

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE QUESTION BETWEEN THE PLAGUES.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 7TH, 1897,

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, May 24th, 1885.

“How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?”—Exodus x. 3.

PHARAOH is the type and image of proud men. God permitted him to be left to the natural hardness of his heart, and he stood up against Jehovah in a very remarkable way. Those who are students of the ancient history of Egypt, those especially who have seen the remains of the colossal statues of the kings, and those tremendous pyramids which probably were the places of their sepulture, will know that man-worship was carried on to the very highest degree in connection with the ancient kingdom of Egypt. Our modern civilization has deprived kings of much of the dignity which once hedged them round, we have grown wonderfully familiar with our fellow-men in the very highest places of the earth; but in those olden monarchies, when the king was absolute and supreme, when his wish—even though he was little better than a maniac,—was the law that governed the people,—when not a dog dared move his tongue against the despot, then kings seemed to be like little gods, and they lorded it over their subjects with a vengeance. No doubt they grew intoxicated with the fumes of the incense which their subjects willingly offered to them, and so came to think themselves almost, if not quite, divine, and assumed the position and honours of God himself. It is not so very wonderful, therefore, that Pharaoh should have thought that, in the God of the Hebrews, he had merely met with just another one of the same stamp as himself, against whom he could carry on war, and whom he might even subdue. He said within himself, “Who are these Hebrews? Their fathers were a company of shepherds, who came and settled in Egypt; and as for these people, they are my slaves. I have built cities with their unpaid labour, and I mean still to hold them in captivity. They talk about their God, their ‘Jehovah.’ Who is Jehovah that I should obey his

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voice? Let it be a battle of Pharaoh against Jehovah, and let it be fought out to the bitter end. I will show these people that I care not for them, or their prophets, or their God."

That same pride which grew so strong in Pharaoh—growing upon that whereon it fed until it came to a colossal form,—that same kind of pride is in the hearts of men even to this day. They do not take upon themselves the same high and mighty airs; but, as far as their circumstances will allow, it is still a duel between man and his Maker, between the sinner and his Judge. In the case of some here present, there is now going on a battle between yourselves and your God. Oh, that you would consider this matter in the right light, that you would look at it with calm, and steady, and reasonable consideration; for then, I think, you would at once throw down your weapons, and sue for peace on gospel terms; and this would be the happiest hour that you have ever lived! God grant that it may be so! I am going to make a running application of my text all through my discourse, and I pray that the Holy Spirit himself may make a direct application of it to anyone whom it may concern.

I. To aid your memory, let me say, first of all, that THIS QUESTION HAS ABOUT IT AN AIR OF ASTONISHMENT: "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?" I have no doubt that, as Moses and Aaron uttered this question, they put it in tones indicative of surprise: "How long is it to be that thou, proud Pharaoh, wilt refuse to humble thyself before the only living and true God?"

And, surely, that astonishment must have arisen partly *from the judgments which God had inflicted upon Pharaoh*. You know what Jehovah had already done. He had turned the water into blood, and destroyed the fish; he had made frogs to come even into the king's bed-chamber; he had brought lice and flies innumerable throughout all the land; he had sent the murrain upon the cattle, boils and blains upon man and beast, storms of hail and rain, and mighty thunderings. With stroke after stroke, almost without a pause, Jehovah had smitten the proud king; yet still, after seven plagues, Pharaoh stood out as proud and obstinate as ever, and therefore the Lord sent to him the question of our text, "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?"

I think I know some cases that are almost parallel with that of Pharaoh. Here is a man who has been very lofty and proud, but already he has been brought from wealth to poverty; at this moment, he scarcely knows where to lay his head, yet in his poverty he has not turned to God. He has been smitten with sickness, and that not merely once or twice, but many times. Turning over the pages of his diary, he can note on such a day fever, on such a day some other deadly disease; and these strokes have followed one after another; yet, on being able to creep out again, and to come into the place of public worship, he is still found as hardened in heart as ever he was. How long will it be, my friend, ere thou dost humble thyself before God? The prophet Isaiah might well ask concerning you the question he put in his day, "Why should ye be stricken any more?" The rod seems to be wasted upon you; you have been smitten till "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint," and you are covered

with "wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores;" yet you turn not unto the God who smites you, but you grow prouder and yet prouder still notwithstanding all his chastisements and judgments. What shall God do next with you? Where shall the next arrow be aimed? An eye, a hand, a foot,—shall these be smitten? Or shall the Lord lay the cold hand of death upon your heart? Shall "the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern"? I cannot tell how or when the summons may come for you; but I would very earnestly say to any of you who have been the subjects of many providential trials and divine judgments, "How long will it be ere ye humble yourselves before God?"

