

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF MOSES

Taught in Ambassador's Class of Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, California

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by Robert H. Roe, Pastor

**Lesson #8, Exodus 7:1-25 - February 24, 1980,
Moses' 2nd encounter with Pharaoh - 1st plague blood**

We come now to the point in Moses' life where he is confronting Pharaoh. He has come into the land of Egypt in obedience to God, albeit reluctant obedience, and he is in front of the people of Israel with the three major miracles God has given him, the staff which becomes a snake then a staff, the hand which becomes leprous then clean and the water of the Nile which becomes blood. These won the people of Israel temporarily, and they did worship God and accept Moses. Then he went to Pharaoh where he was not to give any signs but was simply to tell Pharaoh to let the people go. When Pharaoh clamped the thumbscrews on the Israelites and did not let them go, the Israelites rose up against Moses. When their circumstances became tough, they could either rebel against God or against Moses. So, of course, they picked Moses, and down the tube he goes. So God deals with him again. Beginning in chapter 7, God sends him back to Pharaoh and, even though he is terrified, he is going to obey. Let's take a look at what happens.

Exodus 7:1:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh will not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt, and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

If you look at that on the surface, it would appear that God is pretty harsh. We saw last time, however, that God is deliberately going to humiliate Pharaoh in order to destroy his pride that he might repent and not be lost. God also takes into consideration Moses' fear that in 40 years away he has lost the eloquence required in the court of Pharaoh. Eloquence was a cultivated attribute because, as one of Pharaoh's good courtiers and a good nobleman of the nation of Egypt, it was required in court. You were trained in oratory. You didn't just go into court and say, "Hi there, Pharaoh." There was a prescribed ritual with flowery language. Moses had forgotten all that in 40 years away, and that was one of his excuses, "I can't talk to Pharaoh anymore." So God picks that very problem and uses it as a means of reaching Pharaoh, "That's O.K., you don't have to talk to Pharaoh. I'll use Aaron. I'll make you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron will be your prophet. You are going into the court of Egypt and communicate in a language Pharaoh can understand. However, you won't talk to Pharaoh, you will talk to Aaron, and Aaron, as your prophet, will talk to Pharaoh. That will humiliate Pharaoh right in his own court." We saw last time the purpose of this humiliation was to destroy the pride of Pharaoh which pride would destroy him.

Secondly, "I am going to work it out so that Pharaoh will resist." As we go through these passages, we will see

that God does harden Pharaoh's heart, but first Pharaoh always has the opportunity to believe. It isn't until plague number six that Pharaoh's heart is hardened by God. God did not set Pharaoh up to fail. We've heard that accusation used against the Scriptures. The idea put forth is the bloody God in the Old Testament raises people up then hardens them in their sin just to use them as pawns to glorify Himself. That is not true.

All through Scripture there are two parallel lines, the sovereignty of God and the moral responsibility of man. Two truths Biblically taught. God is sovereign. His will is accomplished and nobody stops Him. Man is morally responsible to accept Christ and to respond to God's light. He is lost by not responding. This was true even back in those days. Don't try to make them match. Just accept them both. These are two truths Biblically taught and both are factual. Don't take one versus the other. Don't set God against Himself.

Yes, God is going to harden Pharaoh's heart, but Pharaoh has an opportunity to believe, and God is trying to help him come to belief by cutting him down to size. So even though He tells Moses He is going to harden Pharaoh's heart, Moses finds out that Pharaoh himself does it first before God steps in.

God also says He will do wonders in the land of Egypt, and when He does He will not only bring out the Hebrews but will also cause the Egyptians to do what? What does it say in verse 5? It is a beautiful little snippet. Up to now God has told Moses, "You are to go into Egypt because I am the Lord, I am Yahweh, the covenant keeping God, the God that makes personal promises and keeps them. I am a personal God to you and your people and I make promises I keep. I made promises to your forefathers 650 years ago, and I am going to keep them. Now you go tell the Israelites, 'I am Yahweh. I am their covenant keeping God. I do make promises to them, and I keep them.'"

