



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Exodus 8:20-10:29

Exodus

“God’s Patience Plagues 4 through 9”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you, Ray, for that biography. The text that we deal with this morning may seem a bit different from the hymn that we sung, in a sense, but really it expresses doctrine that underlies the kind of assurance that we can have that everything is well with our soul because we center on the sovereign power of God and its sovereignty in the plagues of Egypt that led to the redemption of the people of Israel. And so we do speak of redemption. We speak of a sovereign God who is in control, and because of that, we can have that assurance that it’s well with our soul. Regardless of the afflictions that we go through, He’s in control.

Now our passage this morning is Exodus 8:20 through 10:29, a rather lengthy passage. And so in order to avoid spending the rest of the hour reading, let’s look at a different passage that I think summarizes well the material that we’ll cover this morning in Psalm 105, and we’ll look at verses 25-36, and then we’ll look at the text of Exodus. It will be something of a survey. We could spend more time on it, but I think we can handle it nicely in one lesson.

But in Psalm 105, the psalmist writes of the wonderful works that God has performed for his people, Israel, and he speaks of how, in verses 23-24 of this Psalm, He brought Jacob into Ham, or the land of Egypt, and there He multiplied him. And we read in verse 24, “... caused His people to be very fruitful, and made them stronger than their adversaries,” referring to the Egyptians. And then he says that the Egyptians, in verse 25, “He turned their heart to hate His people, and deal craftily with His servants.”

And one thing we’ve noticed, or we will see it this morning, is how craftily, how deceptively Pharaoh would deal with Moses, “He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron, whom He had chosen. They performed His wondrous acts among them, and miracles in

the land of Ham. He sent darkness and made it dark; and they did not rebel against His words. He turned their waters into blood and caused their fish to die. Their land swarmed with frogs even in the chambers of their king. He spoke, and there came swarms of flies and gnats in all their territory. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He struck down their vines also and their fig trees. He shattered their trees, the trees of their territory. He spoke, and locusts came, and young locusts, even without number, and ate up all vegetation in their land, and ate up the fruit of their ground. He also struck down the firstborn in their land, the first fruits of all their vigor.” Let’s bow together in a word of prayer and ask the Lord to bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study together. Let’s pray.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you that we have opportunity this morning to continue studying the scriptures. And as we do look at these things before us, we contemplate the all mighty hand that you stretched out upon Egypt to show your wonders, to show your size, to show your power over the elements and over the very hearts of men. We are reminded that you are truly the absolute solemn God of the universe. We bow before you. We worship you and praise you and thank you that we are your people. Through no work of our own, but we are in your hand of safety not of wrath by your grace, and we have been purchased for you through the blood of your Son. We thank you for that.

We do remember, Father, those whose names are listed on the calendar of concern, and we remember circumstances that are not specifically mentioned. We pray for the difficulties that many are going through physically. We pray for healing. We pray for comfort. We pray for the financial situations of many people and pray that you would bless. You invite us to pray for our daily bread, and we do that. We ask that you would make provision. We pray for our men in the Middle East, and we ask your blessing would be upon them. We pray for a speedy end to this conflict and pray that it would be brought to an end with very few casualties. We pray for our leaders. To that end, we pray that you give them wisdom. We pray your blessings would be poured out upon this nation. We pray that revival would occur and that men would turn their hearts to you.

Now we pray you bless our time of study together, and we ask that you would enrich us. We pray that you would instruct us. We pray that this would

be a time in which you are exalted and each of us are edified. We pray this in Christ’s name. Amen.

[Message] We’re continuing our study on the plagues of Egypt, the events that happened some 3,000 and plus years ago and yet events that seem strangely contemporary. Perhaps it’s premature to draw parallels, but it’s hard, at least for me, to resist seeing a similarity between Saddam and Pharaoh. Both men are characterized by stubborn hearts refusing to face facts and yield to overwhelming odds. Now if it seems obstinate to resist the high tech armies of the alliance, how much more obstinate is it to resist the Lord God? Saddam can inflict casualties, but Pharaoh couldn’t touch the Lord. And in Pharaoh’s case, he proves the point that a person can only resist the Lord to his own destruction and in Pharaoh’s case, the destruction of his whole land.