The question of our text may have been put in astonishment from another point of view, namely, *because of the many false pretences of humility which Pharaoh had made*. When he was smitten, he sent for Moses and Aaron again and again, and he cried out to them, "I have sinned, pray for me. Forgive me just this once." Then, when his prayer had been heard, and the plague had been removed, Pharaoh went back again to his old natural hardness, and said, "I will not let the people go." Therefore the Lord sent to him the question, "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?" Is it not much the same with some of you, my hearers? I want to speak right home to your hearts and consciences; have you ever, in the time of your sickness, promised God that, if you should get better, your life should be altogether different? Yet, though the Lord spared you, there has not been any true change in you. Did you not say, "Please God that I am delivered this time, I will be a better man in all respects"? Yet you are not any better than you used to be. Remember that those resolves of yours are all preserved upon God's file in heaven; you have the counterfoils of those resolutions in your memory; but the resolutions themselves are registered in the Court of King's Bench above; and one of these days you shall see those broken resolutions again, and as you hear them read, you shall have to answer for having acted falsely towards the Omniscient God, and for having lied unto him. God deliver you from the great sin of thus making a mock of him! Meanwhile, I press this question upon the heart and conscience of any to whom it applies, "How long will it be ere ye humble yourselves before the Lord? Will you go on all your lifetime with the mimicry of repentance, with the mere pretence of faith? Will you always be trying to play fast and loose with God? Will you never shake yourselves clear of this shameful play-acting, and come to downright earnest repentance before your God? Will you play yourselves into hell? Will you go on sporting with eternal realities, as if they were only a child's game?" Oh, let it not be so! Let this question of the Lord himself come rolling, like a peal of thunder, into your heart and conscience, "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?"

Do you not think, too, that this question came from Moses with surprise as he recollected *the many mercies of God to Pharaoh*? God had heard the prayers of Moses on behalf of Pharaoh. The proud king might think it a little matter; but he who had prayed for him, and

obtained the answer to his petitions, did not think it a small thing. When the frogs were in all the land, by the prayer of Moses they were all slain; when the swarms of flies came, and defiled the whole country, it was the prayer of Moses that removed the plague, so that there remained not one. It might be a little matter to Pharaoh,—for men who receive favours often think but little of them,—but they who win favours from God by prayer always highly esteem them. So Moses seems to be astonished as he says to Pharaoh, “Has God done all this for thee? Hath he removed his rod from thee? Hath he said to the executioner, ‘Put back the axe’? Has he fetched thee out of the prison-house of his judgments, taken the chains from off thy wrists, and set thee free, and dost thou still stand out against him? How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before him?”

Let me put this question to some who are here. God has been very gracious to you, my friend, in delivering you from many accidents and diseases, and you are spared till your hair is turning grey. It would have been easy enough for your life to have come to an end long ago, yet here you are still spared by God’s mercy. You are not a pauper, as you once thought you would be; you are still living in comfortable circumstances, and that great trial which, at one time, darkened your life like a heavy cloud, has passed away; and you can now look up with a cheerful countenance, and remember times of great despondency and threatened distress. Will you not then—won by this mercy, subdued by this great love,—humble yourself before your God? What more can he do for you than he has already done? See how he has made you the special object of singular providential care. I refer you to your diary, and ask you to recollect how kindly and tenderly and graciously God has dealt with you these many years. O sirs, if terrors will not move you, let love subdue you! Oh! that the grace of God might find out the secret spring of your heart, and bring you now, at once, to humble yourselves before the Lord!

So I think I am right in saying, in the first place, that there is an air of surprise about this question to Pharaoh, because of wasted judgments, forgotten promises, and neglected mercies: “How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?”

II. Now, in the second place, to change the strain a little, and but a little, let me add that THE QUESTION BREATHES A SPIRIT OF KINDNESS.

You know that, when a person does not intend another’s good, he strikes the fatal blow at once without a word of warning; but he who is a father, though he must use the rod, speaks many times, and pleads, and admonishes, and persuades before he gives a stroke. This is just what God did with Pharaoh by his servants Moses and Aaron; he said, “How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?”

