

YHWH Does Not Lie

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 May 2023

Preacher: Pastor Cal Morrison

[0 : 0 0] Now, there was a phrase that I'm just about old enough to remember, a phrase that is lost on the young people, as many things are, but a phrase that you would perhaps hear on the playground before the turn of the millennium. You wouldn't hear it nowadays, but it's a phrase that would perhaps mostly be used among boys, and mostly as a way to outdo one another. See if you can finish the phrase, right? My dad, yes, thank you, my dad is bigger than yours, bigger, stronger, better, whatever it is. You don't hear that nowadays, you know, but that was the thing, that was the posture.

Even if you were the little guy, you would square up and say, my dad's bigger than your dad. And so, that's what it's like, this passage, this moment. Moses is now head to head with Pharaoh.

All the fear that he once had has somehow dissipated or whatever, but Moses no longer looks to himself in this match against Pharaoh. My dad is bigger than yours. My God is bigger than your God. When you strip away the ethnicity, the status between Moses and Pharaoh, they're just both men. That's all they are.

You think about all the great leaders in the world, the powerful people, at the end of the day, they're just flesh and bones. They're just people. Now, that's not to say it wouldn't perhaps be intimidating standing before and challenging a powerful dictator. But what Moses finally realizes in this moment is that Israel's God is bigger than all the gods of Egypt. And so, this is the beginning. This is the beginning of what I've called the showdown. This is really the showdown in Egypt. The last couple of chapters have been a bit like, I don't know if you've ever seen a pre-match press conference between boxers or any kind of sport. They have these pre-competition press conferences. And so, you see these boxers, for instance, that are in this press conference and they start saying things, I'm going to do this to you, I'm going to knock you out, and I'm going to do all this and that. And it's all manner of threats about, I'm going to win. No, I'm going to win. No, you're going to lose. You ever seen that in any sport?

Yeah. It's a common thing. People run in their mouth. And then it becomes not even just so much about who's going to win and who's going to lose, but it becomes about whose words are going to prove true. Well, you've said all this stuff. Well, let's see if you live up to your words.

[3 : 0 6] Now the moment comes in Exodus for Moses and Pharaoh to step into the ring and see whose words prove true. It's a big thing throughout the plagues is whose words are going to prove true.

We've already heard this passage. If you want to keep your Bibles open from 7 to chapter 9, 7, 8 to 9, 12, covering the first six plagues, we could have went through this one plague a week, but we would have been in Exodus for a long time. We could have covered the whole lot in one hour, but there's just so much detail. And so let me just say, this week we're going to look at 1 to 6.

Next week we're going to look at 7, 8 and 9. And then the following week, the Passover and Exodus. And then finally the memorial at the end of June. And then we'll pick it up after summer. But there's a few reasons I just want to state why we're dividing it this way. First reason, there's a pattern. There's a specific pattern to Exodus plagues to group them together. And you could also say that there's not just 10, and they're not actually all called plagues. In chapter 6, verse 6, God calls them great acts of judgment. And then 7, verse 3, God calls them signs and wonders. Again, he mentions great acts of judgment in 7, verse 4. And in verse 9, God says that Pharaoh will ask Moses and Aaron to prove themselves by working a miracle. And so they're not always called plagues. They're called great acts of judgment or signs and wonders. And there's a pattern. So the first sign is really when he throws down the staff and it turns into a serpent. And although the magicians do the same thing with their staffs and with their secret arts, the staff of Moses and Aaron swallows up their staffs. And this is the sign and proof and preview of what's going to happen in the end.

And then when we get to the actual things that we know as plagues, there are three cycles. This is helpful to know there's three cycles of three plagues. So 1 to 3, 4 to 6, 7 to 9. And they're grouped in three cycles. This is evident from the text. Firstly, each cycle begins with a warning in the morning. Every cycle begins with Moses going in the morning. Secondly, in each cycle, Pharaoh is warned with the first two, but he's not warned with the third one. And finally, in the first warning of each cycle, God gives the purpose of why he's doing this. So if you go back to chapter 5, verse 1, you'll remember when Moses first went to Pharaoh and said, Yahweh has met with us and he has told you to let the people go. Pharaoh says, well, who is Yahweh that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I'm not going to do that. So now in every cycle, all three cycles, God tells Pharaoh that by these things, he will know that he is Yahweh. God is answering the question of who he really is. He's answering the question. And in fact, everyone, everyone in this story is going to know who Yahweh is. And so we're dividing it with this pattern in mind. And we're doing the first two cycles and then we'll do the third cycle next week.