Now looking at verse 5, what does He want the Egyptians to know? He is going to destroy Egypt not because He is mad at the Egyptians but to do what? "That they might know what He is Yahweh." He's not El or Elohim, not the greater God, but Yahweh the personal God who makes personal promises and who keeps those promises. He wants the Egyptians to understand that He is a personal God not just to the Chosen People, although that is where the name Yahweh is directly attached, but He is a personal God who keeps His promises to anybody who makes Him their God. He is going to destroy the gods of Egypt; He is going to destroy the power of Egypt, and He is going to destroy Pharaoh.

Understand He's not doing this because He is mad at them. The wrath of God is not an emotion in Scripture. It is a settled state of mind, a settled state of opposition to evil. It is not an emotion. God is not mad at people. He loves all His creatures. He is not mad at Satan. He loves Satan. He hates what he stands for. He hates his work. Remember Ezekiel 28. The strongest Hebrew expression for the anguish of heart, up to and including the beating of His breast, is God's anguish when Satan falls. So God wants the Egyptians to know that He is Yahweh, that He can be their personal, promise-keeping God also. We'll see, when He gets through wiping out the power of their gods, that a number of them understand, and a "mixed multitude" leaves Egypt. So in the midst of His judgment, in the midst of His justice and His power, there is also His grace. This is quite a God we have.

Also look at what He has to work with.

Exodus 7:6:

So Moses and Aaron did it; as the LORD commanded them, thus they did. And Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

Up to now Moses has been fighting God, hasn't he? And now God tells Moses, "I want you to go right back to Pharaoh, the one who put the thumbscrews on the Israelites when you went the first time, and tell him the same dog-gone thing, and I am going to move out and destroy Egypt." He doesn't give any more than that promise, but this time, it says, Moses, "did it" and Aaron "did it." The Hebrew repeats the phrase for emphasis. So they finally obey. This is called faith.

It is interesting. Look at who is exercising the faith, one 80 years old gutless wonder named Moses, and one 83 year old "Swing and Sway with Sammy Kay" Aaron. He blows with the wind. In all of Scripture anytime the people say, "Jump" Aaron jumps. Anytime Moses says, "Jump" he jumps. Anytime God says "Jump" he jumps. He will jump in any direction depending upon the last voice he hears. He has no backbone. This is what God has to work with, old "What's his name," and old "Swing and Sway."

But notice in verse 6, when they obey God, he doesn't record anything about their character, or the fear or the knocking knees. They are scared to death, but they are where He wants them. See, faith and courage are not equivalent. Faith is obedience. You may or may not have courage in your obedience. You may be scared to death, but faith says, "I believe God and am going to act like what I believe is true. Even though I am scared to death of what is going to happen and am not even sure God is going to be there, I am going to go with my belief anyway." That is what honors God. God is not honored by somebody rashly rushing in where angels fear to tread. No, it is some "What's His Name" and "Swing and Sway" who are 80 and 83 years old, and who, though scared to death, walk into Pharaoh's court and carry out His instructions. That is what glorifies God. Don't ever offer the excuse, "I don't have the courage to be a man or woman of God." These men didn't either. Faith is simple obedience to the fact that you believe God is telling the truth. You may be scared to death, afraid God isn't there, may have all kinds of hang-ups and fears, yet you are going to obey God anyway. That's faith. God doesn't mention one of those hang ups in this passage. However, He twice mentions that He was obeyed. That is what glorifies God.

Now God is going to move in. When Moses and Aaron obeyed, God offered them a bonus, a miracle, which He didn't tell them about beforehand. Look at 8 through 10.

