

Exodus Chapter 7 v 25 to Chapter 8 v 19

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[0 : 00] Would you turn with me to Exodus and chapter 8? Exodus and chapter 8, the book we've been looking at in Sunday mornings.

We had a little break last week. And reminding ourselves, God's people, the Israelites, were in slavery in Egypt for 400 years.

And then God raised up a rescuer in Moses. And after 40 years as a shepherd in the wilderness, Moses was sent back to Egypt by God. And he's already performed one plague, the blood, the Nile being changed into blood.

And that had no effect upon Pharaoh. He still would not let the people go. So we start at the end of chapter 7, verse 25, and into chapter 8.

So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt.

[1 : 43] And the frogs came up and covered the land. But the magicians did the same things by their secret arts. They also made frogs come up on the land of Egypt. Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, Pray to the Lord to take the frogs away from me and my people.

And I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the Lord. Moses said to Pharaoh, I leave it to you, the honor of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people, that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile.

Tomorrow, Pharaoh said. Moses replied, It will be as you say, so that you may know there is no one like the Lord our God. The frogs will leave you and your houses, your officials and your people.

They will remain only in the Nile. After Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh, Moses cried out to the Lord about the frogs he had brought on Pharaoh. And the Lord did what Moses asked.

The frogs died in the houses and in the courtyards and in the fields. They were piled into heaps and the land reeked of them. But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron just as the Lord had said.

[2 : 58] Then the Lord said to Moses, Tell Aaron, stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground. And throughout the land of Egypt the dust will become gnats. They did this.

And when Aaron stretched out his hand with the staff and struck the dust of the ground, gnats came upon men and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats.

But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals. The magician said to Pharaoh, This is the finger of God.

But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said. Well, if the children... Well, we're turning to Exodus and chapter 8.

If you'd like to have that portion of the Bible open. Just again to invite you to stay for lunch. Even if you weren't prepared to stay, if you haven't got anything in the oven, as it were, at home, please do stay and have lunch with us and fellowship with us.

[4 : 01] And again, please join us tonight. Tonight is the last of our journeys in the book of Colossians, the letter of Colossians. So we're bringing that to a close after these past months. And I trust that the Lord will help us go out with a bang in that wonderful letter.

So we're in Exodus 8 and we've already just had a little update on that. I was reading a book recently by a man called Ian Rees. It's a very encouraging little book called Faith in the Furnace. And in that book, he tells the tale of some friends of his who were missionaries in the Seychelles. A nice place to be a missionary, you might say. But in the Seychelles, on those islands, there are millions, I imagine, of little lizards called geckos.

And these geckos, because they are small, not only manage to sort of be in the forest and in the woods and in the gardens, but they also are found in the houses as well. And in fact, they not only find their way into your house, but into anything that hasn't got a very tight-fitting lid.

And so normally that's not so much a problem, because they're not dangerous or poisonous in that way. But on a few occasions, some of these exploring geckos have got themselves into a right fix, a fatal fix, as it were.

[5 : 21] One of them took residence in a toaster and was roasted before anyone knew that he was there. Another found its way into their kettle. The missionaries said they didn't notice anything particularly except that for several months the cups of teas had a strange flavor, which they put down just to the local water supply.

Unfortunately, several months later, while cleaning the kettle, they revealed the corpse of the unfortunate lizard. Well, in this second plague that God visits upon Pharaoh, he doesn't send geckos, but frogs, but they seem to create a very similar problem.

They get everywhere. Look at what God says. They will come, in verse 3, into your palace, your bedroom, your bed, in the ovens, the kneading troughs, everywhere.

And these frogs were there. The jars they drank from, the meals that they ate. It's fine, of course, if you don't mind eating frogs, legs and all, but otherwise a terrible nuisance.

The overwhelming number of frogs that came and disturbed the people in such a way that Pharaoh, in despair, actually summons Moses and Aaron and asks them to pray to remove the frogs.

[6 : 46] Verse 8, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, Pray to the Lord to take the frogs away from me and my people.

It was the abundance of frogs, the uncomfortableness of it all, the inconvenience of it all, the frustration of it all, that drove him to that place where he calls on God.

The first thing that we have to ask ourselves this morning in this passage is, what does God have to do in your life to get you to pray? How many frogs does he have to send into your kettle, into your life?

Before you turn to him and seek him for help. Now, of course, Pharaoh, first of all, turned to his magicians when the frogs came.

There in verse 6, he'd done that before. These con men, in one sense, these philosophers and all sorts of people. In verse 7, the magicians did the same thing with their secret arts.

