

The Hand of the LORD Upon the Livestock

SERMON COMPANION • EXODUS 9:1–7

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Controlling Question

What does the fifth plague reveal about the LORD's authority that makes Him worthy of our complete trust and submission?

Governing Truth

The LORD faithfully demonstrates His sovereign authority through His Word and His works, exposing the foolishness of resisting the God who is perfectly worthy of our trust.

Central Heart Truth

The LORD doesn't merely possess the authority to command our obedience. His character gives us every reason to trust Him with our lives.

1. The LORD's Authority Is Declared | Exodus 9:1–3

"Let My people go, that they may serve Me." — Exodus 9:1

"For if you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them, behold, the hand of the LORD will come with a very severe pestilence on your livestock which are in the field." — Exodus 9:2–3 (excerpt)

What the passage reveals

The LORD repeats His command without compromise. Pharaoh's refusal cannot change the LORD's rightful authority. God calls Israel "My people," identifying Himself with those still living in slavery. His repeated warning shows that judgment is deliberate and righteous, not arbitrary.

Consider the contrast: Pharaoh depended on the Hebrews' labor to sustain his kingdom; the self-sufficient LORD needed nothing from them and was acting to redeem them. See Acts 17:24–25 and Exodus 6:7.

Heart questions

- When I hear that God has authority over my life, what feelings or assumptions surface? Why?
- Have painful experiences with human authority shaped the way I think about God's authority?
- Where am I tempted to treat God's clear Word as something I can negotiate?
- How does God's covenant faithfulness change the way I think about belonging to Him?

2. The LORD's Authority Is Demonstrated | Exodus 9:4–6

“But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel.” — Exodus 9:4

“The LORD set a definite time, saying, ‘Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land.’” — Exodus 9:5

“So the LORD did this thing on the next day ... but of the livestock of the sons of Israel, not one died.” — Exodus 9:6 (excerpt)

What the passage reveals

The LORD specifies what will happen, whom it will affect, and when it will occur. He fulfills His Word. He is righteous in judging Egypt and faithful in preserving Israel. Israel's preservation does not mean that God's people never suffer: they were still enslaved. It means that suffering cannot prevent God from remaining faithful to His purposes.

The plague concerns livestock within the scope of the announced judgment, especially those in the field (v. 3); later verses refer to animals remaining in Egypt (9:19–21).

Heart questions

- Do I measure God's faithfulness by how quickly my circumstances improve?
- What is one difficult circumstance in which I need to rest in God's character rather than predict His actions?
- When others observe my response to hardship, what do they learn about the God I trust?
- How might remembering God's past faithfulness strengthen my present confidence?

Key reminder

God's faithfulness isn't measured by how quickly He changes our circumstances. It's revealed in His unwavering commitment to accomplish His good purposes.

3. The LORD's Authority Is Dismissed | Exodus 9:7

“Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not even one of the livestock of Israel dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.” — Exodus 9:7

What the passage reveals

Pharaoh investigates the LORD's claim and receives confirmation. Yet he refuses to release Israel. His problem is not simply a shortage of evidence: he rejects the rightful authority of the God who has spoken.

Pharaoh didn't disprove God's Word. He dismissed its authority over his life. Knowing truths about God is not identical to trusting Him. Yet a believer who sincerely struggles with fear should not be confused with Pharaoh's deliberate hardened rebellion.

Heart questions

- Is there a truth about God I can explain accurately but struggle to live by?
- What am I believing about God that makes surrendering to Him seem undesirable?
- Am I afraid that relinquishing control means God will not care for me?
- If someone has wounded me, do I fear that forgiveness means excusing the wrong? How does God's righteousness help me distinguish forgiveness from removing wise boundaries?

4. Look to Jesus Christ | Matthew 11:28–30

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart.” — Matthew 11:28–29 (excerpt)

The One who possesses all authority is gentle and humble in heart. Pharaoh demanded service for his own benefit; Jesus gave Himself to redeem sinners. His death and resurrection display both His saving power and His trustworthy love. He invites us not into independence from His authority, but into the rest of learning from Him.

For prayer and personal response

1. Thank the LORD for a specific attribute revealed in this passage: truthfulness, righteousness, faithfulness, goodness, or sovereign authority.
2. Identify one area in which fear, pain, or a desire for control makes trusting Him difficult.
3. Ask: “What has God revealed about His character that speaks directly to what I’m believing in this situation?”
4. Take one appropriate step of trusting obedience this week, without pretending that difficult circumstances or needed boundaries disappear.

Closing prayer

Father, You are perfectly faithful to everything You are. Forgive me for treating Your authority as though Your character were uncertain. Help me to see Your goodness and righteousness more clearly, especially in Jesus Christ. Teach my heart to trust You and gladly follow Your Word. Amen.