

Chapter 40

No Compromise!

“And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness...And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land...And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me...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. 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...And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither.”

Exodus 5:1-10:29

In the political world compromise is, I suppose, a necessary evil. Were it not for compromise, nothing would ever be accomplished. In the business world I suppose the same thing is true. Corporations operate by compromise. Compromise is the settlement of differences by mutual concessions. That may be a good thing in politics and business; but in the church and kingdom of God, in all things spiritual, compromise is deadly.

We will begin this study in Exodus 5:1; but it will cover specific aspects of chapters 5-10. In these six chapters Pharaoh stands before us as an instructive type of Satan, the god of this world, proposing four compromises to Moses, compromises by which he attempted to keep Israel in subjection to himself, while allowing them to behave as free men, compromises which would have allowed Israel much freedom. But they would have remained Pharaoh’s slaves still.

God’s Demand

Exodus 5 opens with a divine confrontation. The Lord God confronts Pharaoh. But the confrontation pictures one far more severe, with far greater consequences. It pictures our great Savior’s confrontation with Satan.

“And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness” (Exodus 5:1).

God's servants Moses and Aaron are standing before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. They have only one thing to say. Their issue before the king of Egypt is the singular, unambiguous demand of the King of Heaven. — *"Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness!"*

What a volume of rich instruction those words contain! It is given in plain and forcible language. It sets before us the blessed purpose of the Lord God of Israel to have his people completely delivered from Egypt and separated unto himself, in order that they might feast with him in the wilderness. Nothing could satisfy his heart with regard to his covenant people, but their complete emancipation from the land of death and darkness. He would free them not only from Egypt's brick-kilns and task-masters, but from its gods and its temples, from its altars and its customs, and from its people and their way of life. The Lord God was determined to deliver the chosen nation from Egypt, from the land of Egypt, the bondage of Egypt, the people of Egypt, and the life of Egypt. In a word, they had to be thoroughly separated from Egypt before they could worship him in the wilderness.

Thus it was with Israel, and thus it is with us. We, too, must be a fully and consciously delivered people before we can worship, serve, and walk with God. We cannot worship God until we are sanctified by him, separated from Egypt by his omnipotent grace. We must know the forgiveness of our sins, and our entire freedom from guilt, wrath, judgment, and condemnation. But there must also be a separation, a complete deliverance from this present evil world.

The world is to us what Egypt was to Israel. As Israel left Egypt, we must leave the world. God demands a real, out-and-out, thorough separation of our hearts from Egypt. He says, *"Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness."*

In a word, our God demands, and will not rest until he has accomplished the complete sanctification of his elect, the complete separation of his people unto Christ. This separation from the world may involve physical things, but it is not a physical separation. It is not a separation to be displayed before men by the clothes we wear, the things we eat and drink, or places in which we eat and drink. That kind of separation is nothing but a pharisaical show of hypocrisy. The separation (sanctification) of God's elect to Christ is a spiritual separation, a separation of our hearts to our Savior. It is a separation touching every aspect of our lives. He says, *"Give me thine heart"* (Proverbs 23:26). What does the husband want from his wife? — Her heart. What does the wife want from her husband? — His heart. And that which Christ wants, and will have, from his people is their hearts. If he has my heart, he has everything. If my heart is not his, nothing about me, nothing possessed by me is his.

But Satan does not give up his captives easily. He must be driven by the force of our Savior's omnipotent arms to do so. The fiend of hell will not lose his captives if he can help it. He will exercise all his subtlety, craft, cunning, and power to hold them. We are not ignorant of his devices. If the adversary fails to succeed with one device, he will try another. That is the picture drawn before us by the pen of Inspiration in Exodus 5-10.

Like Pharaoh, Satan denies God's right to be God, saying, *"Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice"?* (v. 2). And he finds the hearts of all in agreement with him, *"because the carnal*

mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7). Every fallen sinner is, by nature, a disobedient rebel before God (Ephesians 2:2).

