

Open your Bibles to Exodus 11:1-10.

- We're back to our study of the Book of Exodus.
- This morning we come to the account of God threatening the Final Plague: The Death of the Firstborn.
- And our focus will be on the Sovereignty of God.

The main focus of Exodus is God's self-revelation and self-glorification.

- In this book, God reveals and glorifies Himself in the salvation of His People and the judgment of His enemies.
- And this chapter reveals that our God is sovereign.
- And when I say, "sovereign," I mean that God rules over all things. He controls all things. He does all that He pleases and no one can stop Him.

Now, other texts in Exodus have shown that.

- But I want to highlight it as we near the end of the Plague Accounts because of the purpose of the Plagues.
- God struck Egypt in order to show the whole world that He alone is the sovereign God.
- And I think this chapter declares that in many ways.

So in this sermon most of us won't hear anything we didn't already know.

- But we should regularly meditate on God's sovereignty.
- Why? Because it's one of the greatest comforts that a believer can have. And I hope to show you that today.
- But, on the other hand, God's sovereignty is a terror to

those who don't belong to Him through faith in Christ.

- Why? Because just as God governs all things in love for His People, He likewise governs all things to the ultimate destruction of His enemies.

Now, I know that many of us are in need of comfort today.

- Many gathered here need to refocus their thoughts upon the LORD and His good reign over their lives.

- You're burdened down with the cares of life. You have sick and dying loved ones. You have fears for the future. You have difficulties at work. Difficulties in your extended family. There are sorrows and weights upon you.

- Some of you may be fearful of your state before God, even though you cling to Christ in faith.

- My dear friends, God's sovereignty speaks a word to all of those cares.

- So may God bless the preaching of His Word and remind us that our God reigns.

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

Exodus 11:1-10

[1] The LORD said to Moses, "Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely.

[2] Speak now in the hearing of the people, that they ask, every man of his neighbor and every woman of her

neighbor, for silver and gold jewelry.”

[3] And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people.

[4] So Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt,

[5] and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle.

[6] There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again.

[7] But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.’

[8] And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, you and all the people who follow you.’ And after that I will go out.” And he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

[9] Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”

[10] Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land.

(PRAY)

Our Sovereign God,

•We know that your will is to save your People out of the world, grow them in faith and godliness, comfort and preserve them, and bring them home to yourself.

•So we ask that you would do those things through the preaching of your Word this morning.

•By your Holy Spirit, make the Word of God fruitful to your holy purposes.

•Lord, without your help, all preaching is in vain.

•So, please, work in our hearts that we might get a clearer sight of you. And seeing you, see all things rightly.

•Glorify yourself in us this morning.

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

•Amen.

1.) Before we dive in, let's set the context and get something straight about this text:

•God commanded Pharaoh over and over to let Israel go a three days' journey into the wilderness to worship. But Pharaoh refused.

•So God plagued them time and again.

•Pharaoh tried to bargain with God and meet Him halfway on His commands. But God wouldn't relent.

•And at the end of Chapter 10, after Moses refused Pharaoh's offer of partial obedience, Pharaoh told him, "Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall surely die."

- Moses then replied, “As you say! I will not see your face again.”

Now, vv4-8 of our chapter today indicate that WAS NOT the end of the conversation.

- Apparently, the LORD instructed Moses to tell that another Plague was coming and Israel would go free.
- But vv1-3 stops the flow of the conversation.
- So what’s going on here?

Well, here’s the simplest answer: vv1-3 are a parenthetical narrative.

- They give background for why Moses spoke so boldly to Pharaoh in vv4-8.
- They show that he wasn’t speaking on his own authority or in arrogance, but according to what God had revealed prior to his meeting with Pharaoh.
- It’s grammatically possible, and fits with the structure of the chapter, that v1 could be translated, “The LORD HAD SAID to Moses...”
- So vv1-3 took place at some point before the conversation with Pharaoh, and gives background for what Moses says in vv4-8.

Now let’s briefly walk through the chapter and see what happened.

- V1 says, “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely.’”

- This is it! The contest between Pharaoh and the LORD is coming to a close.

- Before Moses went back to Egypt, God had said that there would be many signs and wonders performed, many Plagues. But He hadn't said how many.

- But now God says to Moses, "This is it."

- God had told Moses in 4:22-23 that he was to tell Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, 'Let my son go that he may serve me.' If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son."

- Moses knew what the Final Plague would be. But he didn't know when. And now God says, "It's time. Tell him."

One more Plague. One more "strike" from God. And it would be a deathblow in more ways than one.

- But Israel would be free.

- Pharaoh will drive them away completely!

- He won't be reluctant for Israel to leave. He'll cast them out of Egypt.

- He won't merely give them permission to go into the wilderness for worship. "He will drive you away COMPLETELY."

