

TIME-TESTED FAITH

Moses - Part 6

Exodus 7-10

Intro: The story of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, is one of the greatest stories in the Bible. It is the account of a conflict between the power of God versus the power of the greatest nation of that day. The Israelites had been inhabitants of the land of Egypt from the time that Joseph moved his family from Canaan to Egypt during the severe seven-year famine that fell upon that whole area of the world. It was during those seven years of plenty followed by the seven years of famine that Joseph was miraculously raised to a position in Egypt which was second only to Pharaoh himself. The story of Joseph is also one of those incredible events in the history of the descendants of Abraham in the OT.

The time that the Israelites were in Egypt was a little over four hundred years. During that time, of course, Joseph and all of his immediate family died. Evidently for many years the Egyptians remembered Joseph with deep gratitude because he was the one who saved the nation from extinction. But as time went on, the memory of Joseph began to fade from the minds of the new generations as they came along. The book of Exodus opens with a rather ominous statement regarding the Pharaoh who was reigning close to the time when the Lord had planned to move His people out of Egypt. Let me read for you the words of Exodus 1:7-8:

7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

This meant that all of the privileges which had originally been granted to Joseph and his family, were gone. The people had become more numerous than the Egyptians, and the Pharaoh who ruled in that day decided that something had to be done about this threat to their nation. Consequently the people were made to build treasure cities for the Egyptians. This made life for the Israelites very, very difficult. But the more the Egyptians afflicted the Israelites, “the more they multiplied and grew” (Ex. 1:12).

But now I want to take you back for a moment to the days of Abraham. Please turn in your Bibles to Genesis 15.

If you let your eye run down through the first 12 verses of the chapter and you will see that Abraham had been in the land of Canaan long enough that he had started to believe that he and Sarah were never going to have a son. More than that, he had begun to doubt that he would ever possess the land of the Canaanites. And so God confirmed His promise to Abraham. But then the Lord said this which I will read to you in verses 13 through 16:

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full (Gen. 15:13-16).

When we read this passage, and then go on to the book of Exodus approximately four generations later, we have an example of fulfilled prophecy. All of this was according to the foreordained plan of God.

And, by the way, be sure that you don't miss a word of encouragement even for us today. We have God making a promise to Abraham, and the four hundred years later we see God fulfilling His promise in the days of Moses. This ought to be an encouragement to all of us to know that we can fully trust all of the promises of God.

I am sure that Moses knew what the Lord had said to Abraham. And so he could have taken encouragement from it for himself, even though his faith was going to be severely tested before God finally gave deliverance.

I hope you get the picture here. What we have in Exodus is the fulfillment of the prophecy God gave to Abraham. After all, a promise is a prophecy. Many prophecies in Scripture have already been fulfilled. This should help us to believe that ultimately *all of God's promises* will be fulfilled.

As far as I have been able to learn, we do not know how long the ten plagues took, but it took time, probably over a year, and maybe longer than that. It seems that time is always involved in the fulfillment of God's promises. This is what has made many people ridicule the prophecies of Scripture which have not yet been fulfilled, especially prophecies

that have to do with the end times. Many Christians have made their own predictions as to when certain events will take place, like the return of the Lord, but when they set dates they are being very foolish because the Lord has not revealed the time when those future events will be fulfilled. And we only show how foolish we are when we try to be more specific than the Bible is. That is one thing that makes many people discount the prophecies of Scripture. If we stay by the Word, we won't be making those mistakes.

God had told Moses, like He had told Abraham, that He was going to take His people out of Egypt, *but He did not tell them when* – except that it would be after four generations! But He did not tell either Abraham or Moses the exact year, month, day, and hour that the deliverance would take place. The Lord knew, but He did not tell them except in general terms. With all of the promises of God we are commanded to believe them even though we don't know exactly when the Lord will do what He has promised to do.