In Pharaoh’s case, *that which God required of him was right.* It was humbling to his pride, but it was right. What right had Pharaoh to hold the Israelites as his slaves? They were not his people; they had been admitted into the kingdom as honoured guests. One of that race had saved the nation in the time of famine; Joseph had preserved Egypt, and made the king strong in the midst of his people. Gratitude to Joseph ought to have caused the Israelites to be treated in a very different way; at any rate, if Pharaoh did not wish to

have them in Egypt, he ought at least to have permitted them to go in peace, and not to have held them in bondage. This was all that God asked of him: "Let my people go. They are none of yours, they are mine; let them go, that they may serve me."

And, brethren, that which God requires of a sinner is a right thing. He bids thee leave thy sin; is not that right? He bids thee break off thy sins by righteousness; is not that right? He has provided a way of salvation through the atonement of his Son, Jesus Christ, and he bids thee accept it; is not that right? All that he asks thee to do is to confess and forsake thy sin; is not that right? If you cannot undo your sin, the least you can do is to own it like a man; and that is what God asks of you. He bids you trust his dear Son. Is that a hard thing, an unreasonable thing? If he has appointed a Saviour, and equipped him for the service of salvation, and has bidden you, who need salvation, to trust him to save you, and never think of self-salvation, but to take Jesus Christ to be the beginning and the end of salvation to you,—is not that a right thing? Well, then, how long will it be that you will still refuse to humble yourself before him? A right-minded man never desires to postpone a right action; if it be just and right, he wishes to let it be done at once. And, oh, dear friends, it is the most just and right thing that can be conceived of, that a sinner, guilty against the God of love, should confess his guilt, seek mercy, and accept pardon in the way in which God provides it for men!

This question is put in a spirit of kindness, and I desire to put it very kindly to any one of you who has not yet yielded to the Lord: "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before God?" Dear friend, you say that you do intend one day to humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God; *do you think it will grow any easier while you delay?* Is it hard now to yield yourself to the Lord? It will be harder in a year's time, even if you are spared till then, for a man's habits harden every day that he lives. They spin new webs about him, they hold him fast, poor fly that he is, every hour that he lives. If it ever be an easy matter to bow before the Lord, it is easier at this moment than it will be to-morrow. Say not, therefore, "I am waiting for a more convenient season;" for the most convenient season that ever can come is now. There will be greater inconveniences to-morrow than there are to-night, and so will it be *ad infinitum*. If you would be free from your bondage, break loose at once. You have waited too long already, and you do not find it easier from day to day, neither will you if you still delay to submit to the Lord; therefore, yield to him at once. God help you to do so!

Do you not know that, if God means to save you, *he will send heavier plagues upon you than any you have felt as yet?* If you will not come to him with one blow, you shall have two; and if two will not suffice, you shall have twenty, for he will have you. It would be better to yield at once; there is no greater wisdom than, the moment the Lord says, "Seek ye my face," to answer, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding," which must be driven to their work, and goaded on in their labour. There are some who come to Christ like vessels towed into

port, all but wrecked, with rent sails, and broken timbers; it is better by far that thou be gently wafted into the haven by the soft south wind of love, or that thou spread thy canvas to a favouring gale, and fly before the breeze into the Fair Havens of salvation by Christ. I would put it to thee, dear friend,—Why dost thou want to be beaten, and bruised, and cut, and wounded? Why not, as thou art, say to night,—

“Just as I am—without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come”?

