

Open your Bibles to Exodus 9:1-7.

- We're continuing our study of Exodus
- This morning we'll be considering the Fifth Plague: The Death of the Egyptian Livestock.
- And our theme will be God's Distinguishing Grace.

The Bible makes it very clear that God has a People.

- He has a chosen People that He has graciously bound Himself to in covenant.
- He has a chosen People to whom He has made promises of forgiveness, protection, sanctification, and salvation.
- From all eternity, He has declared over a certain portion of mankind, "You are mine. And I am yours."
- And because of His gracious choice to save a People for Himself, He distinguishes, in time and eternity, between His People and everyone else.
- He deals very differently with His People than He does with the world.

And we see that truth in our text today.

- God declares in this Plague that Israel will be spared while Egypt is judged.
- God makes a distinction.

So that's where I intend to land this morning after we walk through the text and see what all happened in the Fifth Plague.

- I hope to encourage every believer in the truth that God has dealt graciously with you from eternity, in history, daily in your life, and will continue to do so

forever.

- And I want to set before any unconverted person among us God's offer of a place among His People, if you will only believe on Jesus Christ.

- It's truly a blessed thing to be numbered among the People of God.

- So may He make us glad in that truth and bless the preaching of His Word.

If you would, and are able, please stand with me for the reading of the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God.

Exodus 9:1-7

[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.

[2] For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them,

[3] behold, the hand of the LORD will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks.

[4] But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die.'""

[5] And the LORD set a time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land."

[6] And the next day the LORD did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died.

[7] And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the

livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

(PRAY)

Our Gracious God,

•Your Word is good. It's true and beautiful and steadfast and glorious.

•And we long to see wonderful things in it today.

•So we ask that you would open our ears to hear, our eyes to see, and our hearts to believe.

•Grant, by your grace, that we would understand, embrace, and rejoice in what you have to say to us from your Word this morning.

•Show us what a blessing it is to be your People. Show us your grace given in Christ. Show us your sovereign love that you've given to us who believe.

•And, in doing so, increase our affection for you.

•Grant, Lord, that we would marvel at your kindness toward the undeserving, toward us, today.

•We ask these things in Jesus' Name and for His sake.

•Amen.

1.) As with every Plague, the LORD initiates it by speaking to Moses.

•God said, "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."'"

•God demand is repeated once again. Pharaoh must allow the Israelites to go worship/serve the LORD.

And Moses is to remind Pharaoh that the LORD is “the God of the Hebrews.”

- Though He is God over all things, He is specifically “the God of the Hebrews.”

- He has a People. He’s bound Himself to them in covenant. He made promises about freedom and a land to dwell in.

- He, the unchangeable God, made those promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He’s reaffirmed them to Israel through Moses.

- They are HIS PEOPLE. God says “Let MY PEOPLE go.”

- God loves them. He is favorable toward them. He has chosen them. They belong to HIM.

- God is driving home the point that Pharaoh is enslaving the PEOPLE OF GOD.

And God won’t take that lying down.

- So in vv2-3, God says that if Pharaoh refuses to free them, “the hand of the LORD will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks.”

- God will stretch forth His mighty hand and strike with “a very severe plague upon your livestock.”

God says that He’ll strike Egypt’s livestock with some kind of disease that will kill them.

- Now, to our modern ears this might not sound too bad.

- But thinking about this from the ancient perspective,

we see that God was threatening an economic disaster.

- Prior to the Industrial Revolution, basically all societies were tied directly to livestock.

- They were important for milk, food, clothing, labor, agricultural efficiency, and transportation.

- God was threatening to economically ruin Egypt.

This Plague is also the first that would strike directly at Pharaoh's personal property.

- Pharaohs kept large number of cattle under their control. They were rich, after all.

- So, if Pharaoh won't let God's special possession go, then Pharaoh will lose his own possessions.

- This is pure justice.

Things are definitely ramping up in the Plagues.

- Death will occur directly from this Plague.

- Yes, it's animal death. But this is the first Plague where the design of the Plague itself was TO KILL.

- Other deaths might have occurred from previous plagues, but it was indirect. The purpose of this Plague was to kill.

And, as with the Fourth Plague, this will be an immediate act of God.

- It will be "the hand of the LORD." His direct doing.

- No instruments will be used. Moses and Aaron will do nothing. No means. Just God.

- God is making it clear that He Himself is working on behalf of His People to save them. They are His. So He is personally involved.

