



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Exodus 6:10 – 7: 13

“The Second Round”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the time of study that Thou hast granted to us. We again Lord ask that Thou will be with as we ponder the word of God unto the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. We thank Thee for the Scriptures, which have been given to us in divine inspiration and we thank Thee that as we read them, we are reading the very words of God given to us for our edification and growth in grace. We know that they are profitable to us, all of them, and Lord we pray that Thou would give us responsiveness to them. How often, Lord, we feel that there is no real desire within us to study the Scriptures and to respond to them in obedience.

Deliver us Lord from waywardness and sinfulness and rebellion against the teaching of the word of God and help us to truly follow Thee in a way that will please Thee and bring glory and honor to Thy name. We ask that Thou will be with us in this hour and the hours that follow as we study the word of God together in Jesus' name, Amen.

[Message] Returning tonight again to Exodus, this time to chapter 6 and verse 10. And the Scripture that we are going to look at begins in chapter 6, verse 10 and goes

through chapter 7 and verse 13. In the earlier part of chapter 7, verses 1 through 13, we have the second round in the encounter between Moses and Pharaoh and that's the topic that we are using for the message tonight.

Now, perhaps you will remember that Moses had asked Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go and Pharaoh was very upset by that and not only said that he would not let them go, but furthermore he was going to make it more difficult for them to do their work. He required of them to do the same amount of work, but they were no longer going to supply the brick makers with the straw, so they had to get their own straw and yet produce the same number of bricks, and the result was that the children of Israel were very upset over that, the extra labor, and they blamed Moses and Aaron for that.

In fact, after they had gone in to talk to Pharaoh about it, they came out and they met Moses and Aaron who stood in the way as they came from Pharaoh, and these Israelite-ish men said unto them, "The Lord look upon you and judge because you have made our favor 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." That was very upsetting to Moses, of course, because he had been told by the Lord that he was the deliverer, and that he was the one who was going to lead Israel out of the land of Egypt, and he was, he thought, following directions when he was doing what he was doing, and so he went in, returned unto the Lord, we read in chapter 5, verse 22 and said, "Lord, wherefore hast Thou so evil and treated this people, why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people, neither has Thou delivered Thy people at all." And so the Lord said to Moses, "Now, Moses, you are going to see what I am going to do to Pharaoh because with a strong hand shall he let the children of Israel go, and with a strong hand, he will drive them out of the land." And then he reminded Moses of who he was and some of the great promises that had been given to the nation many hundreds of years before.

And we read and studied last week those great promises which begin with verse 2, and conclude with verse 8. And so finally in verse 9, the passage we read last time: "Moses spake so that as he told them all of these marvelous promises that the Lord had encouraged him with, he spake so unto the children of Israel that they harken not unto Moses for anguish of spirit than for cruel bondage." So the children of Israel were upset. It's not surprising that Moses too was upset over what was happening.

Now tonight, in the second round, the struggle of God and His servants with Pharaoh over the chosen people begins in earnest, and we are going to see what Paul saw in this also. Now we are not going to see all of it because that will unfold as the chapters between chapter 7 and chapter 11 unfold, but we are going to see why Paul wrote some of the things that he wrote in the Epistle to the Romans. To me, it is always very interesting to look at the New Testament from the Old Testament. And some of the things that are very puzzling to us in the New Testament are puzzling to us because we are not too familiar with the Old Testament. And the apostle obviously was a great student of not only the Book of Genesis but also the Book of Exodus, because some of the things that he writes in the 9th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans are things derived specifically from this section.

For example, in Romans chapter 9, verse 14 through verse 18, after he has said, "Jacob hath I loved and Esau have I hated," Paul asks the natural question, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid for he sayeth to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.'" That is the text from Exodus. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy." For the Scripture sayeth unto Pharaoh, "Even for the same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore, hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy and whom he will, he hardeneth." The apostle got his theology from the Book of Exodus. And so we are going to see as we go along, the

divine sovereignty and we will see it emerge from the context of God's dealings with Pharaoh for the children of Israel.

