

Be Careful What You Wish For

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[0 : 00] And as we come to this 8th chapter in Genesis, of which we'll look at the first half tonight, having had, as we now know, having had the first of the official plagues, namely the plague of blood, as we saw in chapter 7, we're now about to have the second plague, that of the plague of frogs.

And to put it simply, the reason for the second is because the first did not work. If we can say that reverently. Very mindful, of course, that the Lord's plan all along has been to unleash his power and his glory over the so-called power and glory of the gods, the false gods of Egypt.

And to demonstrate beyond all shadow of a doubt that he, the Lord, God of Israel, is the one who alone is going to be able to bring his children out of Egypt.

He alone whom Pharaoh refused to acknowledge or to know as the alone power in heaven and in earth, the only living God, let alone in Egypt.

And he alone is the one who's able to bring his people out. And we see that that's God's intention from back in chapter 3, as we've made reference to in the past weeks. Chapter 3, verse 19, I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

[1 : 19] And I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof. And after that, he will let you go. This is part of God's plan. He doesn't intend that Pharaoh should just be a bit soft and after one go, just let them go then.

And he intends to demonstrate conclusively to Pharaoh and to all the Egyptians, how empty and weak are their false gods and how alone powerful is the living God, the God of Israel.

Likewise, chapter 4, verse 21, The Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand. But I will harden his heart and he shall not let the people go.

Now, this feature of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is absolutely central to the continuation of the plagues in Egypt. And we'll come back to that in due course.

But it is significant here because after the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in respect of the rods becoming serpents that we saw in chapter 7 there, Aaron's rod becoming a serpent and the magicians likewise did it.

[2 : 28] And then Aaron's one gobbled up theirs and so on. And then again when the river became blood, as we saw in the latter part there of chapter 7, there is no remorse or repentance, however temporary or shallow, between the plague of blood and the plague of frogs.

In some of the plagues later on, we'll see how Pharaoh appears to relent. Even if it's only to make the plague stop, he appears to relent. He appears to want to let the Israelites go just so the plagues will stop.

But after the incident with the serpents and after the plague of blood, there's not a hint of that. And the reason then for the next plague, the plague of frogs, is because, if we can say it reverently, the plague of blood hasn't worked.

The first one has not budged his heart. The heart remains hard. Not a hint of remorse. Not a hint of repentance. Nothing, however temporary, however shallow, between the plague of blood and the plague of frogs.

Nothing on Pharaoh's part. Now we said in terms of the timescale, how at the end of chapter 7, we said this last week, that it's approximately three weeks since Moses has come back into Egypt.

[3 : 38] And we totted up the timescales lightly between speaking to the leaders of the children of Israel, and then first audience with Pharaoh, and then the hardships that the Israelites then suffered, and then the incident with the serpents, and then the plague of blood, and then seven days are fulfilled, verse 25 of chapter 7, after the Lord had smited in the river.

So now about three weeks since Moses came back into Egypt. Now we've mentioned previously that the plagues were as much an attack upon the false gods, and the idolatry of Egypt as they ever were upon the land and the people.

And something we have to remember is that everything in life ultimately has a spiritual dimension to it. And we see with so much of creation and providence that with almost everything in it, the Lord is pointing to the work that he himself does.

There is a spiritual lesson to be learned in almost everything physical and material. It can all be used to point us to the Lord, to glorify his name, as of course creation is intended to do.

And so everything material has a spiritual lesson to be learned in it. It is pointing us to the spiritual fulfillment in Christ ultimately. So likewise, every conflict, every difficulty, every challenge in life is part of the spiritual battle going on for the souls of men and women.

[5 : 02] The devil desires to drag as many souls down to hell with him as he can. God intends to redeem his own people out of the clutches of Satan, and there's an ongoing battle between them, in which the victory, of course, is assured, because there's no equality between God and the devil.

But the Lord allows the devil a certain leeway in this fallen world. The prince of this world, as he's sometimes called, the prince of the power of the air, as he's sometimes referred to, for example, in Ephesians chapter 2.

But the Lord allows the devil a certain leeway here, but in the overall spiritual realm, there's no question about who has the victory. So this is part of a spiritual warfare.