As I contemplate the events that are unfolding in the Persian Gulf and the early events in the book of Exodus, the first chapters of it that we’ve been studying, I’m reminded of that first passage in Hosea 13:11 where the Lord says, “I gave you a king in my anger and took him away in my wrath.” Now in that passage, He’s speaking of the kings that he had given to Israel. We can think of Saul, Rehoboam, and others, but that’s a principle that’s played out throughout history. And in the case of Egypt, as the plagues indicate and the devastation that we will see that came upon the land, He did give Pharaoh in his wrath and in his anger. But possibly, as we will see in our passage, he gave Pharaoh to Egypt. He gave Pharaoh to history as a means of revealing himself through Pharaoh’s resistance. Pharaoh had asked the question, “Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?” And through Pharaoh’s obstinacy, the Lord answers his question with the miraculous signs and wonders of the plagues, which not only demonstrate His sovereign power but demonstrate very clearly that He is the only true God. And of the gods of Egypt, the fact that the gods of Canaan and the ancient world, the gods of the modern world are no gods at all.

In fact, if you’ll remember from our study last week and in previous lessons, Moses explains the plagues. He interprets them in Numbers 33:4 as judgments on the gods of Egypt. And as we pointed out last week, God made war on those gods to show that He is the only true God. So the signs and the wonders of the book of Exodus reveal a great deal about the Lord that He is the unique God, that He is sovereign over creation, that He is both savior and judge, but also we see in these passages in these plagues that we look at that God as long-suffering toward the sinner.

That’s really how Paul interprets the way God deals with Pharaoh in Romans 9. And if you’ll turn over to Romans 9, we’ll look at verses 14-24. I really just want to read them. I think they speak for themselves, but this is really Paul’s commentary on the way God dealt with Pharaoh. And one verse, in particular, is taken from our passage this morning. But beginning with verse 14, Paul writes, “What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!” And that’s a principle to remember as we go through our passage. God is not unjust, and anything He does – all that He does is just and righteous.

So Paul begins with that point, “For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.” It’s not dependant on man’s ability. It’s not dependant on anything about man. It’s on God. “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth,’” and that’s the passage – the verse that comes out of our passage in chapter 9 that we’ll deal with in a few moments. “So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?’” In other words, how can you blame Pharaoh for what he did? He simply followed the outworking of the hardening, didn’t he?

Well, Paul answers that objection. It’s the kind of objection, by the way, that’s always raised in regard to Pharaoh and God’s dealings with him. Paul said, “On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known,” and this is really the point that I want to underline in the reading of this passage, “endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory.” God could have destroyed Pharaoh. He could have destroyed all of Egypt in one, great catastrophic miracle, but he didn’t. Paul says He endured Pharaoh. Much long suffering over a period of many months – we don’t know how many months these events took – transpired, but over a period of time, He gave Pharaoh opportunities to turn from his willful resistance and to obey, but Pharaoh wouldn’t.

Now it’s true that God hardened his heart. We see that very clearly in our passage this morning in Exodus. We saw that last we read in Romans 9, but still Pharaoh was no pawn in all of this. He was a man who made genuine decisions in light of overwhelming evidence. He was responsible as all men are. Now you and I may not be able to bridge what seems to us to be a gap between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, but the Bible clearly presents both, and we are to accept both. God is sovereign over all of His creation. He’s truly sovereign, and because of that, He has a right to use His creation as He wills to use it. And his sovereignty extends not only over the elements of creation but over the very hearts of men. As Solomon writes in Proverbs 21, “The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.” And there is probably no greater example of that than Pharaoh in the book of Exodus.

But Pharaoh was responsible. He did harden his own heart in the outworking of God’s will. He was a willful king with whom God was long suffering. And so in addition to showing God’s power, in addition to showing God’s glory and the exercise of that power, we also see God’s patience with the sinner. He is long-suffering. And so all of this is designed to unfold, to reveal the nature of God. He is a just God. He is a powerful God, but he is a patient God. He’s long-suffering.

We have studied the first series of plagues. Last week we studied the first three, and if you’ll remember, we spoke of three triads of plagues. The first nine plagues are divided into three sections, three plagues in each section. So now, we take up the second six. The first, or rather the second of this series – the first plague of the second of this series begins in 8:20 with the swarm of insects. And here for the first time, it is stated that the Lord would protect the land of Goshen, the region in which Israelites lived. He’d protect them from the plagues. He would, as He says in verses 22-23 – He would set it apart from the land of Egypt. He would put a division between the Israelites and the Egyptians. Then as if to forewarn the Egyptians, He gave Pharaoh and give Pharaoh time to repent, He gave them, or He told them, the time in which these things would happen, in which this plague would occur.

