

## Introduction

We are continuing our journey through the Book of Exodus. While we see that it is a story of a people being set free and all these miraculous things happening, we need to be reminded that what it is all about is a holy, sovereign God and His pursuit of worshippers and ultimately that He is devoted to the glory of His great Name. We are going to look at that a little more closely today. Last week, Pastor Steve talked about how worship matters. The people had a choice before them to either worship Pharaoh and continue to work for him, or to what He was desiring for them to come out, to be set free, in order that they might worship Him. So today we're going to continue that train of thought.

I want to review a little bit. Pastor Steve was covering chapter 6 last week, but I want to read the first eight verses again, just to try to set up the narrative of today. So, we're in Exodus 6, starting in verse 1: *"But the Lord said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.*

*"God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name the LORD, I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered My covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel and, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD, your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'"*

So, we saw that passage last week... that God is declaring that He will take action. He is saying, "I will act, I will move, I will work through mighty acts of judgment against the Egyptians" to set His people free. He is pursuing worshippers. He is pursuing His people. He has a covenant with them. He has made a promise. He is true to His character. He is 100 percent faithful or He would cease to be God, and so He says, "I remember My covenant, I hear your groaning, I will act, I will move, I will judge, I will set you free..." so that His Name would be made great.

So we pick up today in chapter 7. We're just going to read the first 13 verses and then try to basically cover chapters 8, 9, and 10 as well. We're not going to read those chapters, so don't get too scared or be scared that, "Wait a second; we're skipping over 4 chapters of Scripture." Either way, don't be mad at me. Okay? ...whichever camp you fall in. I'll try to explain why in just a few minutes. Chapter 7, verse 1: *"And the LORD said to Moses, 'See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply My signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring My hosts, My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.' Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as LORD commanded them. Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.*

*"Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.'" So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said."*

If last week we talked about worship mattering, today I want to just continue with that line of thought and get us to think about "Where is our worship? What are we worshipping? What are our hearts devoted to? What is our world organized around? What in our life are we surrendered to completely, or are we surrendered completely to God... to the Lord?"

## 1. God Desires Worship.

The first thing we want to note is that God desires worship. In chapter 7, if we had continued reading there, God says in verse 16, *"You shall say to him, 'The LORD, 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 have not obeyed.'" Chapter 8, verse 1: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me...'" Chapter 8, verse 20: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Rise up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me.'" Chapter 9, verse 1: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me.'" Chapter 9, verse 13: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me.'" Chapter 10, verse 3: "So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?" That familiar phrase... "Let My people go, that they may serve Me."*

You see that phrase repeated several times, that's from chapter 7 all the way to chapter 10. That's one of the reasons why we're not going to read all the way from chapter 7 to chapter 10. It's the account of the different plagues that God brings against Egypt and their gods. What we see play out each time is kind of the same cycle. There are different elements at play in different ones, but I think we see kind of the same elements, and so that's why I didn't want to read all of that text but just present it to you as, "Here's what we see." What we read in chapter 7, at the beginning, is kind of a synopsis. We see a lot of the same elements there that are going to play out over the next several chapters. In chapter 7, when Aaron and Moses first go to Pharaoh and they say, "Here's the message from God: 'Let the people go.'" Pharaoh says, "Prove it." Basically, they perform a sign, a miracle, in front of them; Pharaoh still doesn't believe. One of the reasons he doesn't believe is that his magicians were able to reflect that, kind of replicate that miracle... "through their secret arts," it says. So over the next few chapters, we see the same message being presented, "Thus says the Lord, 'Let my people go that they may serve Me.'" ...Pharaoh basically saying "No"... God working through some kind of miracle. Sometimes the magicians can kind of duplicate part of it, and then ultimately Pharaoh, every time, with a hardened heart, refusing to give in... refusing to let the people go. So that's why we're going to just take those elements and look at those rather than read through all of the disgusting, epic plagues that came upon the people. We are going to talk about them a little bit, but we're not going to read every account of them, just for the sake of time. I think the temptation is to get sidetracked with "Wow, that's a really crazy story about plagues and plagues and swarms of

locusts or frogs or a river turning to blood and all these crazy things. And they are crazy things, but what God is ultimately doing through those is setting Himself apart as God, for the glory of His Name, and that's what we want to look at.

