

Ministry of Grace Church

Exodus 10 - Speaker Notes

For weeks now we have been looking at the battle between Pharaoh and *Yahweh* to see who is really the lord of Egypt and the Egyptian people. *Yahweh*, through his prophet Moses, has demanded that Pharaoh release his Hebrew slaves, but Pharaoh has refused to do so up to this point. In response to Pharaoh's unwillingness to release God's people, *Yahweh* has unleashed one plague after another to help convince Pharaoh who is really in charge. So far, we've looked at the first seven plagues that *Yahweh* brought upon Egypt. These plagues have demonstrated to Pharaoh that refusing to submit to the lordship of Almighty God has devastating consequences. As we've noted earlier in this study, a couple of the previous Egyptian plagues (the death of animals in the field and the hail mixed with fire) were attacks against the wealth of Egypt. With the coming of the next plague, the locust invasion, *Yahweh* will have managed to strip Egypt of all her wealth and prosperity while protecting the children of Israel from losing anything as a result of these plagues.

While we have been learning about this battle between *Yahweh* and Pharaoh, we have been looking very carefully at a couple of Hebrew expressions, *kibbud halev*, meaning "hardening of heart" and *chizuk halev*, meaning "strengthening of heart." We have seen that hardening of heart is a reference to Pharaoh getting more stubborn in his resistance to Moses and his God *Yahweh*. Strengthening of heart, however, is a reference to Pharaoh becoming more courageous in his fight when he might otherwise have given up. As we will see in this study, one of *Yahweh's* purposes in this whole battle is that the Israelites might know how God made a mockery of the Egyptians and how He performed His signs among the Egyptians so that they might know who *Yahweh* really is.

If you look at the chart on the Egyptian plagues, you will notice that Pharaoh hardened his own heart on five different occasions, but *Yahweh* only hardened Pharaoh's heart on one occasion. In contrast, *Yahweh* strengthened Pharaoh's heart five different times. Our God knows when a person is about to give up and He didn't want Pharaoh to give up until the battle was completely over and He had accomplished all that He wanted. On the surface, it may appear that God was being unjust in the way He treated Pharaoh. Some may think it is unfair that God treated the Israelites with love whereas He treated the Egyptians with hate. Isn't He a God of love? Yes, He is! But, keep in mind what we are told in Romans,

Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? (Romans 9:13-21) [NIV]

If you read the New Testament carefully, you will see that God loves those who truly believe in Him and He opposes those who don't believe in Him. Another thing that we can glean from this

chapter is that God works with those who obey Him and He blesses those who submit their will to His will. In our society today we deride someone who lets other people use them, but as we will learn, it is a blessing to be used by God. So, let's take a look now at the eighth and ninth plagues and see how Moses was used by God as he submitted to, and was obedient to *Yahweh*.

Exodus 10:1, 2

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

In spite of what most translations say, this is the only occurrence of *Yahweh* "hardening" Pharaoh's heart. There are five other places where we are told that Pharaoh's heart was hardened. These are in [Exodus 7:14](#), [Exodus 8:15](#), [Exodus 8:32](#), [Exodus 9:7](#), and [Exodus 9:34](#). In each of these cases, it was Pharaoh who hardened his own heart.

And, as we see at the end of this passage, *Yahweh* had a purpose in all that transpired in these plagues. He wanted to demonstrate to the children of Israel, and all of mankind, that He is *Yahweh*, the self-existent one, Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth. Moses is widely believed to be the writer of the first five books of the Bible. We don't know when he wrote them, but it is clear that God's purpose expressed here has been accomplished through his writings. God had repeatedly demonstrated to Moses not only that He was all-powerful, but that He knows the end from the beginning and he controls the hearts of men.

Notice that with each plague, *Yahweh* asked Moses and/or Aaron to perform some ritualistic action to bring on the plague. Why did He do that? God doesn't need help, so why require some action from Moses and Aaron? Hold that thought. We'll come back to it later.

