

# the plagues! the plagues!

exodus 8.1-19

Plagues 2 and 3 this morning in Exodus chapter 8.

For a week the waters throughout the nation had been turned to blood. The people had been reduced to digging on the river bank to try to get something to drink. But Pharaoh didn't ask for relief or beg for mercy. I'm sure he had slaves that he could force to go get water for his household, so he retreated into his palace in rebellion against God, ignoring what was going on.

But now, the Lord was going to bring His wrath to Pharaoh's doorstep. Actually, He was going to bring it all the way into his bedroom with the second plague.

**Exodus 8.1-4 - And the Lord spoke to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all your territory with frogs."**

The greatness of God's mercy is demonstrated again and again as He repeatedly gives Pharaoh the option to repent and be spared the judgments that were lined up.

Matthew Henry read this passage and wrote:

*"God does not punish men for sin unless they persist in it."*

Yes, the Lord wanted to demonstrate His power to the nations, He wanted to show Himself as the only true God, but He also wanted Pharaoh not to perish. God declares that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. In wrath He remembers mercy. So again Pharaoh is given a chance to surrender to the Lord and spare himself and his people from what was coming.

Here's what was coming:

**Exodus 8.3-4 - So the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into your house, into your bedroom, on your bed, into the houses of your servants, on your people, into your ovens, and into your kneading bowls. And the frogs shall come up on you, on your people, and on all your servants." ' "**

The Lord had already shown His power over the waters of Egypt, now He would show His power over the animal kingdom.

The Egyptians worshiped at least 2 frog-related deities. Some historians believe that this plague would've been made even worse since, as sacred animals, the Egyptians may have been forbidden from killing the frogs that carpeted every lawn and floor and counter and chair. The text says that there were so many they were just on the people.

Now, as opposed to the water being turned to blood, this plague Pharaoh couldn't ignore.

I try to imagine this and how fantastically horrifying this must have been and just the spectacle of it.

But when we hear this story we've got to also remind ourselves that there's still judgment coming for the nations of the earth. God's warning has gone out. And now we're in that period where repentance is possible. But if people refuse to acknowledge and surrender to God, plagues and judgments worse than these will be their reality. And that should stir us up to warn and to save the Egyptians around us.

**Exodus 8.5-7 - Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.' " So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt.**

When I think about these scenes I'm enamored with the power of God, but as I thought about what it would've been like to be Aaron at this moment, I don't know how easy this would've been. Here's why - what we see here is that he, apparently, had to walk through the region, stopping at the rivers and streams and ponds and bringing out frogs from each of them.

Now, Pharaoh and his administration had it coming to them. I think that's how I would feel. But as he went pond to pond, stream to stream, he'd not only see other politically innocent Egyptians, but the Hebrews in Goshen as well affected by this plague. Now, we'll get to the Hebrew's suffering in a moment, but as we see Aaron here it reminded me that the mission we're called to in our service to God is not always easy and it's not always pleasant. It's rarely the path of least resistance. Instead, we're called to a life of infiltration and battle.

Fracking is a controversial topic right now. It's a process of drilling thousands of feet into the ground and fracturing shale so that natural gas and oil can be released. As Christians, we're meant to shake up this world so that the Gospel can seep into the soil of men's hearts. And that process isn't always very comfortable.

You see Aaron here, obeying God, but also having to do something that was not popular or likable. We think of Nathan who had to go and rebuke David for his sin, something we're still called to do one to another. We think of Ananias having to go and reach out to a Christian-killing zealot named Saul. We think of Stephen, the first martyr, having to tell a group of people that they're sinners and in line for God's judgment.

It's spiritual fracking. Shaking things up so that the Gospel can penetrate hearts. Aaron wasn't allowed to go the path of least resistance or be a respecter of persons in carrying out God's command. Neither are we.

**Exodus 8.8-11 - Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Entreat the Lord that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord."**

**And Moses said to Pharaoh, “Accept the honor of saying when I shall intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only.”**

**So he said, “Tomorrow.” And he said, “Let it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God. And the frogs shall depart from you, from your houses, from your servants, and from your people. They shall remain in the river only.”**

God wants to show Himself to people. And He wants to show Himself to people by doing things in and through your life. This is why He commands us to walk in faith, live life trusting in Him and let Him have control over your circumstances so that He can display Himself to the people around you.

Obviously Moses had a somewhat unique relationship with God. But, his confident faith here reminds us that we’re supposed to live our lives today in confident faith as well. Walking by faith is supposed to be the normal thing we do, day in and day out.

You see Moses here saying, “Ok, when do you want this done, God will do it.” Or you see Peter there in the book of Acts looking down at the lame man and saying, “Silver and gold I have not, but get up and walk.” It’s not that they were testing God, but they were trusting Him and living their lives in dependence on the Lord, which meant He could display Himself prominently and powerfully through them. And since they were living life led by the Spirit they were ready to be moved and directed by Him in these dramatic ways.