Everything in life has a spiritual dimension, and it's part of the spiritual warfare between the Lord and the devil. That is what this conflict is. That is what these plagues are.

Thus, with the serpents, Egypt, if we think of ancient Egypt, we tend to think of one country, Egypt. But I don't know if you could ever picture some of the pictures you might have seen of the pharaohs of ancient Egypt and the kind of crown that they wear.

[6 : 14] If you see any color pictures, then you might see the crown. There's a sort of hat that's sort of a flat crown where it curves up to a tall back, and that's red.

And then inside it, there's a sort of tall conical crown that's white inside the red one. And these are actually two crowns in one. The tall white conical one represents upper Egypt.

That is the southern part of Egypt, further up the Nile, hence upper Egypt. And the red curved one represents lower Egypt, that which is nearer to the Nile Delta. Now that's the part of the country that the Hebrews were enslaved in, lower Egypt.

But these two kingdoms, upper Egypt and lower Egypt, were in the glory days of ancient Egypt. They were a united kingdom. There was effectively two kingdoms in the one.

And the overall goddess, the patron goddess of lower Egypt, the red crown, as it were, in Pharaoh's address, was a serpent goddess.

[7 : 15] Known as Wajit, or Wajit, however you pronounce it. She was the patron goddess of lower Egypt, where the Hebrews were held as slaves. So in chapter 7, verse 12, where Aaron's rod swallowed up all the other rods or serpents of all the magicians, the significance of the serpents being powerless against the serpent oblique rod of the God of Israel would not have been lost on the Egyptians.

It wouldn't have been lost on the magicians, and it wouldn't have been lost on Pharaoh. It's lost on us, to an extent. You know, the significance of all these different gods and so on, it is lost on us.

We are conditioned by 2,000 years of monotheism in which you have the understanding or belief that there is one God, one living God.

And yes, not everybody's a believer. Lots of people aren't. The majority of people don't believe in God or regard themselves as agnostic. But what they don't believe in is God, singular, capital G.

It's not, oh, we believe in so many gods, but not these ones. We believe in this 25 gods, but not in that 37 different gods. We don't have a polytheistic mindset.

[8 : 33] We don't have an idea of lots and lots of different gods. We either believe in God or we don't believe in God, but still in our mentality, it's one God that we either believe in or we don't.

So we understand about the plagues of Egypt and their physical aspects, but we don't necessarily grasp the spiritual warfare going on here with what all of these different creatures symbolize to the Egyptians and the different gods that they worship.

So the goddess of lower Egypt was portrayed by a serpent. And when the rod held in the hand of the priest of the god Jehovah swallows up all the serpents that the magicians can produce, that is indicative of the power of the god of Israel over the goddesses and gods of Egypt.

We don't necessarily grasp that, but they would. We as a culture don't really do gods in the plural. But Egypt did in a big way. So when it came, likewise, to the plague of frogs, the goddess Heket, which you can either spell H-E-K-E-T or H-E-Q-E-T, whichever way you like.

But basically, she was the next goddess in line, if you like, next god or goddess in line for conflict. In Egyptian art, Heket is always depicted either as a frog or, more formally, as a woman with the head of a frog.

[10 : 04] Remember how Egyptian statues and so on, you quite often have people with human bodies, but the head of either a dog or a lion or a bird or, in this instance, a woman with the head of a frog.

And she was the goddess of childbirth, the frog-headed image, identifying her connection with water, with frogs being an amphibious creature, of course.

And as a water goddess, she was associated with fertility, particularly, for obvious reasons, the latter stages of pregnancy and so on to childbirth.

Again, as a water goddess, the fertility she represented was associated particularly with the annual flooding of the Nile. Now, remember, the Nile was also perceived as a god to the Egyptians.

So at which time, when the Nile annually flooded, of course, the silt that gathered up was then spread out over the lands on either side of the river and deposited there. That's partly what made the land so fertile.

[11 : 06] It was rich soil, rich silt from the riverbed that was then deposited on the fields, and then it enriched the soil. So it wasn't just bare, dead, of the sand. And that's partly what made the fields so fruitful.

