

Review and Introduction: In Exodus we have been marveling at the great revenue of glory which God was able to reap from even the depraved, rebellious Pharaoh. God clearly announces His plan in Exodus 9:15-16 to use Pharaoh's exalted position for His own glorious purposes when He explains to the Egyptian king why He had not been destroyed already, saying:

For now I could have surely stretched out my hand to destroy you ... but instead, I have raised you up for the specific object of showing my power in and through you and that my Name might be recounted over all the earth.

Whatever trials or plagues we may be experiencing, let us ask God to fix it in our minds: We are enduring these trials in order for God to make a Name for Himself in our lives. May our response therefore be that we learn to worship Him all the more, even in the midst of the storms and plagues of life.

Monday/Tuesday: read Exodus 9:17-35 and Revelation 16:17-21. The enormity of the seventh plague of hail is underlined in Ex. 9:18. It was, "... worse than any that had ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now." Yet, amazingly, despite the astronomical size of the hail stones, and the terror of the lightning and thunder which accompanied them, we are dumb-founded to hear Moses' declare in Ex. 9:30 that he knows "that Pharaoh and his officials still do not fear the LORD." Sure enough, Moses' words are confirmed in the description of hard-heartedness at the end of the chapter:

When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts (Ex. 9:34).

What are we to think of men like Pharaoh who appear to be so strong, with their faces set like flint against their Creator and impervious to repeated warnings and plagues? Look at Pharaoh, with head "unbowed" to either the prophet Moses or to Moses' God! Much is made in our culture of such proud countenances, and men are praised for facing their trials, "bloody but unbowed." Ah, well, the Book of Revelation depicts all of unsaved mankind as just as defiant. The world at the end of time experiences the same kind of storms, earthquakes and even hail, just like the plagues of Egypt: unparalleled in intensity since man came to be upon the earth (Rev. 16:18). Yet mankind remains unbowed, as Rev. 16:21 says:

From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

Meditate and Pray: Instead of hardening our hearts like Pharaoh, and cursing God for sending plagues into our lives, we must ask God to make us *quick and eager* to bow under His Providences. We must ask God to give us a commitment to worshipping Him *irrespective* of the trials which come into our lives, knowing, as Scripture testifies, that God has a good and holy purpose for all the afflictions He sends. As John Piper puts it in chapter 5 of his book, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, challenging us to hold on by faith to God's good as well as glorious purpose in our plagues and trials:

*Will we worship or will we curse the One who rules the world? ... And shall we, with ashes on our heads, worship with Job, "Blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21)? Will we learn from James that there is good purpose in it all: "You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the **purpose** of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11)?*

Wednesday: read Exodus 10:1-15. Once again, in the eighth plague of locusts, we are reminded how Divine punishment always fits the crimes of those who hate God. For example, as you think of locusts destroying “everything that was left by the hail” (Ex. 10:15), ask yourself what would unavoidably follow such a destruction of all edible green leaves and fruit? Is not famine the result? Well, the wise-men of Egypt surely must fear this as they plead with their king in Ex. 10:7 to “send this Moses away.” They urge Pharaoh to realize that “Egypt is ruined.” How appropriate. Cast your mind back to Joseph for a moment. Is not the enslavement of Jacob and Joseph’s people Israel up till Moses’ day a deliberate abuse of the very people who had spared Egypt from famine in the first place? Joseph spared Egypt famine, by saving up grain for the 7 lean years. Now, with the onslaught of the locusts, God would usher in a period of famine that exactly fits such a betrayal of Joseph and his Hebrew descendants.

Meditate and Pray: *LORD, teach us never to doubt that you are an exact God. If your judgments against your enemies like Pharaoh are exact and perfectly calibrated, how much more your Grace to your own people! Your Grace is an exact Grace: In salvation by Grace through Faith, you reward us by imputing to us a perfect righteousness in exact measure to what your Son merited through His active obedience and sinless life. At the Cross, you count the number of stripes with which your Son suffered as our substitute – and by those stripes, each and every one, our specific maladies of sin and guilt are healed (Isaiah 53:5, KJV). And now, as your Church through all the ages, you give us your Holy Spirit as an exact answer to your Risen Son’s request that we would have the Comforter, and you yourself as our Father count the exact number of the hairs of our heads! O Triune God, what a comfort that not a hair of our heads can fall to the ground without your willing it. Hallelujah for our exact and painstakingly careful, loving God! Amen.*