Then, in vv4, God declares that a distinction will be made:

•“But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die.”

- God’s People won’t suffer. Their livestock will live.
- Israel will be protected because they belong to God.
- God makes a distinction between His People and everybody else. He knows how to save His People, even as He judges the world at the same time.

And then God sets a time in v5.

- “Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in land.”
- God sets the time so Pharaoh will know when this happens that He did it. That it wasn’t a coincidence.

V6 says, “And the next day the LORD did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died...”

- The livestock were struck. Keep in mind that a large portion of livestock are cattle.
- And that is a huge insult to the gods of Egypt.

Egypt had a goddess named Hathor.

- She was associated with beauty, femininity, fertility, and motherhood.
- Hathor was the symbolic mother of Pharaoh. She was supposed to care for and protect him.
- And she was often depicted as a cow or a woman with a headdress of cow horns and a sun disk.

Egypt also had a god named Apis. He was the son

of Hathor and was often depicted as a bull.

- Apis was something of an intermediary between men and the gods, as well as a fertility god.
- Because of him, bulls were sacred to the Egyptians.
- The temple in Memphis actually housed a live bull that was worshipped as the living incarnation of Apis.

Now, catch this: The gods of fertility (life) DIED.

- The goddess of beauty given an ugly disease.
- The god of strength was made impotent.
- The goddess who was to watch over Pharaoh can't save him from the Plague of the LORD.
- The god who was to speak on behalf of the gods is made mute.
- There is, then, no life, no lasting beauty, no instruction, and no protection from false gods.
- ONLY THE LORD can give these things. And He gives them to His People.

Now, let me deal with an apologetics issue real quick:

- Our translation says, "ALL the livestock of the Egyptians died..."
- But in later texts, a number of livestock is in Egypt.
- Some will claim this is a contradiction. But that's not the case.
- There are a few ways to understand this language, but I'll just tell you the two I think are best:

1. First, the Hebrew word translated "all" in this verse is also used elsewhere in the OT to indicate "all sorts of."

- So the text is telling us that all sorts of livestock died,

but not every single animal.

2. A second possibility is that “all” should be applied very specifically.

•V3 says, “...the hand of the LORD will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock THAT ARE IN THE FIELD...”

•So all the livestock that were “in the field” died. But not livestock that remained in stables and shelters.

Be confident in the Scriptures, Christian!

•God’s Word withstands every test. It really does.

But this Plague would’ve been horrible.

•Horses, donkeys, cattle, goats, and sheep all lying dead in the Egyptian sun, rotting.

•Imagine the work it would take to get everything buried or burned. And it had to be done or another sort of plague would most certainly happen naturally.

•And the fear that would’ve set in as the people realized that there are severe labor, food, material, and transportation shortages coming in the future.

•This would’ve been a terrifying disaster.

On the other hand, v6 ends by saying, “but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died.”

•God shielded His People from judgment.

•They had been chosen by God for MERCY!

•God made the distinction He promised. He is always faithful to deal differently with His own than He does with the world.

•Egypt was struck, but Israel was saved.

And then we come to the end in v7.

•“And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead...”

- Pharaoh sent to see if God’s Word came to pass.
- Maybe he had hoped that the Israelites’ animals had died, too. That would mean that a natural thing had occurred and wasn’t from the LORD.
- Or, even better, that the LORD maybe had turned His back on Israel, which would free him up to continue enslaving them without consequence.

But that will never happen. God will never deal with His People the same as the world.

- His promises are immutable and sure.
- He had marked Israel out as His People, chosen by grace, for freedom. And that wouldn’t change.
- They were indeed spared from God’s hand of judgment.

And that should’ve made Pharaoh think very hard about his next move.

•But it didn’t. The text says, “But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.”

- No evidence would soften his heart because this wasn’t about evidence. This was a matter of the heart. This was a matter of rebellion against God.
- The hand of God that at other times draws sinners to repent, instead hardened Pharaoh.
- Why? Because he wasn’t one of God’s People. So he remained blind in his sin.
- Thus ends the Fifth Plague.

2.) Now, though there are many lessons we can take from every Plague, I want you to see only one today.

- Think broadly with me: The big fact that sticks out in this short passage is that Egypt suffered while Israel was protected.

- Why was Israel protected? At root, because they were God's People. Because God chose to make a distinction between His People and those who are not. Because God chose to save His People even as He judged others.