That and the irrigation that they could do from the river as well, the irrigation canals and so on. But the annual flooding of the Nile was partly associated with this goddess Heket, at which time the ancient Egyptians would have been used to routinely seeing thousands of frogs, you know, coming out of the river.

And so they'd be well used to that appearing along the banks of the Nile and, no doubt, further inland. Indeed, the Egyptian hieroglyph for tadpole also functioned as the numeral for the number 100,000.

So that indicates how well they were used to seeing plenty of frogs around at certain times of year. The frog goddess thus symbolized fruitfulness in the life-giving flooding of the Nile, producing so many frogs.

Abundance and the promise of coming life. Because it's the fact of the flooding, the fact of the spreading of the silt over the fields, that meant the harvests were likely to be good.

[12 : 23] Future corn, future crops and so on. Future life and feeding. So Heket's supposed life-giving powers caused her to become regarded as goddess not only of birth, but also of rebirth, and hence by extension of whatever the Egyptians understood by resurrection, coming back from the dead.

So that which the Egyptians regarded as a symbol of life was to become in this plague loathsome to them, simply by virtue of its abundance.

Now, of course, a cynic might say, so what you're saying is the Egyptians were well used to seeing, you know, thousands of frogs all over the place. So, you know, obviously that's just what happened.

It was that time of year, the frogs multiplied, and they saw thousands of frogs, but you're saying they were used to it. So what's the big deal if it happened every year? Where's the miracle? Where's the plague?

But surely that is precisely the point. For a people for whom abundance of a small amphibious reptile on a yearly basis is a recognized part of life.

[13 : 37] For this to become a plague, the multiplication, the fruitfulness, if you can call it that, had to be miraculous. It had to be divine, both in its quantity and in its suddenness.

Now, you can almost feel your skin begin to crawl, and your mind begin to shudder at the incredibly vivid and yet succinct description.

If we read from verse 2 in chapter 8 here, you know, Thou refused to let them go. Behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs, and the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading troughs, and the frogs shall come up, both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.

You can always feel like, you know, imagine you open your oven, and there's the frogs there, and you've got to get your dishes out, and you've got to come out, there's frogs coming out of the kneading troughs, and you go to bed, and there's frogs under the cupboard, oh, they're everywhere.

And this is just the thing, they would be everywhere. And the fact that they are described as being in the ovens, and the kneading troughs, and the beds, and so on, would indicate that we're not just talking about a single calendar day here, for people to experience this in their beds, and in their homes, and coming out of every aperture, and window, and so on, driving them mad with it, it must be at least an overnight experience for them as well.

[15 : 16] So we've talked about Moses being here for approximately three weeks, then the frogs coming, and this is at least one overnight experience before Pharaoh begins finally to get in. But as I say, these verses, chapter verses two to four, they really make your skin crawl, by the way, the description of it, because it is so vivid, and so descriptive here.

But the fact is, that there's nowhere the Egyptians can go, to be free of these frogs. They can't go to bed, because the frogs are there, they can't go up on the roof, that the frogs are there, they can't open their cupboard, the frogs will come out, they can't go in the ovens, the frogs will come out, they're everywhere, they are all over, everybody, they're in their hair, and their clothes, on their tables, and everywhere they go, sit and lie down.

And the fact of the matter is, if God's curse be upon a man, it will pursue him, wherever he goes. And that's the spiritual truth, we have to recognize, if God's curse be upon a man, it will pursue him, wherever he goes.

And so it is with these frogs. That which they had worshipped, for its fruitfulness, was about to become a curse, by its catastrophic abundance.

See again, the poetic justice, we might say, or, as scripture would put it in Romans, the goodness and severity of God. Not unlike, for example, with his own people, when he has to get, you know, firm and disciplinarian with them, remember when they're moaning about, having just the manna to eat in the desert.

[16 : 55] It's one thing, when they don't have any food to eat, and then they moan to the Lord, about that much, you know, if he feeds them with manna. And then we find in Numbers chapter 11, no, the people complained, it displeased the Lord, when he heard it, and his anger was kind of, the people cried unto Moses, and Moses cried unto the Lord, the fire was quenched.

