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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

Today I want to talk about Moses and Pharaoh. In Exodus chapter 3, God said, "Moses, go back and tell Pharaoh to let my people go." Moses said, "Well, who can I say has sent me?" God said, "I AM that I AM." Moses argued and struggled with God, but he finally agreed to go back and that's where we are tonight. Moses goes back to Egypt. There in the land of Goshen, he finds all of his Hebrew brothers and sisters in slavery.

Exodus 5:1-9. "Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.' Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.' Then they said, 'The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.' But the king of Egypt said, 'Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!' Then Pharaoh said, 'Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.' That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people: 'You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies.'"

I. THE COMMAND OF GOD

The first thing we want to see is the command of God. I want to remind you that this was not the command of Moses; it was not the command of Aaron. *God* commanded Pharaoh. He sent a message that said, "Let my people go!" I want to talk about how sometimes God gives us messages that are not very pleasant. Notice God warned Pharaoh seven times! Seven times in this interchange God says to Pharaoh, "Let my people go!" I say that because one of the characteristics we learn about God is that God is a God of patience. He is a God the Bible says "who is long-suffering" toward us even to someone as antagonistic and hostile as Pharaoh. God warned him seven times and he gave him plenty of chances to relent and follow his command! What is it that God is commanding you to do? Certainly it is not to let some people in slavery go, but God may be speaking to you about some ministry or something he wants you to do. Maybe there is something in your life he wants you to let go of. What he is saying to you tonight is, "Go and do this ministry!" or what he is saying is "Let go of something in your life that is not pleasing to me! Leave it behind! And you may be like Pharaoh. You may be hardening your heart. You may be saying, "I don't think so!" I just want you to know God is a God of patience. We see that even God has a limit to his patience when he gives a directive to someone. We're going to see tonight that Pharaoh hardened his heart and he had to suffer.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE

That leads us on to the second thing I wanted you to see: The consequences of disobedience. I want to talk about nine of the ten plagues. There were ten plagues, and of course the tenth was

Passover. We’re going to look at that one next Sunday night. The first nine are a prelude to the tenth. Sometimes people read these stories in the Old Testament and say, “God was such a mean God, such an angry God. How could God be so cruel to send all this kind of calamity upon these people?” God warned, he warned, he warned, he warned. In the Bible, before God sends judgement or punishment, he first sends a warning.

1. The plagues

Exodus 7:19-22. “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs’—and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars.’ Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.”

Plague number one was water changed to blood. Of course the main source of water in Egypt was the Nile River. I want you to see is that none of these nine plagues were not just arbitrary choices. God did not say, “Well, let me see. I think I’ll turn the Nile to blood.” No God picked part of the Egyptian deity to show that he was more powerful than the deity. You kids who have studied Western Civilization history you know that the people of Egypt worshiped the Nile River. They thought the Nile in itself was a god because every year when the Nile overflowed, it made the land around it moist and fertile so they prayed to the Nile River. One of the strongest gods in the Egyptian deity was the god over the river Nile. So, for God to turn all the water to blood was his way of showing, “You think your god is strong, watch this!”

Plague number two was frogs, believe it or not. In Exodus 8:6, “Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land.” You know what happened after the river turned to blood. Pharaoh said, “Okay, I get the message.” But then he said, “Oh, no! You can’t go!” So God said, “I’m going to send you another plague” and he sent a plague of frogs. How would you like to have been living in Egypt during this plague? You wake up in the morning and feel movement in your bed and you roll over and find your bed is full of frogs! You try to walk into the kitchen, but it is hard to do because every step you take, you are squashing frogs. You open the kitchen cabinets to get breakfast and frogs hop out. The land of Egypt was covered with frogs. Pharaoh said, “Okay, I’ve had enough! We’ll let them go!” Well he said that and then he changed his mind.

Next was a plague of gnats. Suddenly the air was thick with gnats. Then came the plague of flies. In Egypt, the Egyptians had a god that looked like a frog. For God to put frogs everywhere in the land it was God’s way of saying, “Hey your frog god is not a god at all.” Then they had a god who controlled the insects. So, when God sent gnats and flies, he was saying, “Hey, I’m more powerful than your insect god. Then number five was a plague upon the livestock. This was what was interesting. To show you that this was not just some widespread sickness or bacteria, it says only the livestock of the Egyptians were affected. The livestock of the Israelites was not.