And why was Egypt struck and judged?

- Because of sin.
- But even more foundationally, it was because they weren't God's People.
- After all, Israel was sinful, too. Just read the rest of Exodus and see how sinful and stubborn Israel was.
- So it wasn't because Egypt was more wicked than Israel that they were judged. It was because they weren't His People.

So we see in this Plague that God has a chosen People.

- And He saves them, though they are just as deserving of His judgment as anyone else.
- God makes a distinction by pure, unmixed grace.

And the distinction that God made between Israel and Egypt reminds us of the even greater distinction God makes between His Elect and the Reprobate.

- Between His People who are to be eternally saved from their sin and its penalty, made up of both Jews and Gentiles from all ages, and those whom He will pass over and allow to remain in their sins unto eternal judgment.

- Between believers and unbelievers.

1. God made a distinction between sinners from all eternity.

- He has a People, chosen by sovereign grace for salvation.

- Ephesians 1:4-5 teaches us that God “**CHOSE US in Him (*Christ*) BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love HE PREDESTINED US for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus, according to the purpose of His will...**”

God chose. We who believe on Christ were chosen before the world was formed.

- And we were chosen to be holy and blameless before God through Jesus Christ.

- We were, by the pure love of God, predestined to be adopted by God through Jesus Christ.

- It was the sovereign will of God, the gracious and free choice of God!

- You who trust in Christ were chosen for this, according to the will of God!

- Yes, you chose Him. But you chose Him because He chose you first!

2 Timothy 1:9 says that God “saved us and called us

to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, WHICH HE GAVE US IN CHRIST JESUS BEFORE THE AGES BEGAN...”

- The grace of God that results in our calling to Christ and salvation through Him, THAT GRACE was given to us “BEFORE THE AGES BEGAN!”

- You didn’t receive Christ until the moment you believed in Him and were united to Him by the work of the Holy Spirit.

- But you received grace from all eternity. God graciously chose you to belong to Him through Christ.

God didn’t choose us “because of our works.”

- God didn’t choose us because He saw that we would choose Him.

- He chose us by grace, according to His will.

- God chose to save a particular number of sinners.

- He chose a particular People that they might know and enjoy Him forever through Jesus Christ.

And, as we know from history and Scripture, not all are chosen. He made a distinction from eternity.

- By God’s choice, there are the Elect and the Reprobate, His People and the world, those who will be saved and those who will be left in their sin.

- We who believe on Christ are the recipients of extravagant, amazing grace. For none deserve to be saved. For all have sinned.

2. God made a distinction in the work of Christ.

- Our Lord Jesus came into this world to save those who were chosen by God and given to Him by the

Father.

- The Son of God lived, died, and was raised to save His People.

John 6:37-39 says, “All that THE FATHER GIVES ME will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me. And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that HE HAS GIVEN ME, but raise it up on the last day.”

- God the Son came to save those who were given to Him by God the Father.

- It is the will of the Father that Christ save ALL WHO WERE GIVEN TO HIM!

- Who is that? God’s chosen People! His Elect!

John 10:27-29 says, “MY SHEEP hear my voice, and I know THEM, and they follow me. I give THEM eternal life, and THEY will never perish, and no one will snatch THEM out of my hand. My Father, who has GIVEN THEM TO ME, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch THEM out of the Father’s hand.”

- Jesus’ sheep are those whom the Father gave to Him to save.

- And those sheep are the ones to whom Christ gives eternal life that no one can take from them.

- Those sheep are the ones whom Christ knows. No others are mentioned.

- And in John 10:15, Jesus said, “I lay down my life FOR THE SHEEP.”

- It is for the People of God alone that Christ died!

And Matthew 1:21 says, “She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save HIS PEOPLE from their sins.”

- Jesus Christ has a People. And it is for that People that He came to accomplish salvation.

- And it is for that People that He actually worked salvation in history.

Not all are redeemed by Christ. God made a distinction in Christ’s work.

- His People will receive the forgiveness of sin and Christ’s imputed righteousness, and all others will remain in their sins and be judged for them.

3. God makes a distinction in the work of the Holy Spirit.

- The Spirit regenerates and grants saving faith to the People of God, chosen by the Father and redeemed by the Son.

- The Spirit works in those to whom He is sent by the Father and the Son to grant them spiritual life, remove their dead, stony hearts and replace with them new hearts that beat for Christ!

