



What big lessons are there in this little account of a plague? Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. Exodus 8:16–19 prepares us for the first serial reading in Morning Public Worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these four verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us the justness of God's wrath against sin, the enormity of God's wrath against sin, the humiliation that we ought to experience over our weakness and wickedness, and the danger of being hardened by our encounters with God rather than softened by them.

Wednesday, October 27, 2021 ▫ Read Exodus 8:16–19

Questions from the Scripture text: To whom did Yahweh speak (v16)? To whom did He want him to speak? What was Aaron to stretch out? What was he to strike? What would happen to the dust? Where? Who does what (v17)? What does Aaron stretch out? What does he strike? What does it become? On whom and what? How does the second half of the verse emphasize the enormity of the plague? Who else tried this (v18)? With what success? And what result? To whom did they speak (v19)? What did they say? What happened anyway? Why?

Justice/justness. The first application of this passage appears by way of what isn't there: no going to Pharaoh and warning him, etc. We can see why. Pharaoh is hard. Either v8 was a lie, or he hasn't kept his promise. It doesn't offend our sense of justice that the Lord would inflict another plague upon Pharaoh.

But would it offend our sense of justice if He did so with our nation, or our church? Or even to employ some chastening providence in our own sanctification? Though Pharaoh's rebellion be more obstinate, there are ways in which our sins against grace have a heinousness to them that should shut our mouths under difficult providence—or, rather, open them in confession of sin and humble plea. God doesn't owe us a warning, and He doesn't owe us to do things the way that He has before.

Extensiveness/enormity. Though the river is a great feature of Egypt, it is not everywhere. Later, the Holy Spirit will tell us that the knowledge of God will one day cover the earth like the waters cover the sea. But one way the Bible often describes an innumerable multitude of things or people is by the phrase "the dust of the earth." In the original, this exact phrase appears once in v16 and twice in v17.

In the last of these instances, the exaggeration gets the point across: "all the dust of the earth became lice." Of course, since there was some land left, not every particle underwent this conversion. But you get the idea: every man and animal in Egypt was covered with bugs.

Humiliation. If they weren't functioning as God and Israel's enemies in this passage, the reader could almost feel sorry for the royal sorcerers. They're covered in lice, head-to-toe, and they're expected to produce more. The Lord had permitted them to do so with the frogs (v7), but that hadn't ultimately solved Pharaoh's problem (v8). Now, they can neither reproduce the lice (v18a) nor eliminate them (v18b). They have to give a report to the boss, and they admit that this is beyond them, but can't bring themselves to credit Yahweh—"This is the finger of God" (v19).

Persistent hardness. At first, the conclusion to this plague looks similar to the others. "Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as Yahweh had said." Pharaoh is exposed for what he is like. The LORD's Word proves true. But there is one thing that is different. This time Pharaoh's heart is so hard that we have no plea for relief. This means that his people miss out on the miraculous repeals that accompanied the first two plagues. Considering the extent of this plague, it was a hard judgment indeed upon the people that the lice had to die out from "natural causes" (the more ordinary providence of God).

In four, short verses this plague presents four frightful features of the judgment of God upon the wicked: the justness of it, the enormity of it, their humiliation by it, and their persistent hardness in it. God grant us grace that it shall not be so with us. How marvelous that He has given Christ to atone for all whom, by grace, He would bring to believe in Him.

Where can you see one or more of these features of God's judgment in our nation? Upon certain parts of "the church"? What hope do you have of it not being so with you?

Sample prayer: O Lord, how great is Your longsuffering mercy toward sinners! You owe us no warning, no call to repentance, and yet You have given us so very many of them. We plead for our nation and so much of the visible church, that You would deliver from hardness of heart. Grant that many's eyes would be opened to the judgment that they deserve, and that their hearts would be softened to turn to Christ in faith. And grant unto us, too, to see the heinousness of our own sin, that we may hate it and lay hold of your mercy in Christ, through whom we ask it, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP32AB "What Blessedness" or TPH2B "Why Do Heathen Nations Rage"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Exodus chapter 8 verses 16 through 19. These are God's words. So y'all I said to Moses say to Aaron stretch, out your rod and strike the dust of the land. So that it may become licked throughout all the land of Egypt and they did. So for air and stretched out his hand with his rod, and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast.

All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. Now, the magicians, so worked with their enchantments to bring fourth lights, but they could not. So, there were lights on man and beast. Then the magician said to Pharaoh, this is the finger of God. But Pharaoh's, heart, grew heart and he did not eat them just as Yahweh had set.

So for the reading of God's inspired and inerrant. So one of the new things that we see in this third plague are a couple of things that weren't there or aren't there that were there in the first couple of plagues. Pharaoh does not receive any new command and he doesn't receive a warning about what will happen.

And when we see that, we see that all though, God had given Pharaoh, these new commands and these warnings, God didn't know, Pharaoh, those things they're already new was required of him and Pharaoh's heart was hard and we see the justness of God in his judgments and his in his wrath.

