

## Chapter 56

### Divine Attributes Revealed

“But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go. And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in *that* day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more. And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague *more* upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let *you* go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses *was* very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants, and in the sight of the people. And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that *is* behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger. And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.” (Exodus 10:27-11:10)

The Lord God specifically told Moses that he hardened Pharaoh’s heart, that he might perform all his wonders in Egypt, so that his people might know that he alone is the LORD (Exodus 10:1-2). This knowledge of the triune God is seen in the revelation of his divine attributes in the salvation of his people, putting “*a difference between the Egyptians and Israel*” (Exodus 11:7). No mortal on this earth can know all the wonders of God’s distinguishing grace toward his people. We will have to wait until we see things more clearly in the light of heaven’s eternal glory to see such things fully. Yet, even now, the great, distinguishing grace by which our God has revealed himself to our souls is a matter of unceasing amazement and wonder to us. It is by the grace we have experienced in the saving revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are made to know that the triune Jehovah is God alone. Beside him there is no God!

What a vast difference grace has made between Egypt and Israel! What a difference grace makes in this world “*between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not*” (Malachi 3:18). What an everlasting difference grace will make in the world to come! — “*For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not*

*receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"*(1 Corinthians 4:7).

Oh, how we ought to lift our hearts with unceasing praise to our God for his distinguishing grace! We cannot awake in the morning, walk down the street, go out to work, eat our bread, come into the house of God, or lay down at night without experiencing God's distinguishing mercy, love, and grace upon us. May God the Holy Spirit give us grace ever to observe and lay to our hearts all the vast and numberless dispensations of divine providence and grace going on in life, in the wide world of providence and grace, by which our God constantly puts a difference between Egypt and Israel! Everything proclaims it. Every event confirms it. Oh for grace to be always on the watch-tower to see it and acknowledge it! — "*Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are thy judgments, and his ways past finding out!*"

## Divine Sovereignty

The first thing we see in this passage is a display of divine sovereignty. We begin in Exodus 10:27, because the last verses of chapter 10 should be read in connection with the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter. Here we see that our great God is God alone because he is the God who purposed all things (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 17; 8:6; Isaiah 14:24-27; 46:10-11; Romans 11:33-36).

Specifically, God's purpose is twofold. He has purposed the everlasting salvation of all his chosen vessels of mercy, whom he prepares for glory, and the everlasting destruction of all the vessels of wrath, who are in this world, fitted for just destruction by their own obstinate rebellion (Exodus 10:27-29; 11:10; Romans 9:13-23). Is that not what we see in God's dealings with Pharaoh?

"But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in *that* day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more"(Exodus 10:27-29).

"And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land" (Exodus 11:10).

Essentially, Moses said to Pharaoh, as the Prophet of God did to wicked king Amaziah, "*I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel*" (2 Chronicles 25:16). Pharaoh "*mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy*" (2 Chronicles 36:16).

Be sure you understand the teaching of Scripture in this matter. Pharaoh's heart was hardened by the Lord our God, so that the Lord God might reveal himself in saving mercy to Israel. Yet, he was fitted to destruction, as are all those who perish under the wrath of God, by his own willful rebellion, by his obstinate rejection of divine revelation. Yes, he went to hell according to the purpose of God; but he went to hell because he despised the counsel of the Most High.

Yet, the deliverance of the children of Israel was altogether an act of free grace and sovereign mercy, grace and mercy bestowed upon them according to God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15). And the salvation of God's elect is altogether an act of free grace and sovereign mercy, grace and mercy bestowed upon us according to God's covenant with Christ our Surety before the world was made (2 Samuel 23:5).

Yes, God eternally decreed the damnation of the reprobate, just as surely as he has decreed the salvation of his elect; but the damnation of the wicked is always presented in Holy Scripture as an act of divine justice (Proverbs 1:24-33; 29:1). Every sinner who goes to hell perishes because of his own determination not to bow to God as God, because he deserves the wrath of God. Every sinner who enters into life everlasting is saved because God loves him freely with an everlasting love, because God has chosen to be gracious to him. This is what we see in Exodus 11:5-7.