So we just looked at those examples... that phrase repeated over and over from chapter 7 through chapter 10: "Let My people go that they may serve Me." God desires worship. That term "serve," it's not the same kind of work that we talked about last week. Pastor Steve explained last week that Pharaoh said, "Let the people stay here that they may work for me and serve me." And God said, "No; let the people go that they may serve Me." God's service that He was desiring was not more building of pyramids and slave labor; it's a heart surrendered to God... it's worship. In essence, as Pharaoh is trying to claim the worship and devotion of the people, God is trying to claim the worship and devotion of His people. Ultimately, God is going to win, so that is what we're going to look at today. It is "How is God doing that... why is God doing that?" We just want to set that out there first, right off the bat: God desires worship. He is pursuing worshippers. He is calling His people to Himself because He is worthy of it.

## 2. God is Worthy of Worship.

That's the next point. God is worthy of worship. In chapter 7, verse 5: *"The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them."* God says He is going to do these mighty acts, these powerful acts of judgment, so that the people will know He is the Lord. In chapter 6, verses 1 through 8... it occurs about 5 times where God describes Himself as "the LORD." He states, "I am the LORD." He says that He is going to work so that people will know that He is the Lord, and then kind of caps it off at the very end with, "I am the LORD."

When we see "LORD" like that in the Old Testament, that's all caps... That's small caps. That's the Hebrew word for God, of "Yahweh." They would substitute "LORD" because it was such a holy name for God that they wouldn't speak the name of God; they would use a substitute. It's that covenant name of God... the same Name of God that He used when He presents Himself to Moses in Exodus chapter 3 when He says, "I AM that I AM," when Moses says, "Who should I say sent me?" We see here in chapter 6 that God said, "You know, I presented Myself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty but not as the Name that I have brought before you which is 'I AM'... that Name 'The LORD'... that 'Yahweh.'" This name is really significant because for God just to claim "I AM," for us we think, "Well that's kind of weird." Right? We've heard philosophers say, "I think, therefore I am," or I can just say, "I am" and it's not a big deal because I am. But when God says, "I AM," He is basically just claiming existence. He is claiming full independence from anything else in the universe. The theological term there is "aseity," if you're trying to take notes. That means that God is self-existent. He is not dependent on anything. He is uncreated. He is the uncaused cause. He is the first mover. This is another philosophical line of thought. People try to think back, "Okay, if we have creation now as it exists, how do I trace back creation to some initial something" because every effect has a cause. The problem with that is you can't just keep going. You can't have an infinite regress of causes. I didn't make up that term; I just memorized it. You can't have an infinite regress of causes, meaning you can't just keep going back... you just can't do that. There has to be an uncaused cause and that's what God is. God is the uncaused cause. He is the first mover. Things that are in motion have been set in motion. Well God wasn't set in motion. God was not caused. He is the Causer; He is the Mover. He is eternally existent as "I AM." So it's not just this weird name, "I AM." That's kind of weird. Popeye sings about it. It is declaring that He is self-existent, not dependent on anything else in the universe, because He has eternally existed. That means that everything else is dependent on Him... the flip-side of that. If He is not dependent on anything, He is above everything. Everything else falls through His hands. He has

authority and sovereignty over that. And so He is about to present Himself to Egypt, to Pharaoh, to the Egyptians, and to the Israelites in such a way that they will recognize, not just that He is God but that He is "The LORD"... That He is "I AM"... that there is none higher, there is none above Him, and there is none like Him in all the land. That is what He says, "There is no one like this God." That's what He wants to present Himself as, so God is worthy of this worship that He desires. No one else is worthy of the worship that God is.