Consider John 3:8: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

- The wind blows where it wants and on whom it wants.

- So also the Holy Spirit works life in the hearts of sinners, as He pleases, when He pleases.

- God the Spirit is sovereign, giving life only to those whom He wills. And since there is only one will in God, He wills only to work in those chosen by the Father and redeemed by the Son.

The Holy Spirit is the one who opens blind eyes to the truth of Christ.

- He convinces sinners of their guilt and need for Christ.

- He grants faith to those spiritually dead, that they might trust in Christ and receive Him.

But not all receive the Holy Spirit. God makes a distinction.

- Not all are convinced of their need for salvation. Not all have faith. Not all are made alive.

- God's People are born again. The world remains dead in sin.

3.) Think with me, now: What a blessing and privilege it is to be numbered among God's People!

- What a glorious thing it is to be among those chosen by His grace!

- Nobody else can say what we who believe in Christ can say: "God chose me! Christ died for me! The Spirit worked and is working in me! I don't know why ME, but I am forever grateful that He had mercy on me!"

- Rejoice in this, Christian! God has been kinder to you than you will ever be able to express.

- You are privileged beyond measure. For you belong to Him!

But let's be quick to say this:

- It's nothing in us that caused God to make us His own, just like it wasn't anything in Israel.

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 says, "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set His love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you..."

- Israel wasn't special. They were chosen and loved by God because God sovereignly chose to love them!
- God saved them from Egypt because God had chosen to love them and made them promises.
- That's it! Nothing in them!
- And nothing in us!

Deuteronomy 9:6 says, "Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people."

- It wasn't because Israel was morally better than other nations that God chose them.
- They were sinful just like everyone else.
- Again, it was pure grace from God!
- The same is true for us! God didn't choose us because we're better.
- It's because He is kind and decided to love us!

We're not special. But God is gracious.

- We are nothing. But God has been kind to us.
- We're His People by grace AND ONLY GRACE!
- GOD MADE THE DISTINCTION, not us!

- We are simply glad, unworthy, but grateful recipients of God's distinguishing grace.

MARVEL AT THIS, CHRISTIAN!

- Praise Him! Thank Him every day!
- Take none of this for granted!
- This isn't theoretical theology. This is your life! This is your salvation!
- This is what God has done for you!

4.) But God's distinguishing grace isn't only with regard to our salvation.

- God also makes a daily distinction between His People and the world.
- Now, I DO NOT mean that God doesn't allow bad things to happen to His People. He does.
- Think of Job's suffering, David's persecution, Paul's imprisonment, Moses' rejection, and your own trials.
- Being a Christian doesn't mean that God will keep us from all pain and difficulty.
- BUT IT DOES MEAN that God makes a distinction between His People and the world even in those times.

Think about this: God may ordain the same things to happen to both His People and the unbelieving.

- He may bless or strike in the same way, but for entirely different reasons and to entirely different ends.
- The same external circumstance results ultimately in the blessing of His People and the judgment of others.

1. Suffering is one example. Sickness, loss, hardships of all kinds come to both God's People and the world.

- For His People, God often uses suffering to prepare them to receive Christ. But others are intensified in their hatred of God.

2. Wealth comes to both groups.

- God sometimes gives wealth to His People, so that they might use it for good purposes. It's a reason for praise. It's a means to further God's Kingdom on earth. And it doesn't control them.

- But for others it's a judgment as it hardens them against understanding their need for God and plunges them deeper into sin.

3. Death comes to all.

- But it takes God's People to Heaven. Our enemy becomes our servant that takes us home to Christ.

- But it takes the unbelieving to eternal Hell.

- For one it's the final piece of sanctification. For the other it's the final piece of rebellion.

So even when, externally speaking, God seems to be dealing the same way with His People and the world, He actually isn't.

- He is dealing internally and invisibly in a very different way with his own. He's at work for their good.

- Remember that, Christian! In all things, God does not deal with you as He deals with the world.

- You're His child. You're part of the Israel of God.

- In all things, God deals kindly with you. For you belong to Him!

5.) The distinguishing grace of God in this Plague

ultimately points us to what will be the greatest distinction of all time.

- I hope you know that all of God's historical judgments foreshadow the Day of Judgment.

- The Plagues of Egypt all point forward to the Ultimate Plague, the ultimate pouring out of God's wrath.

- And God's distinction between Israel and Egypt reminds us that a great Day of Distinction is coming.

