

# Exodus Chapter 11

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[ 0 : 0 0 ] from our Bibles now, and we're going to read from Exodus and chapter 11. Those of you who are regular with us will know that we've been looking at Exodus over these past few weeks and months, and we now come to chapter 11. Lots of plagues have taken place where God has been seeking to set his people free, and Pharaoh has been stubbornly resisting God and standing against God. And now we come to really one of the darkest and most tragic and saddest parts of Exodus, which is in chapter 11 and 12, which we'll look at in the coming weeks. But we'll look at chapter 11, and we're going to read chapter 11 of Exodus now, reading from verse 1 through to verse 10.

Now the Lord said to Moses, I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely.

Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold. The Lord made the Egyptians favorably disposed towards the people. Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people. So Moses said, this is what the Lord says.

About midnight, I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt, worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites, not a dog will bark at any man or animal. Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, Go, you and all the people who follow you. After that, I will leave. Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh. The Lord had said to Moses, Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you, so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt. Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelite go out of his country.

[ 2 : 3 8 ] Well, the Lord will help us, I'm sure, as we come to think about that passage in a few minutes. If you would like to turn to Exodus and chapter 11, where we read just a few moments ago, that will be a help because we're going to be thinking particularly about that portion of God's Word.

One morning in 1888, Alfred Noble, the inventor of dynamite, woke to read in his local paper his own obituary. It had been printed as a result of a journalistic error. In fact, it was Alfred's brother who had died, but the reporter carelessly reported the death of the wrong brother.

Many of us would have been disturbed to read our obituary in the paper, but Alfred was more than shocked because he saw himself as the world saw him. He was mourned as being the dynamite king, a great industrialist who'd made an immense fortune from explosives. This, as far as the world was concerned, the public was concerned, was the only achievement of his life. None of his true intentions to break down barriers between separated men, nor his ideas for peace were recognized.

He was simply a merchant of destruction, and for that alone he'd be remembered. As he read the obituary with horror, he resolved to make clear to the world the true meaning and purpose of his life. His last will and testament would be the expression of his life's ideals, ultimately would be why we remember him. His name is connected to that international prize given to those who've done the most in the cause of peace, or literature, or chemistry, or physics.

We know it today as the Nobel Prize. Nothing makes us think more seriously about life than death, and nothing grabs our attention more quickly than the thought of our own death. Sometimes the only way that God can get our attention is when he brings us face to face with the awful reality of death, of our mortality. As we come to chapter 11 in Exodus, we find ourselves reaching the climax of the plagues that God brought upon Pharaoh and the land of Egypt. Each previous plague was building up to this terrible demonstration of God's power, by which at last he would rescue and deliver his enslaved people. God says to Moses, I'll bring one more plague, and he will let the people go.

[ 5 : 20 ] This last plague was going to be the most devastating, the most awful, the most terrible. And in it, God was going to teach Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and yes, even his own people, the undeniable truth that we find elsewhere in the Bible, that the wages of sin is death.

You see, Pharaoh had, from the very beginning, determined to rebel against God and to harden his heart against God's word and will. Right at the very start, when Moses spoke to him, Pharaoh's response was this, who is the Lord that I should obey him?

He consistently hardened his heart when God had spoken to him, in spite of the plagues, in spite of the warnings that were given again and again. Moses had spoken to him, warned him, but we're told when Pharaoh saw there was relief, the plague ended, he hardened his heart. And it went on from there, getting harder and harder, until ultimately, at the end, there was nothing that would prick his conscience, nothing that would move him anymore. Chapter 10, as we looked last week, verse 27, There's nothing left for God to do now but to break Pharaoh, to bend him to his will.

And the instrument that God had to use to do that in Pharaoh's life was the power of death. Death is something, of course, that in our society, here in the West, we think as little as possible about. It's something we like to keep at arm's length. We like to sanitize death. We like to shut it out. It's that taboo subject. It's the thing that is never raised in polite society, in conversation.