In chapter 9, verses 14 through 16: He says again, *"For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth."* God wants to show up in such a way, not just to say, "I win this time," but "I win every time. I can't lose. I am worthy of the worship I desire. I will trump every attempt that you come at me with to be greater than Me because 'I AM', I AM the LORD, I am Yahweh. I exist. I AM that I AM." It's such a powerful, rich, meaningful name, and that's what He presents Himself to Moses as, and that's what He wants to make Himself known as to the people.

So we've got these crazy, fantastical, epic, gross plagues. We talk about the plagues. Sometimes we see something that might mirror a plague and we say, "This is of biblical proportions, this infestation of cockroaches... or something, because we know that this account in Exodus has become part of culture in a sense that we think that these plagues are almost sadly reduced to be like fairy tales because God works in such miraculous, strong-armed, crazy ways as He works through creation. The temptation is to think, "Well, He's just got this really twisted way of punishing the Egyptians, this really off-the-wall, creative way of judging their sin, but He's not just judging their sin. He's also attacking their gods. I think that's the thing that we often lose sight of.

So in chapters 7 through 10... we're excluding the plague of the death of the first-born; we're going to talk about that next week with the death of the first-born and the Passover... all these different plagues were tied in somehow to some kind of deity that the Egyptians had assigned to something in creation. I read that they had approximately 80 gods, 80 deities. There are other religions that have way more than that, but just to think of 80. It's almost mind-blowing to think, "How in the world... how do you keep track... how do you assign... how do you find a new one... how does that work?" So when we look at the different plagues, they are not just a judgement against sin and disbelief but a judgement of claiming authority over a deity, a false god.

So, the first plague is that of turning the Nile into blood. The Nile, the river, was this huge sign of life, of fruitfulness, of abundance that brought life to the Egyptians, so they could farm and drink water and all that kind of stuff. So life, health... water is a sign of that. God takes it and says, "You worship the Nile rather than the Creator of the Nile, so let Me show you My sovereignty over that which you worship," and He turns it into blood. He turns it into something that didn't cause life, something that represents death and created death. They couldn't drink it, they couldn't fish out of it, they couldn't water crops with it, and so He just chops it off at the knees and says, "If that was a god to you, look Who controls that god. I'm sovereign over this."

Another interesting thing that I read, and this is just an aside, but it is believed that culturally, the Egyptians would take their idols down to the river and wash them every day, every morning. So can you imagine taking your idol, which represents something in creation, down to the river, and then all you have is blood to wash it with? What a powerful image. What a powerful statement to say, "Look at the meaninglessness

of this. Look at how futile it is to worship something like this. There must be something greater than this." So He turns the Nile into blood.

There's also a plague of frogs... bringing swarms and swarms and swarms of frogs. You might think, "I've seen some swarms of frogs." I don't think you've seen biblical-proportion swarms of frogs that we're talking about here, just overrunning everything. Here's kind of the twist there. It is that God is attacking... not just bringing judgment upon the Egyptians but it's upon their gods. They had a goddess that had the body of a frog that represented fertility and life in some ways. So when He brings the frogs to them, they can't just stomp them or gig them and fry them up and eat them. Right? (Laughter) These are like deities to them, so all these frogs show up and they're like, "Wait to second; what are we... Wow... Man, we're supposed to worship them; I can't kill them, they're sacred and now there's just a ton of them." The Egyptian magicians are able to replicate this somehow, and they get more frogs to show up. So in a sense you thought, "Hey, that's a win for the Egyptians..." but in hindsight, not really. Now there's just more frogs here. That's not a win; so frogs upon frogs upon frogs, to say, "Ha, ha! You worshipped this. Not so cool anymore. Guess who's Lord over the frogs? It's God. It's I AM."

