

Sermon Reflections

Who's Plaguing You? (Exodus 7:8-8:19)

Summary: Don't dare ignore the LORD God, your Judge.
His discipline is meant to get your attention.
Soften your heart to the powerful, merciful LORD!

Soften Your Heart to Your Judge

1. Don't challenge his divine word (7:8-13)

- A. **Requiring proof** - The word of God commands us to not put the LORD to the test (Matt 4:7). Would you suppose there are any ways you may be "requiring" the LORD (as if possible) to prove himself in some way, rather than simply submitting to his word?
- B. **Lying Wonders** - In order to test our submission to his word, God may employ authentic acts of evil power (see Deut 13:1-3, or consider the false prophet who deceives the world in the last days). This is (and should be) sobering. In light of this reality, what is the believer to do? What are some "lying wonders" to point to in our cultural context today?

2. Don't neglect his right to judge (7:14-25)

- A. **Pressure Point** - In turning the Nile to blood, the LORD judged Egypt's source of material life. How can we discern whether our reliance is upon the institutions of the material world, or in the LORD? How does the thought of God's future judgment upon the world system make you feel?
- B. **Delaying repentance** - Would you reckon there are any patterns of sin in your life for which you are simply waiting for the LORD's discipline in order to address? With the plagues of Egypt or the bowl judgments in Revelation 16 as key examples, consider that while the LORD's discipline restores the believer, it also seals the unbeliever in their hardness of heart. Today, you have his word – do not harden your heart (Hebrew 3:7).
- C. **Sovereignty vs. Responsibility** - The LORD states multiple times that it is ultimately He who hardens Pharaoh's heart, and yet we know Pharaoh is completely responsible for hardening his own heart. As our flesh naturally resists the sovereignty of God, how have you in your own heart reconciled this fact that God is sovereign but that man remains responsible for his actions?

3. Don't mock his abundant mercy (8:1-15)

- A. **Praying for our enemies** - In response to Pharaoh's first breaking point, rather than capitalizing on the unprecedented moment in some human act of vengeance (400 years of slavery!), he instead *prays* for his enemy! The Lord Jesus taught us this explicitly (Matt 5:44). Are you able to pray for your enemies?

- B. **Foxhole faith** - What is the difference between Pharaoh's temporary appearance of relent, versus authentic repentance?
- C. **Trickle-down effect** - How is Pharaoh's hard-heartedness beginning to impact the lives of his kingdom? Consider those the LORD has entrusted to you (as an authority or at least an influence): are you conscious of how your sin and hard-heartedness can impact them?

4. Don't ignore his unmatched power (8:16-19)

- A. **The finger of God** - When you encounter inexplicable providences in your life, how do you respond? Are you conscious of the LORD's discipline in your life? How can you tell whether it is the "finger of God"?

Conclusion - Read and consider the following: **Hebrews 3:7-14 & 12:5-11**

- **When you hear his voice** - We hear the voice of God by his authoritative word, illuminated in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. How do you receive admonishment / correction from the Scriptures?
- **Sunday mornings** - How do you prepare your heart (and your family's heart, if applicable) for Sunday worship with the church?
- **It is called "today"** - What does it mean to exhort? Is today the day to exhort our brethren? (answer: yes). What does it accomplish when we pursue lives characterized by continual exhortation of others in our church? What about our receptivity to others' exhortation of us?
- **Toward a soft heart** - In light of Hebrews 12:5-11, can you list reasons why the LORD disciplines his children? When disciplined by the LORD, two ways we tend toward hardening our hearts are by "regarding it lightly" and/or by weariness. How does knowing God's purposes for His discipline help us to be "trained by it"?
- **By his stripes** - For the joy set before Him, your Savior received the greatest of all discipline, the divine judgment which was required of you, to deliver you from your bondage to sin. In all wisdom and love, the righteousness purchased at His cross bears fruit through yours. By His grace, may His rod and staff comfort us.