One other thing we are going to see. We are going to see the divine wrath, the divine power, and the divine long suffering too. Notice in Romans 9 as Paul continues, "Thou wilt say to me then, Why doeth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay, but all men who art Thou that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why hast Thou made me thus?' Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction and that He might make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy which He hath afore prepared unto glory, even us whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." So, the apostle as he read this, and pondered as he saw not only the divine sovereignty, he also saw the divine wrath, the divine power and the long suffering of God and the way in which he had dealt with Moses and with Pharaoh. He could have demolished Pharaoh immediately. There was no need to deal with him as he dealt with Pharaoh, but he dealt with Pharaoh in order to show his long suffering so that Pharaoh would have no excuse.

Now, we are going to see also further steps in the spiritual education of Moses and Aaron. And one of the ways in which God disciplines us is through the discipline of failure. You notice how Moses is confronted with the fact that he was doing precisely what God tells him to do and yet he is not getting any response. He is going and he is saying, "Now, Pharaoh let us go." And Pharaoh gets very upset over it and makes it harder for him than before. So he tells the children of Israel all the promises that God has told him and he finds that the children of Israel, instead of being encouraged and helped by them, they do not pay him any attention because of the anguish of spirit and cruel bondage that they are experiencing.

So here is Moses, a man who is following the word of God but he is finding that individuals are not responding to him. I guess outside of jealousy, which is one of the most difficult things for human beings to deal with, outside of jealousy, the sins of failure is one of the most painful and acute and crushing pains, and Moses is going to have to experience the discipline of failure. Of course, if our failure comes from our spiritual pride, or our human pride, then it's very good for God to let the acid eat the proud flesh in order that the proud might be consumed. That is good for us. It's very painful, but it's good for us.

If it comes from an overtaxed nervous system, like Elijah's who got all keyed up and accomplished what he accomplished on Mt. Carmel and then fled off at a woman's voice and asked the Lord if he couldn't go ahead and die, that's another matter, or if it's from the nature of the soil that we sow in. The prophets had that experience. They obeyed the Lord God. They preached the word. But they were told ahead of time that the people to whom they were preaching were very stiff-necked and stubborn. And they wouldn't respond. Well, that was encouraging, I guess to the prophets, but they did not rejoice and if they wanted Israel to return that they have to experience the discipline of failure too.

And so the Lord is disciplining his servant, Moses, as well as exercising great long suffering over Pharaoh. But fundamentally, the Apostle Paul will see in this effect that God is the sovereign God who has the authority to harden whom he will harden and to show mercy upon whom he will show mercy. That is part of his glory as the one true God. I AM who I AM. And this belongs to the nature of our God. He possesses the absolute freedom to do what his will determines to do for what he wills to do is right.

And something is right because it is his will. God does not will something because it's right to do it. It's right to do it because he wills it. He is the ultimate authority. There is no moral authority outside of the will of God. That's part of his freedom. That's part of his greatness. That's part of his glory. And that's what Paul saw

in these Exodus encounters between Moses and Pharaoh, the representative of the rebellious will of man.

Well, after Moses has been encouraged by the promises and after he has given them to Israel and Israel has not responded, then the Lord spoke to Moses, again we read in chapter 6 in verse 10, "Go in, speak unto Pharaoh, King of Egypt that he let the children go out of his land." Can you not see the look on Moses' face? "I have already gone in once." And what did Pharaoh do? He gave them more work. And, furthermore, he did not bring them the straw any longer. And now have the whole people upon my back and upon Aaron's back and they are complaining and they are mad and upset and now Lord, are you asking us to go in again and tell him that he should let the children of Israel get out of the land?" And Moses spake before the Lord saying, "Behold the children of Israel have not harken unto me. How then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?" And what he means by that latter statement is that, "I do not have the eloquence to speak. I am of uncircumcised lips." And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel and unto Pharaoh, King of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

Now, I would like for you turn to chapter 6, verse 28 and I am going to read verses 28 through 30 because these verses belong together. They are interrupted by the genealogical insertion in between which we will also say just a word about in a moment. But I want you to notice that the genealogical matter comes between the reiteration of this particular instruction given to Moses. We read in verse 28, "And it came to pass on the day when the Lord spake unto Moses in the land of Egypt that the Lord spake unto the Moses saying, 'I am the Lord. Speak Thou unto Pharaoh, King of Egypt, all that I say unto Thee.' And Moses said before the Lord, 'Behold I am of uncircumcised lips and how shall Pharaoh harken unto me.'"

