

Judica ~ Passion Sunday

God did harden Pharaoh's heart. In other words, Pharaoh always sinned again and again and became more hardened the more he was warned. That was a punishment of his earlier sin and horrible tyranny that in many and various ways he acted inhumanly toward the children of Israel against his heart's accusations. God caused His Word to be preached and His will to be proclaimed to Pharaoh. Nevertheless, Pharaoh willfully stood up immediately against all rebukes and warnings. Therefore, God withdrew His hand from him, Pharaoh's heart became hardened and stubborn, and God executed His judgment on him. For he was guilty of nothing other than hellfire. So the holy apostle also introduces the example of Pharaoh for no other reason than to prove God's justice by it, which He exercises toward the unpentant despisers of His Word. By no means, however, has the apostle intended or understood this to mean that God begrudged salvation to him or any person. He doesn't mean God had ordained Pharaoh to eternal damnation in His secret counsel so that Pharaoh should not be able, or that it should not be possible for him, to be saved.

When Abraham heard God's Word about offering his son [Genesis 22], he had reason enough to debate whether the words should be understood literally or with a tolerable or mild interpretation. They conflicted openly not only with all reason and with the divine and natural law, but also with the chief article of faith about the promised Seed, Christ, who was to be born of Isaac. Nevertheless, when the promise of the blessed Seed from Isaac was given to him, Abraham honored God's truthfulness. He confidently concluded and believed that what God promised He could also do, although it appeared impossible to his reason [Hebrews 11:17–19]. So also about Isaac's sacrifice he understood and believed God's Word and command plainly and simply, as they read according to the letter. He committed the matter to God's almighty power and wisdom, which, he knew, has many more modes and ways to fulfill the promise of the Seed from Isaac than he could comprehend with his blind reason.

We, too, are simply to believe with all humility and obedience our Creator and Redeemer's plain, firm, clear, solemn words and command, without any doubt and dispute about how it agrees with our reason or is possible. For these words were spoken by that Lord who is infinite Wisdom and Truth itself. He can do and accomplish everything He promises....

Even Pharaoh perished in this way. (Of whom it is written [in Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:17], "But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you My power, so that My name may be proclaimed in all the earth.") This was not because God had begrudged him salvation or because it had been His good pleasure that Pharaoh should be damned and lost. For God is not willing that any should perish [2 Peter 3:9]; "[He also has] no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11).

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