Satan looks upon the Word of God as a vain thing (v.9). “*Yea, hath God said*” (Genesis 3:1) is still his favorite device for man’s ruin. Again, he finds fallen man in agreement with his device. The Word of the living God, the message of grace, redemption, and deliverance men trample beneath their feet. — “*The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness*” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

And, as Pharaoh required the Jews to make brick without straw, Satan ever puts sinners to the impossible task of doing something to make their deliverance possible. He seizes the notion in every depraved heart that man can and must do something to win God’s favor. His messengers, appearing to be ministers of righteousness, teach sinners that they must obey the law and produce righteousness for themselves.

First Compromise

If Satan cannot succeed with open scorn and oppression, like Pharaoh, he will try to hold his captives with the snare of compromise. Pharaoh’s proposals of compromise begin in Exodus 8:25. The Lord God had turned the water into blood; but Pharaoh’s heart was hardened. God sent frogs upon the land; but Pharaoh’s heart was hardened again. The Lord had filled the land of Egypt with lice; but Pharaoh’s heart was hardened again. Then God caused swarms of flies to cover the land of Egypt, and Pharaoh offered a compromise. In verse 25 we read, “*And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.*”

How crafty, how subtle, how cunning. Pharaoh’s words were well calculated. — “*Go ye, and sacrifice to your God in the land.*” Moses might have plausibly argued, “This is an uncommonly generous proposal. Pharaoh is willing to allow us to worship the Lord our God. There is no reason to proceed any further.” But he could not do so without betraying the trust God had given him and betraying the people God sent him to serve. Moses could not accept Pharaoh’s proposed compromise without disobeying God’s command. Read his answer to Pharaoh.

“And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us” (vv. 26-27).

At first glance it might appear that Pharaoh was at last bending, recognizing the futility of fighting against the Almighty. But a close look at his words show him a rebel still. God’s command was crystal clear. He demanded the complete separation of his people unto himself. He demanded that his people go “*three days’ journey*” into the wilderness.

A Resurrected People

God would have his people completely delivered from the land of darkness and death. And he demanded that Israel hold a feast unto him in the wilderness, not in Egypt. But they must do it as a resurrected people. They must go “*three days’ journey*” into the wilderness. Throughout the Scriptures, the third day speaks of the triune God and of the resurrection.

We cannot worship God except we worship him as a resurrected, heaven-born, regenerate people, as new creatures in Christ, standing before him on the lofty ground of accomplished redemption in the full-orbed light of the new creation.

It is only when, by the power of God the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we are brought to see where Christ has brought us by his sin-atonement death and resurrection that we can call upon the name of the Lord, worshipping and serving him in “*spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24), presenting our “*bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God*” (Romans 12:2), “*to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 2:5).

Pharaoh said to Moses and Israel, “*Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.*” But Egypt represents the world. And God’s people have been delivered “*from this present evil world*” (Galatians 1:4). Our Savior said, “*Ye are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of the world*” (John 15:19). And again, “*they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*” (John 17:14). James writes, “*The friendship of the world is enmity with God*” (James 4:4). How can believers worship God “*in the land*”? We cannot. God must be worshipped “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). And to worship God “*in spirit*” is to worship him in the new nature he gives. It is taking our place, by faith, outside of the world which crucified the Son of God. It is “*going forth without the camp, bearing his reproach*” (Hebrews 13:13). God’s requirement is the same today. — “*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

The Sacrifice Required

There is another reason Moses could not accept this proposed compromise. — To worship God “*in the land*” would be to “*sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians.*” In Genesis 46:34 we are told that, “*every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.*” If every “*shepherd*” was an abomination to the Egyptians, certainly to offer a lamb in sacrifice to God would be equally abominable to them.

The Sacrifice required, if we are to worship God “*in spirit and in truth,*” is Christ our Lord, the Lamb of God; and Christ crucified is ever an abomination to the world. “*The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.*” Christ crucified, is the condemnation of the flesh. Christ crucified reveals man’s total depravity. The cross of Christ is an offence and a “*stumbling-block*” to those who believe not the gospel.

