

the path of wrath

exodus 10

Exodus 10 this morning. Pharaoh continues down the path of wrath as the 8th and 9th plagues hit Egypt. But along the way Moses has a few moments of decision as well.

Look at verse 1:

Exodus 10.1-2 - Now the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son’s son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord.”

Pharaoh had many attempts to surrender to God, but now he was in a cycle of judgment that would culminate in the ruin of his nation and the death of his son. On one hand it’s a little bit disturbing to read those opening words from the Lord about how He hardened Pharaoh’s heart. But, as we’ve already talked about, Pharaoh, as a free moral agent, was determined to harden himself against God and against the Hebrews and in that rebellion he was given over to the consequences of his sin. And God promises to those who reject Him that He will break them and destroy them.

Now, putting ourselves in the place of Moses, these opening verses remind us that there is always more for us to learn about God. There’s always room for us to grow in our knowledge and love of Him. For me it’s easy to focus on Pharaoh, but it’s important here to notice how the Lord was saying to Moses, “I’m doing these things so *YOU* can grow and so that your families can grow and understand and remember.” So, really, every day that we live is an opportunity for us to recognize the work of the Lord and grow in our relationship with Him. And there’s never a day when He doesn’t want to show Himself to us.

Exodus 10.3 - So Moses and Aaron came in to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.

I realized that I don’t focus on humility that much when I think about my Christianity. But as we read the Bible we find that it is essential for us to fear the Lord and, in order to properly fear the Lord, we must humble ourselves. God says it’s *required* of us to walk humbly. We’re to walk in confidence and boldness and joy *in the Lord*, but when it comes to me presenting myself to God, an absolutely essential prerequisite is that I get down on my knees and humble myself before Almighty God.

To grow and mature and be used by God we must understand our position in His gaze. Because, when we’re *not* humble, the Bible says that God will resist us. He’ll resist the things we are trying to do apart from Him.

James 4.6 - "...God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."

What we find in the Scriptures is that if we want guidance, if we want the Lord to teach us, if we want the Lord to lift us up and use us, we have to humble ourselves before Him.

And that act is defined a couple of ways in this book. The first we see here - with the first use of the word in the Bible. God speaks to Pharaoh and says, "You need to humble yourself and that means obeying My commandments." And then later, we'll see the Israelites in the wilderness in need of food. Deuteronomy comments on the time when God provided manna and says:

Deuteronomy 8.3 - So [The Lord] humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

There we understand that humbling ourselves means not only obeying God, but depending on Him for provision in life.

So, we discover that a Christian who wants to grow and mature and be used and be filled must humble himself by literally obeying God's commands and by relying upon His provision in whatever wilderness the Lord has led him to.

Exodus 10.4-6 - Or else, if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory. And they shall cover the face of the earth, so that no one will be able to see the earth; and they shall eat the residue of what is left, which remains to you from the hail, and they shall eat every tree which grows up for you out of the field. They shall fill your houses, the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians—which neither your fathers nor your fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were on the earth to this day.' " And he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

Was this an unfair plague? Moses said, "If you refuse then this will happen," but earlier the Lord had said, "I'm going to harden his heart so that he will refuse."

What we need to understand is that when it comes to sin there is a point where certain consequences cannot be undone by God's mercy. Pharaoh had many legitimate opportunities to avoid these plagues, but he persisted in blasphemous rebellion. Now he was at the point where the motion of his sin would not be derailed.

This is one of those things that is going to be impossible for us to fully understand. What we know is that God is just and He *loves* mercy, and so we can be sure that Pharaoh was not being unfairly treated. Instead, he had been weighed and measured and found wanting, therefore the Lord was dealing with his sin and wickedness, while simultaneously demonstrating His power and existence to the wide world.

Exodus 10.7-11 - Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God. Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?"

So Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, “Go, serve the Lord your God. Who are the ones that are going?”

And Moses said, “We will go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we will go, for we must hold a feast to the Lord.”

Then he said to them, “The Lord had better be with you when I let you and your little ones go! Beware, for evil is ahead of you. Not so! Go now, you who are men, and serve the Lord, for that is what you desired.” And they were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence.

Here Moses had a moment of decision as Pharaoh opened up negotiations for the people to do their worship in the wilderness. This would’ve been a moment of extreme pressure, but luckily Moses held to the lesson he had learned back with the circumcision of his son, and that was that a believer must do exactly what the Lord says.

This has always been the snare for believers. Starting with Adam and Eve all the way through till this very morning. Will we do what the Lord says or will we do *mostly* what the Lord says? There will always be a temptation hanging out there for us to leave one piece of ourselves outside of God’s control. Some fallback or lifeline that we think is going to keep us more secure, but in reality it’s not a lifeline, it’s a noose.

The Lord said to Moses, “I want the whole thing. All the people. All the livestock. All that you have is going to go with Me out of Egypt to where I want you to go.” And Moses was faithful to that commandment, and that infuriated Pharaoh.

