

## **A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME**

### **GOD HAS MERCY ON WHOM HE WANTS TO HAVE MERCY**

Romans 9:17-18 "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." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden."

It might seem strange to you for St. Paul to use the Pharaoh of Egypt as an example of God showing mercy. To Pharaoh's obstinance did not God administer ten different plagues? Indeed, God did send ten plagues. The most objective critique would have to say, wouldn't they, that God was anything but merciful to Pharaoh.

Upon careful reading in Exodus what Moses wrote concerning the ten plagues, God did show mercy to Pharaoh. God had every right to punish and condemn Pharaoh with the first plague. But, not just once, but nine additional times Pharaoh hardened his heart against God, not God against Pharaoh. A total of ten times God gave Pharaoh another opportunity to repent of his sinful conduct in regard to Israel. Ten times Pharaoh chose to repeat his sinful behavior.

In consequence to Pharaoh hardening his heart toward God, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Only the last and final self-hardening by Pharaoh became the final straw and set up the hopeless situation for Pharaoh and his army.

The lesson here is one of God's patience with sinners. God does not shut the door of mercy at once on the self-hardened. God's mercy closes gradually and is always ready to open wide at the moment of repentance. "God would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4-6) Pharaoh wanted nothing to do with God's mercy for himself or his nation. With all his might he blocked God's mercy. God merely acted out as the honest judge He is and rendered His verdict against Pharaoh based on Pharaoh's rejection of God's mercy.

The truth about God is as the Psalmist writes, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:8-12)

Prayer: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Amen.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Thou art the potter,  
I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will,  
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Search me and try me,  
Savior today! Wash me just now, Lord, wash me just now,  
As in Thy presence humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way! Wounded and weary,  
Help me I pray! Power, all power, surely is Thine!  
Touch and heal me, Savior divine!

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way! Hold o'er my being  
Absolute sway. Fill with Thy Spirit Till all shall see  
Christ only, always, living in me!  
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