

# GOD IS KEEPING HIS PROMISES ON HIS TIMETABLE FOR HIS GLORY

## Exodus 9:13-35

*Please review this week's catechism question.*

### INTRODUCTION

When do you find it most difficult to wait? In what sorts of circumstances do you become impatient?

Have you ever felt impatient with God? Why or why not?

For most of us, patiently waiting is not one of our virtues. We do not like having to endure discomfort of any sort for any length of time. We want things fixed, completed right now. Our impatience often impacts how we relate to God. We are often not satisfied with his timetable. We wonder why it is he is taking so long to do what he says he is going to do. It is for impatient people like us, who demand an answer to the question, "Why is this taking so long?", that today's passage is written. In this passage we discover why and how God is working out his plan to save his people. He tells us that he could make things go faster but he doesn't so that his reputation will be made great in the universe. God says that he could have ended this contest with Pharaoh long ago. He could have wiped out Egypt with one plague and so freed Israel. However, he is slowly, on his own timetable working so that Pharaoh knows his power and so that his reputation in the world is made great.

### STUDY

1. In vv. 14-15 what do we find out about what God has been doing?

*First, he tells Pharaoh that the plagues he has sent were not fatal. However, he is going to send his miraculous signs "into the heart of Pharaoh" and his people. It is the language of plunging a knife or spear into the heart of your enemy. He is going to attach Egypt with the full force of his wrath. He has not done so prior to this. The*

*previous plagues were troublesome but not fatal. Second, he tells Pharaoh that he could have destroyed Egypt if he wanted to. The only reason that Egypt still exists is because God has not wanted to destroy Egypt and free Israel up to this point. They are not destroyed not because God does not have the power but because God has not wanted to destroy them and free Israel prior to this.*

2. According to v. 16, what has God done and why has he done it?

*God tells proud Pharaoh that he exists, he is king of Egypt and he is able to keep Israel in slavery because Yahweh raised him up (the word used here is for setting something in its place and making it firm, so it will not totter), because God put him in this position. Every thing he has, every decision he has made, everything that has gone into making him who he is and what he has, God did. God has given him life and enabled him to successfully resist him so that Pharaoh would know whom it is he is dealing with and so that God's name would be made great in the universe.*

3. According to vv. 12-16 who is responsible for Israel remaining in captivity?

*The Lord is responsible because he has hardened Pharaoh's heart so he won't listen, he has raised him up for this purpose, he has chosen to not do what he can do in order to free Israel*

4. According to v. 17, who is to blame for Israel remaining in captivity?

*Pharaoh is to blame because he willingly sets himself against God and holds Israel in captivity.*

5. What does God tell Pharaoh he is going to do in vv. 18-19? How does this statement show God's sovereignty?

*God tells Pharaoh the specific trouble that he is going to send upon Egypt. He is going to send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen upon Egypt. He tells him the very hour he can expect it, 24 hours after the announcement, how extensive it will be, over all of Egypt and in a*

*revelation of his eternity, he tells him it will be worse than any that has ever come upon Egypt since its founding. He knows this fact because he has ruled over Egypt since its founding.*

**6. Why does God tell Pharaoh v. 16? Compare with Romans 9:16-22.**

*Yahweh tells non-believing Pharaoh that he exists by God's decree and that he resists by God's decree in order to humble Pharaoh. God has given human beings the gift of choice. We make decisions every day about all sorts of things. As a result, we naturally believe that because we make choices, we are in control. It is the assumption of every human being that we are in charge of our own destiny. Pharaoh presumes that Israel is under his control. What the doctrine of God's sovereignty over human choice means is that we are not in control. We are not in charge. I know that this is why God tells Pharaoh because this is exactly how the apostle Paul uses verse 16 in Romans 9. The knowledge that God sovereignly, freely decides whom will be saved and who will be damned humbles us. The knowledge that God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy and hardens whom he wants to harden is meant to put us in our place. We are powerless before this great and sovereign God. There is no one and nothing like him in the entire universe. He alone is to be feared and worshipped. He is in control of the universe, not us. He does not answer to us, we answer to him. God tells Pharaoh and he tells us that he is in charge of Pharaoh's heart in order to destroy his pride and to destroy our pride. We are nothing. He is everything. We are to boast in him alone, not in anything in us or about us. We are to tremble before him.*