And the mixed multitude, that was among them, fell a lusting. And the children of Israel, wept again, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic.

But now our soul is dried away, there's nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes. He said, who will give us, for how will we get meat? Who wants something else to eat?

So we read in Numbers 11, verse 18, Say thou unto the people, sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh. For ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, who shall give us flesh to eat?

For it was well with us in Egypt, therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days, but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you, because ye have despised the Lord, which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, why came we forth out of Egypt?

[18 : 17] Now we were looking this morning, about how the Lord, sometimes in his mercy, withholds from us, things that we might think that we want, and the Lord, if he had been doing exactly what they wanted, for the Israelites, he would have withheld some, of the abundance of that meat, with the quails that he provided, but of course he gave them in such abundance, that they became sick of it.

Now we tend to think, oh if only the Lord would give me this, if only the Lord would give me plenty of that, or plenty of this thing, and so on, sometimes the Lord gives you, exactly what you asked for, but not exactly what you thought you wanted.

If we were to put that in earthly, secular terms, we might say, be careful what you wish for. If we were to put it in more spiritual terms, we might think and say, well the Lord knows what is best for us, and here we find the Egyptians cursed, by an overabundance, a catastrophic abundance, of that which they had hitherto worshipped, as a goddess of fruitfulness, and of fertility.

We see with the opening plagues also, you know, the frogs, and the lice, and the flies, you know, which we'll look at in subsequent weeks of course, that these are all small creatures, you know, flies, and lice, and frogs, and they're not big, they're not powerful, you know, God might have visited the Egyptians, with plagues of lions, or bears, from Palestine, or whatever, or eagles, or vultures, or wolves, but the power of God, is shown as much, in the creation of an ant, as it is, in the creation of an elephant, you know, so that the power, and strength, of judgment, as well as of mercy, may be seen to be of God, and not of the creature itself.

You see, if God had visited them with vultures, or with a plague of eagles, or whatever, and people said, oh yeah, well the eagles are really powerful creatures, who can stand before such mighty birds of prey, it must be the birds themselves, that are doing this, and they would just have gone, and sacrificed to whichever God, had an eagle's head, or a lion's head, or whatever the case may be, but it's not the creature itself, because the Lord demonstrates, it's nothing to do with the power, or majesty of the creature, that he himself has made anyway, lions, and wolves, and eagles, are mighty creatures, lice, and flies, and frogs, are not, but God, is mightier than all, and if God be our enemy, then all the creatures of his making, are at war with us, if God be against us, you know, who can be for us, remember what Paul writes in Romans 8, God be for us, who can be against us, and that is true, but the converse is also true, if God is against us, nothing is for you, you know, remember in Judges 5, where after the victory of Deborah, and Bannock, in the song that Deborah sings, says the stars in their courses, fought against Caesarea, all of creation competes, to fight against, the enemies of God, he is in control, of all these things, thus all the false gods, in whom the Egyptians trusted, and all the false gods, in which we may trust, and he said, oh but you said, we didn't worship other gods, no we don't worship them, in a religious sense, but you only have to click onto the internet, or social media, or whatever, to see the obsession, that we have nowadays, with celebrity culture, or with appearance, or with making sure, that we look tanned, and toned, and fit, and super attractive, and how many likes we've got, on our Instagram, or whatever the case may be, our obsession with popularity, and celebrity, our obsession with ourselves, we become gods, small g, to ourselves, our wealth, our influence, our looks, our power, our strength, our progress, how we stand in relation to others, we worship these things, because they are, the most important things, in the lives, of so many, sad, empty, people, who don't, have, the fulfilments, and the meaning, and the purpose, which the Lord, alone, is able to supply, which of us, does not ask, what's it all for, what's the meaning, of all this celebrity status, or wealth, or money, or power, supposing you achieve it all, supposing you climb, to the top of the tree, supposing you become, the ultimate billionaire, or celebrity, or whatever, what then, what do you do, with it all, where can you take it, what do you gain, you know, if you're a multi-billionaire, what can you do, with 20 billion, that you can't do, with 1 billion, you know, what can you do, without, you can't take it, with you, what is it all for, what is the purpose, what is the purpose, of these years, that we have been given, why do so many young people, tragically, end their own lives, because they can't see, any future in it, it is the Lord, alone, who fulfills, and gives meaning, and purpose, and blessing, to life, and this world, without him, does seem, and is, dark, and empty, and cold, and unforgiving, that it's forgiveness, for the Lord, there's not much, forgiveness, in the world, but rather, what we see, with all the false gods, in whom the Egyptians, trusted, and all the false gods, in which we ourselves, may inadvertently, come to trust, self, money, security, strength, well being, all these things, become, a curse to us, they become, such an obsession, that when we have it,