Exodus 7:8:

Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Work a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.'" So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

The moment they begin to obey, God says, "O.K. I'll toss in some goodies, some miracles, for you. You go into Pharaoh now and toss down your staff." By the way, the word for serpent here is the word for "long one" in Egyptian. It could mean a long snake or it could maybe even be translated dragon. It could mean a crocodile. It could mean a river monger, river lizard. It is the very thing the Egyptians worshipped. This time when Aaron threw down his staff it became whatever it was that was worshipped by the Egyptians. It was not just a plain old snake. And nobody was more surprised than Moses or Aaron unless it was the Egyptians. It was a snake the last time he did it. In fact the last two times it was a snake, but this time POW! it was a crocodile or whatever. That kind of makes an impression.

Exodus 7:11:

Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, [It is an Egyptian word. Sorcerer is very strong in the ancient Egyptian. Pharaohs were always entwined with sorcerers. In the ancient documents, they were very close. Much of their life was intermingled with the occult and their surrounding advisors were occultists. They were a people that dealt in the mystery religions of Egypt and obviously demonic. So it is very obvious that Pharaoh calls in these people that can do occult things] **and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents.** [Well here we go again. First of all, Moses sees a crocodile "Wow!" Then here come the sorcerers and all of them start throwing down their staffs, and since this is the same word for serpent, there are a bunch of other crocodiles running about, so there goes Moses's courage down the drain again. But God is not through yet. They are obeying Him.] **But Aaron's staff swallowed up** [literally "gulped down" their staffs. Swallowed up doesn't give the impression. Gulp, Gulp, Gulp!] **their staffs,** [and all of a sudden Moses and Aaron are standing there and there is only one crocodile left.] **Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.**

See the trouble with Pharaoh? What does Pharaoh's attitude indicate when he calls in his magicians? It indicates he is committed to not believing, doesn't it? No amount of evidence is going to satisfy Pharaoh. If he admits the

evidence, he will lose status, and he'd sell his soul for status, which he is indeed going to do. So he calls in the magicians, and they duplicate Moses and Aaron's act. Although Pharaoh's sorcerers are humbled, that doesn't change things one iota. His sorcerers duplicated just enough to preserve Pharaoh's status.

Class comment: When you say they duplicated it, did they really duplicate it by creating these things or was it something else?

Bob's response: I don't know. I can't answer that. Whether they actually created or not, I don't know. Let's put it this way. Satan in the last days enslaves the world by false signs, wonders and miracles, but they are real in the sense that they are miraculous. They are false in the sense that they are ungodly, but they are real. In Job, Satan produced raiders who slew Job's servants. He called down a storm which destroyed the house where Job's sons and daughters were, and it killed them all. He apparently caused a form of leprosy to come upon Job so that he had to go outside the city as an unclean person where he scrapped the scabs and pus off with a pottery shard. Those weren't fake. Those kids were dead. Job did lose his cattle and sheep to the Chaldeans. That storm did occur. He did have leprosy or whatever the disease was. So that was real.

Class comment: But none of those were actually creating life. Those were things occurring to things that already were. I have worked around magicians who could get doves to fly out of their hands. They didn't have to create them. They already had them.

Bob's response: Yeah, that is true, but I am just suggesting that we not limit this to the modern sleight of hand artists. These were people deeply involved in the occult, which were called secret arts. They could be illusions, but these are live crocodiles, and they are running around the floor. It was convincing enough to appear to be staffs in the sorcerer's hands when they came in, as Pharaoh suggested, so I don't have a pat answer for you. I personally believe this was demonic. How far the demonism went, I don't know. My belief is that it is of the occult. This is a battle between God and Satan. Daniel found that out in his day. when he prayed. A messenger was sent immediately in answer to his prayer, but it took three weeks for that messenger to get through. He actually had to have help in battling the spiritual beings behind the kings of the earth before he could get through. There are powerful forces at work that we don't see, and they have enormous power. Even Michael the archangel did not dare to dispute with the devil over the body of Moses (Jude 1:9). He said to him, "The Lord rebuke you." Apparently Satan is higher in the hierarchy of angelic beings than even Michael the archangel. And Michael respects that even while he battles with Satan.

