



2025 Weekly Devotions

Week of: November 3rd - 9th

Sermon: November 2nd



November 3

Deuteronomy 8:2-3

We are about to engage on a journey that takes us through the confrontation between Moses and Aaron and the Pharaoh of Egypt. It is likely that the ten plagues were poured out on Egypt over a couple of months. To be honest, that is a bit of a guess as I consider that the first one was for 7 days (7:25) while some were for only 3 days (10:22). Of course, there is no way we can know how much time passed between one plague and the next. The point that I want to make is simply that God took His time in this “battle” with Pharaoh; not to mention that more than four hundred years had passed since they were enslaved.

I have often marveled, negatively, at how people judge God when He moves too fast and when He moves too slowly. If there appears to be swift “justice”, folks accuse God of being unjust, cruel, or impatient. When He moves slowly, as He does in Exodus, He is accused of not caring, uninvolved, distant, or incapable. It is often in the delay that people lose faith or heart and often walk away from God as they take matters into their own hands surmising that God either wasn’t there or didn’t care. It took a very short time for the Israelites to be discouraged and lose heart (6:9).

The truth that we must ponder today and along life’s highway is that time and testing reveal the heart of man, both good and bad, and reveals many attributes and power of God. When I say *good and bad* in regard to the heart of man, I mean that over time our faith is tested and proven to be either real or counterfeit. How do you know what you are really made of if you are never put to the test. An instructor will often give a written or physical test to students to determine what they know and what they are made of under pressure.

Think for a moment about why Paul instructed Timothy and Titus in how to organize the local church in the letters he wrote to them. One of the clear requirements for leadership was that they be time tested. Paul emphasized the importance of not putting a novice in position of decision making or influence simply because there was no way to know if their faith, commitment, understanding, and strength were genuine or just a flash in the pan. The point to ponder is that when God appears to be delaying in answering your prayers or resolving your situation, please know that He is doing other work in you and others in the process.

In Deuteronomy 8:2 you can read that God led them through the wilderness at a particular pace and in a particular direction to humble them and to test them to prove what was in their hearts. It is biblically safe to say that He already knows what is in our hearts, but it is important that we and others around us know too. The hope is that we are encouraged at times by our growth and faith while at the same time we are often reminded that we are still in need of the gospel, grace, and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in us. God took His time with the Israelites and Pharaoh because He was doing a lot more than what the eye could see in a given moment.

November 4

Romans 5:3-5

Let's spend one more day thinking about the truth that God allows and even ordains trials to develop our faith and our character and to reveal Himself to us. Why would anyone rejoice in hard places or face them with an awareness that there is purpose in them and grace sufficient for them? Another way to ask this question is, how can some people maintain peace and inner joy through the challenges in this life while others crumble and grow cynical or discouraged in them? Again, the connection to Exodus 7 is that we saw the people not understanding that God was doing a greater work in the circumstances than just simply deliverance from bondage. Oh yes, that mattered greatly, and He was accomplishing that too, but it had to be in the midst of other lessons taught and learned.

Keep in mind that God was unfolding a story in the lives of His people that taught far greater truths than what applied to their circumstances. We were to learn that One greater than Moses would come to set the captives free from a worse bondage than they were experiencing. One would come who would overcome an enemy more powerful and sinister than Pharaoh and the deliverance of the Messiah would occur over an extended period of time in which God would grant incredible and undeserved grace even as He doled out judgment on others.

Paul wrote to the believers in Rome that he rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God because He, and all believers, were justified by faith and now experienced peace with God rather than enmity because of the finished work of Christ on the cross. Oh how wonderful it is to worship, to sing, to praise God for His amazing plan of redemption that brought us peace and life. I love the moments when I feel so close to God because of the powerful truths of His Word and the doctrines on which we stand. But there are also the trials and tribulations that make up a part of our lives too. What do we do with those?

Paul wrote, "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings..." (Rom. 5:3). How Paul? How can you rejoice in suffering? The answer comes in the rest of the verse. He says, "...**knowing** that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (v.3b-4). You see dear church family, Paul recognizes that God is at work in the midst of the challenges. If you and I could just learn to trust that whatever He allows to cross our paths in a day or hit us square in the chest, it is not wasted or haphazard. Everything, and I mean everything, that comes our way is ordained, planned, and meant to be useful for our transformation into the likeness of Christ. You can rest assured that He is teaching you, revealing truth to you that is intended to help you know Him more, and to grow in your faith.