[24 : 16] in such abundance, it begins to, destroy us, and although, this is, a spiritual battle, like everything, ultimately, is a spiritual battle, with a spiritual, dimension, to it, the aspects, of the battle, the instruments, of the battle, the armies, being here, are real enough, you know, these are not, illusory frogs, that everybody's, just hallucinating about, these are, real frogs, coming out, up out of the river, you know, as we see, in verse 14, it's real frogs, and when they die, it's real corpses, and it's a real stench, this is what we read, they gathered them, together upon heaps, and the land, stank, real frogs, real corpses, real stench, a reality, with which, they have to deal, you might think, in terms of, when Pharaoh says, you know, Moses says to Pharaoh, okay, glory over me, you call the shot, you say, when do you want me, to tell these frogs, when do you want these frogs, to be taken away, to die out of the land, and Pharaoh says, tomorrow, we might think, well if it's being played by them, why doesn't he say, right away, do it now, do it today, well, possibly, as many commentators have suggested, he possibly thought, well, if I give them a bit, maybe they'll die anyway, or maybe, maybe something else will happen, or they'll go away, or maybe, my magicians,

I'll be able to do something, or maybe, maybe I'll be able to do it, without Moses, if I say tomorrow, just give it a bit more time, oh, the frogs are still there, multiplying, hopping about, and into everything, and so on, like tomorrow, and then, they all die off, then they all just begin, to drop dead, and they cease, and they are gathered up together, in heaps, and the land, stank, it is at the word of the Lord, they arrive, it is at the word of the Lord, that they are extinguished, the Lord is able, with his own creatures, that he has made, to use them, to his purposes, in his soul, with the beast of creation, it is so also, with humanity, he creates us, for his glory, and we will glorify, the Lord, one way or another, we will either glorify, him by the joy, of redemption, and coming to him, and being saved, by his precious blood, and his sacrifice, upon the cross, or we will glorify, his perfect justice, in the damnation, of the wicked, and those, who turn themselves, against the Lord, and refuse, his authority, his redemption, his power, and you might think, ah yeah, but you know, we don't really, have a choice in this, do we?

And we're going back, now to Pharaoh's heart, which we've looked at, in previous weeks, but it's important, we understand this, Pharaoh's heart, which is hardened, the fact of the matter, is, what we are by nature, fallen creatures, means that we are, predisposed, toward enmity, with God, until the heart, is renewed, by grace, the impressions, made by the force, of affliction, or by suffering, do not abide, everybody, the most hardened, atheist, will probably pray, in a time of extremity, when he is really, terrified, he might well pray, to a God, he didn't believe in, before that, and then, when the situation, passes, and he gets out, and he gets off with it, well he just forgets, about it then, you know, and plenty of people, will make out, that they are, trusting the Lord, or praying to the Lord, in a time of extremity, but the impressions, made, by the force of affliction, do not abide, convictions, or such empty convictions, soon, wear off, promises, readily given, in time of extremity, are soon, forgotten, until the heart, is renewed, by grace, this sad reality, will never change, until the heart, is renewed, by grace, just as, until the nature, of the air, is changed, that which thaws, in the sunshine, will again, freeze, in the cold, when the sun is gone, so God's, patience, is, by those, who will not have him, as their saviour, as their Lord, his patience, is shamefully abused, and when the sky, doesn't fall, or lightning, doesn't strike, it's not, well, that's obviously, because you know,

