

Lesson 4 18th February, 2018

Pharaoh Defies the Lord

Lesson Scope: [Exodus 5:1-7:13](#)

References in brackets refer to Exodus 5 to 7:13 unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus

Jacob and his family located in Egypt at God's direction (Genesis 46:1-4). God promised that after Jacob's descendants had multiplied and become a great nation, He would bring them back to their own land. As Israel's promised stay drew to a close, God remembered His promise to Jacob and his family.

While God was accomplishing His plan in Egypt, conflict was raging between God and Satan. God's main visible agents were Moses and Aaron (7:1), while Satan's agent for hindering God was Pharaoh. The greater Pharaoh's challenge, the greater glory God received as He meted out judgment (Romans 9:17).

God was dealing with Pharaoh and the Egyptian people for their oppression of His people. He saw and remembered the hard labor and injustices inflicted upon the children of Israel. God worked through Moses to show His great power to Pharaoh and his people (9:13-16).

You could begin by briefly examining the polytheistic religion of Egypt. Along with many other gods, Pharaoh was accustomed to being the chief deity in Egyptian worship.

This is an important lesson to help God's people remember that God requires implicit obedience to His requirements in Scripture. Spiritual life through a close, daily walk with God is imperative to produce this type of obedience. Emphasize the danger of looking for the miraculous from the Lord at the expense of disregarding His Word and the applications made to the Word through a spiritual brotherhood. Even though we may not defy God as Pharaoh did, to resist the help and direction of the brotherhood may also set us on a course away from God.

God remains sovereign despite man's opposition. Rebellion against God ends in divinely appointed judgment.

Lesson Aim: To see the folly of setting oneself against God.

Theme Verse: Romans 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Lesson Text

"Let My People Go"

Exodus 5:1-9 Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’”² But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”³ Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens.”⁵ And Pharaoh said, “Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!”⁶ The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen,⁷ “You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves.”⁸ But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.’⁹ Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words.”

Exodus 5:22-23 Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, “O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me?²³ For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.”

"I Am the LORD Your God"

Exodus 6:1 But the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”

Exodus 6:6-7 Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.’⁷ I will take you to be

my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

"I Will Harden Pharaoh's Heart"

Exodus 7:1-4 And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. ² You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. ³ But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, ⁴ Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.

Exodus 7:8-13 Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ⁹ "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.'" ¹⁰ So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. ¹¹ Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. ¹² For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. ¹³ Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

Questions for Study

"Let My People Go"

1. How did Pharaoh attempt to shift the focus away from his own disobedience to avoid accountability to God?
2. Through what various means does God reveal Himself to man?
3. How might we be tempted to shift the focus away from disobedience to evade accountability?
4. Why do those who hate God also oppress His people?

"I Am the LORD Your God"

5. What judgments do all those who reject truth face?
6. What promises can God's people claim in spite of God-defying individuals?

"I Will Harden Pharaoh's Heart"

7. Why was God justified in hardening Pharaoh's heart?
8. What are some initial symptoms of the hardening process we may detect in ourselves or others?
9. What are some of Satan's counterfeits that can initiate the hardening process?

Analyzing the Passage

Moses and Aaron were eighty and eighty-three years old at this time (7:7).

Exodus 5:1 indicates God's main requirements for His subjects—obedience and worship.

When Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh with the words "Thus saith the LORD" (5:1), Pharaoh professed ignorance of Him and declared unwillingness to obey (5:2). Pharaoh was accustomed to being chief deity and felt the need to be subject to none other. But in the events that transpired soon afterward, Pharaoh could observe the God of heaven at work and see His great power.

In Exodus 5:6, 10, we note two levels of Egyptian authority under Pharaoh—the taskmasters and their officers (those over the taskmasters). Exodus 5:14, 19 shows Israelite officers in charge of the workers. These were beaten for not producing the work that Pharaoh demanded. They complained to Moses who in turn returned unto the Lord (5:14, 20-23). JEHOVAH in 6:3 means "the self-existent or eternal one." God was about to reveal Himself to the children of Israel in a personal way when they would see Him as the covenant-keeping God (6:1-8)

Principles and Applications

"Let My People Go"

1. God gives clear direction, even to the ungodly (5:1). Romans 1:19-20 indicates that men understand truth about God by the very creation that they observe. A certain knowledge of God exists in all men by that which they see all around them and by the innate knowledge they have of right and wrong.
2. Disobeying God is a willful choice (5:2). Each person must decide what he will do with the knowledge he has of God. Even though men are free to disobey God, they are not free to choose the consequences of

such a choice. Those consequences include setting one on a course away from God.

3. The rebellious attempt to shift the focus away from their own disobedience to evade accountability (5:4-9). Instead of seriously considering God's command through Moses and Aaron, Pharaoh instead accused them of allowing the people to be idle and not work as they should.

Sometimes people are inclined to reject the teachings of the Word, as directed by God-ordained leadership in the church. Instead of considering their own need to submit, they are content to point to such direction as "man-made rules" or to needs and failures in the lives of others, thereby failing to benefit from the direction that is given.