I suppose it is safe and sad to say that sometimes the trials don't grow our faith but prove just how weak and insincere it really is. Even that dear one is to help you see that you are not all that and that you still need to depend on Jesus and the Holy Spirit to get you safely through. He only wants to "break" you in order to build you up stronger. A better word there may be prune rather than break. Trust Him in the wilderness and in the times when He is letting a Pharaoh remain in your life for now. He will deliver you in time.

November 5

John 10:28; Romans 8:38

Have you ever wondered why God remains faithful to you even when you haven't been very faithful to Him? I've wondered at times why He has continued to extend patience and grace to me. It makes more sense to me in those times when I feel like I have been pursuing Him or remaining relatively faithful in my efforts to be obedient. Yep, there are still those places in me too where I think I can earn His favor or His love and likewise, places where I lose it. This is of course not biblical thinking but is at least understandable to most of us I would imagine.

Today, let's ponder how God responded to Moses in His discouragement, faithlessness, and weakness. I want us to do this so that we can be encouraged in our own struggles and to rightly understand the love of God and His faithfulness even when ours waivers just a bit. I like to share a story with people when they are wrestling with a feeling that since they "let go of God" He surely has let go of them.

When Johanna and I were serving in India, the boys (Laura wasn't born yet) were all just little fellas. India is an extremely crowded country and needless to say, a very white family from Virginia stood out like a sore thumb. I was often a little nervous out in public so Johanna and I would be certain that we were extra vigilant in keeping our eyes and hands on the boys. Imagine walking down a sidewalk next to a crowded and busy street. Do you think for a minute that my sense of security was based on the boy's grip on my hand or wrist? Absolutely not! Their mother and I were adamant that their safety was dependent upon our grip on them not the other way around. I held tight to their hand or wrist in such a way that it didn't matter if they let go. You see, even when they let go or unclasped their little hand, they were still safe and secure because my grip remained tight and strong, and they could not walk into the street or be snatched away from us.

Dear ones, this is precisely why you and I are safe today. The Bible says in John 10:28 that no man can "snatch you from the Father's hand and therefore you will never perish." Aren't you glad that we are safe because of His faithfulness and not our own? Oh friend, if I could lose my salvation I certainly would but, because my salvation is imperishable and I am being kept by His power, I need not fear losing it at all. He is holding on to me even when I let go of Him at times.

The Bible says in Romans 8:38 that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Nothing means nothing child of God. I know that times exists when you can't imagine how God could still love you and yet He does. He does because of His own promises and faithfulness to His covenant. When Exodus 6 ended, Moses was fearful and doubting the possibility of success in facing Pharaoh. But as chapter 7 begins, we see God assuring Him and encouraging Him to keep the faith and to be obedient. Friends, oftentimes God responds not to our faith or lack thereof, but because of His own covenant faithfulness and His grace. God loves you and will remain true to His plan even when sometimes we fail in our faith. Choose to believe the promises of God's Word and don't trust your feeble feelings when they cause you to doubt His love or His ability to accomplish His will through you.

November 6

2 Timothy 4:1-2

As I mentioned yesterday, God remained faithful to His plan and His choice of Moses and Aaron for the assigned task of going before the Pharaoh as deliverer of the Israelites. A verse such as Exodus 7:2 has always served as a strong reminder to me of my own responsibility before God based on His call in my own life. God told Moses, "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." Note that Moses was commanded to say everything that God told him to say. He was not to pick and choose or avoid the hard sayings.

This passage makes me wonder if God was displeased with what took place the first time Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh. I am referring to what is recorded in Exodus 5:1-3. There we read that Moses and Aaron told the Pharaoh to let God's people go so that they could take a three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to God. They even use the word "please" as they make their request. I suppose you could argue that they were just being nice, but you may also argue that they were trying to soften their requests and maybe even bargain with Pharaoh a bit. After all, I read nowhere in the Bible where God told them to ask Pharaoh if they could go away for three days.