At any rate, there is one other thing I will say to you, *a time for decision should be set*. I would like to press the question of the text, “How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?” I remember a man of God, who was talking with a young lady to whom he had spoken many times about her soul. At last he said to her, “Well, Hannah, you do intend to come to Christ one day?” “Yes, sir,” she replied, “I do intend.” “Well, now,” he said, “will you give me a date when you will come to Christ? You are twenty now, will you come to the Lord Jesus Christ when you are thirty? Will you put that down as a definite promise?” The young lady answered, “Well, sir, I should not like to promise that, because I might be dead before I was thirty. Ten years is a long time, and I might be dead and gone before that time, I hope I shall know the Lord before that.” “Well, Hannah,” the good man said, “we will say nine years, then; that is to be the time that you fix when you will yield to the mercy of God.” “Well, sir,” she said, “I hope it will be before then.” “No,” he said, “the bargain is made; you will have to run risks for nine years, you know. You make the bargain that you will come to Christ in nine years’ time; let it stand so, and you must run the risk.” “Oh, sir!” she exclaimed, “it would be an awful thing, a dreadful thing, for me to say that I would wait nine years, because I might be lost in that time.” The friend then said, “Well, suppose we say that you will serve the Lord in twelve months’ time; will you just take this year, and spend it in the service of Satan, and then, when you have enjoyed yourself that way, give your heart to Christ?” Somehow, the young woman felt that it was a long time, and a very dangerous time, so she answered, “I should not like to be hung over an awful chasm, and for somebody to say, ‘I will pull you up at the end of a year, and set your feet on a rock.’” No, she could not bear that thought; and as her minister pressed her to set a time, and brought it down by little and little, at last she said, “Oh, sir, it had better be to-night; it had better be to-night! Pray to God that I may now give my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is such a dreadful thing to be without a Saviour. I would have Christ as mine this very night.” So I put it to you, yield to Christ at once, and do not keep on saying, “I hope it will not be long before I become a child of God.”

You know how people often talk when they owe you money,—they promise to pay you “next Monday.” Then, when the next Monday comes, they say that, unfortunately, there was a remittance which they

fully expected on the Saturday, but it did not come; they feel quite certain it will come on Wednesday morning, and they will be round at your house with it, or, would you mind calling upon them at noon on Wednesday? When you call on Wednesday, they are *so* sorry,—such a thing never happened to them before, but they lost a purse when they were out in the street, so could you allow them another month's credit? That is how they go on, until at last you say, "Well now, look here, will you tell me once for all when you *will* pay me? Do fix a day." And you think you have done something when you get a day for payment fixed at last. So shall I think that there is something gained—though, mark you, I have not much confidence in such an arrangement,—if there is a deliberate attempt made to fix some kind of time when you will yield yourself to Christ; and, of all the times that I can think of,—if I may for once be your solicitor, and sit down quietly, and give you my best advice,—my experience suggests to me that I had better quote to you this passage of Scripture, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." To-day is in your power, it is here at present; it has almost gone, flying with the setting sun, but you have to-day at present, therefore use it, for to-morrow is not yours, and to-morrow may never come for you.

The question of our text is asked, then, not only with an air of surprise, but also with a great measure of kindness; and in that kindly spirit I wish you to suppose that I am walking round the front of this lower gallery, and shaking hands with every unconverted person, and saying, "How long will it be ere you trust in Jesus?" and then mounting the stairs to get to you who are in the upper gallery, that I may put to you the same question, and, after making the round of the whole building, threading my way as best I can through these crowded aisles, and taking each one by the hand, giving a hearty grip, and saying, "How long is it to be? How long is it to be?" and "Had it not better be now?" God grant that it may be now that you will humble yourself before the Lord, for Jesus' sake!

III. In the third place, I will deal with the text in rather a different style, yet still keeping to the same object though I change the line of argument. THIS QUESTION IS ASKED IN A TONE OF POWER.

If I could speak it as Jehovah would speak it by his servant Moses, I think it would run like this: "Thus saith Jehovah, God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me." God as God says to Pharaoh, "*It is no use for you to stand out against me; as well might a moth contend with the furnace. It is of no use for you to lift your puny hand against me. You know not how great my power is; I have given you a taste of it, but I have yet more terrible plagues in the rear which I will bring forward, and you will have to bow before me.*" And you know, brethren, how Pharaoh did at last have to bow before Jehovah. The firstborn of his strength was cut off in the dead of night, and there was wailing in the palace and in all the land; and then, when Pharaoh said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them;"—he dashed forward to

pursue the hosts of the Lord, and you know what followed: "For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them." Then was heard the song of Miriam, "Sing ye to Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." As the rushing waters bore him away, proud Pharaoh learned when too late how great a fool he had been to contend against the infinite majesty of Almighty God.