- It will be total freedom for Israel.

God then gives instructions for the Israelites to prepare for the Exodus.

- He tells them that they all are to ask the Egyptians "for silver and gold jewelry."

- That's a bold thing to ask for! These slaves are to ask their soon-to-be former masters for silver and gold.

What is this?

- In 3:21-22, God said this would be Israel's PLUNDERING of Egypt.
- Now, plundering is what you do once a people has been conquered in battle. But the Israelites are to ask BEFORE the Final Plague.
- Why? Because Egypt has already been conquered in principle. God has declared that Israel will be freed.
- God has already won. The fulfillment is just a matter of time. Israel is as good as gone.

But why are they to do this? Two reasons, I think:

- First, it's for justice. They've been slaves. Unpaid and worked to death. Cruelly treated for generations.
- And now God is going to give them their wages. They won't start out poor when they begin their freedom. They'll get what was owed.
- Second, and more importantly, this is the gold and silver that Israel will freely give back to the LORD as they construct the Tabernacle later.
- God has a plan in all of this: His worship and their good. So He provided for what they'd need.

And what's amazing is that this wasn't left to chance:

- "And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians."
- The Egyptians gladly gave their silver and gold to Israel.
- Why? Because God intervened somehow. He turned their hearts to favor the Israelites.
- This may have been fear and pragmatism. The

Egyptians had seen what Israel's God could do and they were afraid of the Israelites. So they did whatever was asked.

- But regardless of the motivation, God made sure that the Israelites got what they asked for.

So the stage had been set.

- The Israelites were prepared to leave. The Egyptians respected and feared Moses.

- And God had said that after the next Plague, the exodus from Egypt would begin.

And now, having been told what will happen next, the conversation between Pharaoh and Moses resumes.

- “So Moses said, ‘Thus says the LORD: “About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again.”””

See how specific God was: “About midnight.” Or “at midnight.”

- That night, at the darkest hour, the Plague would fall.

- And God Himself would strike. He won't use instruments or people. He says, “I will go out in the midst of Egypt...”

- God Himself will visit them in wrath and judgment for their sins. And no one will be able to stop Him.

And "...every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die..."

- This is chilling. God is terrifying in His wrath.
- Not only children would die, but every firstborn. The young and the old.
- There would not be a single family unaffected by this Plague. And it would span multiple generations of people.
- Example: My aunt, sister, and daughter would all have perished, if we were Egyptians in this Plague.
- This was going to be devastating in every house.

And there would be no exceptions in Egypt.

- "...from the firstborn of Pharaoh...to the firstborn of the slave girl...and all the firstborn of the cattle."
- This was universal judgment. From the greatest to the least. Even to the livestock in Egypt.
- There were no exceptions. And there was no escape from the God of Israel.
- Nothing could save them. No earthly power or status or lack thereof could exempt them from judgment.

Friends, this Plague would be a living nightmare.

- Death would be everywhere. From infants to the elderly and everyone in between.
- Truly, "there (*would*) be such a great cry throughout the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again."

But while wrath would fall on Egypt, God's People would be saved.

- V7 says, "But not a dog shall growl against any of the

People of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.”

- Not even a dog would growl.
- Nothing and no one would try to stop them leaving. No one would dare to say a word.

Israel would be spared the Plague.

- As we'll see in the next chapter, God would provide a way of salvation for them through the sacrifice of a lamb.
- And God's salvation would be TOTAL. Nothing would harm them.
- Not the Plague, Pharaoh, the Egyptians, animals, nature. NOTHING would touch them.
- Why? “Because the LORD makes a distinction...”
- God saves His People, even when He judges the world.

And this was for Pharaoh to see: God is sovereign.

- God saves. God judges. God makes a distinction.
- It's a blessed thing to be among His People. But a wretched one to be His enemy.

In v8, Moses tells of the future submission of Egypt.

- He says that Pharaoh's servants will bow down to him and beg him and Israel to leave.
- Then, and only then, would he go.
- Pharaoh may have been issuing orders and making threats. But the LORD was the one controlling things.
- Pharaoh would be humiliated. Even his own officials

would bow to Moses, God's representative, instead of Pharaoh.

- The LORD would have total victory over His enemies.

Then God told Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt."

- Pharaoh wouldn't listen. But Israel would still go free.
- God would see to it. He would glorify Himself in the judgment of His enemies.

The chapter ends by telling us a summary of the entire Plague narrative from Chapter 7 to 11.

"Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land."

- But freedom was coming.
- All of this fulfilled God's word to Moses at the Burning Bush.
- And all of it fulfilled His purpose to glorify Himself.

2.) Now, what can we take away from all of this?