He brings gnats. Not just gnats in an annoying way but in a stifling, gross, life-altering way. He brings flies. He brings disease to their livestock. He brings boils upon the people. He brings hail from the sky and locusts, and ultimately darkness before the final plague that we'll talk about next week. The Egyptians had created deities and assigned them to different elements of the river, of the land, and of the sky. You see how God, again, is not just being creative and twisted in His judgment or punishment, but He's addressing these false gods, these different deities they have assigned to their creation, declaring Himself... setting Himself apart... as Lord over the creation that they've been worshipping, basically taking their deities away from them, taking their gods away from them. What they had done was they had showed up and said "Okay, what benefits me?" Well, the river, the land, and the sky. "Well, let me try to assign some kind of deity to that and let me try to please those deities, not just for their glory but for my benefit." So they've created these gods, created these idols, and the Lord, I AM, shows up and says, "You've got it twisted. So let Me show you how I control the things that you worship. I am deserving of the worship that you've placed on them."

Ultimately, that plague of darkness... it really hit home because the greatest of the Egyptian gods was the god of the sun. Because the sun came up every day, it really represented life and abundance and blessing and so that reminder every day of the powerful sun that rose. Not just that, it was such a mighty god in their eyes and such a powerful force that they said Pharaoh was almost an incarnation of that sun god, so he's got that kind of deity quality to himself as well. So when God brings darkness, He's not just, "Let Me make it really difficult for you by turning off the lights." He's saying, "Let Me take your most powerful god and show you that I control it and that you can't overpower it. You can't overcome it."

The thing that's kind of weird is that we see the Egyptian magicians replicating some of these. They started with turning their staffs into snakes as well. They were also able to replicate some of the other ones like they brought more frogs, and you think "This is weird. Do they just know some cool tricks? Or, is this some kind of demonic power? Is this the power of Satan working in creation with his influence to do these things?" I think that's very likely. The thing that I want to point out though, as we point to the sovereignty of God over this, is that all of it is a replication. None of it is ever original. The second thing I want to point out is it is never to the same scale or power or extent that God has worked. So God turns the entire Nile into blood; the Egyptians might turn a little vase or something into blood. It's not the same extent but still kind of weak counterfeit to what God has done. So, it's never original; it's never to the same extent or

power. And... this is really important... they were never able to undo what God had done. So if God brings some crazy swarm of frogs, they might be able to add some frogs to it, but they couldn't get rid of all the frogs that God brought. Right? So God is working in ways that can't be undone, in ways that can't be matched.

In Galatians, it says that Satan is a counterfeiter. He is all about deception. He's all about lies. If he can present something that convinces us "Oh, well God isn't the greatest... this is just His equal," we fall prey to that all of the time. We see that with Pharaoh. Pharaoh, when he's asked to let the people go or told to let the people go, and he denies them... he has a hardened heart... he sees the signs before him and sometimes he sees these counterfeit signs and thinks, "Oh, yeah; my magicians and sorcerers can do the same thing." So he's not convinced. But I don't think it's just not convinced... I think his hardened heart doesn't want to surrender to God, so he's more easily convinced by the counterfeiter. It's a lesser product. It's always a lesser reflection of what God has done. You would think he would say, "This is a greater sign," but no. And it's because he doesn't want to surrender... he doesn't want to surrender his heart to God. So if there's just a glimmer of fulfillment or power, he says, "Yeah. I'm still in the right place. I'm still in the right place with my false gods because my sorcerers can do what this God does."

We might think it's crazy to have 80 deities and little idols made of wood or stone that represent things in creation and think that's ancient... that's pagan culture... that's not today in America, in a Christian nation. Right? We worship Jesus and all these things. That's not us. But I think what we've done today is turned our hearts into idol factories. John Calvin says that our hearts produce idols all the time. We place our worship on things that are not worthy of worship. We fall for the counterfeit all the time, even though we know there's a greater sign, a greater power at work. We're so easily convinced by a lesser sign, by a lesser work, because we don't want to surrender. We don't want to give all of our worship to the one true God, and that's what we see at play. We create gods out of anything that brings gratification. For Egypt, it was the earth or forces of nature that they wanted to benefit from. For us, it's wherever we find earthly pleasure or brief fulfillment. We don't necessarily fashion idols out of wood and stone, but we rearrange our lives in "worship" to our idols, and we don't realize that we're addicted to whatever that thing is.