Second reason, we're splitting it in this way because in the last cycle, the third cycle, there is a big shift. There's a shift in Pharaoh's heart, there's a shift in Pharaoh's words, and there's a shift in Pharaoh's people. So we've got the first two cycles, the first six plagues, and then after that, there's a shift that takes place that we'll deal with next week. And these things, a shift in Pharaoh's heart, his words, and his people, we learn about something about God's heart, God's word, and God's people.

[7 : 22] For example, throughout our passage today, a very long passage, Pharaoh is the one who is hardening his heart. But by the end of the second cycle, there's a change. The Lord hardens his heart.

So there's this change, and we'll say more on that later on. But there's a progression of Pharaoh's heart. There's also a progression with Pharaoh's words. In the first six signs, Pharaoh makes false promises. He just throws them out in order to bring a stop to the plagues.

But in the last cycle, Pharaoh begins, and we'll look at this next week, Pharaoh begins to confess his sin. Pharaoh begins to say next week in the third cycle, I have sinned. And he begins to try and compromise. And we'll look at that next week. That's a shift that takes place in the third cycle.

And then even so, in the last cycle, Pharaoh's people start to get fed up and start to turn to the Lord and believe the Lord. So if I could sum it up, I would say this. This morning, the big thing that we're going to see is that God does not lie or cheat, unlike Pharaoh. God does not lie or cheat.

And then next week, what we will see is that God does not compromise. So let me just say a few things before running through this passage. I just want to say that questions will arise. We're going through this. We're going through it quickly. If you have questions, there's not enough time to cover everything in one sitting. But I'd encourage you to take a note of any questions that you have.

[9 : 01] Note them down. Keep them for yourself. Reflect on them later. And perhaps do some further reading or study. Talk to someone. Talk to someone after the service about any questions you have. Feel free to ask me. Certainly, I've done a lot of reading and study that is not going to make it into the talk. A lot of stuff in the cutting room floor. But take a note of any questions that you might have. Second thing, one question that I'm deliberately not going to answer or address today is why did God strike Egypt so many times when he already knew that Pharaoh would not listen?

Why bother with all these plagues when he knew that Pharaoh wasn't going to listen? I'm not going to address that simply because I'm going to address it next week in relation to the warning about hail.

That's going to come very directly next week when we talk about hail. A question I will touch on is what's going on with Pharaoh's heart. I might not go into all of it because we'll look at that further next week. But just take a note of any questions.

Okay, so that being said, let's run through the events. We're not going to read it all because we've already read it this morning. But you can follow it in your Bible if you want to keep track.

The first part is the preview, this showdown with the staffs in Pharaoh's court and his palace. Yahweh anticipates that Pharaoh will ask Moses for a proof. Back in chapter 4, Moses was concerned that the Israelites would want proof. And can you remember, if you know the story, what Yahweh said?

[10 : 40] He said, what's that in your hand? The staff. Throw it down and it turns into a serpent. And so Yahweh already uses this as a proof for the Israelites and he's going to do the same for Pharaoh.

He anticipates that Pharaoh's going to ask for proof. Some suggest that it's not a snake, perhaps a crocodile, because it's a different word from snake in Genesis. But there's enough evidence to show that it's likely a snake. Now the serpent, as we saw in that little mask, the serpent was the symbol of power and authority in ancient Egypt. You can read many ancient texts about this. The serpent was the symbol of power. Think about Pharaoh's crown. This crown had this serpent as a symbol of power. John Currid says, The serpent crested diadem of Pharaoh symbolized all the power, sovereignty, and magic with which the gods endued the kings. This has been part of the storyline from the beginning of the Bible, from Genesis, when the serpent, the devil, when by the serpent, the devil sought to undermine God and enslave his people. And God said back in Genesis 3 that this war would continue between the serpent and God's people.

And then in Genesis 15, we've been here before. Genesis 15, God made a covenant with Abraham about the nation that would come from him. And he said that the offspring would be afflicted for 400 years in a different land, namely Egypt. But God would bring judgment on them. Now by the time of Exodus, Pharaoh is like the figurehead of Satan. That's what you need to know. Pharaoh is the figurehead of the serpent in Genesis 3. He's the representative of Satan on earth. He's the serpent God. Now, we've just had a coronation recently in Britain. And do any of you know how much Charles' crown cost?