And I say to you, sirs, who are fighting against God, *you must either bend or break*. As God lives, you must bow before him in repentance, or you shall be crushed beneath him in the day of his anger. Think not, when we talk to you of God's mercy, that we come to you as your equal might come, and reason with you as though God were afraid of you. Do you talk of your great strength? He is almighty! As for you, your breath is in your nostrils; and the Lord could cause you in a moment to fall dead in a fit, as many have done before you! If thou wilt not yield to him, he is infinitely glorious without you; and if you rebel against him, in what way can you affect the supremacy of his empire? As well might a drop of spray hope to shake the cliffs of Albion as for you to contend against the majesty of God. O sirs, fight not against your God! What profit can there be to you in this rebellion? Already you have found no profit in it; therefore, be not so mad as to continue warring against your God. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He is a God ready to forgive; "He delighteth in mercy." He willeth not the death of any, but that they turn unto him and live. Still, if you will persist in contending against him, see what your end will be: "Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Jesus himself put the final issue thus, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

IV. I conclude my sermon by trying to show that THE QUESTION OF OUR TEXT IS OF WIDE APPLICATION.

Let me try to put the case to you who are here present. Forget Pharaoh, and only think of yourself; let the Lord Jesus Christ himself, with the thorn-crowned head and the pierced hand, stand by your pew, and looking right down into your soul, say in his matchless tone of music,—the music of the heart of love,—"How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?"

What is your difficulty, dear friend? What is the cause of your quarrel with your Lord? *Do you refuse even to think upon religion?* I know that many do; they get up late on the Sunday morning, and loiter about the house all day, with no care to go to what they call these "preaching-shops." They would rather go for a walk. The Bible is never read by them; they say that it is such a dreary book, which shows how unacquainted they are with its contents. Religion they regard as a mere make-up of priests, though they have never fairly examined its claims. Well, friend, will you not at least give the gospel a hearing before you condemn it? Will you not listen to

God's message of salvation, that you may form a sober judgment concerning it? Will you not, at any rate, read that Book which you have hitherto despised, that you may find out whether it really is the Book of God? Oh, no! you know too much to read the Bible, you are far too cultured to listen to the common-place preaching of such poor folk as we are. That is how you talk, but are you not ashamed to speak so? Do you not yourself judge that, when a man thinks he knows everything, he really knows very little, and that, when he affects to be such a very superior person, he is not so high and mighty as he thinks himself to be? Humble yourself enough at least to be wise, humble yourself enough to listen to this question of Nicodemus, "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" Hear the story of Christ, and examine and weigh the evidence of his Messiahship. Consider the claims of Christ, and confess that you have not met them; and then give your whole heart and soul to seek to know the way of salvation.

But, suppose you have thought of religion, what is your trouble? You say, "Well, I understand that *I cannot be saved except by confessing myself a sinner.*" You would not need salvation, would you, if you were not a sinner? Surely, there is no hardship in refusing to you what you profess you do not want. If I opened a doctor's shop, and posted in the window a notice stating that I would give away no pills or draughts to men who were perfectly well, nobody would accuse me of a want of humanity because I acted like that. Those who are well have no need of a physician. So, to qualify yourself for being saved, you must first confess that you need to be saved. Come, friend, have you always been perfect? I should like to see you stand in the middle of the congregation, and let us all look you up and down; if you did not blush, I should know that you were not perfect, and if you did blush, it would be a confession that you were imperfect. We have all transgressed the law of our God; some in one way, and some in another, but "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," and we must confess that it is even so. When we have done this, then will be fulfilled to us the ancient promise, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy."

If you have made a confession of sin, what is further the matter with you? "Why," say you, "I am told that *I must be saved by grace.*" Yes, and how else would you like to be saved? Do you wish to be saved by your own merits? You have not any; you would like to set up some merit of your own, but why try to set up a lie? God is the God of truth, and he cannot endure that which is false. If ever any one of us gets to heaven, it will be by the free and undeserved mercy of God; but why should you quarrel with such terms as these? When a thing is to be given away for nothing, I would be the last man to try to run it up in price; the richest man can have it for nothing, and that is a price which exactly suits the poorest. Blessed be God that salvation is all of grace from first to last! Humble yourself to accept it "without money and without price."

"But I understand," says one, "that *I am to be saved simply by believing in Christ,* and I do not like that way of salvation." Why do you not like it? Salvation by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, through

the sinner simply trusting in Christ, will greatly glorify him. This makes the way of salvation possible to lame feet, and blind eyes, and deaf ears, and enables poor guilty souls to find perfect righteousness, which they could never find in any other way. Humble yourself, therefore, and submit to God's plan of salvation. Really, it seems to me that, if a man gives anything away, he has a right to give it in his own way; and if God gives salvation, surely he has the right to give it in his own style; and if he will give it to all who confess their need of it, and come and freely accept it because Christ has wrought it out, who shall quarrel with such terms as these?