Exodus 10:3-6

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 'For if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory. 'They shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the land. They will also eat the rest of what has escaped—what is left to you from the hail—and they will eat every tree which sprouts for you out of the field. 'Then your houses shall be filled and the houses of all your servants and the houses of all the Egyptians, something which neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day that they came upon the earth until this day.'" And he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

Moses and Aaron have already been told by God that he had hardened Pharaoh's heart and the hearts of his servants. Nonetheless, they obediently went before Pharaoh once again. They delivered God's demands to him knowing that Pharaoh would not let the people go. We will see in verses sixteen and seventeen that Pharaoh finally recognized Him as *Yahweh* the one God of Israel. Eventually, Pharaoh would see *Yahweh* as greater than all the gods of Egypt, but by the time it happened, it was too late for him just as it will be too late for all the unsaved who stand before the Great White Throne Judgment.

Pharaoh's sin was primarily that of not submitting to God's authority. Like some non-Christians today, Pharaoh believed in a supernatural supreme being. In fact, he believed in many of them, but he did not know or recognize the real God, *Yahweh*. To really know God is to recognize that He is the supreme authority over all of creation. To really know God is to recognize that His will

is supreme. To really know God is to submit to Him as the one and only God, the creator of heaven and earth, the supreme judge ... Almighty God.

Egyptian Plague #8 – Locusts.

The eighth plague was a plague of locusts such as had never been seen in Egypt, nor would it ever be seen again. These were ordinary locusts, but there were so many of them that the entire surface of the ground was covered. They even filled the houses of all Egyptians and they ate all the vegetation that had not been destroyed by the hail. Recall that the wheat and spelt were not destroyed by the hail, but now they were about to be completely consumed by the locusts. The hail had broken trees but they were still alive. The locusts would now strip even the trees of all their fruit and everything green.

Having delivered God's message to Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron did not wait for a response from Pharaoh, they simply left his presence.

Exodus 10:7, 8

Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?" So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God! Who are the ones that are going?"

Upon Moses' and Aaron's departure, Pharaoh's servants immediately urged him to let the children of Israel go. They perceived the desolation that had already been caused and credited it to Moses' God. Many of the fish in the Nile had been killed when it had been turned into blood. Most of their livestock had been killed, either by the disease or by the hail. Their flax and barley crops for the year had been destroyed, many of the fruit trees had been either partially or wholly broken down. Their wealth and their sustenance had been severely deteriorated and all they had left was the spelt and wheat that survived the hail storm. These servants knew from experience what complete devastation locusts could cause and they recognized that it would strip the Egyptians of all they had left. This caused them to ask, "Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?"

Relenting to the pleas of his servants, Pharaoh recalled Moses and Aaron and commanded them to go serve Jehovah. Before releasing the Israelites, however, Pharaoh asked, "Who are the ones that are going?" Literally, he asked, "Who and who else is going?" The implication is that Pharaoh was asking who would be left behind as a pledge of the return of the others. Pharaoh probably suspected that the Israelites were about to flee from his dominion and he was not willing to let them go. Not only were they a massive labor force but they were the primary tenders of the flocks of Egypt. To be a shepherd in Egypt was a contemptible position. Having the Israelites as their shepherds relieved the native people from having to do such a lowly and despised job. With the Israelites gone from Egypt, it would be difficult to find qualified shepherds to care for what few sheep and goats they may have had left.

Exodus 10:9-11

Moses said, "We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the LORD." Then he said to them, "Thus may the LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Take heed, for evil is in your mind. "Not so! Go now, the men among you, and serve the LORD, for that is what you desire." So they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

Moses responds to Pharaoh's question about who was going by explaining that all the Israelites, male and female, young and old, along with all their animals would be going. Nothing would be left behind as collateral because Moses knew that this was indeed going to be a massive exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land.

Pharaoh then responded with what seems very odd to us. He said, "Thus may the LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Take heed, for evil is in your mind." He was, in effect, saying, "See if *Yahweh* can help you in the same way I am helping you by letting you go. But you are about to do an evil thing." Pharaoh was showing his contempt, not only for Moses and the children of Israel, but for *Yahweh* Himself. He was also accusing Moses and Aaron of plotting against him so that they could escape Egypt.