A few bob, as they would say. They estimate around about 45 million pounds for a crown. 45, I mean, I don't know how he managed to keep his head up, but it was that heavy. 45 million pounds. Now, if you think that that crown was important, listen to this.

[13:19] And so in ancient Egypt, the crown featured the cobra as a symbol of the goddess Wajit. And it was part of the coronation that they would sing a hymn to the crown. They would sing a hymn to the crown as a goddess, with a view that the crown itself was charged with power. And when it was placed upon the king's head, the king would assume divine power and status. And so this king, this crown in Egypt wasn't just some status symbol or some, you know, really rich, you know, symbol. It was seen as holding the power of the goddess. This crown that Pharaoh wore with the snake was said to be filled with the power of the gods.

And then when the crown was placed, the king would assume this power. And during the coronation, we've actually got a lot of information about the coronation services in ancient Egypt. And during the coronation, Pharaoh would actually address the crown. He would address the crown and he would say this. We've got a note of what he would say. He would say, O red crown, O great one, O magician, O fiery snake. Let there be terror of me like the terror of thee. Let there be fear of me like the fear of thee. Let there be awe of me like the awe of thee. Let there be love of me like the love of thee. Let me rule a leader of the living. Let me be powerful, a leader of the spirits. Let my blade be firm against my enemies. That's what Pharaoh would have to say to this crown before he was endued with the power of the gods. So, for Yahweh's first sign of proof to Pharaoh, he takes the very thing that is charged with sovereign power and shows his own power over it. He's making a big statement with the serpent. Commentator Philip Ryken says this, it would be like when Moses goes in with the staff, throws it down, it turns into a serpent in front of Pharaoh. This is what it would be the equivalent of.

It would be like taking a bald eagle into the oval office in America and wringing its neck. I mean, this was the symbol of the president. Taking a bald eagle into the oval office and wringing its neck.

When God confronts other gods, he doesn't probe around hoping to find a weakness. Instead, he takes aim at his enemy's greatest strength and overwhelms it with superior force. In this case, he sent Moses and Aaron straight to Pharaoh's command center, where he proceeded to claim ultimate authority over all Egypt. And he goes on to say this, I think it's beautifully put. He says, as soon as Pharaoh saw the emblem of his authority slithering across the floor, he called for backup. End quote.

It's highly offensive. It's highly charged. This is a highly politically charged, offensive thing that Moses and Aaron are doing to Pharaoh. But maybe it's just a trick, eh? That's what Pharaoh thinks. Maybe it's just a trick. I'll get my magicians to do the same thing. And so they do the same thing.

[16:45] Ah, we can do that. Their staffs turn into serpents. But then they all get swallowed up by Aaron's staff. How about that? Oh, really? You think you can play this game? This is a sign of things that are coming. Yahweh's not messing about. He's sending a strong signal. He is the one in control, even in Egypt. And it should have been a stark warning to come. Not only did it show Pharaoh and his serpent-crested crown that he was no match for Pharaoh, for Yahweh, this should have shown Pharaoh that he was no match. But also it foreshadowed the powers of Egypt being swallowed up in the sea in chapter 14. This was a sign of things to come. But Pharaoh, no, he refused to listen.

You see, some people will demand proof. Some people will ask for evidence. And even when they get proof, it will not be enough. For Pharaoh, this is an assault on his authority, which actually only makes him more obstinate. Pharaoh's pride leads his nation into cycles of judgment.

Isn't that a case? Oh, how the proud leaders drag their people down with them when they fall. Isn't this true? Pharaoh refused to listen. And so, first cycle happens. Moses goes to Pharaoh in the morning, as he's going out to the Nile, and he says, Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness. But so far you've not obeyed.

Thus says Yahweh, by this you shall know that I am Yahweh. Behold, with the staff that's in my hand, the one that swallowed up your serpents, I will strike the water that's in the Nile, and it shall turn to blood.

And with the verse, the same staff swallowed up the serpents, the Nile was turned into the blood. Now the Nile, the Nile was the river of life in Egypt, yet it became the river of death. Even the great Osiris, the God of the Nile, who was depicted with the river running through his bloodstream, yet what becomes of Osiris when the river becomes death?