In closing, I would very affectionately press home this passage upon all whom it concerns; listen to the Lord himself, as he puts to you this solemn question, "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?" Here are many of us who, long ago, came to Jesus, and humbled ourselves before him, and we did not think it any degradation. I would sooner have some men to put their foot on my neck than I would have the best words of certain other men; one might be willing to sit still, and be abused by some men, and then say, "It is a pleasure even to be noticed by such persons;" while, if certain others were to praise you, you might ask as the philosopher did of old, "What have I been doing amiss that this wretch should speak well of me?" Ah, poor sinner! if you once get a view of the Lord Jesus Christ, and know who he is, and what he is, if you can by faith perceive his beauties, you will say, "To fall at his feet, is a high privilege; to submit myself to such an one as Jesus Christ of Nazareth, is a higher honour than to receive a peerage from an earthly sovereign." Wherefore, let us go together,—you who never went, and some of us who have often been,—let us go together, and let us cry to Christ, "Lord, receive us! We are nothing but a mass of sin and misery; receive us, and save us, for thy mercy's sake; and unto thy name shall be the glory for ever and ever!" Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

EXODUS X. 1—20; AND PSALM CV. 26—38.

Exodus x. Verses 1, 2. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the LORD.*

God would stamp the early history of Israel with the deep impression of his Godhead. His overthrow of the proud Egyptian king should let Israel know in the very beginning how great a God had chosen her to be his own peculiar portion.

3. *And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.*

Can you imagine these humble individuals, Moses and Aaron, thus bearding the great king whose word could make their heads to roll upon the sward? They were not afraid, for God was with them; and they who

speaking in God's stead are traitors if they be not brave. The ambassadors of so great a King must not demean themselves by fear, therefore right boldly said they to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me."

4—6. *Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to-morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast: and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field: and they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh.*

Moses had delivered his message, he had uttered his solemn warning, so he waited no longer in the tyrant's presence.

7. *And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?*

The seven former heavy judgments had so effectually bruised Egypt that the people began to cry against their king for his obstinacy in still further resisting God.

8, 9. *And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD.*

Pharaoh was inclined to make terms with Moses, but God will have no conditions with men who are rebelling against him. An unconditional surrender is all that God will accept.

10, 11. *And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.*

See how proud, how stout-hearted towards evil is this wicked and foolish king. When his people appeal to him to yield, he only does so for a moment, and then he drives out the messengers of God in anger.

12—17. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only.*

See how he is obliged to come to his knees at length. He will be up again soon, for his heart is not humbled, though he is eating his own words. An unhumiliated heart is not subdued by judgments; it is so apparently, but really it is still a heart of stone.

18—20. *And he went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD. And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.*

God kept his grace back from him, so that he relapsed into his natural state of obduracy. Pharaoh is the great mirror of pride and obstinacy; I wonder whether we have a Pharaoh here.

Now let us turn to the 105th Psalm, and see further what God did against this proud Pharaoh.

Psalm cv. Verses 26—28. *He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen. They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word.*

So cowed were they by that awful darkness, that for a time they seemed to repent of their rebellion against the Lord.

29, 30. *He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.*

Though the fish could not live, the frogs could. When good was taken away, evil came. What a strange succession of miracles was this,—the fish slain, but the frogs multiplied!

31—34. *He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He smote their vines also and their fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts. He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number.*

There is great sublimity in this expression. God had only to speak, and whole battalions of devouring locusts and caterpillars seemed to leap out of the earth, or to drop from the clouds: "He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number."

35—37. *And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.*

It was a notable miracle that, after all the oppression they had endured, they should be in such a state of health that "there was not one feeble person among their tribes." When God makes his people march, he puts them into marching trim.

38. *Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them.*

Yet this was the mighty nation whose proud king had defied the Lord. At last, they had had enough of the combat; they were glad that the people of God should retire out of their land, and they themselves bowed low before him.

May we be taught humility of heart, so that we can sing the hymn I have chosen!

"Sovereign Ruler, Lord of all,
Prostrate at thy feet I fall;
Hear, oh, hear my earnest cry;
Frown not, lest I faint and die!"