- As I've already said, this passage declares God's sovereignty.
- He threatened judgment and declared redemption. And that was terrifying for the Egyptians who heard. But for the Israelites, God's People, it provided every comfort.

Brothers and sisters, our God IS GOD.

- Nothing comes to pass that He hasn't willed, in some way and for some reason, to come to pass.
- Nothing happens apart from Him. He is in control.

I know most of you have heard this truth hundreds of times.

- But, please, don't check out. There is balm for weary souls here. There's solid ground to stand on here.

What I want to do now is highlight some of the ways this text shows God's sovereignty and give brief application with each.

- I want to show you how this truth should be the pillow on which the Christian lays his head at night.

1. In v1, God said, that after the Tenth Plague, Pharaoh would free them.

- That wasn't a guess. It was certain.
- But how could God say that? Because He infallibly knows the future.

But how does He know the future?

- Friends, God doesn't merely "know" things.
- He knows the future because He's decreed the future. He has, from eternity, declared what will happen in every single area of life.
- He knows because He has ordained. It's that simple.
- Any other answer will leave you with a god who learns or is in some way dependent upon His creation.
- And if you have a learning or dependent god, you don't have the God of the Bible.
- Our God doesn't learn because our God doesn't change. To learn is to increase in knowledge.
- Our God isn't dependent upon anything for His knowledge. He is I AM. He just IS what He is. His

knowledge is OF HIMSELF.

- Again, God knows because He controls. Because He has already determined what will be.

- THAT'S HOW He could say, "One more Plague and Pharaoh will let you go."

And that tells us that our God absolutely controls the future.

- One commentator rightly said, "Moses was writing this story not merely to help his fellow Israelites trust the Lord AS things happened but to help them learn to trust that the Lord is the One who MAKES things happen in the first place..."

- Brothers and sisters, our God holds the future in His hands. Nothing will come to pass apart from Him.

This doesn't mean that we won't ever suffer.

- But it does mean that the God who has saved us in Christ is the One running the show!

- The future doesn't belong to Satan, or wicked men, or random chance. The future belongs to our God.

- And He is working out His eternal plan for His glory and our good.

- The same God who decreed that Israel would be in slavery for 400 years also decreed that after the Tenth Plague they would be free.

So, Christian, what are you afraid of?

- What can the future hold that your God hasn't willed?
- And what can the future hold that won't ultimately be made subservient to your salvation?

- Let me remind you that "...we know that for those who

love God all things work together for good..." (Romans 8:28)

What are you afraid of?

- Even the worst that can befall you will only serve to sanctify you, increase your reward in Heaven, teach you not to love the world but look for a better one, and teach you more of the love of your Lord Jesus Christ.

- In the final analysis, then, what should you fear?

- Your God controls it all. He knows the future because He has declared what will be.

- And He's already told you, as He told Moses, that in the end, He wins over all evil.

- Sin, Satan, death, the world, and the flesh will all be conquered. And, in Christ, you win, too.

- You need not fear. Your God reigns!

2. In vv2-3, God gave the Israelites favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so the Egyptians gave them gold and silver. And He increased Moses' reputation in their sight.

- God turned their hearts toward His People!

- What is this?! Favor for slaves? Respect for Moses, their national enemy?

- How? THE LORD!

Our God is sovereign over the wills and decisions of men. Even His and His People's enemies.

- He moves hearts. He hardens hearts.

- No one does anything, not kings or commoners, apart from His will.

- Our God doesn't just generically reign over the "big

stuff.” He reigns over all His creatures and all their actions.

In a mysterious way that no one can fully comprehend or unravel, our God rules the wills of men.

- Without forcing anyone to do anything they don't want to do, everyone wills and acts according to HIS WILL.

- If that's not the case, then you can't explain why the Egyptians gave their wealth TO SLAVES and grew to respect THEIR ENEMY who worked Plagues against them, Moses.

- God turns the hearts of men as He pleases. He can even turn our enemies to favor us.

Brothers and sisters, why, then, do you despair?

- Is there someone in your life who hates you without cause?

- Do you have an unreasonable boss at work who won't give you what's right?

- Is there a hard hearted family member who holds an old grudge against you?

- Do you look at our godless culture and think that persecution is an absolute certainty in our future?

- Doesn't this text teach you to cry out to God to grant you favor in their sight?

- He can do it. So why do you not ask?

Friends none of us should look at another person and say, “I know what they're going to do. It's hopeless.”

- Now, you may end up being right. But until they do

whatever you've guessed, you're just GUESSING.

- Who in their right mind would've thought the Egyptians would willfully hand over their wealth?

- But they did. Because our God moved them to do it.

- He can cause wicked people to have mercy on you.

- You need not despair. But instead, cry out to the God who rules the hearts of men.

3. Notice that in v4, God chose the time of the Plague.

- And catch this: The time of the Plague was also the time of Israel's release.

