

Exodus Chapter 8 v 20 to Chapter 9 v 12

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[0 : 00] So let's read this psalm together. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise Him in the heights above. Praise Him, all His angels.

Praise Him, all His heavenly hosts. Praise Him, sun and moon. Praise Him, all you shining stars. Praise Him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.

Let them praise the name of the Lord. For He commanded and they were created. He set them in place forever and ever. He gave a decree that will never pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do His bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and maidens, old men and children.

Let them praise the name of the Lord. For His name alone is exalted. His splendor is above the earth and the heavens. He has raised up for His people a horn, the praise of all His saints, of Israel, the people close to His heart.

[1 : 31] Praise the Lord. And so, if you'd like to turn with me to the book of Exodus in chapter 8. It's very easy to find.

If you find Genesis, the first book in the Bible, it's the next one along. So, it's just the second book in the Bible. Exodus in chapter 8. We, last week and in the previous weeks, have been looking at the beginning of the plagues that God sent upon Egypt to deliver and rescue His people, realizing that God was being infinitely patient with Pharaoh and the Egyptians by sending upon, if we can put it, more gentle plagues, turning of the water, the river to blood, and then the sending of the frogs and the nuts.

And as we go on, we see that God is upping the ante in that way. As Pharaoh hardens his heart, so God has to use a bigger hammer. Ultimately, in the end, as we shall see in the coming weeks, to break His hold over the Lord's people and set them free.

But we're going to read from Exodus chapter 8 and verse 20. We come to the next plague. We're going to look at the next two plagues and how God teaches us again of His character and His dealing with us, His people.

So Exodus chapter 8, beginning at verse 20. Then the Lord said to Moses, Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes to the water and say to him, This is what the Lord says.

[3 : 09] Let my people go so that they may worship me. If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you and your officials, on your people and into your houses, the houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies and even the ground where they are.

But on that day, I will deal differently with the land of Goshen where my people live. No swarms of flies will be there so that you will know that I, the Lord, am in this land.

I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This miraculous sign will occur tomorrow. And the Lord did this. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's palace and into the houses of the officials and throughout Egypt, the land was ruined by the flies.

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land. But Moses said, That would not be right.

The sacrifices we offer the Lord our God would be detestable to the Egyptians. And if we offer sacrifices that are detestable in their eyes, will they not stone us? We must take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifice to the Lord our God as he commands us.

[4 : 26] Pharaoh said, I will let you go to offer sacrifice to the Lord your God in the desert, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me. Moses answered, As soon as I leave you, I'll pray to the Lord and tomorrow the flies will leave Pharaoh and his officials and his people.

Only be sure that Pharaoh does not act deceitfully again by not letting the people go to offer sacrifices to the Lord. Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord.

And the Lord did what Moses asked. The flies left Pharaoh and his officials and his people. Not a fly remained. But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart, would not let the people go.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Go to Pharaoh and say to him, This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says, Let my people go so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them back, the hand of the Lord will bring a terrible plague on your livestock in the field, on your horses and donkeys and camels and on your cattle and sheep and goats.

But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die. The Lord set a time and said, Tomorrow the Lord will do this in the land.

[5 : 47] And the next day the Lord did it. All the livestock of the Egyptians died. But not one animal belonging to the Israelites died. Pharaoh sent men to investigate and found that not even one of the animals of the Israelites had died.

Yet his heart was unyielding and he would not let the people go. Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, Take handfuls of soot from a furnace. Have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh.

It will become like fine dust over the whole land of Egypt. Festering boils will break out on men and animals throughout the land. So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh.

Moses tossed it into the air and festering boils broke out on men and animals. The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians.

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron just as the Lord had said to Moses. If you'd like to have open in your Bibles Exodus 8 and into 9 that will be a help as we look at God's dealing with his people there.

[7 : 05] Just as you're finding that passage I'm going to read briefly from 1 Peter. I don't need to turn there but as you'll see in a moment these words have great import to us.