It appears to me that with a renewed sense of courage and commitment after the encounter with God in Exodus 6, Moses and Aaron move from bargaining with Pharaoh to simply stating the demand of God. They no longer sugar coated or avoided the hard demand. Notice in Exodus 7 and onward they simply state, "Let my people go!" None of us would argue or judge Moses and Aaron for trying to soften their request the first time they stood before Pharaoh. Fear is a real emotion, and they had plenty of reasons to be concerned when they entered the palace the first time.

Folks, when we are called by God to speak hard truths, it is often uncomfortable and awkward as we have to say things that we know will be unpopular and even inciteful. I have at times felt the pressure to soften God's Word or to try to make it more palatable when I know it is not going to be received well. I have posted in my office this saying, "You are required to believe, to preach, and to teach what the Bible says is true, not what you want the Bible to say is true." Let that sink in and before you judge me or the one who wrote that, please know that it is easy to sit behind a keyboard or in the privacy and safety of your home or car and talk about what you would say. Let me tell you that it is a far different story to be the one who must stand in the face of others and stand firm on a truth that you know is going to make some people angry.

Paul knew that his protégé Timothy was beginning to face opposition and criticism in his ministry. He knew the temptation would be to leave some truths out of the sermon or the conversation in order to limit the attacks. This is the environment in which he wrote these words to Timothy, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead...preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:1-2a). This admonition is to us today as well. We must be ready and willing to preach the truth in all circumstances and all seasons regardless of our reception in doing so.

November 7

Exodus 7:12; 1 John 4:4

I want to take a little liberty today and make an application from a single verse in our text from Sunday. In verse 12 of Exodus 7 it says, "For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs." When we consider the battle that was now taking stage between Moses and Pharaoh which points to the greater war between God and Satan, we should think about the reality that Satan is no match for God. Even when he attempts to counterfeit God's ways or perform signs and wonders, God's power will swallow him up every time.

We cannot know for sure if their ability to turn their staffs into serpents was a slight of hand trick or if it was some endowed power from Satan himself. The Bible does tell us that he has the ability to perform signs and wonders too. Remember his antics recorded in Luke 4 when he was allowed to tempt Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days. I tend to believe that the Egyptian magicians were given the power to perform the lesser wonders in this confrontation. The point to hold onto is that He who was working through Moses and Aaron was greater than he who was working through them. Just like it is written in 1 John 4:4, "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." He was then and He still is today.

Sometimes when I think of the many people who God has changed through the years I am reminded of Exodus 7:12. When someone ask me what happened in them to cause them to want to be in church, to read the Bible, or to love the things of God that they formerly despised or cared little for, I tell them something on the order of, "Aaron's staff swallowed the staff of the evil one." In other words, the things of this world that had a hold on a person or that was causing them to be blinded from the beauty of Christ have been swallowed up by God's mercy, grace, and power to save.

When a person truly comes to Jesus by faith and in an attitude of repentance, you can rest assured that the charms of this world, the delights of sin, and the focus on self has been swallowed up by "Aaron's staff." When a former sinner is sitting willfully and joyfully at the feet of Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit has been accomplished and Satan defeated in that person's life. Consider this as an amazing miracle dear ones and never downplay that as common place or a moment of free will exercised. Oh no, this is the sovereign and sole work of God swallowing up the serpent. "If God's grace be in him, the world's best magicians may throw down all their staff; and every staff may be as cunning and as poisonous as a serpent, but Aaron's staff will swallow up their staff." The sweet attractions of the cross will woo and win the man's heart.

Dear one, I would invite you today to put on the full armor of God. Put on the belt of truth, the helmet of salvation, and the shield of faith and know that everything Satan throws at you, all the lies and deception, can be overcome by the truth of God's Word and swallowed up in His power and presence in your life.

November 8

Exodus 7:3

A statement that God makes to Moses in chapter 7 has been the source of much debate and, in my opinion, poor interpretation. Granted, I understand why people feel the need to water this verse down and do spiritual gymnastics to avoid what it clearly says. You see, when we interpret the text precisely the way it is written, some feel that it puts God in an unfavorable light so must vehemently be denied.

Before I speak to verse 3 of our text, I remind you that we must not deny a biblical truth simply because we cannot explain it or understand it fully. I believe many things in Scripture not because I can explain every aspect of the rationale, but because I know that God is holy, righteous, loving, wise, and that He cannot lie. My finite mind cannot fully understand the Trinity and yet I know Scripture teaches and supports the existence of the Godhead. We believe in one God who has revealed His one essence in three distinct persons or as Calvin would say, subsistences. I hope that you have no doubt about the doctrine of the Trinity either.

