

Pharaoh Ignores God's Call

Key Verse:

“Afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.”

—Exodus 5:1

Selected Scripture:

Exodus 5:1-6:1

AS GOD DESIRED THEM TO

do, the children of Israel believed the signs that Moses and Aaron showed to them. They were thankful that the LORD had seen their afflictions and they gave thanks to him for his mercy. As we will come to see, Pharaoh did not have the same reaction when he was shown signs and miracles from the LORD God of Israel.

The contest with Pharaoh began with the first demand as recorded in our key verse. Pharaoh's reaction to the request was one of contempt for he considered the sun god of the Egyptians the powerful one. He decreed that the Israelites would now have to make their bricks without the use of straw. The taskmasters were instructed that the tally of bricks made each day could not be even one less in number. “So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.” (Exod. 5:12) The outcome of this first demand for freedom was that their tasks were in reality practically doubled. Their taskmasters turned to cruelty; the people were beaten, and even prevented from giving

reverence to God. "He said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the LORD." (vs. 17) But by these bitter experiences the people were being prepared to welcome their liberty when it would finally come. It was a testing of faith, not only of Moses and Aaron who had to confront Pharaoh, but also of all Israelites. Pharaoh represents Satan, and the land of Egypt represents his dominion of sin and death over the whole world in which mankind is in bondage. Similarly, we should appreciate the privilege of being set free from the power of sin and death and of being inducted into God's family.

In the face of the righteous demand of the true and living God and the tremendous demonstration of miracles that he was indeed God, and that Moses and Aaron were his representatives, Pharaoh hardened his heart. Instrumentally, God hardened Pharaoh's heart by forcing him into an issue against which he hardened his own heart in refusal. Light rejected, rightful obedience refused, inevitably hardens conscience and heart.—Rom. 9:17-24

The people were greatly troubled as were Moses and Aaron concerning the reaction of Pharaoh to God's request and his subsequent punishment of the people. "They said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us." (Exod. 5:21) Moses entreated God in prayer to show him what to do in response to the evil that had been since he first approached Pharaoh to free his people.

The answer to Moses' first prayer would come quickly. God would assure Moses that he would complete his deliverance of the people, and that nothing would stand in the way of it. "Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go."—chap. 6:1 ■