. But it begs the question, "How do we act on this knowledge? How do we cultivate healthy habits to maintain a tender heart toward God?" To help us along, I have provided some cross-references:

- Prov 4:23 "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."
- Heb 3:8 "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." [Respond to Him! Obey Him! Heb 4:7 and Psalm 95:8 says the same thing.]
- Heb 3: 13 "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."

A hardened heart is driven by rebellion, a tender heart is driven by repentance and responding to God's voice.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Ex 5-10)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The stage is set: Pharaoh refused God's command, and now God would send His judgments on Egypt. He would fulfill His promise in Gen. 12:3 to judge the nations that persecute the Jews. He would reveal His power (9:16), His wrath (Ps. 78:43–51), and His greatness, showing that the gods of Egypt were false gods, and that Jehovah alone is the true God (12:12; Num. 33:4).

II. The Conflict

The ten plagues of Egypt accomplished several things: (1) they were signs to Israel, assuring them of God's power and care, 7:3; (2) they were plagues of judgment to Egypt, punishing the people for persecuting Israel and revealing the vanity of their gods, 9:14; and (3) they were prophecies of judgments to come, as revealed in the Book of Revelation. Note the sequence of the plagues. They fall into three groups of three each, with the tenth plague (death of the firstborn) set off last:

1. Water to blood, 7:14–25 (warning given, 7:16)
2. Frogs, 8:1–15 (warning given, 8:1)
3. Lice, 8:16–19 (no warning, and magicians could not duplicate, 8:18–19)
4. Flies, 8:20–24 (warning given, 8:20)
5. Murrain on cattle, 9:1–7 (warning given, 9:1)
6. Boils on the people, 9:8–12 (no warning given, magicians afflicted, 9:11)
7. Hail, fire, 9:13–35 (warning given, 9:13)
8. Locusts, 10:1–20 (warning given, 10:3)
9. Thick darkness, 10:21–23 (no warning, Pharaoh refused to see Moses again, 10:27–29)
10. Death of the firstborn, 11–12 (the final judgment).

The plagues were actually a “declaration of war” against the gods of Egypt (see 12:12). The Nile River was worshiped as a god since it was their source of life (Deut. 11:10–12), and when Moses turned it into blood, God showed His power over the river. The goddess Heqt was pictured as a frog, the Egyptian symbol of resurrection. The plague of frogs certainly turned the people against Heqt! The lice and flies brought defilement to the people—a terrible blow, for Egyptians could not worship their gods unless they were spotlessly clean. The murrain attacked

the cattle which were sacred to the Egyptians; Hathor was the “cow-goddess” and Apis was the sacred bull. The gods and goddesses that controlled health and safety were attacked in the plagues of boils, hail, and locusts. The plague of darkness was the most serious, since Egypt worshiped the sun god, Ra, the chief of the gods. When the sun was blotted out for three days, it meant that Jehovah had conquered Ra. The final plague (the death of the firstborn) conquered Meskhemit the goddess of birth, and Hathor, her companion, both of whom were supposed to watch over the firstborn. All of these plagues made it clear that Jehovah was the true God!

We may trace these same plagues in the Book of Revelation, when God describes His final conflict with the god of this world, Satan: water to blood (Rev. 8:8 and 16:4–6); frogs (16:13); disease and afflictions (16:2); hail and fire (8:7), locusts (9:1ff); and darkness (16:10). The Egyptian magicians were able to imitate some of Moses’ miracles—turning the rod into a serpent (7:8–13) and the water into blood (7:19–25), and bringing forth the frogs (8:5–7). But they could not turn the dust into lice (8:16–19). Second Timothy 3:8–9 warns us that in the last days false teachers will oppose God by imitating His miracles. See 2 Thes. 2:9–10. Satan is a counterfeiter who deceives the lost world by imitating what God does (2 Cor. 11:1–4, 13–15).

Toussaint, S. D. (1985). Acts. (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds.)The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. (Vol. 2, pp. 123–124). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

e. Plague 5: Death of livestock (9:1–7)

9:1–4. Again **Moses** demanded the release of the Israelites. (On **the God of the Hebrews**; cf. 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:13; 10:3.) If Pharaoh refused, Moses said, **the hand of the LORD** (cf. 3:19; 6:1) would **bring a ... plague on** their domesticated animals: **horses ... donkeys ... camels ... cattle ... sheep ... goats**. With dead frogs throughout the land and with swarms of flies spreading germs, this pestilence, so destructive to animal life, may have been the infectious disease known as anthrax. This would have been in January when cattle were led out to pasture after the Nile inundation subsided. This plague would have been economically distressing for the Egyptians. Also many animals were sacred (cf. 8:26), particularly, as stated earlier, the bull which represented the god Apis or Re, and the cow which represented Hathor, the goddess of love, beauty, and joy. Hathor was depicted in the form of a woman with the head (or sometimes only the horns) of a cow. Also Khnum was a ram-god. The animals of **the Israelites**, the object of God’s mercies, would not be affected by the plague (9:4; cf. 8:22–23; 11:7).

9:5–7. The plague occurred as **the LORD** predicted: **all the livestock of the Egyptians died**. **Pharaoh** investigated Goshen to see if any of the Israelites’ **animals ... had died**. Even though he saw that God had indeed made a distinction (v. 4), he still refused to repent.

