

## **Lessons from Exodus 5 10-29-00**

Last week we were encouraged that God's 'I AM' and 'I WILL' are so much more than Pharaoh's "I will not." What matters is who God is and what He plans to do. We must be faithful to do what He tells us and trust Him for the outcome. Now Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh the second time. But God already knows what it will take and He told Moses back in Ex 4:22-23 (NIV)<sup>22</sup> Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son,<sup>23</sup> 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.'

But God does not go straight there, but to numerous chances for Pharaoh to see he is wrong and that God is the Most High God. Obviously the God that inhabits the Eternal Now knows every response Pharaoh will make and yet He still gives him every chance to hear and obey. There is more going on than meets the eye. Is God willing that any should perish? God so loved the \_\_\_\_\_ that He gave his only begotten son... Does God want to see Pharaoh repent? Even though the Eternal God knows Pharaoh will not repent He still gives him every opportunity.

<sup>7:6</sup> Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them.<sup>7</sup> Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.<sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,<sup>9</sup> "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,' and it will become a snake."<sup>10</sup> So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake.<sup>11</sup> Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts:<sup>12</sup> Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. **But** Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.<sup>13</sup> Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

I do not know if the magician's snakes were slight of hand or the power of darkness but whichever – the power of God dominates the scene. Aaron's snake swallows up the others. Every born again child of God has a supernatural gift of the Spirit that is a display of the life of Christ in you. Some of you may not have discovered it yet and some may be using their's without realizing that it is God and not you. The world can imitate the gifts, but they are weak compared to the life of Christ in your gift. Like the snake swallowed up the others, your gift will speak louder than any imitation. It will swallow up the counterfeits because of the life of the Spirit in your gift.

Verse 13 has a severe warning for us. A hard heart and a refusal to hear go hand in hand. The refusal to hear is the by-product of a hard heart. If we can't hear the word speaking to us as we read it, if we get nothing out of the message or our time in the word, we need to check the willingness of our heart to hear. In this verse it says Pharaoh would not listen – will you?

When there is a hardness of heart and an unwillingness to hear then God in his mercy will deal with us. If God were not merciful toward Pharaoh and the Egyptians he would simply have skipped all these plagues and gone on to the last one, but He is dealing with human hearts and inviting them to acknowledge Him as Lord. He is inviting them from the delusion of self

as god and rebellious refusal to hear their Creator's instruction to become those willing to hear, repent, obey and be blessed.

7:14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go.<sup>15</sup> Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes out to the water. Wait on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that was changed into a snake.<sup>16</sup> Then say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert. But until now you have not listened.<sup>17</sup> This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood.<sup>18</sup> The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.'"

The Nile is one of the many gods of this polytheistic nation. It was their source of life. As Moses touched the river with his staff what they saw as life became death, a river of blood. Not only the river but all the pots and bowls and stored water turned to blood. The magicians do a similar trick...they had to dig small wells beside the Nile to find water just to perform their trick. And Pharaoh had the excuse he was looking for. 22b Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said. 7:23 Instead, he turned and went into his palace, and did not take even this to heart.

There it is again, a hardness of heart and a refusal to listen in the face of this awesome national disaster. Don't tell me we don't do the same thing! We find some reason to justify the work of God in our life – insisting that it was chance and not the providence of God that allowed a certain thing in our lives. Why do we always look to natural reasons instead of the Sovereign God who is LORD over all his creation? Because our hearts are hard. We refuse to listen.

Then God has Moses call up a plague of frogs, everywhere they turned frogs. 8:8 Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Pray to the LORD to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD."... <sup>15</sup> But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.

Please notice the patience of the omnipotent God who allows this man who thinks he is in charge of the world to lie to Almighty God in the face of such overwhelming evidence. Still, he hardens his heart and will not listen.

Next come the gnats. The KJV translates it lice but recent discoveries have shown this word to be more correctly translated gnats. Pharaoh thinks he is so big – God uses his tiniest creation to show Pharaoh how powerless he is. Pharaoh again asks the magicians so he can have an excuse to not believe.

8:18 But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals. <sup>19</sup> The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.

No excuse now, just a hard heart and a refusal to listen. -Some believe that if God would just prove his power – just show He is real that any man would believe. It is not true. We underestimate the deception of the human heart to be our own god. Next God sends a plague of flies. But this time God gives Pharaoh another reason to believe, the flies do not visit the Israelites, only the Egyptians. God did it so Pharaoh would know. <sup>22</sup> "But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be

there, so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land.<sup>23</sup> I will make a distinction between my people and your people.

Egyptians used fly dung in their sacred ointments and healing cream. So much for the wisdom of man. He thinks the things that are destroying him are benefiting him.

<sup>29</sup> Moses answered, "As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the LORD, and tomorrow the flies will leave Pharaoh and his officials and his people. Only be sure that Pharaoh does not act deceitfully again by not letting the people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD."<sup>30</sup> Then Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD,<sup>31</sup> and the LORD did what Moses asked: The flies left Pharaoh and his officials and his people; not a fly remained.<sup>32</sup> But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.

Has Pharaoh been warned? Has he seen more than enough to convince him?