So there are strange things in Scripture about the occult, about the other world and the spiritual realm. I think what we have here is a battle between God and Satan, and so I am not ruling out any possibilities. I'm not being dogmatic about it, but I personally tend toward demonism, not necessarily creation of life, but maybe change of life, a snake into a crocodile. I don't know. I just don't have the answer unfortunately.

But the key here is Pharaoh wants just enough evidence to support himself and his position. He doesn't want any change. So God is not hardening the heart of a man who wants life, who wants truth, who wants to know. No, this man is committed to a course of action which is anti-God. So Pharaoh hardens his heart.

Then we start the plagues. By grace God gave Pharaoh a beautiful opportunity to accept two amazing miracles, and if he had yielded to God and let the people of Israel go free, Egypt would have retained its massive power. Pharaoh wouldn't even have had to give up his godship. That is the tragedy of this thing. God would have left him alone. If he had chosen simply to obey God as far as God ask him to go; if he had let God's people go, he could have stayed on as god of Egypt. Unfortunately his pride wouldn't let him do that.

Do you see what prides does? It enslaves, and we don't even know it. It blinds us, and we don't know that either. That is why it is so insidious. We will see that as we go on here.

So God begins the plagues. These plagues are aimed directly at the gods of Egypt. That is why I believe Egypt's response is demonic because these plagues are a direct blow to their gods. The Egyptians had up to 2200 gods

who were essentially nature gods. They were embodied in various kinds of animals. I made a list of some of them. They had deified the lion, the ox, the ram, the wolf, the dog, the cat, the ibis [like the heron], the vulture, the falcon, the hippopotamus, the crocodile, the cobra, the dolphin, different varieties of fish, trees, small animals, such as the frog, the scarab beetle, the locust, other insects. They also had what are called anthropomorphic gods that appeared in the form of man in the full vigor of manhood. Just about anything that lived and moved and had its being became a representation of deity. And God is going to destroy these gods. Beyond delivering the Israelites, He is going to make Himself known as Yahweh, the alternative to the gods of Egypt. He has to destroy the gods of Egypt to prove Himself to be God above them. He also has to destroy the priesthood. The Priests of Egypt were soothsaying priests. They were deeply involved in demonism. Their secret arts were black arts, and they controlled the thought lives of the people. As well as religious power, they had tremendous economic and political power. Remember during the famine when Joseph bought all of Egypt for Pharaoh including the bodies of the Egyptians? The priests were all excluded. They kept their land, their property, their estates and their bodies. Pharaoh didn't own them. They were a powerful force alongside of Pharaoh. So God has to destroy the priests and their credibility also. He has to deal with Pharaoh because Pharaoh is god in Egypt. He is not a representative of god, he IS god and so He has to wipe out Pharaoh

He also has to deal with the idolatry of the Israelites. As we see in later passages of Joshua and Ezekiel, the Israelites were playing around with the idolatry of the Egyptians. The occult is fun. It's enticing. It's interesting to "know the future." These priests were soothsayers. A soothsayer is one who tells the future, and they could do things that were beyond the ken of man. They worshipped in various fertility cults; they were sensual to the extreme. That is very alluring and enticing to the flesh, and the Israelites succumbed to it.

So God has to deal with them both, and He begins the ten plagues [literally in Hebrew "strokes"] And that is certainly what they were. BAM! Now He did take natural things, but He made them extremely intense. They were not something that just happened to happen. They were things that occurred in Egypt, true, but they occurred here with extreme intensity, which is why they were miraculous. There was never anything like it before, and it happened right on schedule. Moses said, "Start," and it started. Moses said, "Stop," and it stopped. Yes, he waited until the time of the year when these things normally occurred, but they occurred when he said, "Now," and they stopped when he said, "Now." They didn't just fade in and out like they had always done. They hit with a savage blow, "a stroke," extreme intensity, and then disappeared like a stroke, like a blow. Beyond that, they will get worse and worse and worse until they devastate Egypt. They are an orderly progression and are increasingly destructive, and, of course, they are a moral lesson to the Egyptians too. They say in effect, "Choose Yahweh or the gods of Egypt whatever you want."