[7 : 52] They could produce frogs just as before. They could turn the water into blood and before that they could turn staffs into snakes. So he turns to them, but they just made the problem greater, didn't they?

They just made more frogs. That wasn't really what he wanted them to do. He wanted them to take the frogs away, but they just made it even worse. And so now he has run out of options and he has nowhere to turn but to turn to God.

So the second question is this, why is God our last resort? Why is it that we try so many things, we might look to other people or look to our own resources, but it's only when really we run out of answers or possibilities that eventually we'll say, well then at last we'll pray, we'll turn to God.

Well, the problem, of course, is that we are proud. We know that Pharaoh was a man who had a hard heart and we saw that hard-heartedness is something which wasn't just Pharaoh's problem, it's our problem too.

And one of the key essential ingredients of hard-heartedness is pride. We are proud. It's a problem for all of us. It gets us into all sorts of difficulties and it gets us into all sorts of corners.

[9 : 08] And of course, being proud never actually offers any solutions to the very real needs that we have. It never actually answers the difficulty.

In the summer of 1986, two ships collided in the Black Sea just off the coast of Russia. Hundreds of passengers were drowned.

News of the disaster was further darkened when an investigation revealed the cause of the collision. It wasn't there was a technological problem, it wasn't that the radar had failed, it wasn't because there was thick fog.

The cause was human pride. You see, each captain was aware of the other ship heading towards them, but though both could have steered clear out the way, they didn't want to give way to each other and back down.

And so when they realized and decided they should move and came to their senses, it was too late. And the ships collided and sunk with the death of many. Pride.

[10 : 09] Pride. Pharaoh's actions here in this passage are characterized with pride. You see, pride in its simplest form is setting our will against God's will.

It's setting ourselves up against the living God. Back when Pharaoh first met Moses and Aaron and they told him what God's will was, that the people should be let go, this was the response. Who is the Lord that I should obey him? That's the attitude of pride, isn't it? Who's God? That I should do what he says. We see that pride is that self-importance that says that I am more important than God.

My will is more important than his will. And in one sense, we are placing ourselves up in a battle of wills against God. But let's be realistic.

In any battle with God, who on earth is going to win? It's obvious, isn't it? We can't fight God. We can't battle with him. We can't stand against his will.

[11:13] Yet we're foolish enough to think that we can. The Lord God is going to have his way in the end. And the longer we battle with him, the longer we put up our pride, the longer we put up our will against his, the more difficult it will be for us, the more painful it will be for us, the greater trouble we bring upon ourselves.

One of the things that we see here, and we shall see as we go through these ten plagues, is that again and again God begins gently, if I can put it that way, with Pharaoh, with showing his power, but ultimately as Pharaoh hardens and becomes more proud and resistant against God, so God in one sense lays his hand upon him in a heavier way.

Ultimately, with that final and most awful of plagues, the death of the firstborn. That's not how God started. God started with the frogs, a nuisance, an inconvenience, unpleasant.

What about Pharaoh then? In one sense he's written the book on how to be proud. What can we learn about his actions that we might avoid making that similar foolish, sinful mistake?

The first thing that we need to recognize, one thing that pride doesn't recognize, is that pride has limits. Pride has its own limits. As they say, every man has a price.

[12:44] There's only so far pride will keep us from going. Pharaoh could only put up with so many frogs in his soup. There was a limit of the number of frogs he had put up with.

The last thing he wanted to do was admit that he needed Moses and Aaron to pray for him, but he became so desperate for relief from these frogs, that he calls them to himself, and seems, as it were, to show a sign of weakness, doesn't he?

Pray for me. Take away the frogs, and I will let your people go, to offer sacrifice to the Lord. I'm sure Moses was delighted. He must have thought, this is great. Thank you, Lord, that Moses has been softened in his heart by this first plague, or this second plague, and the people will soon be free.

See, no matter how stubborn we may be, no matter how proud we may be, we all have a limit that we will bear, and when that limit is reached, then we break. It may be a certain amount of physical pain.

It may be a certain level of emotional distress. It may well be that we have that inner resource and strength that we can face, redundancy, and we can put up with financial loss, and even perhaps the repossession of our home, but then something else happens.

[14:03] The car breaks down or blows up on the motorway, and it's the straw that breaks the camel's back. It's the last thing we can take. We can't take it anymore. At last, we cry out for help.

Something happened, didn't there, in Pharaoh's palace. The number of frogs became too great.

