

February 24 – Exodus 5

Today I'm going to paint with broad strokes that are certainly applicable and biblically sound yet the lessons are implied more than clearly stated. The chapter begins with Moses and Aaron standing before Pharaoh with their request. It was no small trial of their faith and courage to face the lion in his own den. You recall how Moses tried desperately to get out of this assignment. A fine example was this of God's power to overcome the opposition of the flesh, to impart grace to the trembling heart, and to demonstrate that our strength is made perfect in weakness.

We often struggle with verses in Scripture where it states that God hardened the heart of a person. This causes some to think poorly of God and even question His goodness or at least his "fairness." I want to point out to you that God is entering upon a controversy with Pharaoh and with Egypt. He is about to judge them; and, in order that they may be judged, they must first be revealed to themselves and to all men. Moses makes a simple request that Pharaoh allow the Israelites go a three days journey to sacrifice to the Lord. He doesn't ask that Pharaoh let the people go for good which was ultimately God's plan. Had they been asked to allow the Israelites to depart from Egypt, so large a demand might have seemed to others, and certainly would have appeared to the Egyptians themselves, as so unreasonable as to justify their refusal. But no, we see the Pharaoh's heart revealed in this exchange. The character of Egypt's king stood fully revealed: "I do not know the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (v.2).

"God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30); "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 3:3). But the response of the unbelieving and rebellious heart of the natural man is "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?". Thus speaks the pride of the man who hardens his neck against God. "I know Him not" said Pharaoh, and "I know Him not" expresses the heart of the sinner today. This is ever the effect of rejecting God's testimony. To resist the light means increased darkness: to turn from the truth is to become more thoroughly than ever under the power of him who is the arch-liar. The same sun which melts the wax hardens the clay. Instead of allowing the Hebrews to go and sacrifice to God, Pharaoh orders that their task be made harder. So it is with the sinner who disobeys the Gospel command. The one who refuses to repent becomes more impenitent, more defiant, more lawless, until the Lord abandons him to his own ways and leaves him to suffer the due reward of his sins.

When the Devil recognizes the first advances of the Holy Spirit toward a poor sinner he at once puts forth every effort to retain his victims. At no place is the frightful evil of the Fiend more plainly to be seen than here. No pains are spared by him to hinder the deliverance of his slaves. Satan never gives up his prey without a fierce struggle. When a soul is convicted of sin, and brought to long after liberty and peace with God, the Devil will endeavor, just as Pharaoh did with the Israelites, by increased occupation with material things, to expel all such desires from his heart. This is why so many convicted souls find that their case gets worse before it is bettered. So it was here with the Hebrews. Just as hope was awakened, the opposition against them became stronger: just when deliverance seemed nigh, their oppression was increased.