Then, as if Pharaoh suddenly realized that the Israelites were, indeed, planning on escaping, he said, "Not so!" In other words, "Not so fast, guys!" Having just proclaimed that Moses and Aaron were trying to cause evil to Pharaoh and Egypt, Pharaoh told Moses that only the men were permitted to go.

Exodus 10:12-15

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat every plant of the land, even all that the hail has left." So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD directed an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled in all the territory of Egypt; they were very numerous. There had never been so many locusts, nor would there be so many again. For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Thus nothing green was left on tree or plant of the field through all the land of Egypt.

Yahweh told Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt ... " Was there something significant about Moses stretching his hand over Egypt, with his staff in it? Was there something magical about his staff? As we said earlier, God doesn't need help, so why require Moses to stretch out his hand? Hang in there. We'll talk about this a little more later on.

When Moses obeyed *Yahweh* by stretching out his staff over the land of Egypt, the swarm of locusts came up. The word translated "came up" is a military term indicating the advancement of an enemy force. The Egyptians were accustomed to invasions of Locusts. It was a fairly common occurrence. This invasion, however, was more massive than any that had ever occurred in the land. The number of insects was so large that they completely covered the land to the point that the land appeared to be dark. It is a well-known fact that locusts are willing to eat almost anything. It has even been recorded that some people have covered their crops with blankets to protect them from the locusts only to have the locusts eat the blankets.

You may recall that the previous plague broke many of the trees and wiped out the crops that were ready for harvest. These locusts were going to eat ALL that remained of the annual food sources of the Egyptians.

Exodus 10:16-20

Then Pharaoh hurriedly called for Moses and Aaron, and he said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. "Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and make supplication to the LORD your God, that He would only remove this death from me."

He went out from Pharaoh and made supplication to the LORD. So the LORD shifted the wind to a very strong west wind which took up the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea; not one locust was left in all the territory of Egypt. But the LORD hardened (strengthened) Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.

Pharaoh finally confessed that his actions had been against *Yahweh* and against Moses personally. In fact, this was the second time that he proclaimed that he has sinned against *Yahweh*. After the previous plague, the hail mixed with fire, Pharaoh proclaimed,

I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones. (Exodus 9:27b) [NAS]

He seems to have finally recognized that Moses is the leader of the Israelites in addition to the fact that *Yahweh* is his God. Based on his actions, however, Pharaoh's confession of sinfulness seems hollow. Nonetheless, as a result of Pharaoh's plea, Moses prayed for God to end the plague of locusts.

Now, I find this very curious. Although our text says that *Yahweh* hardened Pharaoh's heart, the Hebrew text indicates that *Yahweh* "strengthened" Pharaoh's heart. Apparently, Pharaoh was losing his nerve and may have been considering backing-off. But, with *Yahweh* having given him more nerve and courage, once again, we see that Pharaoh refused to let the children of Israel go. God would accomplish His purpose and that purpose required that Pharaoh continually renege on his promises.

Exodus 10:21-23

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.

Once again, I have to ask, "why did God command Moses to stretch out his hand toward the sky?" And, why did Moses have to pray to God to end the previous plague? Why didn't *Yahweh* just end the previous plague as soon as Pharaoh conceded? And why didn't God cause the darkness to happen as soon as Moses left Pharaoh? What was significant about Moses praying and Moses stretching out his hand toward the sky?

Egyptian Plague #9 – Complete darkness for three days.

Just as with the third and sixth plagues, we see that Pharaoh wasn't given any warning about this plague. This plague was a direct assault on the Egyptian god Ra who was the sun god, the most important god of ancient Egypt. Egyptians called him the creator and father of all things; he was chief of the Egyptian deities. Early Egyptian kings even claimed to have descended from him. His symbol is the Pyramid.