This helps us because we often want to lay obligations on. God will find our hearts and minds saying well you know what about those? Who have not heard the Bible. Preached God points out in his word. They can see the evidence of his divine nature in the creation and God has put the knowledge of them of himself even in their hearts and they know what's right and wrong.

And what what breaking God's commandments deserves that it deserves that. So one of the things that we see in this plague by the removal of those things and even have a commentators who remark on the removal and how, how this was out of the pattern. And but God is showing us that he doesn't owe us any warning or further instruction, we are already culpable and guilty before him.

In fact, the last thing we hear before this blog is verse 15, pharaoh hardened, his heart and did not heed them as you all they had said. So there's a justice, and there's a just nest, and we should confess God, good. And just as the apostle says, and Romans 9, when he's dealing with what is for us of difficult question, because we don't see the justice of God.

And the guiltiness of man in the way that we should, he turns around. And he says, who are you as the clay to say, to the potter? Why have you made me this way? We are guilty for our sins. We commit them against the Lord, and we have no argument to make against him.

Yes. Righteous. This is why it's so astonishing that although we had no argument, no right? No claim of any kind against the judgment and wrath of God. And there was nothing requiring him at all, to extend to us, any kind of mercy, whatsoever, yet in himself. He is merciful and in his own freedom.

As the living. God, it pleased him to love and to choose in Christ and to determine to save and then to actually send Christ to give this salvation that he determined. So, the first thing we see is adjustments of God, that second thing. We see is how extensive, how complete, how enormous this applied was the first two plagues.

He had used the Nile and the water in Egypt. And while Egypt was distinguished from some of the other lands around in that it had more water because of the Nile. It certainly wasn't covered with water when he says stretch out, your rod and strike the dust of the land.

It's the word that translated land. There's the same. Let's translated earth and verse 17 and that translated land. Again the end of verse 17, but that's dust of the earth dust of the earth dust of the earth, three times and versus 16 and 17 when God wants to describe and a completely innumerable multitude.

A number that is beyond our imagination like the number of our national debt, for instance, or the number of our are iniquities before God. For instance, he often uses in scripture this phrase that dust of the earth. And so when it's the dust of the earth, it is being turned into the lice.

You can hear what God is saying about, how much lies they're going to be, and there's going to be plenty. In fact, they're going to coat every man and beast in all of Egypt. So the extensiveness and obviously, it wasn't all the dust of the earth. That's hyperbolic of speaking to communicate the greatness of the number.

If all of the dust of the earth turned into lice, the, the earth would have disappeared but that gives

you an idea of just how much other others such word pictures that you might be familiar with, for instance, with the promise to Abraham, like the sand on the seashore.

You know, when we go to the beach later this year you can pick up a handful of sand and just try to count the number of grains in the handful. Then pick up a bunch of handfuls and put them in a box. They're in a bucket or something and see how many handfuls go in the bucket and then estimate for yourself, how many buckets are on the surface?

And then start digging down and estimate, how many layers there are of what you of called the surface. Even with all of our math, we would eventually come to a number of that, although we put characters on a page representing a guess that would be hilariously off. Because if you're, you know, if you're off by a factor of 2% and something with the 30 digit exponents that 2% of hilariously large number by itself, and it would be in a impossible number to imagine sand on the seashore.

The other illustration uses with Abraham for instance, and another places, like ours of the sky. But here it's the dust of the earth. Well, the fact of it's enormity also means that we don't just hear the see here that justness of God against our sins, and the enormity of his wrath against sin, with the dust of the earth turning into lights.

But also humiliation. We could almost feel sorry for the royal sorceress except for we've just been instructed by the Bible to see how righteous and just gone is in all of his displays of judgment and graph. And we know that they are functioning as part of this pharaoh administration.

That is, that is God's enemy and Israel's enemy. And so, we pity them as far as love for sinners and love for neighbor and even love for enemy. But in terms of God's wrath upon them in the humiliation they deserve we don't pity the humiliation itself. We pity what the humiliation reminds us.

They ultimately deserve. And that's probably helpful to us in thinking about the wicked and when our hearts are tempted to pity, then for judgments that are coming upon that them and darkness and humiliation that you are in or that they are in. Now, there is a sense in which that's sorry and sad for us and our hearts go out to them with compassion, but it needs to be not so much a compassion for the misery that they're in now.

But a compassion regarding the misery, is a whole of what they deserve and desiring that they should not die, but repent because God has no pleasure in the death of the weekend. Because God desires all to come to the knowledge of the truth, because he teaches us as his children and imitators of Christ to love our enemies and desire, desire, their forgiveness.

So we could almost feel sorry for them, especially as we think about them coming out and they are covered head to toe and lice and apparently it's their job to give a report on whether this can be done by Egyptian expertise as well. They've done this with water to blood, and they've done this with water producing frogs, and now they're covered with lice, and it's their job to try to produce more.

