

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 4:18-23
“Hard Hearts”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19329
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

Exodus 4:18-23

Verse 18

Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Let me go back to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive.” Jethro said, “Go, and I wish you well.”

- Resolved, at last, to do what God was asking him to do, Moses went to his father-in-law to ask permission to return to Egypt. Moses did not tell the whole story to his father-in-law. He simply told him that he wanted to go back to Egypt to visit his family.
- Jethro was willing to let Moses go back to Egypt and wished him well.

Verse 19

Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead.”

- Exodus 2:23 tells us that the Pharaoh who wanted to kill Moses had died.
- Years have passed since Moses left Egypt. The assumption is that at the time when Moses returned to Egypt, all of those who had been in power when Moses left Egypt are dead.

Verse 20

So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.

- Having received permission to depart, Moses loaded up his family and started for Egypt.
- He carried the staff that had been turned into a serpent as he went back to Egypt. (See Exodus 4:2-5)

Verse 21-23

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. Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the LORD says; Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, “Let my son go, so he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go, so I will kill your firstborn son.””

- God had given Moses three miraculous signs that he could perform. (See Exodus 4:1-17) These signs had been given to Moses when he objected to playing his part in God’s plan to convince the elders and the people of Israel to believe him.
- Now God instructs Moses to use these signs when he stands before Pharaoh. However, he reveals that the signs will not convince Pharaoh to listen to Moses because God will “harden Pharaoh’s heart.”
- To harden the heart means to make the person unreceptive. In this case the verb contained in the phrase is in the future tense. Thus, the prediction is that God will cause Pharaoh to be unreceptive to Moses’ message concerning the people of God.
- God then tells Moses to tell Pharaoh that he will punish him for being unreceptive to Moses’ words and uncooperative with God’s plan.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Hard Hearts*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)