

# The LORD Makes a Distinction

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Preacher: Edward Kang

[ 0 : 00 ] It's my absolute joy to introduce to you our preacher this morning, Ed Kang. And as many of you know, Ed just started a pastoral internship with our church.

What's that, like two months ago now, a month or so ago? And Ed started, he's taking some seminary classes now, and he's going through the training we have in our church.

But he went through the preaching cohort last summer with a group of guys in our church learning to preach. And he leads one of the community groups as well. And people that know him, recognize this about him, he has great humility before God and before his people.

And he has posture to learn and to listen well. And he prepared really hard on this sermon, I know, because he's been getting messages going back and forth with me and working on it. So, Ed, please come and preach God's words for us this morning.

All right. Can you guys hear me okay? Sweet. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. If I haven't had the pleasure of meeting you, my name is Ed.

[ 1 : 19 ] And as Sean mentioned, I am a very newly inducted pastoral intern here at Trinity Cambridge. And this is my first time preaching for you guys. So, I appreciate the opportunity.

And it is my privilege and honor to share with you God's word as we long to hear from his Holy Spirit today. Our passage today continues on in the ten plagues, the ten miracles that ravaged Pharaoh and his land as we look today to the fourth, fifth, and sixth plagues.

So, please open your Bibles to Exodus 8, 20 to 9, 12. If you're new or unfamiliar with reading the Bible, Exodus is just the second book, so it's meaning it's way in the front.

And that's, again, Exodus 8, 20 to 9, 12. Please pray with me for the reading and preaching of God's holy and authoritative word.

Father, I am your humble servant, and I tremble before your holy word. Father, I ask that you would help me not to add anything to it nor take away anything from it.

[ 2 : 40 ] Please speak through your servant for the glory, for your glory, and for the building of your church, your people. Holy Spirit, illuminate our eyes to see what you have for us in this passage today.

Again, for your glory's sake. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Exodus 8, 20 to 9, 12. Then the Lord said to Moses, rise up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh as he goes out to the water and say to him, Thus says the Lord, let my people go that they may serve me.

Or else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies.

And also the ground on which they stand. But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth.

Thus, I will put a division between my people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall happen. And the Lord did so.

[ 3 : 59 ] And the Lord did so. There came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants' houses. Throughout all the land of Egypt, the land was ruined by swarms of flies.

Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, Go, sacrifice to your God within the land. But Moses said, It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to the Lord our God are an abomination to the Egyptians.

If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? We must go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he tells us.

So Pharaoh said, I will let you go to sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness. Only you must not go very far away. Plead for me. Then Moses said, Behold, I am going out from you and I will plead with the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people tomorrow.

Only let not Pharaoh cheat again by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord. So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord. And the Lord did as Moses asked and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people.

[ 5 : 15 ] Not one remained. But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also and did not let the people go. Then the Lord said to Moses, Go into Pharaoh and say to him, Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, let my people go that they may serve me.

For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, behold, the hand of the Lord will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks.

But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die. And the Lord set a time saying, Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land.

And the next day the Lord did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died. And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead.

But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw them in the air in the sight of Pharaoh.

[ 6 : 26 ] It shall become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and become boils breaking out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt. So they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh.

And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils.

For the boils came upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians. But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

In this world of about 7.8 billion people, how do you identify yourself? What groups of people do you associate with?

If you think about it, there's so many different categories that you can bucket yourself into. For example, I can answer that personally, saying, I'm a Korean-American, born and raised in New Jersey.

[ 7 : 31 ] I'm living in Boston now. I'm a husband and an introvert, and I work as an engineer in biotech. And there are honestly so many more things that I could say.

Endless ways that we can try to identify who we are. From our race, culture, occupation, relationships, nationalities, past experiences, socioeconomic statuses, educational pedigree, political parties, hobbies, four letters, era Myers-Briggs.

I can go on and on. But amongst the myriad of the different ways that we can identify ourselves, the Bible and our passage today makes it clear that there's only one distinction among humanity, among all humankind, that is infinitely more important than all other titles or ideological camps that we can settle into.

It's whether you are part of God's chosen people or whether you are not. There's nothing more important and no sweeter identity that we can embrace to be part of God's chosen people.