[19 : 14] Yet it was another God, a God called Happy. Imagine that. A God called Happy, the God of the flood, who was seen as the giver of life and the Lord of sustenance, who causes the whole land of Egypt to live through his provisions. It was this God called Happy who received the mortal blow with this sign.

Oh, Happy, where are you now? I wonder what gods of provision we have today. I wonder what the source of our sustenance and provision is. Now imagine in similar ways, Happy is a God who many still worship. Nevertheless, the magicians come in with their secret arts, and Pharaoh is stubborn.

They do the same thing, and Pharaoh is stubborn in his refusal to let the people go. Now I don't imagine that Pharaoh was very pleased that his magicians could do the same thing. Think about this.

Blood is the last thing that he needs. The whole river's been turned into blood. What he needs is water, yet his magicians come and produce more blood. It's like, I mean, come on, okay.

It's the last thing we need. Yet Pharaoh, stubborn as he is, turns and goes into his house. He strengthens his resolve. He shuts his door, and he leaves the Egyptians to dig for water themselves. Who's providing water for them now? Not Happy. Happy's out of business. But next, there will be frogs everywhere.

[20 : 56] Pharaoh will not even be able to go into his house and ignore it, because the frogs will come up into his house, even into his bed, into ovens and kneading bowls, and even upon Pharaoh himself.

The magicians again do the same by their secret arts, but their magic doesn't impress Pharaoh. The whole land of Egypt is teeming with frogs in your bed, in your oven. You can't cook. You can't go to sleep. You can't make a cake or bread or anything without frogs being everywhere, and the magicians come along and say, do you know what we'll do? We'll bring even more frogs. Notice how the gods and the arts and the people, they can't solve the problem. They can only make the problem worse. They cannot solve the problem. Pharaoh's not pleased. Look at his response. If you're there in your Bible, look at the response of Pharaoh when his magicians do the same thing. His magicians do the same thing, yet Pharaoh turns around and pleads with Moses. Bring Moses.

Plead with the Lord. Plead with Yahweh to take away the frogs from me and my people. And do you know what? I'll let them go. I'll let them go and sacrifice. Just get rid of the frogs.

And so, they're not solving the problem. The last thing Egypt needs is more frogs. What use is their power if they're only able to add to the problem? Only Yahweh can solve this. And Pharaoh seems to know it now.

Pharaoh asks Moses to plead with Yahweh to take them away. And finally, finally, he will let Israel go to sacrifice. This is good news. This is great news. All it took was frogs. This is great. We don't even need to go any further. All it took was frogs. And Yahweh has made Pharaoh submit. Notice how God has given gradual warnings. They're not at full intensity. They don't immediately wound people. Frogs, I mean, they're quite harmless in this instance. The first wounds are actually to Pharaoh's pride, to Egypt's economy, and to the objects of their worship. That's who the first wounds are too. You see, Egyptians held frogs as sacred. They had a god called Hecate, a frog-headed female goddess of fertility. This sacred little idol became an absolute nuisance, getting into their houses, their beds, their ovens, their bowls.

[23 : 43] I mean, you're pleased to have a false god, but when they get into your bed with you, you get a bit fed up. They're overwhelmed by frogs. Can you just imagine the nuisance for a minute, trying to get to bed? Trying to, I mean, I know what it's like to have a toddler kicking in the bed, but frogs, that's a whole other game. Frogs in your oven, frogs in your bowls. What an absolute nuisance.

Pharaoh cannot ignore it. The fact that he calls for Moses and asks him to plead with Yahweh shows that he recognizes God's part in this. No one else can solve it. You know, this is, this is a little like, see when non-religious people pray. I did this myself before I was a Christian. When non-religious people pray, they know that nothing else will work. That's why they do it. They know that nothing else will work, so they're willing to try another person's God. Willing to try. Pharaoh makes his first ever promise to let the people go. Finally, he concedes, have it your way, Moses. Have it your way.

Just get rid of the frogs. But isn't this often the case? People often only appeal to God to solve a problem. A confession or profession or prayer or whatever it may be isn't actually about God.

