Glad You Asked: Does God harden hearts? Next Steps Study

Based on Pastor Russell’s sermon series, this study will take the next steps to dig a little deeper into what Russell preached about on Sunday. This study can be done as a small group or individually.

Read Exodus 5:1-20 Bricks Without Straw

***“****Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.’”*

***2*** *Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.”*

***3*** *Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.”*

***4*** *But the king of Egypt said, “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!”* ***5*** *Then Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.”*

***6*** *That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people:* ***7*** *“You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw.* ***8*** *But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don’t reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’* ***9*** *Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies.”*

***10*** *Then the slave drivers and the overseers went out and said to the people, “This is what Pharaoh says: ‘I will not give you any more straw.* ***11*** *Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.’”* ***12*** *So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw.* ***13*** *The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, “Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw.”* ***14*** *And Pharaoh’s slave drivers beat the Israelite overseers they had appointed, demanding, “Why haven’t you met your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?”*

***15*** *Then the Israelite overseers went and appealed to Pharaoh: “Why have you treated your servants this way?* ***16*** *Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, ‘Make bricks!’ Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people.”*

***17*** *Pharaoh said, “Lazy, that’s what you are—lazy! That is why you keep saying, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.’* ***18*** *Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks.”*

***19*** *The Israelite overseers realized they were in trouble when they were told, “You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day.”* ***20*** *When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them…”*

1. What type of person was Pharaoh? What were his character qualities?
2. From a human perspective, what does it mean to have a hard heart?
3. In what ways was Pharoah responsible for hardening his own heart?

Read 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.”*

Read Exodus 7:3-4 “*But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in Egypt, 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.”*

Read 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.”*

1. These verses say that God will harden Pharaoh’s heart. Is this just a prediction of what will happen or did God determine in advance that it would happen to Pharoah?

Read Exodus 9:16 “*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.”*

1. What was God’s purpose for Pharaoh?
2. Can God work through nonChristians?
3. Do you think it is fair of God to determine in advance that some will rebel against Him?

Read Romans 9:14-18 “***14*** *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 human desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.* ***17*** *For 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.”*

1. How does Paul answer the question, “Do you think that it is fair of God to determine in advance that some will rebel against Him?

Read Romans 9:19-24, “***19*** *One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?”* ***20*** *But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’”* ***21*** *Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?*

***22*** *What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?* ***23*** *What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—* ***24*** *even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?”*

1. Instead of focusing on those who “are prepared for destruction”, Paul seems more focused on those who are “objects of God’s mercy.” How does the miracle of salvation change the question of God’s fairness?
2. The question submitted to Pastor Russell for this week asked, “In the Bible, it mentions God hardening someone’s heart. Why does He do that?” After this sermon and study, how would you answer that question?