

Series: Questions

Title: Still, You Exalt Yourself?

Text: Exodus 9: 17

Date: March 10, 2013

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

We return this morning to our questions series. We are looking at questions asked to sinners by the LORD. The next question is found in Exodus 9: 17. The LORD is speaking to Pharaoh. Here is the question.

Exodus 9: 17: As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

Title: “Still, you exalt yourself?”

Those of you here today who have not submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the question for you, “Still, you exalt yourself?” After everything the LORD has commanded in your ears. After everything the LORD has done before you. Still, you exalt yourself? Let’s go up to verse 13 and get the context.

Exodus 9: 13: And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh,

Pharaoh was a very religious man. Every morning he went down to the river—to worship the river, and the frogs, and the snakes. Moses had met him at the same place earlier in his dealings with Pharaoh. The LORD tells Moses

Exodus 9: 13: and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Five times, the same command has been given to Pharaoh. The LORD showed him a miracle. The rod of the LORD was cast to the ground, became a serpent, then ate the rods of Pharaoh’s magicians. The LORD sent 6 plagues—turned the water into blood, made frogs cover the land, brought lice upon man and beast, sent flies into all the houses, sent disease upon all the cattle so they died, brought boils on man and beast. In all of this, Pharaoh hearkened not, refused to obey the word of God. Now, for the 6th time the LORD commands Pharaoh, “**Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.**” Next, God warns Pharaoh of the plagues that are about to come upon him.

Exodus 9: 14: For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. 15: For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. 16: And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. 17: As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

Proposition: Pride goes before a fall.

I. THE NATURAL HEART IS AS HARD AS STONE

The LORD holds up Pharaoh to show us what a man will do if left in the pride and hardness of his heart. Pharaoh was born—like you and me—with a heart of stone. The longer he lived, the higher he climbed in life, the more religious he became, the harder his heart became and the more he despised God.

Pharaoh's problem was the problem of all men since the fall of Adam. — He thought he was a god. That was the root of his blasphemy and unbelief. God will save his people from Pharaoh's bondage, but in the process, he holds up Pharaoh to show us the hardness of the natural heart.

Threats without Grace, No Repentance

A natural, hard heart cannot even be moved by threats of judgement. Believers are motivated and ruled by our Beloved's love for us. (2 Corinthians 5:14). A heart of flesh—made new by grace is constrained by love of Christ for us. Here was Moses and Aaron obeying the word of the LORD—speaking what he gave them to speak in the face of the most powerful man in the world. Moses had been born again. The believers heart is tender. Moses heart is full of faith. His heart was sanctified. His heart was a spiritual heart But the natural heart cannot be penetrated by threats of judgment. Oh, several times, Pharaoh became so afraid he called for Moses.

Ex 8: 8: Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD. [so the LORD removed them]...15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

Another time, Pharaoh said, "I will let you go,". But as soon as Moses took away the plague. **Ex 8: 32 And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.**

After Moses met with him in our text—hail and lightning came from God and began to kill man and beast
Ex 9:27 And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. 28 Intreat the LORD (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer. 29 And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD'S. 30 But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God. 31 And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled. 32 But the wheat and the rie were not smitten: for they were not grown up.

Moses spoke a parable, since Pharaoh did not have ears to hear. Moses said, "Pharaoh, I know you will not fear the LORD for the same reason the flax and the barley was smitten—they were too grown up, too exalted, therefore ripe to be cut off in judgment of the LORD. But, oh, that you were like the wheat and the rie, for they were not grown up, therefore, they yielded to the word of the LORD." And Moses went out of the city, called for the hail to stop, and sure enough,

Exodus 9: 34: when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses." (Ex 9: 33-34)

Application: You see, without the Spirit of God, no amount of threats will work true repentance in a hard heart.

Isaiah 26:10: Let favour be showed to the wicked, *yet* will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.

God Must Give a New Heart

Here was Moses and Aaron obeying the word of the LORD. The only difference between their heart and Pharaoh's heart was the difference the effectual grace of God had made.

Exodus 11: 7: The LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

Romans 9:15: For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. 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. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth”

Someone will say, “It is not fair, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart that is why he did not believe.” Was it fair when God gave Pharaoh birth into a good home? Was it fair when God protected him all his life? Opened every door for him in his career? Protected him from enemies? Exalted him to the most powerful throne in the most powerful country in the world? Was that fair? Most would say, “What a blessed man!”

Application: When we see that God raised up Pharaoh, not to bless him, but to show an example of a hard heart—we ought to be careful judging a blessed man based on prosperity.

But why was God’s dealing with Pharaoh not fair? Men claim they do not need God’s grace to come to God anyway. So why was it unfair if God withheld grace from Pharaoh? The man did what he wanted to do.

Pharaoh had plenty of opportunity to hear the word of the Lord. He had the light of nature. Israel dwelt in his land—he had access to the truth of God. God sent Moses to him with the truth.

Application: Man cannot remain "neutral" to the gospel. He either obeys the gospel by believing God or he stiffens his neck and God will send him to hell. Pharaoh had refused to walk in what light God had given him. Instead, he looked to his false preachers—his magicians—and he worshipped idols.

II. WE SEE GOD IS LONGSUFFERING

Referring to God’s dealings with Pharaoh, Paul said in Romans:

Romans 9: 22: God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.

Exodus 7: 7 And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.