It's just about the problem. Isn't that true sometimes? As soon as the problem's gone, so is any concern or consideration for God. This is true of Pharaoh. This is one of the exposing things about Pharaoh here. Between Yahweh and Pharaoh, whose word is reliable? Remember the example of the boxers in the pre-match conference? I'll do this. I'll do that. I'm going to win. No, I'm going to win.

Well, whose words are going to prove true? Yahweh's saying he's going to do something, and he does it. Pharaoh says, okay, get rid of the frogs, and I'll let the people go. And he does. And does Pharaoh let them go? No. His words are not reliable.

[25 : 55] One of the big takeaways from our passage, God does not lie. God does not lie or cheat. And it's not just that humans do. It's that humans in Pharaoh's position shouldn't really need to lie or cheat.

It's not just that humans lie and cheat and God doesn't. It's that someone like Pharaoh, with all the power in the world, he should have no reason to lie or cheat. Who's going to stop him doing a thing?

Yet in this moment, when you have all this power and you rule by fear, you want your word to be taken seriously. But Pharaoh, he is not in control. And his word being unreliable shows the fact that he's just not in control. His word isn't sure. You see, control is an illusion. Even for the most powerful humans on earth, control is an illusion. There's only one person in control, and that's God.

As soon as there's respite, Pharaoh strengthens his resolve and goes back on his word. And without a warning, the third strike happens. God sends gnats. Some think it might be lice. Whatever it is, here comes a point when Pharaoh's magicians try to replicate it, and they cannot. They can't replicate it. And they turn to Pharaoh and they say, this is the finger of God. We can't do this. This is the finger of God. Yet he wouldn't even listen to them. And this is just the end of the first cycle.

By the end of the first cycle, the magicians are out of tricks. They can't even compete with the finger of God. The gods of Egypt, the magicians, and Pharaoh cannot compete even with the finger of God. How are they going to cope when he lays his hand on Egypt, chapter 7, verse 4?

[27 : 57] Now, interestingly, a wee side note, this term, the finger of God, is only used four times in the entire Bible. It's only used four times. The first time is right here. The next two times are talking about carving the Ten Commandments in stone. And the fourth time is actually Jesus using this term when he's accused of casting out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus says, no, it's by the finger of God. Jesus uses this very same term to show that he is overpowering Satan.

In the same manner that Satan was overpowered in Egypt. It's the only times that the finger of God comes to overpower Satan is in Exodus with Yahweh and in the New Testament with Jesus casting out demons. The finger of God. Jesus is doing the same thing. This whole Exodus thing is foreshadowing who Jesus is and what he came to do. This is pointing towards Jesus. And so we get into cycle two.

Cycle two. Moses goes to Pharaoh again in the morning and warns him of swarms of flies. Yet the development in this second cycle is that there's going to be a very clear distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites who were living in Goshen. God's people will be completely unaffected.

And he doesn't just mention the people but the place. Because as it says in this next cycle, God does this, that you may know that I am Yahweh in the midst of the earth. The first time it was so that you may know that I am Yahweh. Now he's saying you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth, e.g. even in Egypt. I am God even in Egypt. I can take a place like Goshen and shield it, because I am the one that's in control. Yahweh is sovereign even in Egypt. He's the God of all the earth. He's the one running the show, not these other so-called gods. Yahweh is God even in Egypt, and those who belong to him are safe under his rule. Notice that. The people are safe under the rule of Yahweh. But what about the people under the rule of Pharaoh? Are they safe? No. I mean,

Pharaoh cannot protect his people here. And the thing happens, and there's flies everywhere. I don't know if you've experienced something like this. I mean, if you've spent any length of time in Scotland, you know that we have a midge problem. I remember me and Jen had this lovely holiday in Glengarry, and we were in a wee cottage, and it was overlooking Loch Keoch, whatever you say.

[30 : 56] And it happened that just the time that we were there and the landscape around made it ripe for swarms of midges, and it just ruined. It ruined the holiday to an extent. We couldn't barely leave the house without a swarm waiting at the door, you know, for ready to pounce on us. We could hardly go any local walks. We had to get the midge nets and all sorts of things and tape ourself up. And any time we went out, we just jumped in the car and just went somewhere. We even went to the Isle of Skye, which is notorious for midges, and there were less midges there than there were around this cottage. Midges absolutely everywhere. Think about that, but times a million in Egypt, you know, it's just getting out of hand. It says in verse 24 of chapter 8, it says that swarms came into Pharaoh's house and his servants' houses. Throughout all the land of Egypt, the land was ruined by swarms of flies. Absolutely ruined.