All of this means that we are to respond to God's promises *by faith*. But it is not faith *if*, but faith *when!*

In our studies of Moses' life so far we have seen that he and Aaron have already been before Pharaoh. We had that in chapter 5. Moses and Aaron had said exactly what the Lord told them to say, but Pharaoh not only turned them down, but accused them of trying to get the Israelites out of their work. So he made their work harder by making them gather their own straw instead of having it provided for them, while requiring that they make the same number of bricks. Moses and Aaron were blamed for making the situation of the Israelites worse. So they went to the Lord and told Him that He hadn't done what He had promised to do. You see, their faith was being tested by time, or as I have called it, "time-tested."

As chapter 7 begins the Lord told Moses that he and Aaron were to go to Pharaoh again with the same request, but they were told that they would be turned down again, that the Lord would actually harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not release the children of Israel.

So when they went before Pharaoh, told them to perform a miracle. Aaron cast his rod down, and it became a snake. Pharaoh's servants did the same, but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. However, in spite of this setback, Pharaoh refused to let them go.

Next the Lord sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh again as he was going down to the river Nile to worship. And again they told Pharaoh what the Lord had said. But he refused again. And so Aaron held his rod out over the river, and it immediately became blood. The Egyptians worshiped the River Nile so this was an attack upon one of their gods.

But Pharaoh called his magicians and they did the same. The Lord permits the Devil to exercise miraculous powers, as he will again in the last days, and so the rest of the water that remained, Pharaoh's magicians turned that water into blood. But note that the real test of the magicians power would have been that they would be able to undo what Moses and Aaron had done by the Lord's command. But as long as the magicians could do what Moses and Aaron had done, Pharaoh felt he was safe.

The next plague, recorded for us in chapter 8, was the plague of frogs – another object of Egyptian worship. And this was after Moses and Aaron had delivered the same message again to Pharaoh. They did not change their message, but were faithful in giving it until Pharaoh must have been able to say it right along with them.

The magicians could not remove the frogs, but only brought more frogs upon the land. This time the Lord asked Moses and Aaron to pray that the Lord would take the frogs away, promising that he would let the children of Israel go. Moses prayed. The Lord answered Moses' prayer. But then Pharaoh backed down on his promise, and refused to let the people go.

The third plague was lice. This time the magicians tried to do the same. "But they could not" (Ex. 8:18). This was a major turning point in the plagues. It caused the magicians to recognize that "this is the finger of God" (Ex. 8:19). But even with this Pharaoh refused to let the children of Israel go.

The fourth plague was flies, swarms of them. The flies were everywhere, *except in the land of Goshen, that part of Egypt where the Israelites lived. This was to show Pharaoh that God was looking out for the Israelites.*

Pharaoh told Moses for the people to sacrifice to their God right there in the land of Egypt. But Moses told Pharaoh that that would not work because they would offer to God sacrifices which would offend the Egyptians. Then Pharaoh agreed to let them go if they would not go very far away. Moses agreed to pray to the Lord that the flies would be removed.

He prayed. The flies were removed. But Pharaoh again broke his promise, refusing to let the children of Israel go.

This brings us to chapter 10 and the fifth plague, a disease that spread through the livestock of Egypt. But again the Lord made a distinction between His people, the Israelites, and the Egyptians. While all of Egypt's livestock were dying, *no Israelite lost a single animal*. Pharaoh recognized what had happened, but he still would not let the Lord's people go. The Lord was now hardening Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let the children of Israel go. Although it is not mentioned each time, yet it seems that we can assume that each time Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh with the same message, but Pharaoh was under divine judgment, and he, against all reason, refused to let the children of Israel go.

The sixth plague was boils, boils which even affected the magicians of Egypt. It came upon men and beasts (an indication that some time must have elapsed between the last plague and this one). Pharaoh at this time seems to have been devoid of all rationality, suffering severely under the hand of God, and his people suffering the same way, and yet he refused to obey the word of the Lord given again by Moses.

The seventh plague was a judgment of hail mixed with thunder and fire which ran along the ground. It was a plague, the first one, in which faith could be exercised. See Ex. 10, verses 20 and 21. There had never been a storm like this since Egypt became a nation. Crops were destroyed, and the trees were even broken by the hail. *But none of this was experienced by the people of Israel in the land of Goshen.*

This time Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, confessed his sin, acknowledged the righteousness of God (it all sounded good), and asked for prayer. Moses agreed to pray for him, but also told him that he knew that he and his servants did not really fear the Lord. He knew that Pharaoh was still a hypocrite, and yet he prayed for him anyway.