Saying these are natural and can be explained in a natural context does not say they are not miraculous. We have the idea that God interrupts the normal flow of things when He does miracles. That is the farthest thing from the Jewish mind, the Hebrew mind. The Hebrew mind says, "God is the God of everything, every aspect of life." So, when God does something out of the ordinary, it is not something out of this world, it is simply God doing something to a degree He has never done it before. To the Hebrew mind it is always God, even though it is miraculous. We live in a world which separates the spiritual from the secular. The Jew didn't have that separation. Everything in the Jewish life, to a true believing Jew, was spiritual, non-secular. Therefore, God had the right to invade every area of a Jew's life because he was in charge of every area. That is why the Old Testament view of sex is so pure and so forthright. That is a God given thing. They lived in an agrarian economy. The kids grew up watching the animals reproduce. They didn't go around scribbling graffiti on lavatory walls. It was just as much spiritual, just as much Godly.

So now God skips the leprosy and moves right on into the juggler vein of the occult. The Nile was the juggler vein of Egypt. It ran all the way down through Egypt. It was the overflow of the Nile that made Egypt fertile. There was desolate desert on both sides of it. Egypt was a long skinny country going all the way to Nubia, and the overflow of the Nile was what gave the country the topsoil it needed. The overflow of the Nile filled their reservoirs and their cisterns. They had canal systems and a number of little arms to direct the water where they needed it. So the Nile was THE life blood of Egypt. In fact in their mythology the Nile was the actual blood stream of the god Osiris who was their greatest god. He was god of the underworld. If you read Egyptian

literature, poetry and history, you see they were particularly optimistic people and yet they were preoccupied with preparations for death. Much of their life was spent preoccupied with dying, getting ready for the next world. Note the pyramids. What were they? Tombs. The very first thing the king did when he came to the throne was begin building his tomb. It took years and years and man hours and man hours and money you wouldn't believe to build those pyramids. The whole time he is reigning he is preparing to die. They were preoccupied with death. God, now, is going to destroy the life stream, the blood stream, of this god who is in charge of death, the one who kept them in bondage. Does that make you think about God's destruction of someone else who had dominion over death? "Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;" [Heb 2:14]

The first thing God does in His redemptive work here is to wipe out the blood stream of the god who controls the thought processes of all Egypt. Up until now Moses has simply taken a little vial of water, poured it on some sand, and it turned to blood. Now God tells him to do something really fancy. Look at verse 15.

Exodus 7:15

"Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent [or a dragon]" [God wants some continuity in these things. He is really trying to reach the rational thinking process of Pharaoh.] **"And you will say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, [He makes it very plain who the issue is between, not Moses and Pharaoh but Yahweh and Pharaoh] sent me to you, saying, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now.'" "Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD [I am Yahweh]: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it shall be turned to blood. And the fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul [polluted. "Stink" is a better word]; and the Egyptians will find difficulty in drinking water from the Nile.'"**

What is the first thing He makes sure that Pharaoh understand about the whole issue? It doesn't have to happen. "Let My people go that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now." He gives Pharaoh another chance to repent and let the people go before he goes on with the destruction. So Pharaoh is not sinning in ignorance, he is sinning against light.

I know people sometimes are fearful about God hardening their hearts. Let me suggest to you, though, that God doesn't harden the hearts of people who don't know any better. God doesn't harden the heart of some poor ignorant savage out in the wilderness because he doesn't live up to the little bit of light that he has and, as a result, can't receive any more light. He'll take him back and back and back and that savage has to make a number of choices. God won't harden your heart because you stumble and fall from ignorance or because of some besetting sin that has gripped you and from which you long to be free but can't. You try and you fail. Yes, it is lack of faith, but you really want out. We're not talking about that. Pharaoh doesn't want out. For Pharaoh to want out, he would have to acknowledge there is a God greater than he is, and Pharaoh won't do that. He is deliberately defying God, and the sin that hardens you is defiance. Remember the Old Testament has sacrifices for sins of commission; it has sacrifices for sins of omission, ignorance, but it has no sacrifices for the sin of the "high hand," defiance. That is the sin that hardens. That is what God is dealing with here. If you are struggling with a besetting sin in your life but you want out, you are not going to be hardened by God. He will deal with you, maybe until it hurts so much you cry out and quit, but as long as you want freedom from that sin and are trying, even though you don't understand the process of walking dominated by the Spirit, God will win. You will eventually be free because you made a choice to want to be free. God help you if you choose not to want to be free. That is the issue. If you want to be free, Hallelujah. If you don't want to be free, begin praying, my friend, and seriously. I don't want you to get up tight, go home and go through a horrible night because God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Go home and search your own heart, "What is my attitude toward my sin. Do I want out or not?"