In 2 Peter in chapter 2 this is what God has to say about his church. You are a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation a people belonging to God.

Now if you have the AV the authorised version or the King James you'll notice one particular difference there and that is that the last description of the church is a peculiar people a peculiar people which is translated by the NIV people belonging to God.

there was and maybe still is a small denomination in Essex and part of East Anglia who call themselves the peculiar people several little churches and from all accounts they are.

But we know of course that this word means special set apart doesn't mean something like the word peculiar means today but truly of course throughout history there have been Christians who were especially peculiar as people one of them was a man by the name of Brash Bonsall he was the principal of the Bible college I attended he died 25 years ago now but there were many stories surrounding the things that he did one of them took place at a Pentecostal church in Birmingham where he went to preach and being the person he was he thought that he would take along as a visual aid a live snake which he had in a cage or container or a basket however during his sermon the snake escaped from its container and when screams were heard from the ladies in the congregation not the usual screams of

[9 : 19] Pentecostal folk of hallelujah or amen and when they started to jump onto the chairs again peculiar behavior for even Pentecostals it was clear it was clear that the snake had escaped and was slithering between the seats and the feet of the congregation I think the end of the story was that Mr. Bonsall stepped down from the pulpit captured the snake returned it to its basket and continued with his sermon but as I say that isn't the sense of the word peculiar that we have it means special and as NIV translates a people belonging to God it's something above the normal it's something which is out of the ordinary and certainly it is true of all of God's people us included that we are peculiar special people now when we come to the fourth of the plagues and the fifth and the sixth but the fourth particularly we see that

God warns Pharaoh that this plague will be different from those that have gone before in that not only will be a different plague the other ones as we know were gnats and frogs and blood in the river and in the water troughs but this plague will be different because it will set a distinction between the people of Egypt and the people of God God is going to make a very clear demarcation line he's going to make a clear distinction between how he deals with his people and he deals with

those who are not his people and that's very important one of the first thing it throws up though for us is this is that clearly up until this point the plagues that had distressed the Egyptians i.e. the blood and the gnats and the frogs had also been experienced by the Hebrews as well so up until that point the plagues that God sent to move the heart of Pharaoh and to change his heart so that he might set the people free were also endured and suffered by God's people and I think that's very important for us to recognize because again it highlights something which is all the way through the Bible something which we need to take on board and recognize if we do not understand it already and that's this as the people of God we are not exempt from all the sorrows and all the difficulties of life we are not exempt from them living the Christian life is indeed the greatest joy and privilege that any person can know in this world it is a life of fellowship with a wonderful heavenly father it is an enjoyment of liberty and freedom from slavery to sin and to guilt it is the giving of peace of mind and heart which are beyond comprehension it is to know the fullness of joy and a place of confidence instead of fear it is to have hope in face of crippling doubt it is to have life abundant instead of a living death and so much more besides but but it is not a ticket of exemption to the common trials and pains of living in a sinful and fallen world a world under God's judgment a world in rebellion to its creator now there are and always have been

Christians who think that troubles and tribulations should not be a part of the Christian life but the truth is that we have it on very good authority in the scripture as well as in the common sense reality of our own lives that this is not the case as Christians we must suffer Jesus turned to his disciples in John 16 and he said to them in this world you will have trouble Peter later on in that first letter he describes the Christians Christians he was writing to who were struggling and persecuted and says to them do not be surprised at the painful trials you are suffering to say that becoming a Christian means all your worries are over your troubles are removed and your life is going to be one sweetness a bed of roses without the thorns is wrong it's unbiblical it's untrue and it is very unhelpful when Jesus gave the parable of the seed and the sower and the different types of ground he spoke about those who receive the gospel with great joy