Thursday: read Exodus 10:15-26 and Ephesians 4:17-18. We cannot deny that Pharaoh’s punishments through the plagues are getting worse. As he hardens himself against the plague of hail in Ex. 9:34, God sends a more destructive plague of locusts to remove all that the hail missed in Ex. 10:15. But these plagues are not designed merely to address Pharaoh’s sins “of the present moment.” They are also calibrated to redress offenses of long ago. When the pharaohs, so obsessed with written records of their reigns (the scribal cast, the meticulous use of writing, the invention of papyrus – all from Egypt), deliberately drew a curtain over the life, work and religion of Joseph, claiming to be “in the dark” about the debt they owed to the Hebrew nation and to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are we surprised that God would send as the ninth plague a “darkness that could be felt” (Ex. 10:21)? Once again, God answers the sins of men so minutely and so justly in all things! Because of the hardening of Egyptian hearts as a nation, God ensures that they will be darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God (Eph. 4:18).

Meditate and Pray: When we consider the darkness of the nations who deliberately turn away from the light of God, how we should treasure each light-filled recounting of God’s mighty deeds as we pass them on to our children! As Exodus 10:2 literally puts it, describing what we are to do with the Good News of what God has done for His people: *That you may recount, relate, record and tell **into the ears** of your children and grandchildren.* May the LORD make us diligent to pass on all which our eyes and ears see and hear of the LORD!

Fri./Sat./Sun: read Exodus 10:27-29 and Psalm 90:11-17. Though we have more to say from Ex. 10 about Moses' commitment to worshipping with all Israel at God's mountain (See Ex. 10:9 and 10:25-26), we end this week's notes with the crisis of Pharaoh denying Moses and Aaron any further access into his presence. In complete hard-hearted rebellion, he throws Moses and Aaron out in Ex. 10:28-29. This cannot have been anything but painful for Moses, who as a former prince of Egypt cared for that land just as Joseph had! Rejection is never easy. It cost Moses, as it cost Paul, to be so frequently abused by kings and rulers in their hard-hearted pride. Yet, Moses' secret is that he enjoys daily access to the Lord. For example, consider the following verses which well express Moses' access to God as more than enough to compensate his painful rejection by the world:

- In Psalm 90:14, Moses confidently asks for God's unfailing love to satisfy him in the morning.
- In Psalm 90:15, Moses boldly prays that days of joyful communion with God would compensate exactly "as many days" as they were afflicted! He expects God's presence to more than make up for all his heart-breaks in the world.
- (And most amazing of all) Moses will not be intimidated by the wrath of the pharaohs of this world precisely because he fears God's wrath more (Ps. 90:11-12).

Meditate and Pray: Thank God that He is especially present with us, to carry us, when the world rejects us, and when we suffer at the hands of unbelievers. Moses knew what it was like to be "carried on eagle's wings" (Ex. 19:4), especially at times when men like Pharaoh afflicted him, and drove him away. And we also, along with God's people in all ages of persecution, can be sure that our Redeeming LORD will be with us especially when we feel ostracized and rejected like Moses. How does Isaiah 63:9 describe God's presence with us through His Son, to carry us as He did Moses and Aaron?

*In all their distress He too was distressed, and the Angel of His presence saved them. In His love and mercy He redeemed them; He lifted them up and **carried them** all the days of old.*

Sing about God's ability to carry us right away from the presence of the pharaohs of this world and into the arms of His Son, our Savior, with the words of hymn # 673 in our Trinity hymnal:

*Cast thy burden on the Lord,
Only lean upon His Word;
Thou wilt soon have cause to bless
His eternal faithfulness.*

*Heav'n and earth may pass away,
God's free grace shall not decay;
He hath promised to fulfill
All the pleasure of His will.*

*He sustains thee by His hand,
He enables thee to stand;
Those whom Jesus once hath loved
From His grace are never moved.*

*Jesus, Guardian of Thy flock,
Be Thyself our constant Rock;
Make us, by Thy powerful hand,
Strong as Zion's mountain stand.*

*Human counsels come to naught;
That shall stand which God hath
wrought;
His compassion, love, and power,
Are the same forevermore.*