Now, something else here that’s important for us to think about - the enemy is always going to try to go after our kids. They’re always going to be a target.

Dr. J Vernon McGee said:

“Wanting the ‘best’ of the world for [our] children is the most subtle temptation that can come to Christian parents.

They want them to have the best education. They want them to succeed and be rich. One after another has fallen and departed from the Lord.

What do you expect, my friends, when you send your children to [the world] and they come home thoroughly brainwashed?”

If you have kids, guard their hearts and their minds as if you were guarding precious treasure. The Lord tasks us with training up our children and though He helps us and empowers us, we are responsible to teach them to follow Jesus, rather than leave them in Egypt.

Exodus 10.12-20 - Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land—all that the hail has left.” So Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind on the land all that day and all that night. When it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and rested on all the territory of Egypt. They were very severe; previously there had been no such locusts as they, nor shall there be such after them. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every herb of the

land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, “I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you. Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that He may take away from me this death only.” So he went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord. And the Lord turned a very strong west wind, which took the locusts away and blew them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the territory of Egypt. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.

In scope and severity this was probably the worst of all the plagues they had so far experienced. It’s hard to even remotely picture what kind of state Egypt would be in. The desolation of these plagues was unspeakable. I was able to see first hand some of the destruction of Hurricane Katrina and it was just unimaginable. I had seen pictures and video but when we got there and actually went to Bay Saint Louis, the extent and degree of the devastation was more than my mind could really comprehend.

Now, pause for a moment and think about all of these plagues happening to a person at once as they burn for all eternity separated from God. Obviously we can’t really grasp Hell, but we certainly can grasp suffering. And that’s what unbelievers face at the end of their lives if they don’t turn to Christ. We’ve got to be motivated to go out and fish for men because of what they’re facing.

And because the Lord loves mercy. Notice here that Pharaoh didn’t do what he was supposed to do in that he didn’t release the Hebrews to go, but he called out for mercy and in response the Lord brought a west wind to Egypt to save them from the locusts. God loves mercy. He wants to save people from eternal suffering and we need to want that too. So we should pray for boldness and compassion so that we will be quick to intercede for the people around us.

Exodus 10.21-23 - Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt.” So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

The people in Egypt would’ve known that the Hebrews in Goshen had light. But they couldn’t get there. Everyone just stayed in their house because it was too dark to get out.

I wonder what it must’ve been like for the Israelites to go to the borders of Goshen and see the wall of thick darkness plaguing the land.

Now, the Lord uses the analogy of darkness and light when talking about the spiritual world and our role in it. He says that the world is in darkness. And certainly that darkness can be felt as we see the wickedness all around us. But we are the light. And we’re not supposed to keep the light within our own borders, we’re supposed to run *into* that darkness and shine brightly. We can’t be passive. And we can’t wait for the people in darkness to come and seek us out. We’ve got to go searching for them. It’s search and rescue. A search and rescue team doesn’t

wait on the edge of the forest for the lost hikers to get out. They go in and shine lights and make noise in an effort to save the person who is lost.

Exodus 10.24-29 - Then Pharaoh called to Moses and said, “Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be kept back. Let your little ones also go with you.”

But Moses said, “You must also give us sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. Our livestock also shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind. For we must take some of them to serve the Lord our God, and even we do not know with what we must serve the Lord until we arrive there.”

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go. Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!”

So Moses said, “You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.”

Moses was very faithful to keep going to Pharaoh and reaching out to him, but here there came a point where Pharaoh said, “I don’t want to see you anymore,” and Moses said, “Ok, then you won’t see me anymore.”

As we reach out to people, there may be times when someone continually refuses and rejects the Gospel and if it gets to this point, then we can continue to pray for them and intercede for them, but we don’t force them to listen over and over again when they’re in staunch rejection of the Lord.

But here again Moses was in a moment of decision. First it was, ‘don’t leave the borders of Egypt,’ then it was, ‘leave everybody but the men,’ then it was, ‘leave the kids.’ Now it’s ‘leave your stuff.’

But God cannot accept partial obedience. He isn’t satisfied with *most* of our lives. He wants it all. He demands the whole. We can’t say, “I’ll follow You, but let me tend this field over here.” Because the Lord has a field for us. He has a place for us. He’s got the details all worked out. But if we hold back a portion of ourselves for something else, then we cannot be disciples.

It’s interesting to watch Pharaoh and Moses through this process. Pharaoh is on the path to wrath. Blazing ahead blindly and insanely. His is the fate of everyone who rejects God.

But Moses also was walking a path. One that required intense focus and intense compassion and specific obedience. He was being baited over and over again to take an easier way out. But he refused to redefine what the Lord had asked him to do.

The path we’re on is straight, but it’s narrow. And partial obedience doesn’t get us further with the Lord, it does the opposite. So today, humble yourself so the Lord can guide you and fill you with grace and lift you up and rush into the darkness seeking to save those who are lost.