**7. What are some ways you have been humbled by the thought of God's sovereign control over all things, including human choice?**

**God is working on his timetable to increase his reputation in the universe. Therefore, he asserts his sovereign freedom.**

**8. What evidences of mercy do you see in vv. 19-21?**

*First, he gives Pharaoh and his people a 24-hour notice of when the devastating hailstorm will begin. In other words, Pharaoh has time to repent, to let Israel go and so avert the disaster. The second evidence*

*of his mercy is that he tells the people of Egypt that they can escape the full force of God's wrath by bringing their slaves and livestock into the shelter of houses and barns. The hail is coming but there is a way to escape the full impact of the hail. Third, knowing what we know about God's relationship to human hearts we see that God has mercifully enabled some of the Egyptians to fear his word. Some of the Egyptians have concluded that Moses really does speak for God and that the only safe course of action is to do what he says. We can't be 100% sure that these people are actually converted from paganism to the worship of the one true God. I think it is quite possible because when Israel leaves Egypt we are told that many Egyptians joined themselves to the people of Israel and left Egypt with them. Regardless of whether or not these Egyptians are actually converted or they are simply recognizing that obeying God is the safest way to live, this is an expression of God's mercy.*

**9. How do we see these same mercies expressed in our world now?**

*These same three mercies are still being expressed in the world. God is continually calling every sinner to repent and to believe the gospel. The promise is true that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Every moment of every day both by creation and by proclamation of the gospel God reminds people that they are accountable to him and that while they live there is yet time to turn. In addition, God tells people how to be ultimately saved and how to avoid the full brunt of his wrath in this life. He has placed all manner of consequences in the world to restrain human sin. Governments, parents, other authorities, venereal diseases, accidents, drug addiction, divorce, and all kinds of miseries express God's wrath against human sin in this life. He tells humans how to live so as to avoid many of these miseries. Most people fear being arrested or getting a venereal disease or destroying their life through drug addiction and so they refrain from behaviors that would expose them to these dangers. Most people fear homelessness and hunger so they work hard and teach their children to work. God mercifully helps most people make good choices so that they do not experience the full brunt of his opposition to sinners in this life. Some of his enemies he even enables to come to fear his word and so escape the final and greatest judgment, hell itself.*

**God is working on his timetable to increase his reputation in the universe. Therefore, he offers mercy to sinners.**

**10.** What is it that we as readers know about Pharaoh that only God and Moses know in the actual story? See Exodus 4:21-23 & 7:1-5.

*We know something about Pharaoh as readers that only God, Moses and Aaron know in the story. Pharaoh is never going to repent. God has determined to destroy him and send him to hell. God is not treating Pharaoh unjustly. Pharaoh has despised the God who made him and gave him everything he has for his whole life. He has done nothing to deserve or earn God's kindness. So God justly has determined to destroy him, yet he continues to display his power and kindness to him to show his own glory to him. He is out to show how right it is for him to destroy unrepentant sinners by showering Pharaoh with overwhelming evidences of his power and his love and yet Pharaoh persists in resisting him. We know that Pharaoh is an object of God's wrath, prepared in advance for destruction because God has told us so.*

**11.** Do we know this about any living human being? What then should be our attitude towards those who are currently living in open hostility or indifference to God?

*You cannot know about any living human being, including yourself, whether God has determined to send them to hell or not. In fact, every living human being should presume that God wants to save him or her because he sent his Son into the world to die for sinners. The promise that is held out in the Bible is this, "whoever believes in the Son has eternal life." "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." "This is a trustworthy saying, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'" "I did not come to save the righteous but sinners." If you know yourself to be a sinner, then you have everything you need to qualify for salvation. There is no reason to not trust in Christ. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

**12.** How would you describe Pharaoh's response to the "shock and awe" of this unique hailstorm? This is a literal translation of vv. 27-28: "This time I have sinned. Yahweh is righteous and I and my people are wicked. Pray to Yahweh for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don't have to stay any longer."