Moses says in verse 23 that it would happen tomorrow. And that’s another demonstration of God’s absolute sovereignty. This time, sovereignty over both time and space with the announcement of when it would occur, He seems to be in control of the timing and the events of time itself. And then the fact that He would divide between one

region of Egypt and the rest of the land and protect that one region from the plagues indicates that He is sovereign over space over the lands that He governs.

So he makes this announcement, Moses does to Pharaoh, but as he did previously, Pharaoh refused to obey. So the Lord did as He said he would do. We read in verse 8:24, “Then the Lord did so. And there came great swarms of insects.” Now the Authorized Version has “flies,” but the Hebrew text has “great swarms.” And so the New American Standard Bible simply translates it “insects,” but it may well have been “flies” as many think it was. These flies or insects came “. . . into the house of Pharaoh and the houses of his servants, and the land was laid waste because of the swarms of insects in all of the land of Egypt.”

Now Pharaoh begins to relent. In verse 25, he “. . . called for Moses and Aaron and said, ‘Go, sacrifice to your God within the land.’” Moses, however, rejected the offer. God had said outside the land, in the wilderness. Pharaoh says, “You can do it, but it’s got to be inside the land.” And Moses says no to that. They must go into the wilderness, which Pharaoh agrees to with the condition that they not go very far away. And then he adds in verse 28, “Make supplication for me.” So Moses left Pharaoh, and he prayed for him. And we read that the Lord did as Moses asked and removed the swarm of insects, but we read in verse 32, “. . . Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.”

This became the opportunity for the fifth plague, and in 9:1, the Lord instructs Moses to return to Pharaoh with the message, “Let my people go,” and the threat of a plague on Egypt’s livestock. Now once again, as we’ve seen before, this is an attack on Egypt’s religion because the Egyptians worshipped animals, numerous kinds of animals but particularly the bull and the goat. And Amenhotep II, whom we’ve suggested was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, had a particular fanatical zeal for the worship of animals. In fact, they have discovered – archaeologists have discovered sandstone statues of him paying homage to the cow, and there’s one with his head underneath the head of a cow, and another one where he’s drinking the divine milk of the cow. So he was greatly devoted. In fact, one writer says he surpassed, in his fanatical devotion the worship of animals, all those pharaohs who had preceded him. And when you think about Amenhotep, the Pharaoh of the Exodus, and his devotion to the calf, to the bull, you can see where the influence might have come later, as we’ll see in this book, with Egypt’s – rather Israel’s apostasy and worship of the golden calf. Well with this plague, however, He – the Lord proves the folly

of making a golden calf – proves the folly of worshipping animals. It’s another blow against polytheism.

We read in 9:6 that “... all the livestock of Egypt died.” Now that doesn’t mean that every animal, all – every single cow and goat, in the land of Egypt died because the next two plagues speak of the affliction against the livestock. What it probably refers to is either all the livestock that was out in the fields not being protected, or this may be an example of hyperbole that is deliberate exaggeration to underscore the point that this was a disaster that was unparalleled. Many, many, many of their livestock had been killed in this plague. Verse 7 states, “Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not even one of the livestock of Israel dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.”

The sixth plague now comes reported in 9:8-12, and it came without warning. At the direction of the Lord, Moses took handfuls of soot from a kiln and, standing before Pharaoh, threw it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on man and beast. And this time, the magicians were afflicted with the plague. Earlier, they tried to keep pace with Moses and Aaron in doing the miracles. And you remember how they duplicated some of them, but when it came to the gnats, they couldn’t do so. Now they can’t even stand before Moses. As one writer puts it, they were driven from the field. They tried to compete, and they can no longer do that because the Lord has now defeated the magicians of Egypt just as he had defeated the gods of Egypt.

Now in verse 13, there is some theological explanation for the events in Egypt. It’s this text from which Paul quotes in Romans 9, which we read earlier. In Exodus 9:13, “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, ‘Let my people go, that they may serve me. For this time I will send all my plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. For if by now I had put forth my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would have been cut off from the earth. But indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain in order to show my power and in order to proclaim my name through all the earth.’”

Now that expression in verse 16, “allowed you to remain” is literally “caused you to stand.” The New International Version, if you have that, you’ll notice translates it in a way that’s really more consistent with Paul’s statement in Romans 9:17 and, I think, more consistent with the Hebrew text that says, “I have raised you up.” In which case, He is stating here, “Pharaoh, I put you on the throne. I made you the man that you are. I put you

on the field of history.” And in doing so, He has hardened his heart in that position in order to work out His will, work out His purpose through this king, which He placed in power.