Well this is a divine intervention again and it is designed to bolster his servant Moses. Moses is upset because of the anguish of the children of Israel and because they

are not paying attention and so God gives him a further command, to let him know of course, that he is with him. And that he is still his servant. And that he is still doing the will of God but the all-haunting, self-distressed awakened in Moses and so, he says, "Israel is not listening to me, so why should Pharaoh listen to me. Are you asking me Lord that I should go into the den of one of the greatest, if not, the greatest kings of the earth and bade him there when he has already caused the nation to engage in further labor?

And furthermore Lord, you know that my lips are uncircumcised. I am very non-eloquent. I am not the kind of person who is articulate." He has forgotten that he has Aaron by his side, I guess, but at any rate he has these two objections. It would be nice to look up all the places in the Old Testament where reference is made to uncircumcised heart, uncircumcised lips and all that is meant by it. But God hears his servant and he reiterates the command. And he gave him charge to go to the children of Israel, to go to Pharaoh and then Moses interrupts this with the genealogical insertion.

Someone entitled a chapter on these verses “An Old World Cemetery.” Now, you can see why this was done. It was done in order to let you know the background of Moses and Aaron, and they belong, remember, to the priestly family. So, if you'll notice, it begins with Reuben and then Simeon. They were the old children of Jacob and then when we come to Levi, then the genealogy stops and we narrow it down to our heroes who are Moses and Aaron.

So I'll just read these verses beginning with verse 14, "These be the heads of their Father's house or houses." You know when you are reading along in the Bible and you are just reading along and suddenly in the midst of the story we have a genealogy, sometimes we do not pay any attention. And some Bible students have been known to take a look at the page and see that it has names. And so they skip on beyond the names to where we have some material that is not filled with proper nouns. But there is a reason for this.

The reason is that it's important for the Holy Spirit to impress upon us that Moses and Aaron belong to the family of Levi. They belong to that tribe. And furthermore, some of the important names that are going to appear in the account appear here. "These be the heads of their Fathers' houses. The sons of Reuben, the first born of Israel: Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi; these be the families of Reuben. And the sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman; these are the families of Simeon. And these are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon and Kohath and Merari. They will appear again in the Pentateuch. And the years of the life of Levi were 137 years. The sons of Gershom: Libni and Shimei, according to their families and the sons of Kohath: Amram (that is Moses' father), and Izhar and Hebron and Uzziel; and the years of the life of Kohath were 133 years and the sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of Levi according to their generations.

Now, more specific information on Amram, took in Jochebed, his father's sister, as a wife, married his aunt, and she bore him Aaron and Moses and the years of the life of Amram were 137 years and the sons of Izhar: Korah and Nepheg and Zichri; and the sons of Uzziel: Mishael and Elzaphan and Sithri, and Aaron took in Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Nahshon, as a wife and she bore him Nadab and Abihu who will appear again in one of the incidents in the Pentateuch, Eleazar and Ithamar; and the sons of Korah also who appears in an incident: Assir and Elkanah and Abiasaph; these are the families of Korahites, and Eleazar, Aaron's son, took in one of the daughters of Putiel as a wife and she bore him Phinehas, great high priest of later time; these are the heads of the fathers of the Levites according to their families.

"These are that Aaron and Moses." So you see he wants us to know from whence have come Moses and Aaron, they come from the priestly line. "Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies. These are they which spake the

Pharaoh, King of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. These are that Moses and Aaron."