But if all the cattle died in this plague, how can one explain the presence of animals later in verse 10 and of livestock in verses 20–21? Two explanations are possible: (1) The word “all” (v. 6) may be employed hyperbolically, as a figure of speech for a large quantity without meaning the totality of the livestock. (2) Perhaps a better explanation is that the plague killed all the animals **in the field** (v. 3) but not those in shelters.

f. Plague 6: Boils (9:8–12)

9:8–12. Like the third and ninth plagues, this one was not announced to **Pharaoh**. This plague, the first to endanger human life, resulted in open sores (**festering boils**, vv. 9–10) on the bodies of **men and animals**. Moses' tossing **soot from a furnace** may have been a symbolic act, like his and Aaron's use of their staffs in several plagues. **The Egyptians**, fearfully aware of epidemics, worshiped Sekhmet, a lion-headed goddess with alleged power over disease; Sunu, the pestilence god; and Isis, goddess of healing. Yet these deities could not deliver the people and animals from their torments. **The magicians of Egypt** were again helpless (cf. 8:18) because they were similarly afflicted (9:11) and found their own deities powerless. Yet **Pharaoh** persisted in willful obstinance (v. 12).

g. Plague 7: Hail (9:13–35)

This judgment commences the third cycle of the plagues. These three plagues (seven, eight, and nine) were more severe than the previous ones and are described in more detail. This seventh plague resulted in great economic duress. Clearly the abilities of several Egyptian gods were again being challenged. Nut, the sky goddess, was not able to forestall the storm; and Osiris, the god of crop fertility, could not maintain the crops in this hailstorm; nor could Set, the storm god, hold back this storm.

The lengthy section describing this plague includes four things: the instructions to Moses (vv. 13–19), the destruction of the plague (vv. 20–26), Moses' discourse with Pharaoh (vv. 27–32), and the impenitence of Pharaoh (vv. 33–35).

9:13–19. Again **Moses** was to see Pharaoh **early in the morning** (cf. 7:15; 8:20). The reason for the impending judgment was again Pharaoh's unwillingness to release God's **people**. **Pharaoh** had failed to recognize the worth of **the God of the Hebrews** (cf. 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1; 10:3). He would not admit that **there is no one like Him in all the earth**. Though God had been gracious in not displaying the full fury of His wrath (9:15), this **plague** would teach them something of His **power**. In fact God said this was why He had **raised ... up** Pharaoh (cf. Rom. 9:17, 22). God was about to demonstrate His power by a **hailstorm** of huge proportions, without historic precedent (Ex. 9:18; cf. v. 24). Yet in His grace God told the king to have **livestock** (cf. comments on vv. 5–7) and people brought under **shelter**. In Egypt cattle were usually outdoors from January to April, before the summer heat set in.

9:20–26, 31–32. Hearing of Moses' forewarning, some of the Egyptians believed God's **word** through Moses and responded appropriately.

The LORD brought destruction on the Egyptians as He had predicted, though the hail (and rain, vv. 33–34) did not fall on **the Israelites in the land of Goshen** (v. 26). **Men and animals** were killed by the **hail**, and crops were demolished. However, the phrase **everything growing in the fields** (vv. 22, 25) is qualified by the statements in verses 31–32. "Everything" refers to those crops about to be harvested, namely, **flax** (used in making linen cloth), and **barley**. **Wheat and spelt** (an inferior type of wheat) were unaffected. Flax and barley blossomed in January and were harvested in March–April. Wheat and spelt ripened about a month later (in April) and were harvested in June–July. (See the chart "Calendar in Israel," near 12:1.) So this plague may have occurred in February.

9:27–30, 33–35. Such an awe-inspiring display of omnipotence brought an unqualified repentance from **Pharaoh (I have sinned**, v. 27; cf. 10:16). Acknowledging that God is **right** (9:27), he consented to release the Israelites (**I will let you go**, v. 28). **Moses** promised to ask God to stop the plague, though he recognized that Pharaoh's repentance was superficial and merely self-seeking (v. 30).

Since the plague was raining murderous hail through Egypt, except in Goshen, how could Moses move about so freely? Again the plague was probably in the fields (cf. v. 3) and selective in what it destroyed (viz., people, animals, trees, flax, and barley). **Moses** was correct (cf. v. 30); though the true God was gracious in bringing this holocaust to an end, **Pharaoh** remained calloused against Him.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (pp. 99 – 100). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

9:6 How did God kill all the Egyptians' livestock? See note on 7:20–21.

If all the Egyptians' livestock were killed in the plague, where did the livestock come from that later died in the hailstorm (vv. 19–25)? The Bible doesn't explain this; however, two possibilities exist. The first assumption is that the word "all" should be taken literally. In that case the livestock later killed in the hailstorm were imported from farther up the Nile river, perhaps from Cush; or that in the interval between the plagues the Egyptians had acquired some of the Israelites' flocks. Alternatively, the word "all" in v. 6 might be used here in a restrictive sense to mean "all that were in a particular area," or "all who were afflicted," or perhaps simply "the great majority."

9:7 For a discussion of Pharaoh's heart being hardened, see note on 4:21.

9:9 How could furnace ash create boils? It is not necessary to assume that the outbreak of boils was caused directly by contact with the ash; the Lord could have inflicted the boils independently of the dust when Moses acted in obedience to His command. As with many of the other miracles, God may have acted through nature, perhaps through a bacterium or virus, or beyond the realm of the natural, to accomplish His purposes.

9:25 For a discussion of how the Egyptians could have flocks even after a plague killed their livestock, see note on 9:6.