*"And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."*

Why did God make a distinction between these two nations? Why did he hate Egypt, but love Israel. Why did he afflict Egypt, but spare Israel? Why did he choose Israel alone among all the nations of the earth to be the object of his love? Why was Israel alone favored, being told, *"You only have I known of all the families of the earth"* (Amos 3:2)? The Lord God said to Israel, *"Thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth"* (Deuteronomy 7:6).

Why? Was Israel a more outwardly desirable nation? Not at all! — *"The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people"* (Deuteronomy 7:7). Was Israel a more inwardly deserving nation? Not at all! Israel was just as wicked as Egypt. — *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). The reason God singled Israel from among the nations is to be found only in his absolute sovereignty. — *"It pleased the Lord to make you his people"* (1 Samuel 12:22; Psalm 115:3; Ephesians 1:3-6).

Because God loved Israel, because he loved us with an everlasting love, he declares, *"Against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."* — Blessed security! Thank God for his great sovereignty, especially as it is displayed in his distinguishing mercy! He not only delivered Israel, he made the Egyptians supply what they needed for their journey. — *"Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold"* (Exodus 11:2). It was this silver and gold that was later used to adorn the tabernacle in the wilderness. Let us ever

remember that both the creation and government of the whole world is for the glory of our God and the salvation of his people. Robert Hawker wrote...

“Blessed God! Let it be my happiness to record thy praises, and to speak of all the signs and wonders which thou hast wrought in a way of redeeming my soul, and the souls of all thy people, from the house of spiritual bondage, in the accomplishment of which thou hast subdued Egypt and destroyed it, and scattered thine enemies abroad with a mighty hand. Oh, may it be written upon my heart with the pencil of the living God, that it is not by might, nor by power in ourselves, that thou hast brought us out; but by thy right hand, thine arm, and the light of thy countenance. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord, and thy blessing is upon thy people!”

The God of all grace, our heavenly Father, set his love upon such undeserving sinners as we are from eternity (Jeremiah 31:3). He appointed his own dear Son to bring us salvation (John 17:2). The Lord Jesus Christ has fulfilled his commission (John 17:4, 6, 9), saving his people from their sins. Many self-righteous “dogs” (Philippians 3:2) object and attempt to thwart God’s sovereign purpose of grace (Psalm 22:16, 20), but to no avail (Revelation 22:15). Our blessed Savior will without fail bring all his people to eternal glory (John 6:37, 39; 10:28).

## Divine Justice

*Second*, we have before us a display of God’s justice. In verse 5 the Lord God declares, “*all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.*” I find that statement striking. Throughout the Levitical dispensation constant reference was made to the firstborn! It seems that even in the destruction of enemies, as well as in the salvation of his elect, God’s eye is fixed upon the sacrifice of Christ, the Firstborn. Let ours be fixed upon him as well. Just as Pharaoh and the Egyptians were slain by an act of divine justice, God’s elect are saved by the work of God’s justice.

Our God declares himself “*a just God and a Savior*” (Isaiah 45:20). In asserting that he is both “*a just God and a Savior,*” the Lord God shows us two facts regarding his character that must be recognized, if we are to understand anything revealed in Holy Scripture. You do not know God, you do not understand his works, and you do not know the message of Holy Scripture, until these things have been established in your heart. God is just! He is holy and righteous. — “*God is light; in him is no darkness at all!*” Because he is righteous, just, and good, because he cannot compromise his character, he must punish sin. This just God is also a Savior! God is love. God is mercy. God is grace. He will be gracious. He will be merciful. He will save sinners. He must do so, because he cannot compromise his character.

When Adam sinned, he was cast out of the garden, because God is just; but he went out with the promise of a Redeemer, wearing the garments of an innocent victim who was slain in his stead, because our God is a Savior. The world was once destroyed by a flood, because God is just; but “*Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,*” and was saved in an ark God had provided, because God is a Savior. The Lord destroyed Sodom in the fires of his wrath, because he is just; but Lot was snatched out of the city of destruction, because he is a Savior. The law was given on Mt. Sinai in thunderings, lightnings, and thick darkness, bringing with it condemnation and death, because God

is just; but there was given, in the holy of holies, the mercy-seat, covered with sin-aton ing blood, where God promised to meet with sinners, because he is a Savior.