Moses understood this. He said to Pharaoh, “*Shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us?*”

Press upon men the necessity of redemption by Christ, declaring that the holy Lord God must and shall condemn all sin (Romans 8:3), that there is no other way by which sinners can approach God, that without the shedding of Christ’s blood none can be saved (Hebrews 11:6), and

that by the cross of Christ believers are crucified to the world (Galatians 6:14), and man's hidden enmity against God erupts in a rage. The Lord Jesus tells us plainly, *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also"* (John 15:19, 20).

God's Word

There was one more reason Moses gave for not accepting Pharaoh's compromise. It was contrary to God's plain command given in his word. — *"We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us"* (v. 27).

The Word of God settles all issues for believers. When God has spoken, there is no room for reason, debate, or even discussion. We bow to that which God declares in his Word. The Book of God, and the Book of God alone must determine our doctrine, regulate our worship, and govern our lives. In the church and kingdom of God the Word of God is our first and our final appeal for all things. We believe nothing, preach nothing, and practice nothing in the house of God except that which is plainly revealed in Holy Scripture. Human opinion, religious tradition, and social approval, or disapproval, are utterly insignificant.

When compromise is proposed, it must be flatly rejected by all who would worship God. Why would anyone consider compromising the Word of God? Compromise does nothing to honor God, but only dishonors him. Compromise does nothing for the good of men's souls, but only destroys them. Compromise does nothing to build God's church, but only corrupts it. No one benefits from compromise except the compromiser. And, ultimately, he will find his compromise destructive (1 Corinthians 3:11-17).

I press this matter because God's servants and his people are constantly pressed to compromise the things of God. We are constantly urged to do something to make the gospel more "acceptable" to men; and our sinful flesh is always inclined to make concessions. Multitudes of churches today have what they like to call "contemporary worship" services. In such services the music is more lively and the songs are less meaningful, but more emotional. Preaching gives way to sharing, and worship to clapping hands!

In the dictionary on my desk, just below "contemporary" I find the word "contemptible." And the religion of this age is utterly contemptible! Let there be no compromise with Pharaoh in the Israel of God. To compromise our message is to destroy our message (Romans 11:6). And unless we are willing to compromise our message, we will not compromise our methods, our music, or our ministry in any way. Let men say what they will to justify themselves, I have never yet known any church or preacher who altered his methods who did not compromise his message.

Second Compromise

Pharaoh's second proposed compromise was very much like his first. If he could not keep Israel in Egypt, he would keep them as near to Egypt as possible. He said, "*I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away*" (8:28).

He was ready to lengthen the chain, but it was still a chain; and he still held the chain. Complete liberty he was not willing to grant. The point at issue was the complete separation of God's people from Egypt (the world), and this Pharaoh (representing Satan) fought against to the bitter end.

"*Only ye shall not go very far away*" is one of Satan's most cunning devices. God saved me just before my seventeenth birthday. I had lived next door to a man I highly respected for most of my life. He was, as far as I know, a very moral, and highly respected man. I never knew exactly what his job was; but he was a government agent of some kind. He and I got along very well. We visited in his back yard frequently, talking about things that interest and amuse teenage boys. Though he knew a good many of my vices, he never once warned me of their consequences, or even suggested that I should not engage in them. But, as soon as he learned that I had been baptized and had preached a few times, he called for me to come over for a talk. I cannot recall his exact words, but essentially he said, "Don, I hear you have gotten religion. That is really good. But you want to be careful not to be extreme. Do not become narrow minded. You do not want to become so heavenly minded that you are of no earthly good."

That is precisely the wisdom of this world. The world says, "Avoid extremes. Do not become a fanatic. Beware of becoming dogmatic and narrow-minded. God does not want you to be long-faced and miserable. There is no need for religion to radically change your life. Do '*not go very far away.*'"

But our God has made the wisdom of this world foolishness. God sent Moses to Pharaoh to bring his people out of Egypt and to into the land of Canaan. And, in this Moses was typical of the Lord Jesus. The Son of God left heaven for earth that he might bring his people from earth to heaven. He tells us to set our affection upon things above (Colossians 3:1). And that is far away from this world! To that end, the Spirit of God says to every believer, "*Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him*" (1 John 2:15).