And this is just the start of the second cycle. Pharaoh's dragging his whole nation down to suffer these things, and we're only at the start of the second cycle. It's getting unbearable. It's not bringing harm yet on people, but it's unbearable. Pharaoh has been given every opportunity with gradual intensity to put an end to all this. Now, he should have known something from Egypt's history.

Back in Genesis, a similar thing happened to a Pharaoh in Egypt when he held something of God's. You remember in Genesis 12 that Abraham and his wife Sarah went down to Egypt, and Pharaoh took a liking to Sarah. Abraham told a wee white lie and said, she's not my wife, she's my sister. God had already said to Abraham, whoever blesses you, I will bless. Whoever dishonors you, I will curse. Abraham and Sarah find himself in Egypt, and Pharaoh takes Sarah. And then all manner of plagues comes upon Pharaoh, and he's like, what on earth is going on? And when he finds out that it is God behind us, he lets Sarah go.

Sarah was the mother of the nation that would once again be held by Egypt, by another Pharaoh. Is he going to let God's people go? Or is he going to suffer plagues?

The flies are too much. Pharaoh once again calls for Moses. He doesn't waste any time. He knows what he needs to do, but he tries to get them to sacrifice within the land of Egypt. Yeah, yeah, yeah, you can do the sacrifice, but just do it here. And Moses says, don't be stupid. It's not going to work. If we do that here with sacrifices that are detestable to Egyptians, we're going to get stoned.

[34 : 04] We can't do it here. We need to do it in the wilderness. And Pharaoh concedes. He's like, whatever, whatever, just have it your way. Do it your way. Just get rid of the flies. Moses explicitly tells Pharaoh not to cheat. He says, you did this before, Pharaoh. Don't cheat like you did before. Not only is Pharaoh's word unreliable, not only does he lie, but he cheats you.

This is the way the serpent behind Pharaoh always operates. He'll cheat you out of the things that he promises. He'll cheat you in the end. How many times are you going to be cheated by the things that are promised before you realize that your trust in worship is misplaced in the wrong things?

We all need to learn this, you know. These false promises of the world were just cheated in the end. You see, the one who does not lie or cheat is Yahweh. He will do what he says, and he will give you what he promises. And so Pharaoh, against the warning of Moses, he cheats again. Chapter 9, verse 3, it's no longer the finger of God, but the hand of God that falls on Egypt. Now it's going to be all the livestock of Egypt that will be plagued and die, yet none of the livestock of Israel shall be affected.

And when Pharaoh goes out and sees that it happened like that, you would think it would make him a bay. But when he sees that it happened, just as God said, and when he sees the livestock of the Israelites unharmed, you'll have experienced this. See when, maybe yourself, okay, I'm sure you're all better than me. I've experienced this. You're probably all far too better than me. When someone that you don't like, someone who's against you, when you see something nice happening to them, does it not just make you dislike them even more? See, when Pharaoh sees this, oh, Israel are getting the favorable treatment.

It just makes him strengthen his resolve against him. He's just not going to give in. He just becomes all the more stubborn. You're doing well, folks. We're nearly there. Without warning, the last cycle of cycle two comes with boils breaking out and sores on man and beast throughout Egypt. It says that the magicians couldn't stand before Moses, not that they were much use at this point anyway. And at the close of the second cycle, the close of our entire passage, the last verse, there's a shift in Pharaoh's heart. All the time he's been hardening his heart. He's been strengthening his stubbornness.

[36 : 44] But this time it says, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Now, what does that mean? We're coming to an end. What does that mean? Back in chapter four, a few weeks ago, the Hebrew word in this verse for harden, actually the Hebrew word means strengthen. So we mustn't think that God is doing some unfair magic thing of making Pharaoh's heart callous from the outside. God's not doing something, you know, unfair to Pharaoh. The word is strengthen. And so Pharaoh, along this story, Pharaoh has had the courage to strengthen his own heart. He's had the courage to keep up the fight and keep his resolve against Yahweh. Because that's what Pharaoh wants, isn't it? Pharaoh does not want to give in. He doesn't want the glory or worship to go to anyone else but himself. And so he's, oh, I'm strong, I'm strong, I'm strong. But the picture is that by the end of this, Pharaoh's heart is fainting.