Then we have verse 17. "Thus says the LORD, 'By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it shall be turned to blood. And the fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul; and the Egyptians will find difficulty in drinking

water from the Nile." What does He want to do with Pharaoh now? He wants Moses to know He is Yahweh; He wants the Israelites to know He is Yahweh; He wants the Egyptians to know He is Yahweh, and what does He want for Pharaoh? His purpose in all four situations is to bring each of them to the place where they will have a personal relationship with the promise making, promise keeping God. He is going to destroy Egypt in order that Pharaoh might know that He is the LORD

In the movie "The Ten Commandments" they made an interesting theological statement, even though I don't think anyone realized what they were saying. When Yul Brenner, as the Pharaoh, came in after the first born had been slaughtered and his chariots had been wiped out, Anne Baxter, as his wife, sticks it to him about the loss of her son. Yul Brenner is devastated. He may be hostile and angry, but he is crushed. He sits down on his throne, and he says, "The Lord, He is God." I almost fell out of my chair. That is exactly what God wanted Pharaoh to know. That is what God was after. It didn't occur in Scripture, unfortunately, but it did occur in the "Ten Commandments." I don't think he had any concept of what he was saying in that movie, but that statement is exactly what God wanted Pharaoh to say. "The Lord is God."

Getting back to our passage. The Egyptians sang hymns to the Nile. It is was deified. Here is one of the phrases in a Hymn to the Nile. "Bringer of food, rich in provisions, creator of all good, Lord of majesty, sweet of fragrance." But now the blood stream of Osiris is full of fish belly up. The Nile stinks and the water is totally unpalatable, totally undrinkable. It is necessary to dig in the sand far out from the Nile in order to get any pure water. God has devastated the Nile. The whole purpose of this plague was to reach people. It was not to get even.

Exodus 7:19:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'

The Nile was probably at its flood stage. It was probably June, July or August, somewhere in there. When the Nile was at its flood, it came rushing down and filled all the tributaries, all the canals, all the cisterns, and all the reservoirs they had. And it says any place where there was any water including the wooden bowls or stone bowls in the house, anything from the Nile was turned into blood. It is really a miracle. And that is exactly what happened.

Exodus 7:20:

So Moses and Aaron did even as the LORD had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood. And the fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was through all the land of Egypt

God is trying to evangelize, not just the Goshen territory. He is trying to evangelize all of Egypt. So the whole of the Nile becomes foul. But in verse 22, here comes the important part.

Exodus 7:22:

But the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened [literally was strong], and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this. So all the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink of the water of the Nile. And seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

Pharaoh calls in his magicians. Now, what is the last thing that Egypt needs at this moment?

Class comment: More blood

Bob's response: More blood. What is the only thing that Satan's emissaries can do? Foul it up worse. Pharaoh's response, "This is nothing to me." When God does something, Satan cannot counteract it. He can take something and destroy it. One of Satan's names has that context, "destroyer." All Satan can do is increase the evil, increase the wickedness, increase the pollution. In other words, he can only make things worse. He can never produce something good from what he touches.