And in this passage, we'll understand why. We'll go through our text today with that overall theme in mind. And so before we start in our text today, if you've been following us through the book of Exodus, we remember that we're in the middle of the ten plagues or ten signs as Matt helpfully preached on plagues one through three last week.

[ 9 : 03 ] Today our passage focuses on four, five, and six. And these plagues are grouped together in series of three. So one through three, four through six, and seven through nine, and the tenth and final plague on its own.

This literary structure has been long supported and recognized by Jewish exegetes and scholars. And when you compare the plague accounts side by side, they have this clear parallelism that you can see for yourself.

I think I have a slide that should be able to show that. This shows that the beginning two of each grouping start with a warning to Pharaoh, whereas the third typically omits that warning. And additionally, we know that it's the beginning of a grouping when it starts with some form of this refrain, go to Pharaoh in the morning. And that's exactly how we start our passage today. We read in verse 20, God commands Moses to confront Pharaoh in the cool part of the morning and in the public scene as Pharaoh goes out to the water. It feels intentional of the Lord to have Moses speak in public where the community could both hear God's warnings and then to see the manifestation of said warnings.

[10:21] And God commands Moses to declare, Let my people go that they may serve me. Or else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people and into your houses.

Now, it's difficult to precisely identify these bugs. Different translations have horsefly or mosquito. But helpfully, in Psalm 78, 45, that implies that these insects did feed on the Egyptians themselves. So that helps us to have a little bit of a clear picture of the severity of this plague. And these flies or mosquitoes or whatever you want to call them, they would be unrelenting. There would be no rest or escape as God commanded that these flies would be everywhere where they go.

Even on their beds, the constant buzzing in their ear, their skin probably welted up with bug bites and the endless sensation of trying to itch and scratch.

[11:25] In my mind, it's kind of like the basic antithesis of the beautiful promises that apply for us believers in Psalm 121. The Lord is your keeper.

The Lord will keep you from all evil. He will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore. This wasn't the case for idolatrous Egypt or Pharaoh.

Then please read with me in verse 22 because the Lord makes a critical distinction for the first time. If you've read it carefully, this is the first time in these series of battles with Pharaoh where he makes this distinction.

It says, But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. If you're familiar with the end of the book of Genesis, it's in this land of Goshen where Joseph had his entire family settle down in the eastern part of the Nile Delta.

[12:26] It's also here where the Israelites multiplied greatly upon God's blessings, so much so that Pharaoh the king, several successors after Joseph's time, feared an Israelite revolution that might overtake Egyptian rule.

And while it was good land with already proven opportunity to grow, this was not to be their final destination, as God was working to make a path for them to make it to the land that was promised to their forefather Abraham, the land of Canaan north of Goshen.

Next, we read a statement in our text that gives insight into God's heart desire here. We see straight into God's heart. At the heart of this battle between Yehovah versus Pharaoh, which isn't really a battle at all, because on one side of the ring you have the literal creator of the universe, versus the other side, a little tiny man.

We read that he does this so that Pharaoh and the rest of idolatrous Egypt would know that God is the great I am in the midst of the earth. And this is a response to Pharaoh's initial answer back in chapter 5, when he says, Who is the Lord?

Who is the Lord that I should obey him and let Israel go? I don't know the Lord. And I know I'm so often guilty of this, but far too often when we read through Scripture, we can throw ourselves in the passage, and we can obscure the writer's intent.

[14:00] We read a man-centered story, saying, Wow, God did this only for me, just for me to be happy, when in fact this passage and really the entirety of Scripture as a whole, it's God-centered.

It's God's motivation that he would have his name known in all the land. Brad Pitt, a famous actor, I think most of you guys probably watched the movie or so, I think represents a lot of this world in this quote in which he says, I didn't understand this idea of a God who says, You have to acknowledge me.

You have to say that I'm the best, and then I'll give you eternal happiness. If you won't, then you don't get it. Well, if I ever got a chance to meet him, and probably more importantly had the

boldness to actually respond to this quote, I think I'd say, Well, Mr. Pitt, number one, it's totally right and appropriate for us to worship the sovereign Lord and creator.