Among other things, that tells us God was longsuffering with Pharaoh for over 80 years. Pharaoh was fit for destruction long before God cut him off in the Red Sea. God would have been just in destroying Pharaoh the first time he refused to obey his command.

Yet, God sent plague after plague upon him and the Egyptians. The LORD waited a long time—the entire time he granted Egypt space for repentance.

Revelation 2: 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

Application: Sinner, don’t waste the time God has given you. God would have been just to destroy us a long time ago—the first time we refused his command to “Repent and believe his gospel.” He would be just to do it today if one refuses him. Do you see how longsuffering God is?

Romans 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

God was longsuffering because he had a people in Egypt and he was not willing that one of them perish.

2 Peter 3: 9: The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The same is true today. He told Pharaoh let my people go. I am telling you the same thing. You say, "I'm not holding back the LORD's people." If you are one of his you are holding us all back. When the last one comes to repentance we are leaving Egypt and going to the promised land!

III. WE SEE GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART IN JUDGEMENT

Because Pharaoh would not walk in the light God gave him, God eventually hardened his heart. So that Pharaoh could not believe. God does the same today. The more grace God gives the more a sinner submits and casts his care into God's hand. But the more God removes his light from a sinner the more a sinner casts the venom of his heart against God.

The Scriptures declare that Pharaoh hardened his heart against the Lord (Ex. 9:34-35) and that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 10:1). Both are true. Pharaoh hardened his heart in rebellion and unbelief; and God hardened Pharaoh's heart in leaving him in his rebellion and unbelief.

The same word from which "harden" is translated—when God said, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart"—the same word is used in a positive way in another place concerning God's' saints. It means "to make strong and courageous." When the LORD spoke to Joshua—

Joshua: 1: 6: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. 7: Only be thou STRONG (same word translated "harden.")

In his saints, by the Spirit entering the new heart, causing the believer to submit and trust the strength of the Lord, God hardens the heart—makes it strong against OUR ENEMIES. But in the reprobate, by the Spirit removing his restraints off the carnal heart, the reprobate exalts self, relies more and more upon his own strength—his heart becomes hard—strong in rebellion AGAINST God.

God left Pharaoh to the corruptions of his own heart and nature. God left him to the power of Satan, And God sent him strong delusions to believe the lying miracles of his magicians.

Pharaoh would listen to Moses, see him perform a miracle. Then his magicians imitated it in their falsehood. And Pharaoh's heart would harden further. By the grace of God, what was a plague of judgment in Pharaoh's eyes was a sign of deliverance to the children of Israel. They were more and more persuaded that the Lord would deliver them. But left to himself, with each plague, the heart of Pharaoh and the Egyptians became more and more hardened. I've seen that happen with men. God does it in our day.

2 Thessalonians 2: 10:...they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11: And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

Romans 1:28: And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Application: Today is the day of grace. Harden not your hearts. God has fixed a limit to his day of grace, like he did with Pharaoh. When that limit is overstepped there remains nothing but judgment.

Hebrews 3: 12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

IV. LASTLY, WE LEARN BY GOD’S DEALINGS WITH PHARAOH THAT EVERYTHING GOD DOES IS FOR THE SAKE OF HIS PEOPLE

Exodus 9: 17 As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

Our Redeemer shall deliver each one of his captive children into liberty with him. By Adam’s transgression and by our sin—we come forth slaves like the children of Israel: under the curse and bondage of the law. Our wills and affections are in bondage to our sin-nature. Under the power of Satan and his taskmasters like Pharaoh and his taskmasters ruled and whipped the children of Israel. False religion has men making their treasure cities for them. Demanding a tale of bricks each day, making them gather their own straw. If a man says, “I want to leave here and go worship the LORD”...Satan’s taskmasters shout, “Ye are idle, ye are idle. Listen no more to vain words” they say, “make us more bricks.”

But God only allowed Israel to become slaves in Egypt so he could make his power and his name known in setting them free. The same is true with all God’s elect. Our heavenly Father purposed from the beginning that Christ shall set us free and give us liberty to serve him in love. It is pictured here.

Exodus 7:4: But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. (5) And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them....8: 1: And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Application: Never forget that even when darkness appears to cover the earth, even when death and destruction are seen everywhere, our God and heavenly Father is working all things together for the salvation and everlasting good of his elect.

By Christ’s blood he has redeemed every single one of his elect when as yet we were in bondage. He shall send his prophet like he sent Moses. And by his Spirit he shall make each new within

2 Corinthians 3:17: Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Once set free from all bondage by his love and grace then we serve him in righteousness. So look back at our text.

Exodus 9: 16 And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. 17: As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

The answer is, in one sense, no, Pharaoh did not exalt himself. God said, “I have raised thee up—exalted you, made you to stand.” Without God Pharaoh could not have had any power whatsoever. Like Christ to Pilot. God exalted Pharaoh for a purpose to make his power and name known.

Acts 4: 28: For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

But in another sense, the answer is, yes, Pharaoh exalted himself. Pharaoh was without excuse for his wickedness and rebellion against God. The man took everything God gave him and did exactly what the wickedness of his heart wanted to do. He exalted himself and refused to let God's people go. But in the end God won!

Sinner, believe God today! You won't win fighting against God. There is a set limit and time to rebellion. If you are thirsty, come to the waters and drink freely! Your soul shall live!

Amen!