4. Defiance of God often produces hostility towards His people (5:4-9, 23). This results in opposing true followers of God. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). This opposition sometimes issues into oppression and cruelty. Haman's opposition to and hatred for Mordecai stands as a prime example of how those who defy God may also oppose and oppress His people.

"I Am the LORD Your God"

5. God will keep His promises in spite of the rebellion of the wicked (6:1, 6). In the midst of the Egyptian oppression, God reconfirmed His covenant to the children of Israel. When we suffer for righteousness' sake, we should always remember that God sees and is working on behalf of His people. When a situation looks hopeless, God's people must call upon Him and cling to His promises of deliverance.

6. The rebellious will reap great judgments at the hand of Almighty God whom they have defied (6:6-7). Just as Pharaoh faced God's mighty power of the plagues that came upon Egypt, so those who sow to the flesh will always reap corruption (Galatians 6:7-8). Even though a person may not in this life face dramatic results as Pharaoh did, all men will finally be judged according to their works, and whoever is not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12-15).

"I Will Harden Pharaoh's Heart"

7. God will further harden the hearts of those who have chosen to reject Him (7:3-4). It is true that God will forgive those who come back to Him in repentance. But one who rejects truth opens himself to the deception of the forces of evil and to the possibility of God sending him

strong delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11). In such a condition, one is beyond the help of God, not because God is unable to save but because that person has chosen a course of rejecting truth and then perceives no need for repentance.

8. Satan's counterfeits accelerate the hardening of the rebellious (7:11). Sometimes people are impressed with the miraculous, concluding that because a miracle is evident, it must be of God. Just as Pharaoh's wise men and sorcerers had certain powers, Satan continues to have a degree of power. We must avoid going after the miraculous forces of evil or even the questionable, so that we do not become insensitive to God's true power in our lives.

9. Divine miracles fail to deter the willful on their headlong course to destruction (7:12-13). Abraham told the rich man in hell that even if someone came back to earth from the place of torment, unbelievers would not repent.

Important Teachings

1. God gives clear direction, even to the ungodly (5:1).

2. Disobeying God is a willful choice (5:2).

3. The rebellious attempt to shift the focus away from their own disobedience to evade accountability (5:4-9).

4. Defiance of God often produces hostility towards His people (5:4-9, 23).

5. God will keep His promises in spite of the rebellion of the wicked (6:1, 6).

6. The rebellious will reap great judgments at the hand of Almighty God whom they have defied (6:6-7).

7. God will further harden the hearts of those who have chosen to reject Him (7:3-4).

8. Satan's counterfeits accelerate the hardening of the rebellious (7:11).

9. Divine miracles fail to deter the willful on their headlong course to destruction (7:12-13).

Answers to Questions

1. How did Pharaoh attempt to shift the focus away from his own disobedience to avoid accountability to God?

He claimed he did not know the Lord. He also accused Moses and Aa-

ron of allowing the Israelites to ease up on their workload. He then commanded to make their workload much heavier, so that they would not have time to think about leaving Egypt.

2. Through what various means does God reveal Himself to man?

He reveals Himself through the witness of creation. He reveals Himself through the written Word. He also reveals Himself through the life and testimony of His people who function within the body of Christ.

3. How might we be tempted to shift the focus away from disobedience to evade accountability?

We might tend to justify inconsistency by comparing our life to someone else, instead of being sensitive to what the Lord wants us to do. We might also use human philosophy or human reasoning to direct our life, rather than allowing the Word of God to direct us.

4. Why do those who hate God also oppress His people?

This is often an attempt to convince themselves that God's people are wrong, and that they themselves are right. Jesus foretold this (John 15:20).

5. What judgments do all those who reject truth face?

Those who reject truth become insensitive to God's direction in various areas of life. They open themselves to the possibility of deception, without considering how seriously they will be deceived. They also face eternal separation from God and final judgment in the lake of fire.

6. What promises can God's people claim in spite of God-defying individuals?

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10). "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

7. Why was God justified in hardening Pharaoh's heart?

Pharaoh had first resisted God and refused to obey God's command through Moses and Aaron. God has determined that He will harden those who harden themselves against Him (Romans 9:15-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-11).

8. What are some initial symptoms of the hardening process we may detect in ourselves or others?

Resisting the teachings of Scripture is a danger sign. If we become irritated by the help of church leadership or the use of the brotherly address, we should analyze our motives and attitudes. Having our life's priorities centered around ourselves rather than the Lord's work and the needs of others indicates a wrong direction of travel which will lead to the hardening process.

9. What are some of Satan's counterfeits that can initiate the hardening process?

One of these is the promotion of an easy Christianity that emphasizes believing in Christ, but has little to say about crucifixion of the flesh, cross bearing, and obedience to the Scriptures. Another is the area of alternate health remedies that have no scientific basis, but major on mystical and questionable practices.

Summarizing the Lesson

Pharaoh chose to align himself with Satan against God and His people. Satan and his forces continue to bid for our loyalty today. May we determine to continually follow God without reserve, so we are not overcome by the forces of evil. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Research Guide

1. Read Romans 9:14-23.
2. In *Doctrines of the Bible*, read pages 211-215 under "Satan—His Dominions."