But the reality is, of course, that the sting of death is something that we have all felt. The pain that it brings, the scars that it leaves, the wounds that are open upon our hearts, they're not relieved or soothed by pretending death doesn't exist or by denying its reality.

[ 7 : 38 ] In fact, by covering over death and leaving it, in one sense, under covers, buried in the sand, we actually aggravate those sorrows, those griefs. We intensify them.

But the Bible makes it very clear that it's vital we consider death, our own death, and that we don't ignore it and put it in that place of forgotten things. In Ecclesiastes, that wonderful book which speaks so much common sense to us, Solomon writes this, In this chapter, Moses speaks to Pharaoh for the last time.

And in that conversation and in those words, we have an insight into the very subject of death. We bring it out into the open. We see it for what it is.

And in doing so, there's a lot to teach us and instruct us. But also, for the believer, there's a lot of comfort as well to be had. The instruction that we see in this chapter, which is something we know to be true, and it's this, it's the universality of death.

That death is for everyone. It's no good us just thinking and putting it off, saying, well, it won't happen to me. It's a long way off in the future, I don't need to think about it.

[ 9 : 07 ] The reality is that death will come to everyone. As Moses said, there in verse 5, Every firstborn son in Egypt will die.

From the firstborn son of Pharaoh who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl who is at her hand mill. From the highest and the greatest in the land, to the least and the most insignificant.

Death must come. From the king to the slave. The only mystery for us is when will death come. It's not that if it will come.

It's like we were talking with the children about the Lord Jesus has returned. That's a reality. It's not about if Jesus will come. It's when he will come. And so it is with our death. It's not if we will die, but when we will die.

That's the mystery. It's God's right alone to take our lives as it was his right to give us life.

[ 10 : 04 ] It is not right. It is not right. And it is definitely wrong that we see around about us the growing pressure to resisted suicide and euthanasia.

That is never right because ultimately it is murder. It is the taking of another person's life or even the taking of our own life, which is only God's prerogative and right to do so.

We are never right to do so. We set ourselves above God when we take the life of another or even our own. And that is the height of rebellion against the God, our creator and sustainer.

But since you and I must die one day, and since we know that we must die, but we don't know when, the vital question must be, am I ready to die? Am I prepared to die?

Am I prepared and ready for that day when God calls me from this life into eternity? Hebrews in chapter 9 says, it is destined for men to die once and face judgment.

[ 11 : 14 ] That's the reality. Are you ready for your death? I don't mean like in those advertisements on the television for the co-op, I think it is, funeral services, or I've picked the music for my funeral, or I've picked the place for my funeral, or whatever it may be.

It's not about whether I've written my will or chosen my plot in the cemetery. Those are very insignificant things that really, when you're dead, you don't need to bother about.

Somebody else will sort them out. But are you ready to die and face God? See, one of the things that we see here, which is so important, is that we see that there are differences in death.

As in all things, God makes a distinction between those who have faith in him and those who do not. Look at verse 7. Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.

In the earlier plagues, God had made a distinction, hadn't he, between the Egyptians and to his people who lived in the land of Goshen. Apart from the first three, it seems, the first three plagues, the blood, the Nile turning to blood, and the frogs and the gnats.

[ 12 : 29 ] But after that, God said, I'm making a distinction and these things will not happen amongst my people. So in chapter 9 and verse 6, when God was to send a plague upon the livestock, verse 6 tells us, all the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died.

Later on in verse 26, when they had the hail that came down upon them. Verse 26 tells us, the only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen where the Israelites were.

God has made a distinction. He has separated. His people from the rest of humanity. And the most striking distinction that God makes between the Christian and the non-Christian is only fully realized in the events that follow death.

Today, of course, when we walk around, we look the same as everybody else because physically we are the same. Spiritually, we've been changed. Spiritually, we've been transformed. Spiritually, we are in relationship, fellowship with God and we deal with life in different ways, but the great distinction must be at death.

We see that here as to how the death of the firstborn will affect these two different groups in different ways.

- [ 13 : 49 ] First of all, we see the response that they have to death. Verse 6 tells us that in Egypt there will be loud wailing worse than there's ever been or ever will be again.