This is the message of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ was made sin for us, the wrath of God fell upon the Son of his love, because God is just! Yet, by that very act, we are saved, because he is a Savior! Here is the answer to the question of the ages. — How can God be just and yet justify the sinner? It all happened at Calvary! Christ died “*that God might be just and the Justifier of all who believe on Jesus Christ*” (Romans 3:24-26). At Calvary mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other! — “*By mercy and truth iniquity is purged*” (Proverbs 16:6). That mercy, that truth, that purging of iniquity is found only in the death of Christ as the sinners’ Substitute. There is no other way for a holy God to save fallen man.

## **God’s Longsuffering**

*Third*, in Exodus 11:1 we see the longsuffering of God. — “*And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.*” That is a terrible declaration of justice and wrath. After all the plagues of Egypt, there yet remained one more in the death of the firstborn. Even so, after all the sorrows of the ungodly in this world are finished, there remains one more in their final destruction in the world to come (Psalm 9:17-18). — “*After this, the judgment!*”

God would have been just in destroying Pharaoh the first time he refused to obey his command (5:1). Instead, he sent plague after plague upon him and the Egyptians. In each plague he revealed his power and mercifully granted Egypt space for repentance (Revelation 2:21). It is written, “*God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction*” (Romans 9:22).

So it is today. God would be absolutely just in destroying us the first time we refuse to obey his command to “*repent, and believe in the gospel*” (Mark 1:15). Instead, he gives sinners warning after warning and opportunity after opportunity to comply with his command. Yet, man despises “*the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance*” (Romans 2:4).

Why is God so patient, forbearing, and longsuffering? It is because his love is set upon his own from eternity, and he is not willing that any of his loved ones perish. His longsuffering, like his sovereignty, is our salvation (2 Peter 3:9-15, 17-18).

## **Divine Supremacy**

*Fourth*, God’s purpose in all that he did in Egypt, as we saw in Exodus 10:2, was to display his supremacy as God, “*that ye may know how that I am the Lord.*” And Pharaoh was about to learn it. Pharaoh was about to learn the same lesson learned by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the greatest ruler of his own day (Daniel 4:34-37). God said, “When I get done he will not only let you go, he will throw you out of the land.”

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague *more* upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let *you* go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether” (Exodus 11:1).

The Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Savior, is still supreme, “*over all God, blessed forever!*” He has “*purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*” (Isaiah 14:27).

“Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.”(Isaiah 40:15-17)

God our Savior has defeated his adversary and ours, the Devil. He is delivering his elect from him (John 17:2; Revelation 20:1-3; Matthew 12:27-29; Luke 10:17; John 12:31). Let us ever adore and praise our great God and Savior for his free grace and distinguishing mercy toward us. — The only difference between the believer and the unbeliever, between the righteous and the wicked, between the seed of Christ and the seed of the serpent is the difference grace has made. This every heaven born soul gladly acknowledges. — “*By the grace of God I am what I am!*” God’s grace is always particular, distinctive, and distinguishing. Those who are saved are distinguished from those who are lost by five marvelous acts of grace.

The first distinguishing act of God’s grace is his eternal election. If you can, with the eye of faith, trace every spiritual blessing that you now enjoy, and those which you hope to enjoy back to the place of their original source, the place of their origin would be spelled “E L E C T I O N” (Ephesians 1:3-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Jeremiah 1:4; 31:3).

The second act of grace by which God has distinguished his elect from the rest of mankind is effectual redemption. By his precious blood, poured out unto death upon the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ has effectually ransomed God’s elect from the hands of divine justice, by satisfying the claims of justice against us (Isaiah 53:8-11; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 9:12).

The third act of grace by which the Lord has distinguished us from the rest of the world is his adorable providence. Our God governs all the affairs of this world; and he has governed all the affairs and circumstances of our lives to bring us to the place where we now are, and to eternal glory in Christ (Matthew 10:29-31; Romans 8:28).

The fourth act of grace by which we are distinguished from all other men is God’s sovereign work of regeneration. The only thing that makes you different from any other being on this planet, if you are born again, is the fact that God has saved you. He gave you life and faith in Christ by the irresistible power of his Spirit (Ephesians 2:1-10).

The fifth act of grace by which God distinguishes his elect from the unbelieving is his merciful preservation. The only thing that keeps us in grace is grace itself. The only thing that holds us to Christ is Christ himself (Jeremiah 32:38-40).