It's fitting for us to do so. Imagine with me if a tennis player went on tour, and for the entirety of his career, let's say that he's never lost a single match.

Every single major tournament he signed up for, he was bringing home the trophy. Not only that, let's say that he's never dropped a single set. And if you don't, maybe this analogy goes over your head if you don't, tennis scoring can be a little bit tricky, but if you pushed it even further, let's say that he's never lost a single point.

[15:41] It's unbelievable, right? Every match, 6-0, 6-0, 6-0. And at the end of his career for his retirement speech, he makes this claim, I am the greatest tennis player to have ever played this sport.

No one in their right minds would reject that statement. You couldn't. People may not like to. People probably hate him because he ruined the sport for however long his career was, but they have to acknowledge his greatness.

Even more so, is it not appropriate for us to lift up the name of the omnipotent, omniscient ruler of this universe? Second thing I'd say to Mr. Pitt would be just how much God graciously interlinks the glorification of his own name and the blessing and protection of his chosen people.

Case in point, Exodus is the story right now. Remember with me that a few weeks back, we talked about how God has chosen to put his glory on the line by promising Moses and the rest of his people their deliverance from their crushing burden of cruel slavery.

They were a forgotten people with no voice, completely and utterly powerless. They even had no autonomy for how they wanted to raise their own families, considering we have a lot of families today.

[17:02] But God signed his name off on the tax, putting his glory on the line, and showed his faithfulness through the gracious promises in saving a people that couldn't offer him anything in return.

God initiated this transfer of ownership so that the Israelites would worship and serve him, yes, and so that the Israelites could experience true joy and peace as they finally fulfill their eternal purposes to be God's chosen people.

And we read on in verses 24 that exactly what Yahweh said would happen does happen. Just another reason to glory in our Lord.

In fact, we can read on in verses 24, 31, chapter 9, 6, and 10, that Moses records a simple confirmation, a simple confirmation that all three of these plagues happen exactly the way that God said it would.

It's so different from us flaky people. I mean, it's almost June. How well are we doing on our New Year's resolutions, right? I think I'm on track for like one out of five.

[18:15] But this is how committed God was to his glory and for the deliverance of his people. These were not bluffs. When God has promised something, you can take it to the bank.

Whatever God speaks literally becomes truth. God has set his mind for mercy and grace towards his people to redeem them. And so Goshen and the people of Israel were untouched and unscathed.

And read with me in verse 25. Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, Go, sacrifice to your God within the land. But Moses said, It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to the Lord our God are an abomination to the Egyptians.

If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? I love these next chunk of verses. This next chunk of verses. To threaten Pharaoh, he tries to make a compromise.

As he still holds on to, you know, some belief that he has some leverage over God and his people. And he tries to get them just to agree within, just stay within the land.

[19:25] Don't go too far. But Moses is quick to see that this wasn't going to work. He deduces that the people of Israel would stone them for worshiping God.

Now, it's not exactly clear what would be so offensive to the Egyptians about their serving of God. Perhaps it would be about the sacrificing of animals that they consider sacred.

After all, among their numerous gods, they did worship a bull god and a cow goddess. It could have been, like one commentator remarks, equivalent to sacrificing a pig at a mosque or a cow in a

Hindu temple.

So Moses responds as if he's saying, Not a chance, Pharaoh. Not a chance we'd accept this compromise. You know as well as I do that this would never work. You think you can try to fool us with this compromise, but in the end, it's still you that benefits.

It's all or nothing. We're leaving just as we said we were. So Pharaoh responds, Okay, alright, fine. I'll let you go to sacrifice the Lord your God in the wilderness.

[ 20 : 36 ] And he adds this line as if he's trying to convince himself, too, that he's in control. Only you must not go very far away. Pharaoh quickly learns through these ten plagues that he cannot compromise with God.

And in some sense, these same compromises pushed on Moses are pushed on us today, too. We hear, You can be a Christian. You can worship God.

Just don't let it change your loyalties or your allegiances. Or we hear even the common, Do what makes you happy. Do what makes you feel good.

But just follow the rest of this world in your worldview and value system. Don't be too different. And what about you? Do you try to compromise with the Almighty Lord?