Did you notice in verse 26, it says, "These are that Aaron and Moses." Now, Aaron was older than Moses. He was 83 at this time and Moses was 80, remember? But then in verse 27, the order is reversed. "These are that Moses and Aaron". And I think we can see in this, though it is difficult to prove that the reason that the order is reversed is because Mary is going to resume the story and Moses is the more important of the two characters so far as the story is concerned. But when it comes to the genealogy, it's Aaron who comes first because he is the older. So the tribal connection is made, and now that brings us to chapter 7 and verse 1 and the first sign. This is really the first round.

Now, I want you to realize that for Moses to go in before Pharaoh and in order to understand it, you must realize that this required tremendous audacity on the part of Aaron and Moses from the human standpoint. Just remember the unbridled authority and power that were claimed by the Egyptian monarchs. Each Pharaoh was regarded as the child of the sun. He is depicted as fondled by the greatest gods and sitting with them in the recesses of their temples to receive worship equal to their own. When a person wanted to swear and to swear by a supreme oath, he swore by the life of Pharaoh. Without Pharaoh, no man could lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. For him, great Egypt existed. For him, all other men lived, suffered and died. For him, the mighty Nile flowed from its unexplored fountains to bring fruitfulness to the soil, and for him, all of the numerous armies of priests and magicians and courtiers did their work and ministered to the king. From his great throne, he looked down on the wretched crowds of subject peoples careless of their miseries. What were their tears and groans to the great and mighty Pharaoh? They were simply a fitting sacrifice to be offered to the greatest of human beings upon the earth, one who aspired to be one of the gods also.

In addition, this particular monarch to whom Moses went, had won great victories, only recently, through his generals, achieved certain great successes, and they had

enhanced his arrogant pride and so you can see the paroxysm of supercilious arrogance reflected in the response of Pharaoh when they first went in to him and Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord; neither will I let Israel go."

And you notice that he caught the point of the request. He said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" He sensed that when Moses and Aaron stood before him and said, "The Lord has said, 'Let my people go.'" That the Lord was assuming ultimate authority and Pharaoh was now a human subject. And so he sensed that he was called upon by the Lord Jehovah to obey him. And that is the point he got and he saw that these fellows were presenting him with a request that was a mandate from someone who had greater power than he and he did not recognize anyone who had any greater power than he. That stung him to the quip. He considered himself a god, but here's another God who is ordering him to do something. So I think you can see why he responded as he did.

Now, think of the audacity of Moses and Aaron in the light of this. Can you not imagine that their knees were trembling a little bit when they went in again to Pharaoh after they had already been rejected one time, but now they are going to go in before him again? And so the Lord encourages Moses and he says in chapter 7, "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet." And so Moses' slow education is going to continue.

Now, the Lord deals so carefully and often so slowly even with his great saints, how much more for the rest of us. Remember, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of Moses as a person who was faithful in all his house. So here is a great man, Moses; he is called upon by the Lord to go in and further he said to encourage him, "Look, I have made you a god to Pharaoh and Aaron is going to be your prophet." So the words of God are going to come from you, Moses. You are my representative and Aaron

is going to be like a prophet. He is going to take words from your mouth which are the words of God and he is going to bring them to the people.

Incidentally, this statement here with which he began at the verse 29 of chapter 6, "I am the Lord," is designed to authenticate and to give the pledge of a successful accomplishment of all that he is doing. So now in the account, encounter "I am going to make you a god to Pharaoh." So what that really means is that Moses is going to be invested with the authority of the Lord God. Do you notice the definition of a true prophet here? I think this is the first time the word "prophet" occurs in the Bible. And we have in it the definition of what a prophet is.

It has a lot of great practical significance for what is happening in the Charismatic movement today. In the Charismatic movement, you often hear people claiming to be a prophet. Now, what they mean largely by this is that it is the right and privilege of someone to stand in the meeting and to prophesy. The usually simple prophecies, if you have ever read any of them, they are very simple. They are rather meaningless. They can be interpreted 5 or 10 or 15 different ways so that a person can say afterwards like the oracle at Delphi it was fulfilled because they are phrased in such a way that they could be fulfilled in many different ways. The characteristic thing of a prophet, however, was that he gave divine revelation.