We've been going through Ecclesiastes with the College and Young Singles, and we have this great account from Solomon who had all this wisdom and all this access to whatever he wanted. He basically says, "I pursued every pleasure imaginable trying to find satisfaction, trying to find fulfillment, and I had access to it." So he's trying to say, "Trust me; if it's out there, I've tried it." He comes up empty and says, "It's meaningless; it's futile." So if you read Ecclesiastes, it sounds really depressing and pessimistic, but what Solomon is doing is presenting an account to us to say, "Here's the world apart from God. All these things that are meant to bring pleasure and point us to the one true God and stir our hearts to worship the one true God, we create gods out of." We create gods out of the gifts instead of worshipping the Giver of the gifts. So, today we may not have the financial resources that Solomon did to create the world he wanted around him and pursue everything, but we've got access mentally and often visually to anything we want in the world, so we'll pursue these things that are fleeting satisfaction. They don't last. We think, "I would never have a house full of idols. That's crazy talk." If you've ever seen an episode of "Hoarders" or something and you think, "How do those people get to that place where they're just surrounded by filth and they don't see it?" We find ourselves in the exact same spot. Our hearts are like a hoarder's house, just stacks and stacks of sin, and we don't recognize what it is until one day we think, "How did I get to this place? How did I find myself here? How did I take enough steps to be surrounded by all this evil?" It's because we pursued... we had access... and the frequency of our pursuit was just so common. We kept the high going, so we never realized it wasn't satisfying; it wasn't fulfilling, whatever we were pursuing. Maybe

it's one thing... maybe it is a million things, but we kept going back to it. We kept going back to that well, over and over and over again, so that the high, the satisfaction, the fleeting fulfillment never wears off for us.

If you've seen some of those other trashy reality shows about intervention with heroin addicts, and you see them come off of that high, you see how desperate, how broken, the darkness, the desperation that comes over them because they don't have constant access to that high. As great as it is, the low is that much lower. But we have... I want to say luxury but it's the curse as well... access to whatever we want all the time, so we never have to come off of that high. We never experience the desperation. We never experience the low. All we do is keep going back to that well, and we think we're fine when really we're addicted to the idols and the sins that we've stored up in our hearts. You think, "That's not us. We're not the Egyptians. We don't have those things." We've created our own idols: Success, security, children, grades, raises, health, vacations... We rearrange our lives around these things. We get really upset when God messes with them. That's a good indication that we have idols in our lives... when God reminds us that we're not in control and that whatever we're worshipping isn't the end-all, be-all as well. So these are some good indicators of "What are the idols in my life? What have I created? What have I made into a god in my heart rather than the one true God... rather than 'I AM that I AM?'" We go to these things that don't last, and we find ourselves just going back to them. We're tricked; we're easily tricked.

Maybe you can't relate to the heroin addict or the hoarder. I found myself yesterday with a bag of Cheetos Cheese Puffs... (Laughter) and I put one in my mouth in my mouth and I thought, "This is really good! It's crunchy and then it starts to dissolve and it's cheesy." It's so excellent. Then about five to ten seconds later, it's gone. You would think, logically, "Oh; well that's not fulfilling." But no... we go back into the bag. My wife wasn't here, but I confessed to her last night that I ate too much junk food yesterday. (Laughter) I kept going back into the bag, and I was like, "What am I doing?" Chris Mayfield always talked about cotton candy being like that and how the effects of sin are like that... where it seems great, it's appealing to the eye, it's fluffy, it's bright, it tastes really sweet, and then three seconds later it disappears. Instead of thinking, "Well, that's no good for me... that doesn't last." We think, "Let me just eat the whole thing." We keep going back to it and stuff our faces. The end-result is not good.