It's been said that the most miserable Christians are those who live with a foot in both worlds. And with a foot in Egypt and a foot in Goshen.

[ 21 : 44 ] And you hedge your bets, quickly pulling out your feet, announcing your allegiances whenever it's convenient for you. I know I have. The question still remains, Who will you serve?

Brothers and sisters, it's in your self-interest that you take both feet into submission before God. As Alistair Roberts and Andrew Wilson put in their book, Echoes of Exodus, Those who serve Pharaoh become beasts and perish.

Those who serve the Lord become priests and flourish. Finally, similar to the episode with the frogs, we can observe that Pharaoh admits in believing in the power of God as he pleads for Moses and Aaron to act as his intercessor.

He doesn't turn to the magicians, or he doesn't turn to the cow goddess or the bull god, but he goes straight to the one that he knows that can affect change to a situation. Pharaoh is a prime example of how it's not just enough to quote-unquote believe, and intellectually accept the existence of a powerful God.

In James 2, he teaches us that even the demons believe and shudder. James shows us the necessity of showing our belief by our obedience to and love for God and his commands.

[ 23 : 07 ] Not that Yahweh demands or expects perfection, but genuine saving faith normatively produces genuine worship and desire to obey God.

This picture is so radically different from the one represented by Pharaoh, someone who may think that God exists, but only really turns to him only for a last resort for help.

In a way, Pharaoh is just using him. He's trying to use God for his own purposes. So we read Moses' response in verse 30.

So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord, and the Lord did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not one remained.

So how did the insects relent? In these punchy verses, simply put, Moses prays, and the Lord did just as Moses had asked.

[ 24 : 08 ] As I've been reading and meditating on this passage for the past couple weeks, it strikes me just how much God's sovereign power and control is at perfect display here, and yet it says that God did just as Moses had asked.

This motivates me more than ever to just get on my knees and pray. Because the omnipotent and omniscient God listened to the man with uncircumcised lips.

But I can understand, maybe someone might say, oh, you know, that's Moses. He's literally in the Bible. Of course God would listen to him. Going back to James, he writes in chapter 5, and I think I have this verse in the slide.

The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah, or in our case Moses, was a man with a nature like ours, meaning he's just a regular man without any special DNA or spiritual superpowers.

And he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months, it did not rain on the earth. Or again, in our case today, that Moses prayed that the deluge of flies would relent

against Egypt.

[ 25 : 19 ] Brothers and sisters, does this not excite you to pray? I'm really thankful for Lauren to share that prophecy today. I feel like God is orchestrating something for us.

That this text is an example for how our prayers have more power than world leaders. Perhaps you feel like you're in a situation where there is no escape or answers, similar to Lauren's prophecy.

Maybe you're struggling with your physical health. Maybe you or someone you love feels, you feel that is enslaved to habitual sins and feel like there will never be change.

Maybe you're feeling hopeless about your future prospects of a relationship or career. This is one of many examples throughout Scripture where God listens and then takes action from the prayers of a sinful person.

The same is happening right here, right now in our own church, Chinatown, Cambridge. And from our limited vantage point, he's been actively answering prayers.

[ 26 : 29 ] For example, for new elders and Matt, for the sending out of missionaries, for healthy new life, for unity and love amongst our church, for spiritual protection and sanctification, for growth in evangelism.

There's so much more that God is doing too that we don't directly see or give God thanks for. And we have to start to see the problems of our lives not just as obstacles or setbacks, but more as new opportunities for us to pray, opportunities to see God's hand move, just like Moses saw.

We come to the fifth plague where it follows a similar pattern where Moses confronts Pharaoh with a familiar line, demanding that he lets the Hebrews go, that they may serve him. As the fifth plague, God graciously warns the king in chapter nine, verse three, that a very severe plague will fall upon your livestock that are in the field.

The severity of the plagues continue to build as this fifth plague is the first that bring about death in Egypt. This reminds me of what Jesus said to Paul back in Paul's account of his conversion in Acts 26, 14.

It's hard for you to kick against the goats. An ox goad was essentially a sharp stick. It was used to steer the animal in the right direction.