Matthew 13 he said this as he describes and explains the parable to his disciples the one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy but since he has no root he lasts only a short time when trouble or persecution comes because of the word he quickly falls away that's the great danger of preaching a gospel or presenting a Christianity which says that all your troubles are dealt with and removed when you follow Christ or that life will be easy in following Christ if we don't accept that truth that we shall have trouble that it will be hard then when those troubles come when those difficulties come we will turn away from Christ or feel that God has let us down and we know of Christians who have suffered that way what did Jesus say take up the cross and follow me trouble difficulty trials sorrows griefs are the experience of the Christian however however in this in the events that we read of here in Exodus and chapter 8 we learn something else not only that God's people are not exempt from all the sorrows and griefs of life but also we see in these plagues that follow in chapters 8 and 9 that in fact

God's people are protected from some of the sorrows and griefs of life we're not protected from all but we are protected from some notice that God says there verse 23 I will make a distinction a distinction between my people and your people if you've got the NIV then you may notice there's a footnote that says I will make a deliverance or put a deliverance between my people and your people and that surely is the sense of what we're to understand when God says there's a distinction that he is going to deliver his people from the effects of the plagues that follow when he hadn't done so before he was going to protect them and rescue them now I don't believe that 24 verse 24 when God says that he will send swarms of flies into Pharaoh's house

[16:53] I don't believe that means that the people in Goshen God's people did not see a fly during that time but they didn't see a swarm of flies in the sense that they just saw the normal flies that were about but they did not have the swarming infestation of flies that the Egyptians knew they were protected from it and so the same with the next plague the plague that fell upon the livestock of the Egyptians there was so strong a distinction that in fact Pharaoh went and sent men to investigate can you imagine it I mean it's hard for us to imagine on this you've been to Egypt and Goshen or whatever but you've got these sort of separate communities but living cheek by jowl and there's this line one side all the cattle are dead and one side all the cattle are alive and one side all the sheep are dead the other side all the sheep are alive one side all the pigs are dead and the chickens are dead and so on experience tells us that the psalmist is quite right in his in Psalm 32

verse 10 when he says many are the woes of the wicked those who pursue lives which indulge in their sinful and their sinful lusts far from being happier and content are those who seem to experience and bring upon themselves greater trouble greater distress greater heartache than the believer who seeks to live uprightly before God there's a lovely insight to that well almost a humorous one if it wasn't for the fact that it's not humorous in Proverbs 23 listen to this who has woe who has sorrow who has strife who has complaints who has needless bruises who has blood shut eyes those who linger over wine who go to sample bowls of mixed wine it's the drunkard isn't it the drunkard brings upon himself all these things and of course this observation is not just limited to drunkenness but to any excess to any greed in any area those who seek after these things who fill their lives with these things which are ultimately destructive bring upon themselves great sorrow and so the Christian is spared from these things as they seek to live for Christ there's something much more than that isn't there it's not just that there are very natural blessings that come from belonging to the Lord

Jesus Christ that spare us from the excesses of sin which can be so debilitating and painful but we know there is a very real distinction in the way that God looks upon us his people and deals with us and the most telling place where that will be revealed to all people of course is on the day of judgment here's Jesus again giving to those who are listening the parable of the sheep and the goats all the nations will be gathered before him that's the son of man he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats he'll put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left the conclusion of what Jesus has to say is this then they that's the goats will go away to eternal punishment but the righteous to eternal life there's something very clear here for us to acknowledge and recognize that when we are in relationship with the living God when he owns us as his people when we are those who have put our faith in his son and belong to him then he is actively definitively working to preserve and to keep us from those things that would harm us or destroy us otherwise he is only allowing into your life and mine dear Christian those things that will do us good according to his purpose for us that's the whole truth isn't it behind that glorious verse in Romans 8 28 and we know that in all things