For the Egyptians, there is sorrow and grief unheard of before. And no wonder, because we're told that in every single family, somebody died that night. If you turn over to chapter 12, verse 30, it tells us that is the case.

Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night. There was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. Why such grief?

Why such sorrow? Yes, because of course they had lost somebody who they loved. But you see, for the unbeliever, for those without the hope of Christ, it is sorrow without hope.

1 Thessalonians chapter 4, as Paul is writing to the Christians about those of their friends who died. He says, I don't want you to be like the rest of men who have no hope.

- [ 14 : 56 ] Without Christ, death is hopeless, isn't it? It's the end of everything good. It's the end of everything enjoyable. It's the end of everything. That's why people strive and work as hard as they can to eke out life as long as possible.

Because after that, as far as they're concerned, there's nothing. Bertrand Russell, who I'm sure you've heard of, a very famous man, in fact, a Nobel Prize winner for literature.

He was a committed atheist all his life. This is what he wrote. This is how he saw life. The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, toward a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none can tarry long.

One by one as they march, our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent death. Brief and powerless is man's life.

On him and all his race, the slow, sure doom falls, pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way.

- [ 16 : 12 ] For man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, remains only to cherish before yet the wind blows, sorry, before yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day.

He's a cheery bloke, isn't he? What a tragic way to view life, isn't it? The long march in darkness. That's the reality of what it is to be without Christ.

That's the reality of what it is to face death when you have no hope in the Lord Jesus. It is hideous, sorrow, grief, wailing, mourning.

But what a difference there is between them and those who are God's people. Verse 7, but among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal. In other words, there's complete quiet and peace.

I can put it that way. There's no wailing or crying. There's no distress or upset. There's no sorrow. There is peace. Well, you might say, well, of course there isn't because nobody in the Israelite part of the land died.

- [ 17 : 25 ] They had no reason to grieve. But that's exactly the point for the believer. That when we face death, there is no death. Jesus promised us in John chapter 11 verse 25 as he stood by the tomb of his good friend Lazarus and spoke to Lazarus' sister Martha.

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?

When Paul was writing to those Christians in Thessalonica about their friends who had died, he doesn't say that they have died. He says they've simply fallen asleep. For the Christian, death is not a grievous thing, a terrible thing, an awful thing.

We are those who do have hope in the face of death. That actually death is that doorway into life everlasting, life eternal, life in fullness. For in fact, what we read here even in chapter 11 of Exodus is that God's people through death are greatly rewarded and blessed.

Look at verse 2. Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbours for articles of silver and gold.

[ 18 : 44 ] And that's in fact what they did. We read it later on in chapter 12 when they go out from the land. They receive from the Egyptians all sorts of articles of gold and silver and precious things.

The death of the firstborn in Egypt was to bring into the possession of God's people riches and treasures. And so that's the way the Christian thinks about death too.

Because when we die it is the gaining and the receiving of the greatest riches and treasures that we have ever looked forward to. Apostle Paul as he writes in Philippians 1 talks about his own death.

He was aware that he was going to die. What was his attitude? He said, For me to live is Christ but to die is gain. To be with Christ which is better by far.

Didn't see death. Something to be shut away from or not spoken about or hidden but something to be rejoiced in. Because it was the bringing into the fullness of all that he'd hoped for and promised.

[ 19 : 49 ] A man by the name of John Bradford was burnt at the stake in 1555 because he was a Christian who preached the wonderful good news of Jesus. Just before he was burnt at the stake he wrote a letter to his friend and in the letter this is what he spoke about was he anticipated death.

Not the burning but what came after. I'm assured that though I want here in other words I lack here I have riches there. Though I hunger here I shall have fullness there.

Though I faint here I shall be refreshed there. And though I be accounted here as a dead man I shall there live in perpetual glory. For the Egyptians it was the loss of all their treasures.

The loss of their riches as they handed them over. And in reality for those who are not Christians when you die it is the loss of everything good. It's the loss of everything hopeful everything enjoyable.