[ 28 : 01 ] If the animal refused to change its course, it would resist, resulting in a harsher, more painful stab from the goat. And Pharaoh and his stubbornness continue to ramp up the severity of these miracles.

And again, just as God did in the fourth plague, he makes a clear distinction between Goshen and Egypt, between God's people and Pharaoh's people. God gives a day for Pharaoh to relent and to soften his stubborn heart, but with the implied no answer, God strikes.

A plague or sickness takes the lives of most of the domesticated animals in the land of Egypt in one day. Moses likely is using hyperbole, an exaggeration in verse six, in which he wrote, all the livestock of the Egyptians died because, well, livestock are still mentioned later and some of the subsequent plagues.

But still, for an agricultural society as most societies were back then, this had to be massively crippling economically to the land of Egypt. Just imagine all the cars in Boston going kaput in just one day.

Then Pharaoh sends his people to Goshen to really check and to look up the truth, whether God was actually telling the truth or bluffing. Tells the truth, to look up the truth of what God warns, and potentially maybe to buy back some animals.

[ 29 : 28 ] And lo and behold, Goshen was untouched. It's twice now that God has made this distinction between his people and Pharaoh's people. This is truly a divine mercy because we read on in Deuteronomy 7, right when the new generation of Israelites enter into the promised land, Moses preaches, the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession.

Out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth, it was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were fewest of all peoples.

And it's because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers. Did you catch God's reasoning for why he chose Israel?

It's definitely not because of their great number or anything really intrinsic to themselves, but simply because he loves them and is faithful to the gracious promises to their forefathers.

Case in point, it's simply because of grace. This concept of distinction isn't exclusive to the Old Testament as in the New Testament, Jesus later talks about making this distinction between his own people and the followers of the world and Satan, between the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25.

[ 30 : 55 ] When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Then he will say to those on his left, depart from me, you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. There is future judgment coming.

And like these plagues in our passage today, Jesus is making a clear distinction between those who are part of his people and those who are not.

The promises of blessing, hope, and eternal love truly are exclusively for those who are his children by faith. This is a hard message for our day and age where inclusivity is more and more valued, more and more prized.

[ 32 : 09 ] But while these blessings are indeed exclusive, the good news of Jesus Christ is that the invitation is not. Let me say that again, that while these blessings are exclusive, the good news is that the invitation is not.

If you've joined us today for worship and you haven't professed your allegiance to Christ, as the Holy Spirit says in Hebrews 3, 7, today, today, if you hear God's voice, do not harden your hearts. There's only a set time where this invitation will be extended, so don't delay. Jesus is calling for you today. And we know that like Pharaoh, all of us have rejected God and his will.

Both he and we refuse to live for him and fulfill our proper roles as God's servants and vice regents on this earth. We desire to be our own gods, establishing our own kingdoms.

And this is what scripture defines to be sin. And because God's immaculate holiness, he couldn't be in the presence of us filthy sinners.

[ 33 : 15 ] And more than that, because of his perfect justice, he, the great judge, must punish sin with the sentence of eternal damnation and death.

But the good news, again, is that every single person, no matter who you are, what you've done, is that you're invited. You're invited into an intimate relationship with your creator by believing in your hearts and confessing with your mouths that Jesus is Lord.

That he, though he is God, came not to be served, but to serve by living a perfectly righteous life, dying the death we deserved, and resurrecting to conquer death.

Again, today, if you hear God's voice, do not harden your hearts. For those of us who are already part of his family, it's good for me to remind you that it's through Jesus' death and resurrection that Jesus, as Peter teaches us in 1 Peter 2, that we are now a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. This is amazing grace.

[ 34 : 42 ] Just like Israel, there is nothing intrinsic to ourselves and why you were saved. Nothing that God needed or expected out of us when he chose us.

If you're anything like me and that you try to keep proving yourself to God and your worth, please let this truth put you to ease.

Rest easy, my friends. I need to preach this to myself. I'm preaching that to myself right now.

There's so much freedom in letting grace be free.

Letting grace be grace. No more proving or self-validation. We were once a people with no identity, fully deserving of God's just wrath, but now we are God's people.