Now, that's a lot different from just saying, "I have an idea of what might happen next Sunday in church." Divine revelation is something behind which the Lord God stands and you can see from the use of the term "prophet" here, that Aaron is regarded as a person who will take the words of God. "For you see, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron shall be thy prophet." So it's Aaron's duty to take the words from Moses who is Pharaoh's god, and bring them to Pharaoh. So, you can see from this verse that it is the work of a prophet to give words from God, not advice, not counsel.

Now occasionally, someone will say, "Well doesn't Paul say in 1st Corinthians 14 that the prophet exhorts, and encourages, and comforts?" Yes, that is true. It states right

here in 1st Corinthians 14 and verse 3, "That he that prophesyeth speaketh unto men to edification and to exhortation and to comfort." Well if he speaks to edification, exhortation, and to comfort, then that is what a prophet does. So when a prophet stands up and exhorts, and comforts, and consoles, he is doing the work of a prophet, right? Wrong, for the simple reason, there is something else about the prophet. The prophet's exhortation, consolation, comfort must be revelation. It is not enough for a person to exhort and to console and comfort. The text doesn't say, everyone who consoles, comforts, exhorts is a prophet. The text simply says that a prophet may console, exhort, and comfort. The characteristic thing about a prophet is that he gives divine revelation.

Now, as divine revelation may be of something that is going to happen in the future or it may be of something God wants us to respond to right now. But it comes from God. Take the prophets of the Old Testament, take Isaiah, did he always prophesy of the future? No, all you have to do is read a little bit. You know he spoke right to the people who were there with him, and he warned them and admonished them and exhorted them and comforted them. He was prophesying. But what he said was divine revelation. That is the characteristic thing of prophecy. Prophecy may be of that which is future, it may be of that which is of present application.

A prophet, to put it in simple terms as model teachers and students have often put it, a prophet may foretell or forth tell, but he is giving divine revelation. So not everyone who exhorts and comforts and consoles is a prophet, but every prophet who exhorts, and comforts, and consoles gives out divine revelation. So, I could comfort you and console you and exhort you and admonish you, but that wouldn't make me a prophet because I wouldn't be giving you divine revelation. I might give you divine, divinely guided, I hope, teaching, but it's not infallible. But the prophets give infallible revelation. So that's an important text; you see, that tells us what a prophet really is.

Now, I will tell you that the claim to be a prophet is a very, very exalted claim. It's not a claim of a guess about what the future may bring forth. It's a claim that you are

speaking the word of God. That is something else, and true prophets will not be too anxious to speak if they do not have absolute assurance that they are giving the word of God. Oh, we have so much foolishness in Christianity today. It's so sad that we don't study the Bible, and if we don't study the Bible, then of course we have to be lead astray by them.

So now Moses replies, and you can tell from his reply in verse 30, "I am of uncircumcised lips. How shall Pharaoh speak unto me?" This is the result of a baffled soul. He is thinking of himself. He is not thinking of the Lord. He has to learn a great spiritual truth and that spiritual truth is that the Lord God brings us down before he brings us up. He empties us before he fills us. And he must make an end of us before he begins to do something great through us, but what a beginning he does make when he has brought us to the end of ourselves. And one of the things that is taught in Scripture in harmony with that is taught by the Lord Jesus in John chapter 12 when he says, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat falling to the ground and died abideth alone, but if it died, it bringeth forth much fruit." That is a principle of spiritual life.

Our Lord expressed it of course in his saving work. He went to the cross and like a little seed that you will put in the ground, a seed, a grain, and the outside of it will ultimately be destroyed, but the life within will begin to spring up and then instead of one seed, there will be many seeds, but there will be fruit. There must be death before fruitfulness in the natural realm, so in the spiritual realm there must be death before fruitfulness and our Lord's death on the cross is the standing illustration of the way of fruitfulness. And in the Christian life, the same principle operates. The same precise principle, that until we are brought to the place where we are renouncing trust in ourselves, giving over ourselves to the Lord God, we shall discover that we will not be fruitful. But when we do, when God has brought us to that place by his grace, he begins

to make his saints fruitful. So, Moses has got to learn all of this. He will learn that, "I am, will do, certain great things for Him."