God isn't there, he's not real, or else, if he's real, he's not able, to strike me down, so he's not done anything, so I don't have to worry, about anything after all, when God's, long-suffering love, becomes, simply a hardening, of the sinner's heart, it is derided, as proof, either of his absence, or of his inability, to act, at all, so we must have a care, with the hardening, of our hearts, and the most famous, soul, whose heart, is hardened, one way or the other, of course, in the Bible, is Pharaoh, Pharaoh's heart, is hardened, now it is worthwhile, and I know we're, jumping ahead of ourselves, a little bit here, but it is worth, our while, just looking down, through the different, plagues here, and seeing what happens, with regard to, Pharaoh's heart, just in closing here, first of all, remember, there's the incident, with the serpents, in chapter 7, where we read it, verse 13, that God, hardened, Pharaoh's heart, and that in verse 13, says his heart, was still hardened, now,

Pharaoh's heart, being hardened, that can be a neutral, doesn't say, God hardened it, doesn't say, he hardened it himself, but okay, his heart was hardened, but when it comes, to the plagues themselves, with the plague of blood, we read, first of all, chapter 7, verse 22, his heart, was hardened, doesn't say, who did it, except that of course, God had hardened his heart, at the first, in chapter 7, at verse 13, so his heart, is hardened, it remains hardened, there's no remorse, there's no repentance, after the plague of blood, come the plague of frogs, and we read, that Pharaoh, hardened his heart, verse 15, that's what we read, when Pharaoh saw, that there was respite, he, hardened his heart, you can't say, oh, poor Pharaoh, God was just imposing, his will, no, Pharaoh hardens, his own heart, here, that's his choice, that's his decision, and yes, there's repentance, or remorse, after the frogs, but then, after the respite, he, hardened his heart, then come the plague of lutz, in chapter 8, verses 16 to 19, where we read again,

[30 : 49] Pharaoh's heart, was hardened, doesn't say, whether God hardened it, doesn't say, whether Pharaoh, hardened himself, no remorse, no respite, and no repentance, come the plague of flies, verse 24, of chapter 8, there is remorse, after the plague of flies, but rather, we read again, Pharaoh, hardened his heart, verse 32, of chapter 8, come the plague, upon the cattle, in chapter 9, we read simply, neutrally, neutral terms, Pharaoh's heart, was hardened, it remained hardened, in other words, after he, had hardened it, in chapter 8, the plague of boils, again in chapter 8, verses 9 to 10, we read, God, hardened, Pharaoh's heart, now this is the first time, God has done it, since the incident, with the serpents, come the plague, plague of hail and fire, the seventh plague, chapter 9, verse 23, and yes, there is a bit of, remorse, repentance, after the hail and fire, but again we read, Pharaoh hardened, his own heart, after that, but that is the last time, he does it himself, because after the plague, of locusts, where there is a bit of, remorse, a bit of response,

God hardened, Pharaoh's heart, the plague of darkness, there is a bit of, partial remorse, yes, but God, hardened Pharaoh's heart, and then with the threat, of the plague, upon the firstborn, chapter 11, God, hardened Pharaoh's heart, but you see, the thing is, that up until, the tenth, and final plague, if you were to divide up, these descriptions, you would see that, there are, until the final tenth plague, and taking away the incident, with the serpents, at the beginning, there are three occasions, when we are told, God hardened Pharaoh's heart, there are three occasions, when we are told, Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and there are three occasions, when we are simply told, Pharaoh's heart, was hardened, and we are not told, who did it, three, three, and three, completely equal, in that regard, until, the final plague, at the end, when God, hardened his heart, to make sure, that his deliverance, in the Passover, was carried through, three, three, and three, complete equality, and yet, with we are to look at them, when we see, that it is towards the end, that God begins, to make sure, that heart stays hardened, we think, oh well that's not fair, that's not right, because God's imposing his will, what is God imposing?