Oh, no. If they just lacked demonic methods for producing, lice out of dust, or if the Lord in his sheer providence, in which he had permitted, their wicked and ignorant methods to work. And the first two instances withdrew that enabling for this one, or maybe they're just so covered with lice or mosquitoes or gnats, whatever it is.

It's, you know tiny little creeping crawling creatures insects or similar that like to cover animals and beasts. Notice on men and beast verse 18, they're covered with these and maybe that puts a dent in their sorcerer abilities to be so completely overwhelmed. But even if they had been successful, you remember, they're successful with the frauds, but that was kind of the problem they could produce frogs, but they couldn't eliminate frogs.

And so back in the previous plague when when the magicians did so with their enchantments and brought up frogs in the land of Egypt, verse 7 and immediately verse 8 had said, Pharaoh called from Moses. And Erin said, to treat, y'all way that he may take away the frogs from me, there's an implication there that, that the, you know, the Egyptian sorcerers could produce the frogs but they couldn't eliminate the frogs.

And so we have something similar here in verse 18. The magicians. So worked with their enchantments to bring fourth life, but they could not. So there were lights on man and beast. The report that they weren't able to, you know, even if they had been able to, the end result would have been the same.

There would still be lice on man and beast. And so there's utter humiliation here, they're covered with the lice. Their job is to produce more of them, they're unable to produce more of them, they're unable to do anything about the ones that are there. They're just being utterly humiliated as we can powerless creatures, which we are compared to God.

All we can do is create more of our own problem and we can provide no solution ourselves in large parts

because we are beset with our fleshliness and our sinfulness, and our weakness. It has got alone who can do anything about our sin, and our misery and he has done.

So in Christ, but it is helpful to us to remember that, we ought to be humiliated by our sin, and our weakness and humiliating to them to at last say, in verse 19, this is the finger of God and there may actually be something of persistent hardness there. The question is, is that y'all way who is doing this and they say along he, I'm not Yahweh.

You always the personal name of God. Hello, even could be used of multiple God. So though the Lord Jehovah y'all way uses that name of himself alone the plural name he applies just to himself and yet. Yeah the the sorcerers of Egypt and the magicians of Egypt is the sneaking James's translate translating here, only used the word Elohim.

The the point is that this is something that is beyond them one or more of the deities is doing this. And so there's a persistent hardness there. They should, at least have admitted that it was Yahweh. Who is doing this specifically. But whether or not there is that persistent hardness and perhaps they're just using Elohim because they're afraid of the name of Yahweh or something like that.

We do see a for sure. Persistent hardness in verse 19. Don't we because the Holy Spirit goes on to say but Pharaoh's heart grew hard, the thinking about how hard he already was think about how horrible a statement. This is that when we're faced with the justice of God's wrath, the extensiveness of God's wrath, the humiliation of our sin and weakness that you would think such things would always soften.

And yet if we are not softened, then we will be hardened. The Lord's word cuts one way or the other. This is one of the reasons why it would be so dangerous for us to read his word and think about it and family worship. And think that we're just coming away on affected, no to be unaffected by God's word is to be hard towards God's word, God's word, carries with it.

The duty of being soft towards him and being humble underneath under it. And technology is truth and his goodness is righteousness. Our wickedness, the marvelous love and salvation of the gospel, all of these things. And so there is this persistent hardness of Pharaoh. That is a warning to us here.

Not to come away, unaffected by encounters with God and encounters with his work. So just four verses long. But yet for great lessons for us for important and significant lessons for us about the justness, of God against our sin, and the extensiveness of his wrath against that sin, and the humiliation that we ought to have for our sin and for our weakness and the persistent hardness that we must seek from in that.

We would not have so that we are effected by softening rather than by heartening. When we encounter him and his word, let's ask him to give us that softness. Our father in heaven. We confess your goodness. That this household can sit around your word early in the day and here these truths and see them in your word and know that it is because you have given us your word and preserved it for us, and you have called us out of the world, you have given us the knowledge of of Christ you've given us the knowledge of much truth about Christ and ourselves from your word.

And now oh God, we ask for each one of us individually that we would have this soft heartedness that we were just hearing about at the end of the passage that your spirit would give us to recognize your justice against our against us, your wrath against our sin. And that we would not complain with ideas and philosophies, and logic that fails to see your perfect righteousness and how you owe us.

Nothing and yet have offered us and given us Christ. We pray that you would help us to be soft-hearted about how much our sin deserves your wrath and how much wrath our sin deserves help us Lord, to be humiliated by our sinfulness, and by our weakness, that we would not have any hope and self at all.

But that all of our hope would be in Christ and that his strength, your strength being made perfect. In our weakness, we would rejoice in weakness because we rejoice in Christ and so give us soft heartiness towards you. Give each of my children, an individual personally soft heartedness towards you give me and my life soft heartedness towards you.

We ask until by the faith through which you have joined us to Christ. You have also grown us in the grace of knowledge of Christ and conformed us to Christ and we enjoy you fully and glorify for you forever and glory grant it. We ask in Jesus name, amen.