It's the loss of this world because you live only for this world and you've got nothing in the world to come then when you face death then there is nothing to be worth living for.

[ 20 : 58 ] Yes for the unbeliever for the person without Jesus there is no hope in the face of death. But for the Christian there is reward in death there is glory there is joy there is delight in death for they're receiving so many things.

And one of the things that the Christian receives at death is here as well spoken about in Exodus 11. Verse 1 God said I will bring one more plague on Egypt after that Pharaoh will let the people go from here he will drive them out completely.

The amazing thing is this is that the people of God who have been enslaved for 400 years in Egypt no holidays no days off in one sense up until that point the only time they were set free from slavery was when they died.

But now the death of the firstborn now the death of the Egyptians meant that they would have secure and full and everlasting liberty for every single one of them. Their slavery was coming to an end they were entering into fullness of freedom.

And for the Christian again that's the wonderful thing. Death is not the end but the beginning of freedom the beginning of freedom from the power and the guilt of sin and of course for us that comes through the death of Christ the death of another.

[ 22 : 15 ] of course as we go on and think about the Passover that becomes all the more plain when we look at the lamb who was sacrificed and the blood that was shed and painted on the doorposts.

But even here we see that those who died in Egypt were the means by which freedom came to those who were enslaved. And so through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf in our place there is freedom set free liberated brought into the fullness of the life of God through the suffering and sorrowing of another.

When we become Christians we enter into freedom. When we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we enter into a wonderful lifelong freedom. Paul as he writes to the Galatians chapter 5 he says to them this it was for freedom that Christ has set you free.

That's the wonderful good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ that when we put our faith and trust in him we don't bind ourselves in some shackles to a religion but we are set free from those shackles of popularity in the world and keeping everybody happy and pleasing ourselves and we're set free to enjoy the life of God.

But there's still more liberty to come because in this world we still live with pain and suffering and sorrow even as Christians though we have been forgiven our sins we still struggle with that inner sinful nature.

[ 23 : 42 ] but when we die death releases us from all those things releases us into the freedom of those chains and hindrances that make this life a spoiled life.

The last book of the Bible in Revelation John looks into heaven and he hears about what's going to happen when Jesus comes again and what's going to happen to those who put their faith in him and he says this he sees this and hears this now God is living with men and he will live with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God he will wipe every tear from their eyes there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old things have passed away.

That's the incredible thing for the Christian that's why yes we enjoy life here and we're thankful for life here but we know that when we face death we don't face it without hope we don't face it with grief and sorrow and thinking that's the end of all the good things we face it as that being the entering into all the fullness of the good things it's the pain that we feel now when we need a new knee or a new hip the struggles that we have with frailty the problems that we deal with in our own hearts and our own lives the grief and the sorrow all of those things will be gone true freedom but what a contrast it is what a sad thing it is when we see again that this distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian for the Christian it's not for the non-Christian rather death is not the entering into freedom and life but rather it is the enslaving of everlasting and eternal damnation it's the entering into a bondage which is the most awful helpless grievous terrible thing words cannot explain words cannot tell of the sorrow and the horror and the grief just as those who had denied

God and rejected God all these days in Egypt wailed and grieved like they'd never done before so the reality is for those who die without Christ the wailing and the grieving and the sorrowing for eternity be like nothing they've ever known before if I could do anything to convince you dear friends of the need for Christ what a difference it makes to know him I believe that one of the reasons that Moses left Pharaoh hot with anger was because he knew very well the utter sorrow and grief that Pharaoh had brought the people into I believe that he was angry yes because Pharaoh had rebelled against God and denied God his place in his life but I believe that Moses was angry because he knew the death that was going to be brought by this man's sin he knew the sorrow and the wailing that was going to be brought by his disobedience to God and that's why he left hot with anger dear friends how can we be unmoved how can we be unmoved by the consequences of sin in this world how can we be impassioned passionate about men and women who are wandering down that road of destruction and death who are facing death with no hope how can we be impassioned about those who deal them lies and falsehood when they tell them that when you die everything will be fine and no matter what you've done or how you've lived you'll all be in heaven who teach a false gospel that this world is all there is and that you should live for now and have nothing to do with any