When our Lord Jesus returns in glory and in judgment, He will judge all men.

- Matthew 25:31-46 tells us that on that day, all the nations will be gathered before Him. Everyone who has ever lived will stand before Him.

- And He will be seated on His glorious throne to render Final Judgment concerning the eternal destiny of all men.

- Eternity with God in the New Heavens and the New Earth. Or eternity away from the blessed presence of God in Hell.

And on that Day, He will make the Great Distinction.

- He will separate the sheep from the goats. The believers from the unbelievers. His People and Not His People.

- And His People, those who trusted in Him and gave evidence of their faith by how they lived, His People will receive eternal life.

- To those He will say, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

•But to the wicked and unbelieving, to the goats, He will say, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Those who are not His People will go away to eternal destruction for their sins.

- But His People to eternal life, for God will save them.
- God will shelter them on that great Day!
- He will save His People!
- He will hide them from the fury of His wrath. They will be by His side, in a glorious Goshen of sorts, protected from His judgment.

And what will we who believe say on that Day?

•“I have been spared, not because of me, but because God made me His own! I am saved, not because I’m worthy, but because God will not destroy His People whom He loves!”

What a distinction that will be!

- Where have all the wicked gone?
- Where has sin gone?
- Where have all God’s enemies gone?
- They have been swept off the earth in His flood of judgment. And we, like Noah, remain by God’s grace.
- Those who remain are the People of God.
- There will be no need for any unbeliever to send for proof, like Pharaoh did.
- For on that Day, all will see the gracious distinction God has made!

Be encouraged by this, Christian: God promises to

save you on that Day!

- We who believe in Christ ought not fear damnation.
- God has promised to save us. He will not deal with us as He deals with others.
- Those who trusted in the LORD were spared from the Plague. And the free gift of eternal life is for those who trust in Jesus Christ.
- We have nothing to fear. For God is our God and we are His People. He will hide us in the day of wrath.

Think about it this way, you believers who fear the judgment:

- God made His distinction from eternity, in Christ's work, and in the Spirit's work.
- He won't throw all of that away on Judgment Day. He is unchanging in every regard.
- His distinction is immutable. It will remain.
- Trust Him! His Word to you about this is just as certain as His Word to Israel about the Plague.
- He will save you because HE ALWAYS SAVES HIS PEOPLE!

6.) My dear brothers and sisters, take this truth and hide it deep in your hearts:

- God does not deal with His People as He deals with others.
- We must preach this daily to ourselves: "I'm one of God's People by grace through faith in Christ. He will never deal with me as He does the world. Not now. Not in the Judgment. Not in eternity."

Remember that when you sin.

- He doesn't deal with you according to your iniquities.
- He will forgive. He remains your God. He is patient and compassionate toward you, for Christ's sake.

Remember it when life is hard.

- He isn't out to destroy you.
- He loves you and will turn every cross into a crown.

Remember when you come to the hour of your death.

- God promises you in Christ that He will make a distinction.

And to the unconverted, I want you to know that God offers you a place among His People. He offers it today.

- I hope you know that some of the Egyptians became His People after the Final Plague.
- God embraced them by His grace, just as He did Israel. He has never turned away any sinner who wanted to be His.

God offers Christ to you this morning.

- Jesus Christ died for the sins of those who will believe on Him.
- He died for those who will forsake all attempts to make themselves good enough for God.
- He suffered the penalty for sin, the wrath of God, as a substitute for everyone who will simply trust Him to save them.
- And God says that you can have Christ. You need only to believe.

- And if you have Christ, you are one of God's People. If you have the Son, you have the Father.
- And if you have the Father, the Father has you.

You might be thinking to yourself, "What if I'm not one of God's People? What if I'm not chosen?"

- Well, that's not for you to figure out.
- God offers salvation to you right now!
- And His People will respond in faith.
- So believe and, believing, know that you're His!
- The only way to know you're His is to believe.
- So believe on Christ and be saved!

Or will you be like Pharaoh and resist?

- Will you reject such a gracious offer of eternal life?
- Will you forever remain outside of God's covenant, His People, His salvation?
- Or will receive Christ? And receiving Him, have everything?
- I beg you, lay down your weapons, stop fighting, and receive the Gift of God!

God says to us who believe, "I've loved you from eternity. I love you now. And I will love you forever. You are my People and I am your God."

- May God grant us faith to believe and rest in His love.
- Amen.