With that being said, we turn to Exodus 7:3 today where it is written, “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...”. It may be easier and more palatable to the human heart to dance around this verse or come up with all kinds of reasons why it doesn’t mean what it says. Afterall, if God truly did harden Pharaoh’s heart does that make God the author of sin? If He truly did harden his heart, how can God still find fault with Pharaoh? These are valid questions, but they do not change the truth of the verse. There is another option which is that God really did harden Pharaoh’s heart. I encourage you to read Romans 9:14-18.

Sometimes we must deal with the reality that Paul wrote in Romans 11:33. It says, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways”! God does not leave us without some answers to the question as to why He would harden Pharaoh’s heart. We are told in many places that through the plagues, God would demonstrate His power to deliver and reveal the depth of sin that gripped Pharaoh and many of the Egyptians. In Psalm 105:25 it is written, “He turned their hearts to hate His people, to deal craftly with His servants.” This was in reference to what He did in Egypt when His chosen people were in bondage.

Friend, at the end of the day when it comes to questions that come to our minds when we read verses like Exodus 7:3, we must remember that His ways are higher than ours and His knowledge is perfect and infinite. There is purpose to all His ways and much of what He does is done to reveal Himself to His people causing us to love Him and see our need for Him. It is all truly for His glory and our good. Again, we may wonder how and why, but I would encourage you to remember that the clay has no right to question the Potter (Rom. 9:21). A very hard truth for the carnal mind to grasp is that humanity is not the center of the story – God is. As I have been saying often lately, His is the event and ours is the duty. Trust and obey and rest in His wisdom and goodness.

November 9

Romans 9:14-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

I jumped into the deep end yesterday so let's just stay there a bit today as well. I think it is important to note that the hardening of the heart, as in Pharaoh's case, and turning someone over to their sinful desires is possibly two different things. Now, they will both end up in the same place, hell, if there is no faith, repentance, and pursuit of Christ. As I have been pondering this idea, I believe it is important for you to know that just because God hardens or in the case of the people in Romans 1 – just simply turns loose, it does not mean that He cannot extend mercy as He wills at a future date. After all, Romans 9:15 does say that He can have mercy on whomever He chooses.

I believe that some people, like Pharaoh, were indeed created for the purpose of dishonorable use (Rom. 9:21). This may seem harsh to you and me, but it is solely God's decision. The majority of the people who fall into the category of those listed in Romans 1, are people who God simply leaves unto their own freewill. He does not harden, I believe, in the same way that He did in Pharaoh's life. Remember that we are told in Exodus 7:5 the reason why He did this. It says, "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." You must also note that this event is pointing to what God will do in His cosmic battle with Satan in order to deliver you and me from the bondage of sin and death.

I am sure that you are fine with God's judgment against Satan so should you be with His judgment against Pharaoh. I believe in the providence of God, there are times when He truly does use a person to accomplish His will in both good and bad ways. He chose Moses for a purpose as well as Pharaoh; one to honor and one to dishonor. They happen to be two very distinct purposes. I want to take your thoughts and attention back to the book of Romans for a bit today.

Remember in Romans 1, the point is that Gentiles are lost in sin but can be saved as described in Romans 3. The Jews are mentioned in chapter 2 as equally lost apart from Christ as the Gentiles of chapter 1. Like the Gentiles, the Jews too can be saved. So, keep in mind that those who have been turned over to the lust of their own minds are the ones in chapter 3 that Paul is writing about who can be saved just like any Jews who repent (Rom. 3:21-24). Remember, we all fall short of the glory of God. Could this be in reference to Romans 1:23 concerning those who exchanged the glory of God for lesser things?

My point today is that although they were handed over to the lust of their own flesh, they were not, in my opinion, hardened in the sense that Pharaoh was. I say this because I don't want you to think that today your loved ones have been irrevocably hardened and lost forever. I am encouraged by the mercy of God. He can at anytime reach into that foolish heart and open those blind eyes to see His beauty and cause them to run to Jesus. I think of 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and then 11 as I remember that "such were some of you." We were foolish and lost but not hardened eternally. Sin and Satan may have a grip on some of our friends and family now but never forget that Aaron's staff can swallow the serpents of Satan with no trouble at all.