Pharaoh's heart is becoming weak by all these things, and he cannot keep up the fight. And so God has to strengthen Pharaoh's heart for him to continue to fight. He has to strengthen Pharaoh's heart to give him the courage and strength to do what he desires. God's not forcing Pharaoh to do something against his will. He's given him the strength to do what he wants to do.

One commentator helpfully said that God has given Pharaoh the choice when he is not under duress. See, during the plague, he's under duress. Please, please, please, please, just get rid of it, please.

But when the plague disappears, Pharaoh gathers himself. He's got a bit of strength. He's not under duress. That's when the real test comes. That's when the real test comes. It's the case for all of us, isn't it? In the midst of a trial, we may heartily call out to God. But the real test is whether we will still listen when the trial is passed and our hearts are no longer weak.

That's when the real test comes. Will you listen to God when you are strong, when you're feeling strong, when you're not under duress? Will you still listen and acknowledge God?

[39 : 08] If God makes a promise, He will not cheat. He will keep His promise. Trust the Word of God. The Word of God never fails because He never lies or cheats. If God says He's going to do something, He will do it. And if God makes a promise, He will not cheat on His promise.

Folks, more could be said about this passage. You've endured much already. It might have seemed like an extra plague on you. It just so happens the Lord didn't lose any of my pages today.

More could be said about this, but let me point you to Jesus as we land this plane. ever since Genesis 3, the Jews have been waiting for the offspring of Eve, who would crush the head of the serpent. And in Exodus, at this point, Yahweh is the one who is doing this, for only He could.

And in fact, it says back in Exodus chapter 3 that God came down. God came down for this very purpose, to defeat the serpent, to defeat the serpent, to redeem His people and make Himself known. God came down.

Now, in Jesus, God came down. He came down to crush the serpent Himself, to redeem the lost, and to make Himself known. There's no greater revelation than Jesus. There's no greater rescue than Jesus. There's no greater act of judgment than Jesus on the cross. Folks, there's no deceit in His mouth, says the Word of God.

[40 : 57] There's no deceit in the mouth of Jesus. He does not lie. If Jesus said He's going to come back, He's going to come back. If Jesus said that all who believe Him will have eternal life, He will give you eternal life.

If He says that He will forgive you, He will trust in His Word. If He says that He's going to do this or that, if He makes promises, He is not going to cheat you out of His promise. He will not go back in His Word.

If you're trusting in Jesus, then, oh, be absolutely encouraged that He's not going to cheat you. No matter what it seems like in this world, no matter what your circumstances seem like, Jesus is not cheating you.

He's going to fulfill His Word. Regardless of how things look, Jesus will never cheat you, never go back in His Word. And if you don't yet trust in Him, if you don't yet know Him, well, as is repeated throughout Exodus, these things are done so that you may know who He is. The things that Jesus came to do were so that you may know who He is, and that by knowing who He is, you may trust in Him and have life in His name.

By the things that Jesus did, you will know that He is the Lord of all the earth. Who's the one who turns water into wine and multiplies bread? Who's the one who heals the sick?

[42 : 26] And raises the dead? Who walks on the sea and ascends into heaven? Whose blood was shed so that me and you could be forgiven? It is Jesus. Believe in the words of Jesus.

What He said He came to do, He did. So that all may know that He is the Lord. He doesn't lie. He doesn't cheat.

What He says He will do, He will do. Trust in the Word of Jesus. Let me pray. O Lord, please help us by Your Spirit to know who You are, to see You and understand Your Word.

Help us by Your Spirit to trust in You, for we have a bias in our hearts to distrust. We have proclivity to not listen to You, to disbelieve.

Lord, we are fickle human beings. We are weak. Give us the strength to believe Your Word. Give us the endurance to continue believing Your Word.

[43 : 39] Give us the revelation by Your Spirit through Your Word to see that Jesus is the Lord. And let our hearts not be troubled, that we may continue to believe in Him and trust that He will not cheat us.

He will not lie, but He will keep His Word. Lord, we thank You that we live in a time where You have done these things. We thank You that we live in a time where You have made Yourself known in the greatest way possible through Your Son, Jesus.

So we praise You for that, and we pray that You would continue to make Yourself known through Jesus in each one of our hearts, for Your glory, forevermore.