Now he continues and the Lord says to him in verse 2, "Thou shall speak all that I command thee and Aaron, thy brother, shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israelite of the land and I will harden Pharaoh's heart and multiply my sons and my wonders in the land of Egypt." What a strange statement, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." This is something that individuals who study the Bible have a very, very difficult time believing. That God is a God who hardens as well as shows mercy. It would be very wicked of me to ask you, without saying what I said to you tonight. Do you believe God has the absolute authority to harden whom he will and show mercy to whom he will? Be nice to ask you that question. I know what you would do now. You would put your hand up because you would say, "I don't want Dr. Johnson to know that I don't know that, that great truth." But, that gives me an idea the next time I teach this somewhere, I am going to ask them as we begin in the introduction, How many of you believe God has the absolute right to harden whom he will harden and show mercy to whom he will show mercy?

I came over to the Chapel this morning and went in the office and there was a letter in there for me as a speaker of the Believer's Bible, from Oklahoma and I read this to those of us who were here and most of us got a kick out of it. I got a kick out of them anyway. He says, "It is encouraging to hear someone speak of Romans 11 and say what God says instead of the theological gymnastics we usually get on the subject." I have a friend over in Mississippi who is a Baptist preacher and he always says that when we come to difficult texts in the Bible, some of us preachers like to do a toe dance around them. That is his expression of avoiding the difficult text of the word of God.

Now, we are going to see as we go through the section that over and over again reference is made of this hardening. A number of times it will say God will harden. Sometimes it will say Pharaoh hardened his own heart; sometimes it will simply say

Pharaoh's heart was hardened. But I want you to notice that the first reference to hardening is traceable to the Lord God. Notice verse 3, "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart and multiply my sons and my wonders in the land of Egypt". That's square one in the hardening teaching. It begins with the Lord God. Now, all of the other texts may be understood in the light of this. But this is the first reference to it.

Now, we read on. We are not going to spend a lot of time on that tonight, but later on we will say a little bit more about it. The Pharaoh shall not harken unto you, but I may lay my hand upon Egypt and bring forth thine armies. Ever thought of Israel being an army? Well, anybody who is going to fight a large battle is his army. I think this is marvelous condescension. To call that motley crew of people who are not only not wanting to happen to them what is happening to them, to call them "my armies." You see the Lord, however, speaks of us and speaks of them in the light of what he will make of them. And so he calls us his sanctified saints, his justified saints. He calls us his holy ones.

Think of it, his holy ones. We are anything but that. But that from the standpoint of our present activity and our state before him but that's our standing. And so Israel, his armies, "And My people, the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord." Pharaoh is going to find out who the Lord is. When I stretch forth my own hand upon Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them, and Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they. And Moses was fourscore years old and Aaron was fourscore and three years old when they spoke unto Pharaoh and the Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron saying, "When Pharaoh shall speak unto you saying, 'Show a miracle,' for you, then thy shall take unto Aaron, then I shall say unto Aaron, 'Take Thy rod and cast it before Pharaoh and it shall become a serpent.'"

Now, this word, not the same word that was used back earlier in the book. This is a word that sometimes means something as big as a crocodile. So, we can assume that

this probably was a large monstrous snake, perhaps, a young crocodile. What is striking about it is that this word was used as a symbol of Egypt and Pharaoh. So Moses is going to perform through Aaron a miracle that will have special meaning.

Then we read Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh and they did so as the Lord had commanded and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants and it became a serpent. Evidently, he told them something about what he was going to do, else, they had an intermission and the wise men were called forth to duplicate the feat. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers.