Notice in Exodus 9:5-7: “The Lord set a time and said, ‘Tomorrow the Lord will do this in the land.’ And the next day the Lord did it: All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died. 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.”

Up until this point, the first five plagues were directed to other kinds of animals or different things. But plague number six affects people with boils or sores on the body. Chapter 9:10: “So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on men and animals. The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said to Moses.”

Isn’t that amazing? We’re talking about sores that were open and oozing and bleeding; they were terribly painful. People wonder about that phrase where it says, “God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” They say, “Wait a minute! That doesn’t make sense!” When somebody turns their back on God and the truth of God, they go further into darkness? That phrase, “God gave them over.” What that really means is that God gave them a little shove. When somebody walks away from God, he says, “If that’s where you want to go, you go in that direction.” He gives them over and that’s what he did to Pharaoh. He gave him over to the hardness of heart.

Here’s plague number seven: The next thing you know there was hail falling from the sky. Hail came and destroyed the crops, destroyed the property. Plague number eight was locusts. Locusts filled the land the sky and the air was so full of them locusts, you couldn’t even see the light. Then the ninth plague was a plague of darkness. Turn to chapter 10:21. “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt—darkness that can be felt.’ So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places they lived.” WOW! Any of you who have ever studied Egyptian culture have heard of Osiris, Isis, the god of the sun, the god of light. To the Egyptians that was their most powerful god! So, you know when the God of Israel turned off the light, he was saying, “Don’t worship the sun! Don’t worship the moon! You had better fear the one who made the sun and made the moon!” These nine plagues did not cause Pharaoh to turn to God and do what God said. So the tenth plague—the one we’ll talk about next week—was the final one. There is a lesson in here people sometimes miss. In the midst of God sending these plagues, Pharaoh changes his mind a little and he tries to get Moses and God’s people to compromise, settle for less than God’s perfect plan.

When I was growing up and studying history, I read that throughout the history of America there were times when there were great compromises in government. Even those who study history will understand that sometimes compromise is good when it comes to ideology. So we sometimes think the word “compromise” is a good word and it is at times. There are many times when there is a problem in marriage, there has to be some compromise. Husbands and wives have to compromise. That’s a good word. But when it comes to God’s will and plan for your life, compromise is *not* a good word—it’s a bad word! It’s a temptation from the devil to compromise.

III. THE COMPROMISES OF PHARAOH

The third thing I want to talk about today are the compromises of Pharaoh, because Pharaoh actually made four offers to the Israelites but they were all short of what God wanted for them.

1. Worship God where you are

In compromise number one he says, "You can worship your God just worship him where you are." Look at Exodus 8:25. It started out with Pharaoh saying, "Who is your God? I don't know your God! Get out of here!" Finally, after a few plagues, Pharaoh said, "Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, 'Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land.'" Now, what is that a compromise of? When you really think about it, it's a compromise that has to do with salvation. Do you know what the devil will tell every person here or every person in America? The devil will say, "Sure worship God, but don't change! Live in the land of bondage! Live still as a slave to sin and worship God all you want to!" We're going to see as we get a little bit further into Exodus that Egypt is a picture of a person living in bondage, a picture of a lost person. When they come out of Egypt, it's a picture of a person being saved! In fact, when they go through the Red Sea, it's a picture of baptism. That's what the New Testament says and a picture of a person on the way to the fullness God has in store for each one of us in the Promised Land. So this is the picture. The devil says, "Go ahead and be a Christian. Just don't leave bondage to sin. Call yourself a Christian. Go through the motions but don't move out of the land of bondage. That's what he is saying to you today. He's saying. "Worship God, but act like everybody else who's not a Christian. That's compromise number one.