God is imposing, that which up until that point, Pharaoh has freely chosen, to be himself, or that which has been maintained, Pharaoh's heart, was hardened, after Pharaoh has chosen, to do it himself, in other words, God is beginning, to make permanent, what we, or Pharaoh, thinks we can do, or not do, as the case may be, I can choose, to be against this, I can harden my heart, or I can soften it, but I choose to harden it, I can choose again, to soften my heart, or I can choose to harden it, you keep choosing, to harden it, and eventually, God makes sure, it stays permanent, permanent, to go back to our, previously used, secular phrase, be careful, what you wish for, when I was a little boy, my mother used to tell me, that I shouldn't make, nasty faces, with my face, in case the wind changed, because if the wind changed, and your face, was open-hearted like that, it would stay like that, and it was a, if it's a device, to make you stop making, rude faces, or rude noises, or whatever the case may be, because if the wind changed, you'd be caught like that, now okay, that's a childish warning, in order to stop you doing, something sort of vaguely, antisocial, but in spiritual, and real terms, there is a reality here, which we also find, in the ordinary, physical world, we think, we are in control, of what we do, and when we have, that control, we choose to exercise it, in a negative way, if somebody is addicted, to something, whether it's alcohol, whether it's nicotine, whatever it may be, you'll often find, oh no,

I can give this up, anytime I want to, only I don't want to, I'm choosing, to exercise my right, to keep on doing, this negative, bad thing, I'm choosing, to exercise my right, to keep on, hardening my heart, I'm choosing, to keep on, disbelieving, in the God, who has been revealed, in creation, and providence, and in his word, and through his son, Jesus Christ, I'm choosing, to set myself against, that's my choice, that's my, intellectual, consider, opinion, and who are you, to say, any different, and I keep on, making that choice, God at the end, will ensure, that the choice, you make, becomes proud, so be careful, what you wish for, and be careful, what choices, you make, because Pharaoh, is not being abused, or ill-treated, by God, what Pharaoh, is getting, from God, is exactly, what Pharaoh, chooses, exactly, what he wants, exactly, what his heart, hard as it may be, from his, free choice, desires, what is your, heart's desire, and what is it, that you desire, from the Lord, as long, as we, continue, to harden our heart, against the Lord, are we prepared, for that to be proud, or do we continue, to nurture the idea, if I just choose to,

I can break out of this, I can choose the opposite, anytime I want to, only, I don't want to, you see, when the addict, takes his first drag, or his first drink, or whatever the case may be, yes, he probably could pick it up, or put it down, as he chooses, but the more, he goes into that, addiction, and the more, our soul, adheres to the addiction, of being against the Lord, which pleases our flesh, pleases our fallen mind, and our intellect, the harder it becomes, to break that habit, the harder it becomes, to go back, to where we started, you see, it's one thing, to climb back up, when you've fallen three feet, it's quite another, to climb back, when you've fallen 300 feet, the more you fall, the further you drift, from the Lord, the more likely it is, to become, permanent, Pharaoh hardened his heart, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, but in the end, God, God, God, hardened, Pharaoh's heart, all he's doing, is making, permanent, that which Pharaoh, or you, or me, may have chosen, for ourselves, make sure, that what you choose, is what you really want, to be permanent, because the gods, of this world, whether it be self, or celebrity, or wealth, or frogs, or blood, or the Nile, or whatever the different, creatures that the Egyptians, worship, these things, we consider to be, gods to us, blessings to us, delights to us, become a curse, when we receive them, in such catastrophic, abundance, that instead of blessing us, they destroy us, is this world, really all that you want, what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain, the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man, give in exchange, for his soul, there is a spiritual dimension, to everything in this world, there is a spiritual dimension, to everything you do, and everything you are called, to do, there is a spiritual warfare, raging, over the possession, of your soul, and the Lord, has the power, to defeat the devil, at every score, the Lord, has the power, to deliver you, out of your spiritual Egypt, your spiritual bondage, the Lord alone, has that power, but you've got, to want to be free, and you've got, to be willing, for that heart, to be softened, by the power, of God's grace, be careful, what you wish for, be more concerned, with what you pray for, and bring your prayers, and petitions, to the Lord, who alone, is able to answer, and who alone, is able to set you free, and to let his people, go, it is time, to the Lord,