God of the imagination death should make us angry it does make us angry of course it does we are angry with death it seems so unfair particularly if it's somebody young but you see as we've saw at the very beginning death comes and takes everyone good and bad young and old genius and idiot doesn't matter who we are death must come perhaps for some of us as well and I know it is the case we're still angry because of the death of a loved one we know that it was God who took them from us but we get angry with him we don't understand why he should have done what he did but really dear friends our greatest concern must be for them and for ourselves is where has death taken us where will death take us will it be to grief or to peace will it be to reward or to loss will it be to freedom or to punishment see as we saw at the very beginning there is a principle laid out throughout the whole of the universe which is this the wages of sin is death the consequence of sin is death but the free gift of

[ 29 : 02 ] God is eternal life in Christ Jesus Romans 6 23 that's the wonderful truth just as the consequence of our sin is death and we must die and those who we love must die so the consequence of Jesus death on the cross for us is eternal life for everyone who puts their faith in him is the freedom to face death without fear God is speaking he spoke to Pharaoh again and again and again and again and Pharaoh left it too late God has been speaking to some of you again and again and again and every time he's spoken your heart has become maybe just a little bit harder than it was before dear friends please please don't harden your heart you don't know that you're not guaranteed tomorrow or the next day you're not guaranteed another opportunity for Christ to come and be your saviour you've got guaranteed that God will continue to be patient as he has been with you and he has been so patient with some of you for so very long now's the time to hear his voice now's the time to respond to his call now's the time to say to him

Lord God forgive me save me make me one of your people the world is divided dear friends not between black and white or rich and poor or young and old but between the saved and the lost between those who are Christ's and those who aren't where are you where will you go let's pray together now you are the only God the true God the real God and you are the one who has given us this day given us breath life health strength you are the God who is generous merciful good kind you are the God who created us and made us for one reason that we should know you and enjoy you and enjoy the world you've made and enjoy the eternity that is your possession but we have sinned

Lord we've rebelled we've stuck our fingers in our ears when you've spoken to us we've run away and hidden our heads in the sand when we faced death and said it'll never happen to me I'm okay because of that rebellion and because of our sin and because we have rejected you as our rightful God we deserve to be separated from you eternally because that's what we've chosen for ourselves we don't want you now so why should we want you then but in your love in your amazing grace you've sent your son the Lord Jesus into the world to rescue us to provide for us forgiveness and life now and for eternity and we're so grateful again Lord Jesus that you did come willingly gladly though you are God and you lived in this world and you endured suffering and shame you knew and know what it is to live like us but you went to the cross and you died there in our place as our substitute to take the punishment that we deserve to endure the hell the death that was ours and we thank you that by doing that and by rising again from the dead and being now eternally alive you can and gladly give forgiveness and life to all who will come to you simply by faith simply by believing that you are who you are and asking to be saved you do come into the lives of men and women and boys and girls and you transform them from fear to faith from loss to gain from hopelessness to hopefulness we ask again oh lord that you would continue to do that in the lives of those who do not trust you help us who do know that joy and do know that hope as we face death help us again to grief yes to sorrow and mourn over those we love but not to do so without hope but to do so knowing that they are with you which is better by far give to us lord we pray evermore a burden to share the wonderful the vital news of

Jesus with those we meet with help us oh lord to be lights in this dark world for we ask all these things in the name of Jesus Christ amen amen . . .

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[ 35 : 34 ] . . . . .

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victory, since first has lost victory on me. For I am His and He is mine, for the precious blood of Christ.

The guilty line, the fear in death, this is the blood of Christ in me. From life's best time to final breath, Jesus promotes my destiny.

The power of hell will see your land and have a promise of His hand, till He resents on those below.

[ 37 : 43 ] Here in the power of Christ us stand. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through Jesus Christ.

He died for us, so that we may live together with Him. Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.