2. Go, but don't go far

Here's compromise number two. He said, "Well, okay. If you won't stay here, don't go very far." Look in 8:28. "Pharaoh said, 'I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the Lord your God in the desert, but you must not go very far. Now, pray for me.'" This is the second thing Pharaoh said. First he said, "Worship God, but don't leave Egypt." Then he said, "Okay, if you're going to leave Egypt, just don't go too far." Now what's that a picture of? That's how Satan tries to get all of us to compromise when it comes to total commitment to Jesus Christ. Have you ever thought about Satan's strategy? I believe Satan is shrewd and subtle and it is his design to keep every single person from becoming a Christian. He'll trick you; he'll lie to you; he'll even say like Pharaoh said, "You can be a Christian. Just don't change." When you become a Christian, do you think the devil says, "Well, I've lost that one. I've given up on that person." No. He pulls out his file cabinet drawer, takes your file out of "lost" pulls out the file for "saved" and drops it in there. Then he changes his strategy and says, "Okay. Now you're a Christian just don't go very far into this Christian thing. Don't become a fanatic! Don't get fired up about this thing! Just don't go very far! Don't get really committed. Stay pretty close to Egypt!" That's the compromise of the devil.

3. Go, but don't take your family

Here's compromise number three. First of all he says, "Worship, but don't go anywhere. Okay,

worship, but don't go very far." Then compromise number three was, he said, "Don't take your family. Don't take your family. Go alone!" Turn to chapter 10:10-11. This is after the plague of the locusts. Pharaoh is giving a little bit more each time. "Pharaoh said, 'The Lord be with you—if I let you go, along with your women and children! Clearly you are bent on evil. No! Have only the men go; and worship the Lord, since that's what you have been asking for.'" Do you see what Pharaoh is saying? First he says, "All right don't leave the land but you can be a Christian." "Well, okay if you leave the land, just don't go very far!" Then in compromise number three he says, "Okay, you can go, but leave your family behind." Now what is that? That is the devil trying to tell people today, "You can be a Christian but don't let it influence your family. Don't let it influence your marriage. Don't let it influence your children. You go ahead and be a Christian, but you leave your family out of this thing." Do you know the sad fact is I have known some parents who really don't think it is their job to spiritually train their children? They think they will just let their children decide what they want to believe on their own. That's like planting a garden and not planting any seed just seeing what will grow there. I'll guarantee you what will grow there: WEEDS! You must make sure you take your family with you on your Christian pilgrimage.

4. Go, but leave your possessions behind

Here's compromise number four. He says, "Okay you can go, but don't take your possessions!" Chapter 10:24 says, "Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, 'Go, worship the Lord. Even your women and children may go with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind.'" He's saying, "Okay. Go on and go! Take your families but you leave all of your possessions your flocks and your herds. You're not taking those." What's that a picture of? Simple. If the devil can't keep you from becoming a Christian, his next step is "don't be totally committed, don't go very far" Then he says, "Okay, if you're going to do that, leave your family out of this." Number four the devil says, "Listen, if you are going to go off on this Christian thing, leave your money out of it! Your money is between you and yourself and is none of God's business. I'll guarantee you there are a lot of "so-called" Christians who have reached a point of compromise when it comes to stewardship. That's exactly what Pharaoh said, "Go, but don't you take your money with you." I like what Moses said in verse 25. "You must allow us to have sacrifices and burnt offerings to present to the Lord our God. Our livestock too must go with us; not a hoof is to be left behind. We have to use some of them in worshipping the Lord our God, and until we get there we will not know what we are to use to worship the Lord."

Moses resisted all the compromises of Pharaoh. He said, "No, we're going to go! Not only are we going to go, we're going to go all the way! Not only are we going to go all the way we're going to take our family with us. Not only are we going to take our family with us, we are taking all of our possessions with us!" Where have you drawn the line? Do you say, "Well that's as far as I'm going. I'm a Christian, but I'm not going to go all the way with Jesus. I'm just going to stand on this side and make sure I have my ticket to heaven." or "I'm going to really get fired up, but I'm going to leave my family out of it!" If you have gone all the way and you say, "I'm going all the way with Jesus. I'm taking everybody I can with me and I'm taking everything I own, everything I possess, and it all is going to be offered to God. That's what total commitment is all about.

OUTLINE

I. THE COMMAND OF GOD

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE

III. THE COMPROMISES OF PHARAOH

1. Worship God where you are
2. Go, but don't go far
3. Go, but don't take your families
4. Go, but leave your possessions behind