One or two frogs in the palace, well, that's not too bad.

Kids bring frogs in, don't they, from the pond, so I put up with that before. A dozen or so, yes,

wandering around. I did tread on one the other day, but it's a bit of a squish, but yeah, that's okay.

But now I've got 50 in my bed. And I've got to clear them out every time I want to go to sleep. That's getting too much. And just at lunchtime, the chef came in, and there was one baked in a Yorkshire pudding.

And I just can't stand seeing another frog. And so at last, the limit of pride is reached.

[15:07] How many frogs is God going to have to send into your life, dear friends, before you reach a limit? How many frogs is he going to have to put in your bed, or in your Yorkshire pudding, or in your life, before you say, enough is enough.

I'm not going to fight anymore with you, God. You see, we recognize that though there was a limit to Pharaoh's pride, unfortunately what we realize is this, that pride not only has limits, it also has lies.

It tells itself. Pride tells its own lies. You see, Pharaoh decides he's going to make a deal with God.

Verse 8. You get rid of the frogs, I'll let the people go.

Notice the order of the, of the sort of the promise he makes, or the lie he says. You get rid of the frogs, and then I'll let them go. You do your end of the bargain, God, and then I'll keep my end of the bargain.

You see, if you've ever prayed in that way, or somebody has spoken to you about praying in that way, you can be sure, dear friends, that that sort of promise is already decided not to be kept. If you said, Oh God, if you sort this problem out for me, if you get my finances dealt with, if you help me to find a job, if you heal me of this sickness, well, yeah, I'll start going to church again, and I'll read my Bible, and I'll be a good person.

[16:37] You can be sure, dear friends, that once God keeps his end of the bargain, you won't, because you never intended to in the first place. Pharaoh reneges, doesn't he, upon his promise.

As soon as the frogs were dead, as soon as they were out of the way, what happens? He goes back on his word. Verse 15, When Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart, and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said.

God's not caught by surprise. Don't think that when you lie to God, somehow he's fooled. Don't think that when you make a promise, that you're not going to keep somehow, he goes, Oh, that's really good.

He knows your heart and mine. He knows that it's sinful. He knows that it's proud. He knows that it's stubborn. He knows that we're going to go back on our words. And yet, isn't it wonderful, and gracious of God, that he actually takes the frogs away?

He knew that Pharaoh wasn't going to keep his word. He could have just said, No, I'm not going to. I know you're not going to do it. But he does it. Isn't it amazingly gracious of God, that even in your sin, and even in your pride, and even in your stubbornness against him, that he's helped you?

[17:50] That he's actually heard you when you've cried, and looked to him for help? That he's actually answered? Isn't that gracious of God, when he knows that you're just going to renege upon it?

When you're just going to go back to the way you were, be the same old, same old, and ignore him once more, forget him once more, live for yourself once more.

You see, even if we did, at that moment, think that we would keep that promise, the trouble is that we're just getting ourselves into more problems.

Because we can't keep the promise, because we won't keep the promise, we've doubled our sin, as it were. We thought God could be bribed, and we've sinned against him even more. So where does that leave Pharaoh and God?

Well, God takes away the frogs, Pharaoh hardens his heart, but that's not the end of it. Pharaoh hasn't had the last word. Isn't that an obvious characteristic of a proud person?

[18:59] They've got to have the last word. Notice that when you're in a conversation with somebody, how you have to have the last word. I have to have the last word. It's a sign that we think that we are in control.

And so without warning, God sends yet another plague. Verse 16, If you thought frogs could get everywhere, just imagine where gnats can end up.

Not just in your bed and your bedroom, but everywhere. In your soap dish, in your shower, in your bath, in your hair, in your food, in your teeth. Probably only somebody who's ever visited or lived in the Scottish West Coast and Highlands can appreciate how unpleasant this plague was.

Because every year they have midges. Isn't that right? Every summer, it's estimated that 50 million biting midges can fill just one single hectare of land.

50 million in just a hectare of land. A space. So bad is the midge problem in the West Coast that there's a midge forecast. You can look it up. www.midgeforecast.co.uk And you can see where the worst load of midges are.

[20:16] It's a bit like the UV index. They get down south. They don't bother with it in the north, of course, about the sun. These midges were so thick that they're like the very dust of the ground.

Everywhere. The sky is thick. In the house, out of the house, you couldn't escape from them. You see, what had Pharaoh's pride done? What had Pharaoh's arrogance done in setting himself up against God?

He'd gone from bad to worse, from frying pan to fire. See the folly, dear friends, of clinging to our pride. It can only make things worse.