We are told that this was a darkness that could be felt. Some commentators claim that this darkness must have been caused by an extremely thick fog because it is a darkness which was felt. There is no evidence of this in the text, however. Others claim that this was caused by a thick dust storm, the likes of which would sometimes last for two or three days, so thick that the sun was completely blocked out and it became as dark as night. However, looking for a natural cause ignores the fact that the land of Goshen this condition did not exist. This is more likely a supernatural darkness, that is, an absence of the sun, moon, stars, or light of any kind -- without any apparent natural cause.

Compare this with the fifth bowl judgment of Revelation:

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, (**Revelation 16:10**)

In these two examples of God-induced darkness, we are told that it was, “a darkness which may be felt” and that people, “gnawed their tongues because of pain.” When presented with this idea of pain inflicted by the feeling of darkness, we tend to think of physical pain. However, consider the emotional pain that would have been caused by suddenly not being able to see anything. A sudden blindness in which a person could not perceive any light whatsoever. At first, a person would be frightened and would hope that it was only temporary. With time, however (perhaps a few minutes or even a few hours) a person would begin to wonder if the condition was permanent. After a day or two had passed, one would begin to wrestle with the fact that they might never see anything again. This would cause extreme emotional pain. It is a darkness (both physical and emotional) that surely would be felt.

Also, consider this, if the Egyptians were in the vicinity of others, they would soon learn that they were not the only ones who had suddenly gone blind. Consider how Pharaoh might have felt. He was used to having people wait on him hand and foot. Who would be able to assist him now, since nobody could see. That’s another level of anxiety and fear altogether that would only add to the emotional pain the Egyptians were already suffering.

Although the Egyptians would not have known it at the time, the Hebrews were not blinded. They had light “in their dwellings.” The word translated “dwellings” refers to places where collections of people sit. It is not just a reference to houses, but to all the cities or areas where they lived.

And - once the darkness was lifted, it would not have taken long for all Egyptians to learn that *Yahweh* had caused the darkness to descend on the Egyptians only. The Hebrews had light the whole time!

Exodus 10:24-26

Then Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, "Go, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be detained. Even your little ones may go with you." But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice them to the LORD our God. "Therefore, our livestock too shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we shall take some of them to serve the LORD our God. And until we arrive there, we ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the LORD."

Obviously, this darkness frightened Pharaoh enough that he called for Moses, giving him permission to leave with children but without flocks. Had this been just a dust storm or simply a thick fog it is unlikely that Pharaoh would have been so frightened. It also seems that Pharaoh called for Moses after the three days of darkness, for there is no mention of Moses doing anything to have the darkness lifted. We are only told that it was to last for three days.

It appears that Pharaoh was again looking to have a deposit left behind which would guarantee the return of the Israelites. That appears to be why he would not let them take their flocks and herds. But, once again, Moses stuck to his demands that all must go including the flocks and herds.

Exodus 10:27-29

But the LORD hardened (strengthened) Pharaoh's heart, and he was not willing to let them go. Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Beware, do not see my face again, for in

the day you see my face you shall die!" Moses said, "You are right; I shall never see your face again!"

Then, for some reason, *Yahweh* gave Pharaoh inner strength so that he refused to give in to Moses' demand regarding the flocks and herds. And, because he was so sure of himself and still unwilling to submit to *Yahweh* and His prophet Moses, Pharaoh commanded Moses to leave and never come into his presence again. Surprisingly enough, Moses agreed to never come back. Notice, though, that the next chapter of Exodus occurred while Moses was still in Pharaoh's presence, before he leaves for good.

But, this was not the last time that God manipulated Pharaoh's heart (see chapter fourteen).

So What?

We all know that God could have brought on all the plagues without any action at all by Moses and Aaron. Why did He repeatedly tell Moses to do this or that in order to bring on each plague? God is the creator and controller of all of creation. Couldn't He have just made the plagues happen? He knows the end from the beginning. In fact, God is outside of time as we know it. He currently exists at the beginning of time and at the end of time. He is simultaneously in eternity past and eternity future. His power is as far above our power as His ways are above our ways. The prophet Isaiah has told us:

**"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9)**

Our God spoke the heavens and the earth into existence. He spoke and there was light. He spoke and there was life. He created man in His own image from the dust of the ground and breathed life into him.