God works for the good of those who love him and called according to his purpose that's the truth behind that isn't it that everything in your life and mine is filtered through the hands of almighty love every situation every circumstance every trial joy sorrow our loving heavenly mighty father purposefully and with individual attention acts for our deliverance 24 24 7 here's Jesus again in Matthew in chapter 10 this time explaining the care of God to his people are not two sparrows sold for a penny yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your father even the very hairs on your head are all numbered so don't be afraid you're worth more than many sparrows who knows how many times in our lives

God has interposed and acted on our behalf to protect us from harm how many times has God dealt with us differently from others in a situational circumstance has it not been can we not say that the reason that we are here today this evening is because the Lord God almighty has delivered us kept us preserved us and dealt with us according to his great love there's something else isn't there here that I want us to draw out which really follows on from what we've been saying because the Lord delivered his people and dealt with them differently from the Egyptians and it's clear that God provided for them all that they needed in life God provided for them all that they needed in life there in chapter 9 verse 7

Pharaoh sent men to investigate found that not even one now think about that because in all honesty if you go and speak to just a farmer today and let's realize that there were probably hundreds of thousands of sheep goats cattle pigs who knows what else were there it would be quite normal to lose at least one animal out of all of them probably each day a farmer expects out on the fields that he's going to lose some sheep over the winter there's going to be some loss do you see that actually not one died even one that was a bit on its last legs a week ago made a surprising recovery the farmer expecting it to be dead but it wasn't this is the Lord isn't it no wonder Jesus says not a sparrow forced the ground how on earth could Pharaoh have seen that and not been struck to the heart this is

[24 : 41] God I'm dealing with how can I resist him but what we notice is especially of course that God provided so if you were in the Egyptian camp if I can put it that way you had no milk because the cows were all dead and the cattle were all gone you had plenty on the Israelite side on the Hebrew side you could bath in it if you wanted to there was loads when the Egyptians wanted their

bacon sandwich in the morning they couldn't because the pigs were all dead I'm going to make a bit of a supposition here up until this point God had not commanded the Hebrews not to eat pork so they may have had bacon sandwiches anyway but they had enough of anything that they needed you see dear friends what we see here again is that we have a generous heavenly father who provides for all our needs keep drawing back to the words of Jesus because again what we recognize surely is that there is a unity in the scriptures that what we see in the

Old Testament about the living God isn't true of what Jesus represents to us and teaches us about the living God so in Matthew 6 what does Jesus tell his people the disciples the many who were there at the Sermon on the Mount why do you worry about what you'll eat or what you'll drink or what you'll wear for the pagans the unbelievers run after these things and your heavenly father knows that you need them knows that you need them see it's not simply because as a Christian we no longer spend our money on fags and booze or other foolish things that the majority of the world run after it's because God deals differently with us that our needs are met he actively and considerably meets our needs to make sure that we have all he wants us to have at just the right time even when on occasions that means we have nothing have you ever been struck by Paul's open and honest account of God's deliverance of him and help of him in 2 Corinthians 11 his sufferings his long list of sufferings you notice that he speaks about the fact I have often been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food I have been cold and naked did that mean that in those times God forgot to care for him and provide for him no of course it doesn't

Paul never comes to that conclusion Paul never points a finger in fact what he recognizes and what he describes is of course that in all these things he's been driven to the place of dependence upon God God his heavenly father has allowed him to go without just as God his heavenly father has given him plenty at other times and so it is with us so if at the moment your wallet is full praise God if at the moment the moths even have deserted it praise God your heavenly father gives you just what you need you see God's perfect provision for us is always the same the promise we have in Philippians chapter 4 verse 19 my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus is true when we are hungry and when we're full when we're thirsty and when we're quenched when we are naked and when we're clothed because we have a

God who deals with us differently than he does the rest of the world we are his people there's one last thing that I want us to draw out from here there's something else in this passage and it really is the chief mark that sets us apart from the world what is it that really makes us different what is it that really shows that we belong to Christ go back there to Exodus chapter 5 and verse 25 we see Pharaoh beginning to buckle don't we so he does one of his usual let's make a compromise he's a good politician we're not going to give you all that you want we're going to try and deal with you in a way which means I can get away with as little as possible go sacrifice to your God here in the land okay here in the land he tries to make a compromise but Moses refuses for two reasons the first reason is because all the way through