And the purpose He states in verse 16 was to show His power in him for the ultimate purpose of proclaiming His name through all the earth. So He raised up Pharaoh, and it’s a statement to this arrogant king, who no doubt thought he was a self-sufficient man. He was a descendant of the gods, and the Lord God is saying, “You want to know who I am that you should obey me? I am the very one that put you where you are, and I have done so in order to work out my will in your life in a very dramatic and a very clear way,” and that is to proclaim – to show His power and to proclaim His name through all the earth.

Well in line with that, look at 10:1-2. This is directed to Moses, and He says to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may perform these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, that you may know that I am the Lord.” In both cases, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, the plagues, which were occasioned by that hardening, were for the purpose of making known the Lord, making known His name, revealing His name. As we’ve seen throughout this study, that is one of the main purposes of the book of Exodus. It is to unfold the meaning of the name Yahweh, who He is.

And so the point here is to reveal who God is. Pharaoh and the plagues made the Lord known as the God who defeated the gods of Egypt, the God who defeated polytheism all false religion as the only God, as the one who is sovereign over nature because He controls the elements, as the one who was sovereign over history because He controls kings’ hearts, and time itself as the truly sovereign God who governs all things for the salvation of His people and the defeat of His enemies. Enemies as great as Egypt itself, which was at this time, the greatest nation in the world, which He says, “I made a mockery of Egypt.” Another way to translate that statement is, “I have made a toy of Egypt.” And so great Egypt is nothing but a toy to God, and its resistance is foolish because that’s how great the Lord God is. And so He raised up Pharaoh. He gave prosperity to Egypt in order to show His greatness in defeating it.

You’ll notice in neither passage does the Lord say that the plagues were sent because of Pharaoh’s sin or because Egypt deserved judgment. Now chapters 1 and 2 make it very clear that Pharaoh and Egypt had sinned, but that’s not the explanation that the

Lord gives for His dealing with Pharaoh. The signs or the calamities came in order to reveal His name, and that in itself is justification for what God does. That’s enough reason for Him to harden the heart of Pharaoh, to perform these great wonders. He doesn’t have to justify Himself before us, but that’s justification enough.

Remember what Paul said in Romans 9, “He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?” God is righteous in all that He does not because He does what is right but because what He does is right, and He is the sovereign creator, who is just as Paul points out. We may not understand all of this, but we can know that God is in complete control, and God is totally just in all He does, and men are responsible. So God is sovereign, and I think this is very clearly pointed out in these passages. Nevertheless, the knowledge He made known to Pharaoh was, in itself, a warning that it is futile to resist the Lord. It is a further opportunity, this message that will be given to him by Moses, to repent, to turn, to not resist.

And the fact that the warning was given repeatedly shows that in all of this, the Lord had been very patient with this king. As He says in verse 15, had He chosen, He could have put forth His hand and cut off Pharaoh and Egypt from the earth, but instead He repeatedly sent Moses and Aaron with the request, “Let my people go.” He repeatedly demonstrated His great power, His great authority in the plagues that He sent upon Egypt. And He sends – He brings plagues of gradual intensity, and yet, as verse 17 states, “Still you exalt yourself against my people by not letting them go.”

And so the severest plagues of all would now fall. And Pharaoh was destined to become, and as F.B. Meyer states, “. . . a beacon and a warning, a sign to all generations that if man will not bend, he must break.” Verse 18 Moses announces a new plague, one of severe hail, which will be accompanied by fire, or we should interpret as lightning. And it’s a storm that was without parallel in Egypt’s history. Rain itself is very rare in Egypt. I think in the city of Cairo, they have an annual rainfall of two inches, and then to the south, there is no rain at all during the year. So Egypt was totally unprepared for this. They don’t have much rain at all and certainly not hail.

But in an act of mercy toward the Egyptians, they are warned to avoid the blow by bringing their cattle, their livestock, into the shelter. It’s a kind of gospel call like the call that we see in John the Baptist, flee the wrath to come. And here, as whenever the gospel is preached, there are those who avail themselves of the opportunity and those who don’t. Some of Egypt did obey, and they took care of their livestock, but others didn’t. Then at

the command of the Lord, Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. It struck men and animals that were in the field. It shattered trees. Egypt was wrecked.

