

February 28 – Exodus 9

In Exodus 9:1-7 we find a plague (judgment) that was directed against the possessions of the Egyptians. An awful disease struck their herds so that "all the cattle of Egypt died". But once more God exempted His own people—"of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died" (9:6). This afforded a striking demonstration of the absolute sovereignty of God. He completely controls every creature He has made. Disease strikes only when and where He has decreed. The herds of the Egyptians might be dying all around them, but the cattle of Israel were as secure as though there had been no epidemic at all. God also protected His people from the boils and the hail. The spiritual meaning and application of this judgment is not difficult to perceive. God can watch over and keep safe His children even in the midst of devastating judgment on this world.

Referring to some incidents in the history of Israel, the apostle declared, "Now these things happened to them as an example (types); and they are written for our instruction" (1 Cor. 10:11). In the light of these Scriptures, then, we are fully justified in regarding these compromises of Pharaoh as samples of the temptations which the Devil now brings to bear upon the people of God. "Sacrifice to your God within the land" (8:25), that is, Egypt. And Egypt represents the world. But God's people have been delivered "from this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). The Lord Jesus said to His apostles, "You are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15:19). And again, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). "The friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4), how then can believers worship God "within the land"? They cannot. God must be worshipped "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), and to worship God "in spirit" means to worship Him through the new nature. It means to take our place, by faith, outside of the world which crucified the Son of God! I know this lesson is taken from our previous chapter but the application is the same even as we journey through the plagues of chapter nine. This is just what Satan hates. He aims to get the believer to mix the world and the church.

It is not God's design for His people to worship Him in the midst of His enemies: "Come out from their midst, and be separate, says the Lord" (2 Cor. 6:17) has forever been His demand. Moreover, to worship God "within the land" would be to "sacrifice what is an abomination to the Egyptians" (8:26). Light is thrown upon this expression by what we are told in Genesis 46:34—"For every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians". If every "shepherd" was an abomination to the Egyptians, certainly to present a lamb in sacrifice to God would be equally abominable to them. Nor have things changed since then. Christ crucified—which condemns the flesh, and makes known the total depravity and helplessness of man—is still a "stumbling-block". Again; "Will they not then stone us?" Beloved, for many of us we don't experience much persecution or pressure from this world for being Christians. But I remind you that if you press upon people their desperate need of the Cross—God's judgment of their sin (Rom. 8:3); announce that by the Cross of Christ believers are crucified to the world (Gal. 6:14), and that is only through Jesus that they can be saved and the world's anger is at once aroused.

Just like Satan, Pharaoh decides to continue to try deception with the Israelites. He tells Moses that he will let the people go to sacrifice to the Lord in the wilderness" (8:28). Ah, that sounded promising. It appeared as though the king was now ready to yield. But mark well his closing and qualifying words—"only ye shall not go very far away". Pharaoh was ready to lengthen the chain, but it was still a chain. Be careful dear children when Satan tries to get you to make compromises in how, where, when, and to what degree you worship the Lord. We tend to slip away in small steps and Satan is really good at giving us a little chain that tends to keep us enslaved. Jesus said, "I came to set you free – completely." Don't make deals with the Devil. Moses didn't and Jesus certainly didn't!