God had said you must take a three day journey into the desert to worship to me so he sticks to that but notice he brings up something else there in verse 26 he says the sacrifices that God requires or that they would offer to the Lord our God would be detestable to the Egyptians why would they be detestable to the Egyptians well because we know that when we go later into Exodus and we see how God reveals to Moses and his people the sacrifices he demands that they are blood sacrifices they are the slaughter and the killing and the offering of blood animal sacrifices something detestable to the Egyptians what is it that marks you and I out as Christians what is it that marks us out as belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ if it is not the fact that we are those who have been marked with the blood of Christ isn't that the picture of Passover as we come to it later on the doorposts and the lintels marked with the blood of the lamb isn't it that which sets us apart as believers the world looks upon the sacrifice of the son of

[30 : 48] God and thinks it detestable as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1 Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles isn't it the one thing above all else that the world can't understand and thinks foolish and stupid why do you worship a man who was crucified who was killed as a slave in the catacombs in I'm not sure if it's Rome or in Ephesus they found graffiti from the first century that graffiti has written in Latin Cornelius worships his God and there is a picture scrawled on the wall of a man crucified with the head of a donkey detestable stupid foolish but you see for us dear friends we are unashamed to acknowledge that our greatest joy is that

Christ sacrificed himself for us as Paul says in Galatians may I never boast except in the cross of the Lord Jesus it is that which we hold most dear it is that which is most precious to us that which is central to us that Christ the very son of God the innocent sinless son of God suffered to secure forgiveness for his people because ultimately that's what everything here lies upon why does God deal with us differently why does God spare us from many of the difficulties and the trials of life why does God provide for us and meet our needs why does God deal with us in such a wonderfully fatherly gracious way it is only because of Christ crucified it is not because we have anything in ourselves that sets us apart as special it's not because we are good people holy people righteous people it's not because we have done anything to win his favor or earn his love it is all of grace and that grace is meted to us given to us portioned out to us only because of the blood of Christ the detestable sacrifice for sinners for we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory because what Christ has done we are protected and provided we are given life through his death we are accepted through his rejection we are made rich through his loss that's why we count the cross his sacrifice the most precious thing in all the world for it is through such undeserving mercy and love that we have become the possession and the people of God what about you dear friends this evening do you know that you are one of those peculiar people do you know that you belong to the Lord do you count yourself one of Christ's people you see there is no middle ground either we are God's people or we're not God's people either we are in the land of Goshen the kingdom of God under the protection and the care of the Lord or we are in Egypt there's no fence upon which to sit you've either got flies and diseased livestock and boils or you haven't you've either got forgiveness for sins eternal life and peace with God or you haven't there is no central place there is a distinction there is a line a line which is drawn in the sand now a line which is drawn in the blood of Christ now and you must be on one side or the other and if you're on the side of Egypt if you're on the side outside of God's protection and care dear friends why are you there why not cross over from death to life why not come and receive the sacrifice of Christ for your sins why not take him as your Lord and your God make your boast and confidence before God that Jesus died for me and now

I am his every single part of me oh to be numbered with the people of God who cares what the world thinks who cares what the Egyptians do who cares what will happen to them because ultimately Jesus has said as the sheep and the goats are separated so that separation must come where will you go eternal darkness or eternal life eternal sorrow or eternal joy be counted stand up and be counted as God's child as one of his people knowing that he will deal with you in grace in love in faithfulness today and forever let's stand and sing our final hymn it's that wonderful hymn that we are reminded of that everything that we have and everything we are is through the Lord [36 : 40] Jesus Christ in Christ alone my hope is found he is my light my strength my soul peace my soul I love you.

I love you.

Remember that at one time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise without hope and without God in this world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Amen.