It can never make things better. You can't outstare God. He's not going to back down. Now before, of course, these magicians were able to replicate the frogs, but now they were stumped. Now they couldn't do this thing. They couldn't make the gnats come up from the ground. Suddenly they are brought to that place where their limitations are reached. They say to Pharaoh, this is the finger of God.

[21 : 20] This is God's doing. Whatever you've thought before about whether this is God or not, this is God. Let us tell you. Because we can't do it. Surely their confession and their words to Pharaoh would make the penny drop.

Surely now he'd see a sense. Surely now he'd say, okay, I thought beforehand I was sort of dealing with just a trick, but now I realise I've been told this is God.

I'd better change my ways. I'd better stop being so proud. I'd better work it out. This is God you're fighting with, dear friends.

You're not fighting with me. You're not battling in wills with religion or with your parents or your family. This is no trick.

Christianity is no foolish, absurd, man-made religion. This Jesus Christ really is God. And he really is calling you to obedience to him and faith in him.

[22 : 31] And you have got to see what's really going on. But what happens with Pharaoh? Well, we see Pharaoh, pride, pride has its limits, yes.

Pride has its lies, but pride has its own logic as well. What does Pharaoh do? Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen.

He wouldn't listen. Instead of recognising it was God's doing, instead of recognising it was brought upon himself by his own hard-heartedness, by his own deceitfulness, by his own attempting to bribe God, Pharaoh won't turn to God in humility.

Rather, just as predicted, he remains stubbornly unmoved. In one sense, the die is set, the cast is set. There comes a point, and this is why I plead with you, dear friends, I plead with you, if you have made your heart proud against God, do not continue as you are because there comes a point where your heart is so proud and hard there is no way back.

And it doesn't matter how much evidence is laid before you, it doesn't matter how much people plead with you, how much they show you and direct you to the truth, you won't admit you're wrong. You won't see sense.

[23 : 55] You'll continue to argue even though now you know that you are wrong. The book of Proverbs is a wonderful book.

It's so full of common sense. It says some very stinging things. It says, The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

The way of a fool seems right to him. It doesn't matter what you say to him. It doesn't matter what you show him. It doesn't matter what evidence is laid before him.

He will not accept. He will not budge. He will not move. But dear friends, who wants to be just a stone pillar? Who wants to be so proud and so hard and so sure that they're right?

Is it really worth it? Is it really worth it? Especially when you think of what God offers, of what God wants to give, how he wants to give love and grace and forgiveness, how he wants to turn and change and transform, how he wants to give life instead of death?

[25 : 13] Hard heart is a dead heart, isn't it? So again, I come back to the question, how many frogs, how many gnats does it take for you to admit you need God's help, that you're wrong, that you've sinned against him?

How long does God have to keep sending frogs and gnats before you turn and repent? How many years has he been doing it in your life?

Perhaps from when you were a child, I don't know. Perhaps from just the last few years, I don't know, but how long has God been speaking to you through the trials and difficulties of life?

How many times has he shown you the foolishness of your ways, that they only end in emptiness and despair? How much longer does he have to keep doing that?

Does he have to keep doing it until you are completely immovable, until you are completely cemented and concreted into place, so that even an explosion, an earthquake will never move you?

[26 : 17] God is patient, he is kind, he will continue to send these things, these frogs, these gnats, these geckos into our lives. promise. It's no use making empty promises here or anywhere else.

It's no good saying, well, I'll try and be better or if you do this for me, God, then while I'm in this jam, then I will turn. You need to do it without a bargaining chip.

You need to do it without debate. You need to do it in submission. You need to do it wholeheartedly, acknowledging that you're wrong, he's right. Been right all along, just I didn't want to acknowledge it.

See, God is so gracious, he's not going to hold it against you. He's not going to wave that stick over your head. It's only by grace that he continues to persevere with you.

It's only because of what Jesus has done on the cross that he still is willing to forgive you and wants to forgive you. There's nothing you can do to win his favour, nothing you can do to somehow earn his love.

[27 : 24] It's there. It's right before your eyes. Call on him. Say sorry. Back down.

Step down. Let go of your pride. Receive the forgiveness that he brings. Receive the grace, the love, the life that only is his to give.

Close with these words of the Bible. They're in the Old Testament and the New. And Peter reminds them of this here. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time. Let's sing together our final hymn this morning.

and you can dabeis continue. All over here. Now, I'm going to well on there and to get a deal of place in world.

[28 : 38] As well, us diagrams