So, let me ask the question again: Why did God repeatedly tell Moses to do this or that in order to bring on each plague? Could He not have brought on these plagues without Moses' actions? Couldn't God have brought on these plagues even if Moses had refused to do as he was instructed?

Likewise, what about Joshua? When he came to the heavily fortified city of Jericho, God told him to have the army of Israel silently march around the city once a day for six days. Then on the seventh day God told Joshua to silently march around Jericho seven times. And, on the seventh time he was to sound the trumpet and all the Israelites were to shout with a loud shout. When they did as they were told, God performed a miracle and, "the walls came a tumblin' down." Did God need Joshua's help in breaking down the walls of Jericho? Was it really necessary for the Israelites to shout? What if Joshua and the Israelites had refused to do what they were told?

And how about Jonah? God told him to go to Nineveh and preach repentance. Jonah didn't want the wicked Ninevites to get saved and he knew they would if he preached God's message. So, instead of heading east, Jonah tried to run away by heading west, but God wouldn't let him. God interceded and gave Jonah one whale of a ride inside the great fish. When Jonah finally reached Nineveh, he preached the truth and people were saved throughout the great city, which made Jonah mad! Could God have saved the Ninevites without Jonah's help? Of course He could. He's God!

In his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul commands us to quit worrying and to make our requests known to God through prayer and supplication:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

He also commands believers to pray ceaselessly and to give thanks to God for everything:

pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)

And, do you remember what Jesus told His disciples?

... your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. (Matthew 6:8)

So why do we have to pray? If God really loves us and already knows what we need, why do we need to ask for it? Why doesn't He just give us what we need?

You've probably noticed that I have been asking a lot of questions today. Here's another one. Are you ready for some answers? --- Our God is a God of relationships. He wants a personal relationship with each one of us. In Romans, Paul tells us that God adopted us when we got saved. Even though we were sinners and alienated from Him, through the blood of Christ He brought us near, He bought us, and He adopted us as His own children. And, not just children, sons! That is, those who will inherit from the Father. He wants us to be a special part of His family.

But it doesn't stop there. God actually wants more than just a personal relationship with each of us. That's right, God wants **more** than just a personal relationship with us, He wants a partnership with us. He doesn't just want us to be recipients of His plan, He wants us to be participants in His plan. Why? Because He wants us to know Him and we only get to know God personally as we fellowship with Him and work with Him. If God were our Heavenly Genie, we could ask for anything and He would just give it to us. If He were our heavenly Sugar Daddy, he would just give us whatever we wanted whenever we wanted it. We wouldn't even have to ask. But, if God was our Heavenly Genie or our Heavenly Sugar daddy, then we would all become lazy, thankless, spoiled brats. When we work with Him, we get to know Him in a more personal way and we develop a deep, loving, relational, partnership with Him.

Moses knew God as well as any man who has ever lived. And, it wasn't because God always made things easy for him. It's because God gave Moses a job to do and he did it. With each plague that Moses called down upon Egypt he believed that God would do exactly as He said He would. As a result, Moses experienced God's loving faithfulness. Each time Moses obeyed God and confronted Pharaoh, even though he knew that Pharaoh would reject his demands, he drew closer to his Lord and Master. Moses became *Yahweh's* partner. Because of his obedience to God and faith in God, we know Moses as one of the greatest prophets of the entire Bible. God gave him a hard job to do and he worked hard at it. He and God were partners!

So, let me ask you two more questions: **Are you a child of God? If you are, are you also one of His partners?** God has given each one of us a job to do. In the great commission we are commanded to "preach the gospel" and we are commanded to "make disciples." If we are to be God's partners then we have two jobs to do, preach the gospel and make disciples. Are you one of God's partners?

Now, that's something to think about!

Let's Pray