

Exodus

Chapter 7-11

Ten Ways to Leave

29.01.2006

The media chopper hovered. Marksmen prepared. A distraught lady sobbed into a megaphone, "Ronnie, please, I beg you, let the children go! Drop the gun! Let them go!"

They paused, waiting for a door to open and children to come out. The lady sobbed. Police scanned windows. Marksmen waited, fingers gently on the triggers. Reporters scurried, hoping for tears, blood, relief or death. Seconds dragged.

Then with the loudest thing she had heard, a bullet exploded into the tyre next to her leg, followed by the shout "Never! They'll die first!"

Sadly, as problems overwhelm, people can get more dangerous. Back downs seem impossible.

It was like that for Pharaoh in Exodus 7-11. Let the Hebrew slaves go? Never! They helped the economy, standards of living increased without inflation. So when, on a Mission from God, Moses requesting he let the Israelites go, Pharaoh exploded.

This was more than stubborn will, more than financial concern. It was spiritual warfare. For we are told Pharaoh chose to refuse, yet God ensured Pharaoh would not back down.

God strengthened Pharaoh's NO-GO position, so all would know the Hebrews' God lives, and in not to be tampered with. He is mightier than the gods. He is mightier than Pharaoh. He is mightier than the warriors of Egypt!

Moses negotiated with the oppressor knowing that the conflict would be long and painful. God said in Exodus 7: *"You shall speak all I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and I will multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh does not listen to you, I will lay my hand upon Egypt and bring my people the Israelites, company by company, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and*

bring the Israelites out from amongst them."

The stick turning into a snake had no effect on Pharaoh. His own magicians could do something similar. Pharaoh was reassured and comforted that God was unnecessary.

Have you noticed how non-Christians can justify their lack of accepting God by pointing to non-Christians doing what Christians should do? eg They may point to someone good, and say "See, you do not have to be a Christian to be good".

Pharaoh's magicians copied some signs. But the ten plagues which afflicted Egypt, were designed as judgments on Egypt's King, people and gods. Each plague declared that our God is the only true God. and Pharaoh's stubbornness made his people suffer more.

The plagues grew in their intensity against him. The first was turning the waters of the Nile into **blood**. But the magicians could copy it so Pharaoh shrugged it off and went, unconcerned into his palace, while all Egypt dug for water.

The **frogs** concerned Pharaoh. They covered everything, even his bedroom! Magicians did a smaller, similar trick, so Pharaoh asked for the frogs to go. He promised the Hebrews could go to worship God if the frogs went. But when the frogs all died that night, Pharaoh reneged. The stench of his betrayal was greater than the stench of rotting frogs.

But the magicians could not copy the plague of **gnats**. They recognised God's hand. Pharaoh's skin was sore from bites, but his heart was hard. He refused to believe

Moses warned of the plague of **flies**. This time, God would protect the Hebrews from the plague, for the flies would only afflict Egyptians. Having no aerogard, Pharaoh agreed to let them worship God, but only in Egypt. However he reneged again.

Some people never seem to learn do they? They make promise after promise and still break them, not thinking that God can affect them. In the

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heat of pain, they call on God, but in the cool of release, they show their concern was to ease pain, not trust God.

So God began to force Pharaoh's hand even more. All livestock not kept inside would **die**. No Hebrew animals died. But still Pharaoh wouldn't give in. Then God showed Pharaoh's magicians were totally ineffective. They were just as afflicted with the plague of **boils** as every Egyptian and any remaining animals.

Pharaoh's hardened heart caused much suffering and pain for all his people. and his downfall would bring glory to God.

Not even the plague of **hail** could break Pharaoh's hard heart. It was dented, for he said *"This time I have sinned. The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Pray to the Lord, for we've had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you do not have to stay any longer."*

**Surely God's power had been evident enough. He'd shown his power over the Nile, insects, animals, disease and weather. Pharaoh's magicians recognised true power when they felt it. The Egyptians who did recognise it, were saved from the deadly hail, because they heard the warning and brought their animals and families inside.

But when the hail stopped, so did his promise. So when Moses warned about the plague of **locusts**, Pharaoh offered for men to go out to sacrifice. Once again the promise was futile.

But God went the next step and showed the enormity of His power. He sent three days of **darkness**. The cosmic distinction of day and night was in God's control. But stubborn Pharaoh refused to budge. As soon as things grew bright again, the need for God went, and his resistance grew.

Moses was banished from the court. The tenth blow, which crumbled Pharaoh, was a severe judgment... the death of each firstborn son. But as with all of God's judgments, there was a way

to escape. If anyone listened to God, and trusted Him, then God would provide shelter.

Just as we have to trust in Jesus and obey him, so they had to trust God, and act on what He said. In this case, a lamb had to die, and its blood was to be splashed on the door posts, and a special meal was prepared.

The next morning, in the midst of judgment on the evil nation, God rescued his people. Pharaoh let them go. He acknowledged God was very powerful. Yet even his knowledge and painful acceptance did not mean he was saved from God's judgment. For Pharaoh reneged again. After they had gone, he decided they should be recaptured and punished.

God's glorious power was seen to be most triumphant when the tyrant's army drowned in the Red Sea. The world knew that God is all-powerful and delivers his people.

Do you know that? In what way do you know it? Like Pharaoh, is your acceptance a grudging one, which you marvel, but then renege on and draw back from? Or is it more like the Hebrews, who with hesitant steps learnt to trust God's power and care?

For our day of judgment is coming. In Revelation 16, in the cartoon-like imagery of that book, plagues like those in Egypt are described as afflicting the world. Instead of Pharaoh being the one with the hard heart, the people who reject Jesus are the hard hearted ones.

16:9 *"They were scorched by the fierce heat, but they cursed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him the glory."* and again in verse 11 *"People gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and they did not repent of their deeds."*

Are you like them? Does pain cause you to curse our powerful God? Or do you trust Him to provide salvation through Jesus, the lamb of

God who died for you?

Jesus died to save us from the final devastating judgment to come. Simply trusting God's promise is all we need.

And as we trust, then we will follow His directions, just as the Hebrews did.

But rest assured that in that final judgment, God will rescue His people, even while devastation occurs around them. Are you ready? Do not be like pharaoh! Do not be hard hearted! Our God is powerful!