In verses 31 and 32, the destruction is described how the flax and the grain were destroyed by the hail and the lightning, and those were major Egyptian exports, and they were throughout the centuries. You remember from the book of Genesis and particularly Genesis, we see how Jacob – well, Abraham before Jacob. When famine hit Canaan, they would – people would come down to Egypt because there was always grain there. Egypt’s economy wasn’t dependent on the rainfall; it was dependent on the Nile, which was usually almost always consistent in its overflow because it was dependent on the rains in tropical Africa, which were very consistent. They were great exporters of grain and flax, and now that’s been destroyed. So this was a severe economic blow upon the land. But again the land of Goshen was spared, and in that, I think we see very clearly, distinguishing grace in how God protects His people in the midst of difficulty.

And so with this, Pharaoh seems to repent, and we read in verses 27 and 28, “Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, ‘I have sinned this time; the Lord is the righteous one. I and my people are the wicked ones. Make supplication to the Lord, for there has been enough of God’s thunder and hail.’” Actually, that word “thunder” is literally – it’s “voices.” There’s been enough of the voices of God. He hears the voice of God in the thunder. He says, “I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.”

Moses agrees to intercede, but he also saw through Pharaoh’s apparent change of heart, and he knew that it was really a false change of heart. He says in verse 30, “As for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear God.” Nevertheless, he went out of the city, spread out his hands to the Lord, and the hail ceased. But again Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not let the sons of Israel go just as the Lord had spoken to Moses. And so a more severe plague will follow.

Moses and Aaron again appear to Pharaoh to announce the plague. But first they seem to plead with Pharaoh to repent, and in so doing, to avert disaster. We read in verses 10:3-5, “Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me. For if you refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory, and they shall cover the surface of the land, so that no one shall be able to see the land. They shall eat – They shall also eat the rest of what has

escaped – what is left to you from the hail, and they shall eat every tree which sprouts for you out of the field.” Plagues of locusts were devastating catastrophes in the ancient world, and they still are to this very day.

Locusts – plagues of locusts still occur occasionally in Egypt. In fact, in 1889, a swarm of locusts flew across the Red Sea that was estimated to be the size of 2,000 square miles. Now the threat of locusts is still serious so much so that in 1945, the Anti-Locust Research Centre was established in London in order to try to control and to fight these plagues. But really, there’s little that can be done to control or to stop a plague of locusts. Teams who try to do that will use flamethrowers against them, but that is ultimately ineffective. The only thing that really rids the land of a plague of locusts is the wind and the elements. So when it happens, one’s at the mercy of those plagues. Back in 1969, *National Geographic* did an article on locusts entitled “Locusts: Teeth of the Wind.” I think that’s an apt description. They come, and they eat.

And Egypt had experienced it before but never a plague as bad as this one. By now, Pharaoh’s officials are beginning to get wise to the situation, and they realize that it’s hopeless to resist the Lord. And so in verse 7, we read that they give some counsel to Pharaoh. They say to him, “How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?”

And so Pharaoh tried to strike a bargain with Moses and Aaron. He called them back, and he said that Israel could go, but they had to leave the children, making them, in effect, hostages to Egypt. Pharaoh did not want to lose his slaves. They were great to his economy. He wants to hold onto them. Plus there’s pride involved in all of this. He doesn’t want to yield. “So you can go, but leave the children as a guarantee that you’ll return.” Moses refused to do that, and so Pharaoh, exasperated, drove Moses and Aaron from his presence. And so the plague fell. Moses stretched out his staff, and it even brought the locusts. They covered the whole land and ate any green thing that the hail had left.

And again, Pharaoh professes to repent. So Moses interceded, and the Lord shifted the wind and drove all of the locusts into the Red Sea. But again, when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, we read that the Lord hardened his heart, and he did not let the sons of Israel go. It shows that people can make professions or repentance, professions of faith, that are really empty professions. Twice Pharaoh says, “I have sinned.” He does that in 9:27, and he says it here in 10:16, but there’s no reality to his repentance.

His refusal to obey occasions the ninth plague, the plague of darkness for which there is no warning. And it was darkness that verse 21 says could be felt. Verse 22 states there was “... thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days.” And then we read in verse 23, “They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.” So again, this shows the sovereign power of God and illustrates His sovereign distinguishing grace. Light speaks of truth; light speaks of salvation. We see our Lord described as the light of the world. And yet, when He is judged on the cross in our place, darkness surrounds that cross, and it does so for three hours.