Now, these sorcerers were individuals who were what we would call spellbinders. That is, they were mutterers. They used all kinds of spells by which they accomplished their magic. So they were wise men and we read, "Now the magicians of Egypt, they also did, in like manner, with their enchantments." By the way, we know the names of these two folk because in 2nd Timothy chapter 3, Paul mentions Jannes and Jambres. So, Jannes and Jambres were among these individuals. We know that from Jewish tradition which is recorded also in the New Testament attesting to it.

Now, remember magic was prominent in Egypt. This was the land of magic. Two to three weeks ago, I recorded a statement from the Talmud in which said something like God gave out ten measures of magic in the world and nine of them went to Egypt. And so they were known for their magic. How they performed this miracle, we do not know. Maybe they did it by sleight of hand. They were sorcerers. Maybe they did it by hypnosis because I understand you can hypnotize a snake. I have never tried though. But I understand you can do that and in fact, you can even make a snake become very rigid like a rod. Although this was Satanic, we don't know.

But we know it was a lying miracle. I would imagine that Moses and Aaron's faces fell somewhat when these wise men and these sorcerers were able to do something that was obviously close enough to theirs to make Pharaoh and others think, "Well, all you are doing is just some cheap magic, we have people who can do that kind of magic

too," until we read and Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. That's another matter. And he hardened Pharaoh's heart and he harkened not unto them as the Lord had said. So, when Aaron's rod gulped down their rods, that told us first of all that evidently they were real snakes. They were there. At least this one was a real snake and furthermore, that this snake was a superior snake to their snakes, which suggested that the person who performed the miracle was also superior.

Now let me close by just making a comment here: Oh, the patient process of growth. Sometimes we think all we have to do is just set out a program, supposedly given by God and we will see it come to pass. Because after all, doesn't the Bible say that if we do certain things, certain things are going to happen. Let me give you an illustration, the Bible says, "So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth, it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." So the Lord says that his word will not return unto him void, it will actually prosper wherever he sends it and it will do precisely what he intends for it to do.

So what happens? Well in the church we preach the word of God; nothing happens. Nothing happens! Same old people come back next week, same old people in Believers Chapel. We preach the word of God and there is old Howard Fry again, or Al Limbs, or Charles Howard, or whatever. And we are told that the word of God is going to produce fruit and we are preaching the word of God and we do not see what is supposed to be happening and we forget that there is a matter of waiting upon the Lord God to accomplish his work in his time. Moses was doing precisely what the Lord told him to do. And things were going bad. So, there is something else in the word of God that we need to pay careful attention to.

And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, I think, has put it very well in the 10th chapter of his book in the 35th and 36th verses. He says something like this: "Cast not away therefore your confidence which has great recompense of reward for you have

made of patience. But after having done the will of God, you might receive the promise." We have to realize our responsibilities to do what God tells us to do. The matter of fruit is up to his sovereign determination. It may come immediately. It may come after a lengthy waiting period of time.

F.B. Meyer said, "We become sometimes unaware of the dead, through incubus of human inertness and indifference, to say nothing of obstinate resistance." Why did not God just crush Pharaoh with one mighty miracle? Because he was teaching Pharaoh and others through Pharaoh's longsuffering. His wrath, his power, his might, his sovereignty, but also his longsuffering, for he dealt with him over a lengthy period of time and in the things of the Lord God, we must remember that often the promises of God are not fulfilled to us immediately because he is busy teaching his servants something and perhaps some others also some things that they need to learn. He is very patient and he accomplishes all of his will and he is going to get all of you saints to heaven and make you just like the Lord Jesus Christ in his own time. Is it not marvelous to think about?

In the meantime, we are responsible to obey the word of God and follow the teaching and give out the word of God and give it to others. Then perhaps he will give us some advance fruitfulness by his grace. His servants are faithful and fruitful. May God help us to be patient and responsive. Let's bow with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the way in which Thou didst so wonderfully, lead and guide Moses and Aaron and then the children of Israel. How patient and loving, and merciful Thou hast been with them and with us. Oh God, we pray that we may be patient and obedient.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.