"*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*" Galatians 6:14). The cross of Christ has crucified the world unto us and us unto the world. The world counts us dead. Dead people do not count. Dead people are meaningless. That is how the world looks upon us. But that is okay. — If the world is crucified to me, that is how I look upon the world. It is a dead thing. It is meaningless. It does not count.

But how can we be happy if we turn our backs upon all the world? Where shall we find fulfillment and satisfaction? — CHRIST. I ask any who have forsaken all and followed Christ what our Lord asked his disciples. — "*Lacked ye anything?*" The universal answer is, "*Nothing*" (Luke 22:35). Our very meat and drink is to hold a feast unto the Lord our God in this wilderness, to walk

in fellowship with him who loved us and gave himself for us, to do the will of our Father (John 4:34).

As soon as the plague of flies was removed, Pharaoh “*hardened his heart neither would he let the people go*” (8:32). Heavier judgments were then sent upon his land. They brought the rebel to his knees, but not in genuine repentance and submission.

Third Compromise

Pharaoh’s third compromise reveals another of Satan’s cunning devices. He offered to let the “*men go and serve the Lord.*” But, pretending to be concerned for the children and the dangers to which they would be exposed, he said, “You do not want to take them with you, *for evil is before you.*”

“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. 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” (Exodus 10:9-11).

If he could hold their children in Egypt, Pharaoh would retain a powerful hold upon the hearts of the Hebrews, holding that which was dearest to them. They could never be done with Egypt as long as Egypt held their children.

Our children represent the most tender objects of our care. This proposed compromise is the suggestion of half-hearted devotion. How crafty the serpent is! Satan knows that if he can hold that which is dearest to us, he will hold us. But our Savior demands total, unreserved surrender. He demands that we forsake all, if we would follow him. — “*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:26).

The Lord Jesus does not demand that we treat our families or our lives with contempt, or wish harm upon them or ourselves. To do so, as John Gill wrote, “would be contrary to the laws of God, to the first principles of nature, to all humanity, to the light of nature, to reason and divine revelation.” When the Lord God declares, “*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*” (Romans 9:13), the essential intent of his words (if I am not mistaken) is, “I am totally committed to Jacob, but to Esau I give no consideration.”

That is precisely what our Savior requires of us — Whole-hearted devotion. As we follow him we must allow no one, not even husband, or wife, or son, or daughter, or mother, or father to come into consideration. He will have no rival.

Fourth Compromise

Pharaoh first tried to keep Israel in Egypt. Then he tried to keep them near the land. Third, he sought to keep that which was dearest to their hearts in Egypt. Finally, when he could not persuade

Moses to accept any of those compromises, he proposed sending them out into the wilderness without any ability to serve the Lord. If he could not keep the servants, he would prevent them from having the ability to serve. If he could not induce them to sacrifice in the land, he would send them out of the land without sacrifices. That is the proposed compromise of Exodus 10:24-26, Pharaoh's last compromise.

“And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither” (Exodus 10:24-26).

The flocks and herds of this pastoral people constituted the principle part of what they owned. They speak of our earthly possessions. The fact is nothing we possess is really ours. Everything we have we have as that which God has trusted to our hands as stewards in his house. It is ours only to use at his will, for his glory, and in the interests of his house. Of old, God charged Israel with robbing him of his tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:8). And the same charge can justly be laid against multitudes today. Let us not be guilty.

As Moses said to Pharaoh, “*There shall not an hoof be left behind,*” let us bring all to our Savior, serving him with everything he has trusted to our hands. “*There shall not an hoof be left behind*” means all that I have and all that I am belongs to my Redeemer; I hold all at the disposal of my Lord.

But there is more to the picture. Inasmuch as Israel's deliverance was a picture of our redemption by Christ, a type of our Savior's glorious accomplishments of redemption, Moses' response to Pharaoh gives us a very clear declaration of particular and effectual redemption. Every soul for whom a lamb was slain in Egypt came out of Egypt, and all came out with everything pertaining to their lives. “*Not a hoof*” was “*left behind.*” So, too, every sinner for whom Christ our Passover was sacrificed, every sinner for whom the Lamb of God was slain shall come out of Egypt. — “*There shall not an hoof be left behind!*”