I think that's what we've done with the things in our culture, the things in our lives that we've organized our lives around to worship and make gods out of. We think, "Well this is fulfilling for a moment. Well, I just have to pursue it harder, maybe, for it to be more fulfilling." Or maybe we're smart enough to realize, "This is not fulfilling, so let me grab something else and I'll bring this. This will fulfill me. That's what I need." Then we realize, "That doesn't fulfill me either," and so we jump to the next thing. It's like the closing scene of "The Jerk" with Steve Martin when he says, "That's all I need is the people I love..." but then he's walking out of his house and he keeps grabbing stuff. "That's all I need is this lamp and that's it." And then he passes something else and says, "That's all I need is this lamp and this Pat-a-Ball game. That's all I need... and this chair... and that's all I need." So that's how we find ourselves saying, "I need this. That didn't last. I need this. That doesn't fulfill me. I need this too. If that didn't fulfill me, maybe I need this. That's not fulfilling me. Maybe I need this if that's fulfilling me..." And God is trying to say, "Stop worshipping the creation and look to the Creator." These are all good gifts. These are good things but they are to stir our hearts and our affections to the One who has entrusted them to us... the One who has blessed us with these things to enjoy so that we worship Him. The Nile... Right? The crops, the land, the sky, the sun... these are great things. These are the things that God has given us to reveal Himself, His existence, so that we might say, "Something has set these in motion. I worship the God who put these here"... not "I made gods out them." We need to step back and say, "Okay. I'm not the ancient pagan

Egyptians, but I've created idols in my heart... I've created gods out of the things in my world, and I've rearranged my world around them to devote myself to them, my resources, so that no one messes with them." God is saying, "You're focusing on the creation and not the Creator. Look past the gifts to the Giver of the gifts and worship God, the 'I AM' God."

It's tempting to think, again... that's back then, that's Old Testament. Once God had a kid, He softened up. Right? He doesn't discipline as hard. He works through grace and not through punishment and not through condemnation, but He will punish sin. He has punished sin on the cross. As nasty and gross and epic as the plagues were, we think, "God doesn't work like that anymore; He's not that harsh on sin anymore." That's because the ultimate harshness, the ultimate punishment, the wrath of God poured out on Christ on the cross in our place. So to think, "I'm glad I don't live in the Old Testament... now I don't have to get punished." The only reason... the only way you won't be punished for your sin in eternity is if you have faith in Christ... His substitute, His sacrifice... He took on the curse. He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf, so that we might be the righteousness of God... that we might have the righteousness of Christ, so that when He looks at us He doesn't see the sinful heart that we all have. As good or moral as we might be, we're all sinful apart from Christ. When God looks at us, if we're in Christ, He sees the righteousness of Christ, not that sinful heart. If you're not in Christ, He sees that sinful heart, and He will judge that sinful heart. So don't think, "I may not get the Old Testament wrath through a plague," but there is eternal torment for those who are not found in Christ, and there is eternal life for those who are in Christ. But both times, in both situations, God punished the sin. He either punished the sin through Christ on the cross, and if you have faith in that, you don't get the punishment... Christ took it. If you don't have faith in that, you will get the punishment for your sins. Don't think, "I live in a blessed time and so I'm good." The Bible tells us that none are righteous. We all fall short of the glory of God. The heart is deceptively wicked, above all else. We are enemies of God, children of wrath. These are scriptural terms about us apart from Christ. In Christ: Friend of God, co-heirs with Christ, children of God, in Christ. That's the difference.

### 3. A Hard Heart Won't Worship God.

So here's the other fork in the road, if last week was okay. Worship matters so I can worship Pharaoh or worship the one true God. Sometimes we find ourselves saying, "Well, I would worship God if He would do this." But, no. The third point: A hard heart won't worship God. I didn't list all the references. I just said, "Thirteen references in these 4 chapters alone" where there's a reference to Pharaoh's hardened heart and his denial to surrender to God, his disobedience, his refusal of worshipping God because he had a hardened heart. If you want to listen really quickly and write these down it is chapter 7, verse 13, 14, and 22; chapter 8, verses 15, 19, and 32; chapter 9, verses 7, 12, 34, and 35; chapter 10, verses 1, 20, and 27. Those are the 13 references in these 4 chapters to the hardened heart of Pharaoh, denying worship to the one true God.