And this is truly the most important distinction in all of human history. This means that those who are part of this family, we're in a better off position than really the rest of this world. The poorest of us, we're infinitely richer.

[ 35 : 44 ] We're more treasured than the richest in this world. The least secure of us in the eyes of this world, we're safer. We're more protected, more provided for than royalty or world leaders if they

don't know Christ.

The most foolish of us or wiser than the smartest philosophers that don't see him. It's not because of your individual pedigrees or resumes or talents, but because of grace.

Grace is everything. Pray that you would take comfort in that. Come to our final plague of our passage today, the sixth and final plague of the second trio, Mirrors.

The third plague, both in its brevity and its focus on the Egyptian magicians. Similar to the third and ninth plague, the account of the sixth plague doesn't record Moses or Aaron confronting Pharaoh, though it could be assumed that they did have similar confrontations as before.

Instead, Moses is directly commanded to take symbolic action by taking handfuls of soot from the kiln and throwing it in the air in the sight of Pharaoh.

[ 37 : 01 ] It's in a sense poetic justice because we remember that Israelites were commanded in harsh slavery to make bricks in these kilns. A kiln, if you don't know, as a type of oven on top of their daily quota without any straw.

So, Moses obeys and God causes boils to break out both on man and beast. And as I mentioned before, these signs have been ramping up in intensity as this is the first real demonstration to the Egyptians that their own lives are in danger.

Prior to the boils, it's been annoying frogs and flies, but now it's their own skin on the line. Even more so if you've been tracking the de-evolution and the unraveling of their ministry, the magicians go from successfully imitating the, successfully imitating Yahweh's miracle of transforming a staff to a serpent and water to blood to observing how the plague of gnats was caused by the finger of God and not being able to conjure up even some gnats.

And now, not only are they not able to reproduce this sixth plague of boils, but now they can't even stand before Moses. In ancient Egypt, healing was frequently linked to magical rituals undertaken by priests in their temples.

The very priests to whom the Egyptians might look to for help are themselves afflicted and their powerlessness to ward off this bodily ailment, it underlines yet again the superior strength of God.

[ 38 : 41 ] Finally, get to the end of the passage where in verse 12 we read, but the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he did not listen to them as the Lord had spoken to Moses. This is the third time we've read some closing, some version of this closing.

In the fourth plague, we read that it's Pharaoh himself who hardened his heart. Then for the fifth plague, it's the passive form where it says that the heart was hardened.

Finally, we read explicitly that it is the Lord, the Lord is the one who hardened the heart of Pharaoh. We get both responses, that it's both Pharaoh himself and God who hardened the heart of the king. I'm not going to delve deep into these questions as both Sean and Matt have touched upon this in previous sermons. If you have any questions, I encourage you to go back and listen to those. But I will add to make clear that God is not forcing Pharaoh to do something against his own will.

That interpretation is not supported by the narrative that we read. The strengthening of Pharaoh's heart is about giving Pharaoh the boldness and the stubbornness to do what he most desires.

[ 39 : 53 ] And we read until the actual exodus of the Israelites, Pharaoh consistently refuses to let God have his way. Take heart, saints, that our God is not the author of evil.

But our God truly is in control. Let's take comfort in these last few words in today's passage that just as the Lord had spoken to Moses, Pharaoh refused to listen.

This is all going according to God's plan. Your own lives are going according to God's good and gracious plan. God's not worried about your life and your story so neither should you.

So hopefully by the help of the Holy Spirit you've been able to see a clear picture of a sovereign God who is fighting for his people. Sign after sign as they grow in intensity we see how far God is willing to go for his glory and for the deliverance of his people.

If you are made powerless in this world find your power and hope in prayer to the God who will listen to you. More importantly know your great identity and grace as God's chosen people.

[ 41 : 12 ] If you haven't put your faith in Christ again I reiterate please come talk to any one of our church members. I'm so confident in their ability to be God's ambassadors in this world.

Let's pray. Father would you help us to see what kind of love that you've given us that we should be called your children and so we are.

God would we boast more and more of you less of us. Give us eyes to see your glory and to cherish it above all other things in this world. convict us cut us to the heart teach us that you are good

Father.

We love you and we thank you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.