Well what does that say, then, about our justification of sin? It is true that sin gratifies, but what will it never do? It will never satisfy. It cannot. Satan cannot satisfy. He cannot reverse the processes of corruption. He can only increase them. Here come all these magicians who can do all these wonderful things, and they make just what the Egyptians do not need, more dead fish and more stinking water. Isn't that wonderful? You have more cisterns full of belly up fish and stinking water. But it satisfies Pharaoh. Notice that? It satisfies Pharaoh! He doesn't care what happens to Egypt as long as his ego is intact. And he will grab at any straw to keep it that way. So he goes off to his palace completely unconcerned. Why not? He's got slave to dig around the Nile and bring the water to him. He's got meat and wine in the palace. Like Marie Antoinette said, "Let them eat cake." So he goes off with all his deity intact.

What about the Egyptians? What are they beginning to think? What about the Israelites? God doesn't let the Israelites get out of this, you know. It isn't until plague 4 that the Israelites begin to be exempt. What are the Egyptians thinking about now? Seven days to get any water, unless you go out and dig more wells far from the Nile. What do you think they are thinking about the Nile? What about the Israelites? What are they thinking about the power of the gods of Egypt? Why is God not exempting the Israelites for the first three plagues which deal essentially with the comforts of Egypt? What is God deliberately making the Israelites go through in the first three plagues that deal with the comforts of Egypt? What does God have to deal with with the Israelites? What about their relationship with Egypt? Do the Israelites want to leave Egypt? No!

The history of the Israelites all the way through the wilderness wanderings is, "No way. Let's go back." They don't want to leave Egypt. What do they really want in Egypt? They are in slavery. They are in bondage, but it is harsh cruel bondage. What do they really want? What really turned them against Moses? The increase of their bondage. The increase of the harshness. They just want to stay in Egypt in bondage, but they want an easy bondage. Why not if you've got a good slave master? There's no responsibility. You get up in the morning, do your thing, get your three squares a day, and even according to one Pharaoh, he "provided all bread and beer for all the slaves." The Israelites didn't want out. They were quite satisfied with their bondage until it got nasty. They were in bondage for many, many years but the Pharaoh of the oppression and the Pharaoh of the exodus got mean, and that is when they cried out. They didn't cry out to God for 430 years, my friends. Why? Because sin can be quite gratifying, and we really don't want freedom from it. Sure, we would like freedom from the wages of sin. That is a different matter. That is the thumbscrew. That is removing the straw from my bricks so I have to go out and find my own straw. I have to sweat when I do that. I can make my quota of bricks like falling off a log after I get my skills down. Then I go get my six pack and my loaf of bread and no strings. It is only with the thumbscrew that the wages of sin begin to pain, and I cry out. I still don't want freedom from sin, though, I just want freedom from the pain, the penalty of sin.

We are all Egyptians. We are all Israelites. The Egyptians were caught in the throes of the system, but the Israelites knew better. They were like us. They knew better, and they didn't want relief from what bound them. They only wanted a better deal within the boundaries. They wanted to sin without the penalty, the sin without the wages. They were quite satisfied to continue within their sins. Only one problem, they were God's chosen people, and like them, God is determined to make believers "conformed to the **image** of His Son." He will not let us go. If He has to grind us down until we hate Him so much we will give up our particular sin, He will do that to free us. So He grinds the Israelites down along with the Egyptians. They were out digging wells too. Goshen stank just like the rest of the land. By the time He gets through, they will be willing to leave temporarily. The tragedy is the lesson lasted just exactly two months. There is only a two month period between the release from Egypt and the first mutterings against God. That is the tragedy of the chosen people.

Father, we just thank you so much for your faithfulness to us that you are Yahweh, that you are a

God who makes promises and a God who keeps His promises. And, Father, we thank you so much that You will not be satisfied with us living an easy life of bondage to sin, that You will insist that we be free men in Jesus Christ. You have said, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." And you are committed to that freedom in our lives. And so, Father, we pray that we might not be like the Israelites and be satisfied with a six pack and a loaf of bread but want the manna from heaven, the food from heaven and the water from the Rock provided by You. We thank you, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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