Here in our nation we’re so well-to-do and so self-sufficient that sometimes it’s hard to even imagine what it means to actually walk in faith-filled dependence on God. I’m guilty of it. It’s a hazard of the time and place we find ourselves.

But living a life that is totally achievable without the involvement of the Holy Spirit and the power of God is the opposite of what the Bible sets before us as Christians.

And I do believe it’s a cultural thing. Not that we’re the only ones who might struggle with this, but you don’t even have to go to the persecuted church to find believers who walk in daily dependence on God’s power. You just have to go somewhere where there’s not a lot of money. Just go to a 3rd World, Latin American nation and you find, generally, a greater reliance on God as well as a greater confidence in God’s power for daily life.

It’s not a universal rule and it’s not that we’ve failed completely, but it’s a scary thing to realize that we don’t *need* God to live a ‘normal’ American life.

In his book *Forgotten God*, Francis Chan says:

*“I don’t want my life to be explainable without the Holy Spirit.”*

But, I think often my life can be easily explained without Him. And I don’t want that. It’s not the norm for Christians. Walking by *faith* is.

Before we press on, look at Pharaoh here. He's at a real moment of need. When people come to us and are in those moments of need, we've got to deliver real truth and help to them. We've got to deliver a real connection to God. Not just something that makes them feel better or just cliché things. This guy really needed help and Moses was ready to give it to him.

**Exodus 8.12-14 - Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh. And Moses cried out to the Lord concerning the frogs which He had brought against Pharaoh. So the Lord did according to the word of Moses. And the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courtyards, and out of the fields. They gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank.**

This is significant compassion. Remember - Pharaoh deserved judgment. He deserved what he was getting. But, rather than act like Jonah, or the disciples when they suggested to Jesus that He call down fire on people, Moses went out and prayed for his strongest and most active enemy.

We're called to infiltrate and shake things up in this world, but we're also called to intercede for our enemies. In Matthew 5 Jesus says that we're to *love* our enemies. Certainly Moses is demonstrating that here.

When a wicked person is suffering my default position is, "He's getting what he deserves." The real truth is we *all* deserve God's wrath. And it's God's kindness that leads to repentance, His kindness working through us.

**Exodus 8.15 - But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the Lord had said.**

The terrible circumstances of this plague led Pharaoh to call out for mercy. But when those circumstances were relieved, He didn't turn to God. Because this wasn't really a frog issue, it was a heart issue. Exodus makes that abundantly clear. So when we minister as individuals or as organizations or as the Church, we've got to be certain that we're addressing the heart and not just the stomach or the skin or the mind. It is from the heart that the mouth speaks. It is the heart that brings forth fruit and action, so when we bring the Gospel, we have to address the heart most of all if we want real saving change to occur.

**Exodus 8.16-17 - So the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.' " And they did so. For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.**

God had shown His power over the water, over the animal kingdom and now over the earth. He was coming hard after Pharaoh.

But they still had 7 plagues coming their way. And again, I want us to think about these judgments in light of Revelation. There are greater plagues coming to this earth. Bowls of God's wrath that will be poured out. We've got to get the word out *because* there's still time for people to repent and avoid that judgment.

One interesting thing about the first 3 plagues is that they impacted everyone in the nation. It's only with the *next* plague that God starts making a distinction between the Hebrews in Goshen and the Egyptians everywhere else.

What's up with that?

Well, it reminded me that there's a weight to bear on this rescue mission. One of the big stories after the September 11 attacks was the physical suffering endured by the emergency responders. People who went in to be a part of the rescue ended up inhaling smoke and chemicals, some even losing their own lives in the effort to save others. That's the job.

It'd be much nicer if we never had to endure any difficulty on earth. It'd be nice if we got saved and were immediately taken to heaven. But the job is to stay and run into the fire because it's worth it to save people who are lost. My suffering and light affliction doesn't measure up to the eternal death that people are facing. And according to 2nd Peter, the faster we pull people out, the faster we can get out of here, and I'm all for that.

**Exodus 8.18-19 - Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had said.**

The magicians could copy the first two plagues but not the third and not the rest. Some suggest that they had Satanic power, others suggest they were simply performing illusions made to trick Pharaoh. The text seems to present them as though they actually were able to work these counterfeit wonders by the power of Satan. But with the plague of lice even they had to stop and acknowledge the finger of God.

They remind us of the fact that one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Not every knee will bow in devotion, but the rest will bow in defeat. Yet all will concede and declare that our God is the only God.

The Lord is making it a point to reveal Himself to people. Let's amplify that work by allowing Him to shine through our lives today. That happens when we shake things up with the Gospel, run into this plagued world, seeking to save and when we walk in real, spiritual faith in the power of God.