And sure enough, as soon as Pharaoh saw that the storm was over, he hardened his heart, and would not let the children of Israel go. This takes us to the end of chapter 9.

As we begin chapter 10 we see how Moses and Aaron warned Pharaoh of the plague of locusts. See Ex. 10:3-6. Then note in verse 7 what

Pharaoh's servants said to him.

So Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said that the people could go to serve the Lord, but then he changed his mind and said only the men would go, thinking that if the men left their families, they would be back. So the Lord brought the locusts, and they ate every herb and all the fruit of the trees, that is, the total food supply. Pharaoh again repented in words only. Again Moses prayed for him and for Egypt. God answered, and then Pharaoh refused to let them go.

This brought on the ninth plague, a thick darkness which could be felt, and it lasted for three days. The people were not even able to see each other. How alarming this must have been! "But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (Ex. 10:23).

Pharaoh agreed to comply fully with what the Lord wanted, but then the Lord hardened his heart so that he would not let Israel go. See Pharaoh's final words to Moses in Ex. 10:28, and then Moses' words to Pharaoh in verse 29.

Concl: It is all an incredible story, isn't it? And we can say that from the standpoint of what the Lord did, and Pharaoh's response. And how the Lord gave Moses and Aaron the courage to go back to Pharaoh those many times, to tell him the same thing, and then to pray for him even when it became apparent to Moses that Pharaoh was not going to let the people go, was equally amazing.

There are many, many lessons to be learned from a story like this. It is no wonder that the Israelites were told to pass this story on to their children, and then to their children's children, and on to all succeeding generations. Every American ought to be forced to listen to this story. Probably most of them would go on without any change of heart, but at least they would see the kind of a God they are dealing with. And it is good for us as the Lord's people these many years later to read, and to re-read this account of the contest between Pharaoh and God. Pharaoh, with all of his power, was no match for God.

The story is not over when we come to the end of Exodus 10. We all know, or should know, what comes next. The Lord willing we will consider that next week. I am speaking of the Passover. The Lord brought His people out of Egypt, but He left behind a nation in grief because in

every home where there was a son, the firstborn died under the judgment of God – even in the royal palace!

Now there are four principal characters in these four chapters we have covered, even though there were thousands of Egyptians and Israelites who were involved. But I want to call your attention to four:

- 1) God.
- 2) Pharaoh.
- 3) Moses and Aaron.

Think what these chapters tell us about God: His power, His patience, His mercy. He was faithful to His Word, faithful to His people, and faithful in judging the disobedience of Pharaoh.

In Pharaoh we see the rebelliousness of the human heart. We see His moral blindness and His stupidity. We see what a liar he was, and what a hypocrite. For those who want to talk about free will, in Pharaoh we see how a man will react toward the things of God when he is left to do what he wants to do. Man's will never leads him to God, but it leads him continually against God and away from God.

And then the account about Moses and Aaron is amazing and inspiring, isn't it? But the glory does not go to them, but to the Lord who enabled them to act so faithfully and courageously. I am surprised that we don't see that Pharaoh spoke of killing Moses until we get to the end of chapter 10. He could have had Moses killed at any time! Why didn't he? Because the Lord was protecting his servant. And it ought to be a lesson to us to see how Moses went to Pharaoh many times to give him the same message, and then how Moses repeatedly prayed for Pharaoh even after Pharaoh proved himself to be a liar, just wanted to get out of trouble, but not caring one bit about getting right with God. Some day Pharaoh will stand before the living God to face his eternal judgment, and he will not be able to tell the Lord, "You didn't give me a chance."

And so the message comes to us today, as we have read from and listened to the Word of God, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (quoted in Heb. 3:7 and 8 from Psalm 95:7-11). The thousands of Israel saw how Pharaoh resisted the Lord, and how he ultimately paid for his foolishness with his own life, and then they left Egypt, went out into the desert, and did exactly what Pharaoh had done, hardening their hearts against the Lord. Let us pray that we will learn from Pharaoh's foolishness so that we will not be guilty of the same.