I bring that up because I've encountered people throughout my time in ministry and throughout my life as a Christian who say, "I would believe in God if He would show me a sign." "I'll trust in Jesus if He walks through the door." Don't bet on it. Pharaoh tried that: "Yeah; I'll worship God if He can prove Himself God." And God said, "Okay." ...Frogs and locusts and blood and gnats and flies and death and boils and darkness. And what does Pharaoh do? "Nah... I'm not convinced." He IS convinced. His heart is hardened. He refuses to surrender his worship to the one true God. You want to fast-forward to the New Testament. The Pharisees said, "Show us a sign." Jesus said, "Here's the sign: The sign of Jonah. I'm going to die and be buried and be raised again on the third day. That's your sign. I'm done doing magic tricks to prove who I am. I will be raised to life on the third day from death." Do you think that convinced them? It should have.

They still denied Christ because their hearts were hardened. Don't think that if God just showed you a sign that you'd surrender. If you're already in that line of thinking, your heart is already resistant to God. It's already hardened to say, "I need Him to show up." No, you don't need Him to show up. You just need to surrender your heart to God. You have pride; you have the illusion of control over the things in your life, authority over your world, and you're afraid to let go and admit that God is sovereign over your life. God is in control of your life. God controls the things in your life and you don't. It scares us. It scares me. It will get ugly, if we surrender. If we surrender our hearts to God, we'll ugly-cry; it just won't be good. That's what surrender is. That's what worship is. It's a heart surrendered to God. Pharaoh tried to negotiate. Right? If you read those chapters 7 through 10: "Okay, I'll let you go, but leave your livestock." "Okay, I'll let you go but just the men." "Okay, I'll let you go; just kidding... I won't." He had the signs in front of him. He had God's proof in front of him, but his heart was hardened. It wasn't surrendered to God because he didn't want to lose control of what he had.

What we're going to see next week, and you know the story... spoiler alert... God takes everything out of his life and brings him to his knees because God is about the glory of His Name. "At the Name of Jesus, every knee will bow, every tongue will confess..." God will get His worship. He desires worship. He's worthy of worship, but your hard heart will not worship. Stop asking for a sign because the risen Christ is our sign. Surrender your heart to God. Let go and realize, "I don't have control over these things... these things that I worship, these things that I think that I control, these things that I can manage..." Surrender that. Surrender that. Worship I AM. Worship the one true God. You've got the sign... the sign of a Risen Savior.

We're going to have a time now of responding to this truth, to this Gospel... this Gospel, not of just national freedom that we celebrated on Friday, that we read about in Exodus. God has created a nation out of His people, but it's so much more than that. It's because He wants to be known as the LORD and worshipped as the LORD. So during this time of response, if you are responding to that Gospel, surrendering your heart, laying your heart on the altar before the Lord as a living sacrifice, as Romans 12 tells us. That sacrifice is "all in." It's not, "Let me sacrifice my right arm or my left arm." "I'm all in and sacrifice has no holding back." That's what God desires. He wants a heart laid before Him, sacrificed before Him, surrendered to Him.

We'll have a song to break the ice a little bit. We're going to stand and I want you to respond to God. If He's called you out, by the power of His Gospel, by the power of His Spirit, respond to Him. Come and talk to somebody. They will point you to Scripture. They will pray for you. If you just want to fill out the response card from your worship guide and put that in the offering plate... We'll call you; we'll talk to you if you've got questions. But remember that God will get His worship. He is worthy of it. He deserves it. He desires it and He will work in your life to get that worship.

"God, thank you so much for the power of Your Gospel, the power of the cross. God, the way that You worked through power towards Egypt and their gods, the way You worked through the power of Christ on the cross, the way You worked through the Holy Spirit today... God, You have shown Yourself to be 'I AM'. I pray that You soften hearts to trust in You, to surrender to You, to be laid before You... God, that we wouldn't convince ourselves that we're just waiting for a sign when really we're just holding onto the pride in our hearts or holding onto the fact that we don't want to surrender. We don't want to admit that we need You. God, I pray for surrender. I pray for worship, that Your Name would be made great. We give this time to You, Lord. We ask these things in the Name of Jesus. Amen."