Next the sacred beasts of Egypt, that the Egyptians bowed down to, are struck dead, and again the Land of Goshen where the Israelites lived would not lose any livestock. <sup>9:7</sup> 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. -He wanted evidence and he got it, but for the last time he hardened his heart. He has seen enough. He knows it is Almighty God and he still says, "I will not."

Next the plague of boils came. <sup>9:11</sup> The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians.<sup>12</sup> But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen... I believe there is a line, that after you have seen enough, heard enough, and you know your Creator is graciously asking your submission that is due Him – yet you refuse – that you no longer need to harden your heart. God will do it for you. 2 Thess 2:10-12 (NIV) They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.<sup>11</sup> For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie<sup>12</sup> and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Ex 9:15-16 (NIV) 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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. Hail was coming. The officials that believed brought in their livestock and servants under cover. Those who still did not believe lost everything that was outside. It ruined the crops and stripped the trees. But not one hailstone fell in Goshen.

<sup>27</sup> 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."<sup>28</sup> 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."<sup>29</sup> 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."<sup>30</sup> But I know that you and your officials still do not fear the LORD God."

It sounds like repentance. It sounds like Pharaoh has finally seen the light. <sup>34</sup> When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts. - They didn't need God's help. Now his officials are implicated with Pharaoh.

When Moses threatens locusts will come and devour the crops that had just sprung up after the hail, the officials give in. But Pharaoh says only the men can go and has Moses driven from the court. When the locusts cover the land like a black cloud Pharaoh does a fake repentance. As soon as the locusts are gone, ...you know the story... It is uncomfortable isn't it? It's because God deals with all of us like this – and we recognize the hardness of our own hearts when we read about Pharaoh. That is why we need to ask of God for the miracle of a new heart, the new birth that He has promised if we will just humble ourselves and come to Him. 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?' God asked Moses in 10:3. He asks us the same thing today. How long? What will it take?

Next is darkness that can be felt. Same response. And finally, what God knew from the very beginning would break the back of the nation, a nation that had seen its gods declared powerless against Jehovah, a nation of hard hearts that would not give up the slavery of God's people. The death of the first born is coming.

Passover is the word *pasach* in Hebrew. Look at its usage in Is 31:5 <sup>5</sup> Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will '**pass over**' it and will rescue it." The bird is feminine – like a mother hen protecting from a predator. Do you remember Jesus words over Jerusalem? How often I would have gather you under my wings, but you would not. God is about to allow the Destroyer to search out the first born throughout all Egypt and take their lives. But there is one way to escape.

Moses told them to take a lamb or goat from their flocks and slaughter it pouring the blood into the basin. The basin is *sap* in Hebrew, a word borrowed from Egyptian for a trough at the foot of the door to divert rainwater from coming past the threshold. They were to take a branch of hyssop dip it in the *sap* and mark the lintel and door posts. As they did they made the sign of the cross marking the places where their Messiah would one day bleed for them.

They had to enter in by this blood stained door (you'll recall Jesus referred to himself as the door) and stay inside for the night. God promised that where He saw the blood marked doors He would *pasach* – cover with his wings of protection. The Destroyer could not come in. All that night they could hear the screams throughout Egypt, but they were safe. And in the morning the Jewish calendar began on day one. Up until that time they had used the calendars of the nations where they lived, but they were beginning a new existence. The night before they went in as slaves. The morning they came out as a freed nation.

Pharaoh didn't know he was a slave – in worse slavery than that he subjected Israel to. We don't know we are slaves unless somewhere in the difficulties of life we stop hardening our hearts and listen. When Israel leaves Egypt, Ex.12:38 says many other people went up with them. God wasn't wasting his time with the plagues, for many Egyptians became Israelites that day. You see, becoming a child of God is not by nationality, but by a conscious choice not to harden your heart, to listen – and so is every day of freedom in Jesus. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Is God speaking to you today? Don't harden your heart – listen, obey, let Him cover you with his wings of love and protection. Come out into a new life.

When Jesus ate the Last Supper with his disciples He was celebrating Pasach with them. He was about to become that sacrificial lamb. His blood was about to go on the door post – the cross, so his people could be spared from the Destroyer. Because the wages of sin is death

the Destroyer is justified in taking your life. But those who say "I will" to his invitation to come under his wings are safe. The Destroyer must be satisfied with the death of Jesus in your place, for your sins. He won't force you come under his wings. But He is calling you. "Come to me, enter in." So simple because it's for kings and slaves, educated and ignorant.

Another man saw miracles – 1500 years later– Nicodemus. He came to Jesus and declared, "You are from God because no man can do what you do unless God is with him." Jesus went straight to the reason for the miracles, his message – you must be born again, come to the light if you love truth, believe in me and have eternal life, enter in. Pharaoh chased the nation of Israel and drowned in the Red Sea, a slave to his pride and unbelief. Nic would go on to be one of the first of many in his group to believe. He helped take Jesus down from the cross giving up his status he once lived for in his religious world. He entered in under the wings of God.

"Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden (slaves of pride and unbelief) and I will give you rest." <sup>4</sup> He will shield you with his wings. He will shelter you with his feathers. His faithful promises are your armor and protection. Psalms 91:4 (NLT) Ex 4:22-23 (NIV)