So maybe there’s a connection here between the three days of darkness upon Egypt, which are judgment upon that land, and the three days – three hours of darkness, which were judgment on our Lord. But just as there was light in Goshen, so His people today dwell in spiritual light and life. Well judgment comes upon Egypt, but the distinguishing grace is seen in the light that’s in Goshen.

The darkness that falls on Egypt is very strange. It’s darkness that could be felt. It was a tangible kind of darkness. And so that raises the question, what kind of darkness was it? Well, it may have been the darkness that was caused by a sandstorm or a dust storm. An 11th-century Arab chronicler records a great storm accompanied by darkness so intense that it was thought that the end of the world had arrived. No doubt, many of these Egyptians thought that the end of the world had come.

And again, Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and he offered a compromise. They could go worship the Lord, but they had to leave their flocks and their herds. Now that’s a bit – that’s a better deal than the previous one. They could take their children this time but leave their herds. Pharaoh needed some herds at this point, and they’d help him out if they didn’t return. But again Moses refused. That’s not what the Lord had commanded. All were to leave, and Pharaoh – and Moses won’t compromise again.

You see, there’s a tremendous change in Moses from what we saw of him at his call when he was standing before the burning bush and even after he had returned to Egypt to begin his ministry. You remember he began very fearful. He was unsure of himself. He was even unsure of the Lord. He didn’t really trust the promises. But now he’s bold, and that’s the work of the Lord. Moses finally steps out in faith, and as he steps out in faith, he sees the hand of the Lord, and as he sees the hand of the Lord, his strength – his faith is

strengthened and it increases. And because of that, he refuses to compromise with this great monarch.

It’s very easy for us to compromise with the world, and to compromise with this man would have been a very easy thing to do. In fact, he almost begins to be a little bit reasonable. He lowers his price. He lowers his demands, but the man of faith doesn’t do that. A man of faith knows what God has promised, and he not only believes the promises of God, he believes that God can perform those promises. That’s why he believes them. And Pharaoh, or rather Moses, had come to trust the Lord implicitly in all of this. He’d seen His hand. His faith was strengthened, and he will not compromise with the world.

Moses insisted that Pharaoh comply fully with the command of God, but we read in verse 27, “The Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was not willing to let them go.” And so enraged at Moses’ inflexibility, Pharaoh drove Moses and Aaron from the palace warning Moses, “Do not see my face again, for the day you see my face you shall die!”

Now that was the kind of threat that earlier would have unnerved Moses, but now he stands calm and resolute. He says to Pharaoh in verse 29, “You are right; I shall never see your face again!” Then there’s a note of judgment in that. So he left, and as one writer states, “Great silence settled down upon the land like the stillness which precedes a tropical thunderstorm.” The magicians had quit the conflict. The gods of Egypt were defeated and proved nonexistent in helping the people. Pharaoh’s policy of resisting God had proven a disaster for his nation. Time and again, Moses and Aaron had come with God’s message, “Let the people go.” Pharaoh had refused. He’d resisted. As Paul says, “To make His power known, He endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.”

He had many opportunities, Pharaoh did, but now the stage was set for the climactic and worst plague of all, the tenth plague with the death of the firstborn of Egypt. These events may be ancient, but they have a contemporary ring to them. Men today, as in every generation, think that they can resist God and win. They can refuse the gospel, but they can only do so to their own destruction. And these plagues illustrate the meaning of Hebrews 10:31, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” And these plagues only illustrate in a vague way what the author of Hebrews is speaking of. God who is love is also, as the author of Hebrews points out, a consuming fire. He is not one to be resisted, and yet, He is also patient toward the sinner. And His patience is an opportunity to flee to Him, to flee the wrath to come. As John, or as our Lord promises in the gospel of John of verse 37, “All who come to Him, He will certainly not cast out.”

So as we conclude our lesson, I ask the question, have you come to him? Remember while there was judgment on unbelieving Egypt, there was deliverance. There was protection. There was light in Goshen, and all of these events were leading up to Israel’s deliverance. They point toward salvation, and there is salvation in the Lord. Ultimately all of this looks to the salvation in the cross of Jesus Christ. And so we’re invited to flee to Him, to flee to the cross, embrace the Lord through faith. Those who do, have life. Those who believe in Him, as the scriptures promise, will be saved forever. Let’s bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the truth that we see before us. We thank you for the promises that are made. We remember the sovereign power of our Lord and how that is the guarantee that His promises will be fulfilled. We thank you for that and pray that you give us great comfort. And remember that at all times it is well with our soul not because of anything within us but because of your grace and your power. Thank you for that in Christ’s name. Amen.