

EXODUS 9:8-12

When God Uses Suffering to Reveal His Sovereignty

Dr. Daniel L. Bohannon | Ukiah Bible Church

CONTROLLING QUESTION: What does the sixth plague reveal about the LORD's sovereign purposes in human suffering?

GOVERNING TRUTH: The LORD sovereignly uses even human suffering to accomplish His righteous purposes, revealing His authority over all people and exposing the condition of their hearts.

LISTEN FOR THE ANSWER

The sixth plague moves the LORD's judgment from Egypt's surroundings to the bodies of its people. Watch how His authority exposes human limitations, false confidence, and the response of Pharaoh's heart.

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE REVEAL ABOUT THE LORD?

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE REVEAL ABOUT THE HUMAN HEART?

1. THE LORD'S AUTHORITY IS DEMONSTRATED

Exodus 9:8-10 | The soot becomes a sign of the LORD's authority.

FEEL THE PLAGUE: The painful boils afflicted people and animals. Job's suffering helps us picture the severity of such sores (Job 2:7-8).

OUR LIMITS AND HIS AUTHORITY

Egypt's achievements in medicine and engineering could not stop the plague. Modern medical care is a gift for which we should thank God, but no human ability makes us independent of Him (Acts 17:24-28).

Where have I begun trusting the gift more than the Giver?

2. THE LORD'S AUTHORITY EXPOSES FALSE CONFIDENCE

Exodus 9:11 | The magicians could not stand before Moses.

The specialists who once challenged Moses were themselves afflicted. Earlier they had admitted, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). Their supposed spiritual power offered no protection.

A FALSE REFUGE: A good thing becomes an idol when we look to it for the security, identity, or satisfaction that only God can ultimately provide.

WHAT DO WE LEAN ON?

Money, health, reputation, productivity, education, and even religious activity can become substitutes for dependence on the LORD. Weakness can reveal where our confidence has rested.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

What loss or limitation might reveal where my confidence has rested?

How does the sufficiency of Christ's grace speak to that weakness?

3. THE LORD'S AUTHORITY IS EXERCISED OVER THE HUMAN HEART

Exodus 9:12 | The LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen.

Pharaoh had repeatedly resisted the LORD and hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15, 32). The LORD had already foretold His sovereign purpose (Exodus 4:21; 7:3-4). Scripture affirms both God's sovereignty and Pharaoh's responsibility (Romans 9:17-18).

A CRUCIAL DISTINCTION: Honest grief and questions can turn toward God. A hardened heart refuses His rightful authority even when His Word is clear (Psalm 13:1-6).

When I suffer, do my questions move me toward the LORD or away from His Word?

FOUR PORTRAITS OF SUFFERING

JOB – GOD’S WISDOM IS GREATER THAN OUR UNDERSTANDING

Job suffered terribly without the hidden wrongdoing his friends assumed. He did not receive every explanation, but came to know the LORD more deeply (Job 1:1; 2:7-10; 42:1-6).

DAVID – GOD’S HOLINESS CALLS US TO CONFESSION

David described his distress and confessed his sin, turning to the LORD for mercy (Psalm 38:1-22).

NAAMAN – GOD’S GRACE HUMBLER HUMAN PRIDE

A powerful Syrian commander learned to obey a humbling instruction, received healing, and acknowledged the true God (2 Kings 5:1-15).

PAUL – CHRIST’S POWER IS MADE KNOWN IN WEAKNESS

Paul pleaded for relief from his thorn, but the LORD taught him the sufficiency of grace (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

CONSIDER THE CONTRAST: Pharaoh suffered and continued to resist. These accounts show that suffering has no single explanation and does not automatically produce humility.

Which biblical account most helps me understand my response to suffering?

THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST IN OUR SUFFERING

Pharaoh used power to make others suffer. Jesus Christ, who possesses all authority, willingly suffered to save others (Mark 10:45). At the cross, God accomplished redemption through human wickedness without excusing those responsible (Acts 2:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

“My grace is sufficient for you.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

We may not understand the purpose of our suffering, but through Jesus Christ we have come to know the character of the God who governs it.

What beauty of God’s character does the cross reveal to me?

TAKING THE TRUTH TO HEART

KNOWING GOD

What have I learned about the LORD's authority, wisdom, righteousness, and love?

TRUSTING GOD

What difficult circumstance am I tempted to interpret apart from what God has revealed about Himself?

FOLLOWING CHRIST

What response of faith or obedience is the LORD calling me to make?

CARING FOR OTHERS

How can I care for someone who is suffering without pretending to know God's hidden purposes?

SCRIPTURES TO RETURN TO THIS WEEK

Exodus 9:8-12 • Job 42:1-6 • Psalm 38:18-22 • John 9:1-3 • 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 • Mark 10:45
• Acts 2:23

PRAYER

Father, teach me to trust Your character when I cannot understand my circumstances. Expose the things I have trusted in place of You, soften my heart toward Your Word, and help me rest in the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.