*This sounds like thorough and complete repentance and surrender to God. He openly confesses his sin, that the Lord alone is righteous and that he and his people are wicked. He tells Moses that the people of Israel are free to go. He shows that he believes that only God can deliver him from the wrath of God. He knows that the hail is due him for his sin and he knows that God will listen to Moses and deliver him from his own anger. Verses 27-28 are as clear of a statement of the gospel as you will find in the OT. I am a sinner. God is perfectly good and just. I deserve hell as the just consequence of my sin. However, God has given one who can intercede for me, who is a man like me and if I ask him, he will pray for me and God will listen to him and deliver me from his just judgment. Could you describe the gospel better than that?*

**13.** Is there anything in what Pharaoh says that tips us off that his "repentance" may not be as sincere as it appears?

*He says, "This time, I have sinned." What does he mean, this time? Didn't he sin when he subjected the Israelites to slavery, when he butchered their babies, when he refused to give them straw, when he refused to let them go the previous six times, when he lied to Moses on two other occasions? Pharaoh admits that he has sinned now, but he does not admit than anything else he did was sinful.*

**14.** How does this help us to evaluate whether or not we have truly repented and trusted in Christ for our salvation?

*Here is a way to know if you have been truly converted to Christ or if you are a hypocrite. Do you openly acknowledge all your sins or do you only admit to some of them? Are you defensive when you hear that something you enjoy is shown to be sin by the word of God? Do you think that you are not that bad? Do you think that you are better than others, that your sins are not as offensive as those of say, a*

*homosexual or a drug addict? Do you think of yourself as a sinner or as a person who makes mistakes once in awhile?*

**15.** Moses says that he knows that Pharaoh has not repented yet he asks the Lord to stop the hail and the Lord answers his prayer even though he knows Pharaoh has not repented. Why does God answer the prayer of Pharaoh?

*God is still working on his own timetable. He is working to show Pharaoh his power and so that his name is proclaimed in the earth. His main goal is not freeing Israel. He is kind to Pharaoh, to all Egypt now in order to increase his own glory. His ultimate plan is the destruction of Pharaoh and Egypt but he is merciful now because in his infinite wisdom he knows what will most increase his glory in the world and stopping the hail now will best accomplish that goal. He is kind to Pharaoh now even though his plan is the destruction of Pharaoh.*

**16.** What warning is there in God's answering Pharaoh's prayer even though he does not fear the Lord?

*We must not draw conclusions about how God feels about us through how our lives are going here and now. Just because you have asked God to give you a good life here and he has answered your prayers, does not mean that he loves you and is going to save you. He often treats with kindness those who are his enemies and whom he intends to send to hell, like Pharaoh.*

**17.** How do we know that God loves us?

*Is the evidence that God loves you that he healed you of a sickness one time or spared you from a bad accident? Is it because he gave you a Christian husband? Do you know that God loves you because you live in a nice house and have nice children and a healthy body? I often hear Christians explaining that they know God loves them because of how kindly he has treated them here on earth. Receiving benefits on earth is not the way you know that God loves you. The way you know that God loves you is that he has made you one of his people through the death of his son. The greatest gift he can give is Christ for your*

*sins. Knowing that Christ died for you and that you belong to God by his gracious work is the only way you can know with certainty that God loves you. You cannot tell from the circumstances of your life how God feels about you because God is merciful and kind even to those whom he has determined to send to hell, like Pharaoh. We know we are loved by God when Christ is better to us than everything else, when our faith is in him alone.*

**18.** What other help does the example of Pharaoh's plea for help and promise to obey and then his subsequent "hardening of his heart" give us as we think about where we stand with God?

*Once the terror of God's judgment is removed, Pharaoh again hardens his heart and will not listen, just as the Lord has said, because he does not fear the Lord. You have had times in your life when you have, because of some great trial or difficulty, cried out to God and begged him to deliver you. You have earnestly sought him in prayer and Scripture. You have sought to live as a Christian. But now, the terror is gone. Are you still seeking him? People who are truly converted don't stop seeking Christ when the trouble is gone, when they've gained the earthly comfort they were seeking. True converts seek Christ persistently because they want to know him, not just escape some earthly discomfort.*

**19.** Upon what does your confidence that God loves you and is going to welcome you into heaven rest?

**God is working on his timetable to increase his reputation in the universe. Therefore, he bears with great patience the objects of his wrath.**