- What am I getting at? God is sovereign over the timing of all events and their outcomes.

- God chose midnight that night for the Tenth Plague. And so it was. Right on time. As He willed.

Friends, everything happens exactly when the LORD sees fit for it to happen.

- Relief comes when He says. Judgment and salvation come when He says.

- Nothing can be slowed down or sped up.

- The world runs on God's clock. Events unfold according to His agenda.

- God doesn't just determine what will happen, but WHEN it will happen.

Why, then, are we so impatient?

- We worry, get frustrated, are anxious and angry and full of discontent. But why?

- I'm not belittling anybody. Suffering is real.

- Sickness is hard. Bad jobs are hard. Stubborn family members are hard. An empty womb is hard.

- Long hours, loaded schedules, unfruitful efforts, all of that can wear a person down.
- Watching the wicked overrun the righteous is awful.
- But do we not trust His wisdom? That He knows when the time of relief should come?
- And do we not believe that He'll sustain us until that time?

Every trial has its expiration date for God's People.

- Maybe it's in the life to come. I don't know.
- But I do know that the God who ordained the trial has also decreed the moment it will end.
- Wait upon the Lord! Call upon Him to sustain you!
- Don't grow bitter. For "midnight," the time of relief, will come when God says.

4. In v5, God said that He would strike down the firstborn throughout Egypt.

- And in that, God reminds us that He is sovereign over life and death.
- The firstborn would die when He said so.
- Life and death are in His hands. When they come, to whom, how, and everything else.
- All men live and die at pleasure of the King of Glory.

Not one person comes into or leaves this world apart from God.

- He gives life. And He takes it. All as He wills.

We sometimes say, "He was taken too soon."

- And I understand that sentiment. And I use it.
- But it's not really true. Nobody is ever taken too soon.

Nobody is ever taken too late, either.

- Our lives truly are in His hands.
- Before we were born, our days were written in His Book. And not one of us will die before our appointed time.

Do you fear death?

- I'm with RC Sproul on this one. He said that he didn't fear death, but was afraid of the act of dying.
- There are many horrible ways to die. And that's scary.
- But why should we be anxious about death?
- Our loving God has made death the vehicle that takes us home to Him. What's there to fear?

The unbeliever ought to be afraid. But not you.

- The wicked are in the hands of a God angry with them for their sin and unbelief.
- They're but a moment from Hell. Standing on the edge of a cliff with the wind blowing on their backs.
- But not you. You're a moment from Heaven.

Or do you keep yourself awake at night with thoughts about your loved ones dying?

- But are they not in the hands of God who has determined what will become of them?
- They won't go too soon. They'll go as He wills and not a moment before.

We will die when God says so.

- So we who belong to God need not fear. Our lives are in His loving hands. And death will bring us to glory.

3.) Now what we've seen so far is all beautiful and glorious and true.

•But I don't want you to miss the great, big truth that this text teaches us:

•God is sovereign to judge sinners and save His People.

God said that He would judge Egypt but save Israel.

•He makes a distinction. And that distinction is between those who are His People and those who are not.

•And, ultimately, that distinction is all that matters.

Friends, the sovereign God judges sinners.

•God's judgments in the Plagues point us to God's Final Judgment of all men.

•One day, God will execute judgment on those who do not love and obey Him.

•The sentence of eternal damnation will be upon ALL who have sinned. And ALL HAVE SINNED!

No one will escape this judgment. It's an appointment we will all keep.

•From the least to the greatest, all will appear before Him and give an account for their lives.

No sin will go unnoticed.

•No dark corner of the heart will go unseen.

•No wrongdoing will be overlooked.

•No word will be unreported.

•Nobody will get away with anything.

•The wicked, those who did not fear the Lord and trust

in Him will be judged.

- Just as certainly as the Plague fell upon Egypt, God's wrath will come upon the ungodly.

But God will save His people!

- God provided a way of salvation for Israel: The sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, and having its blood applied to their homes.

- Judgment wouldn't fall upon them. But it wasn't because they were sinless or better than Egypt.

- It was because God graciously provided salvation for them!

- It was by God's sovereign grace that He saved His people.

Israel's salvation points to the eternal salvation that God has provided for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

- Though we've sinned and deserve Hell just as much as anyone else, God gave His Son to save us.

- Our Lord took our sins upon Himself and offered Himself up to the righteous wrath of God at the Cross for our sins.

- His blood was shed, His life was given in our place.

- The Lamb of God has taken away our sins by His death, that we might not be condemned.

- Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed.

- And because He has died and rose again, we are saved from judgment.

Brothers and sisters, our sovereign God has made a distinction!

- He's declared that those who trust in Christ won't be damned, but will live forever!

- The salvation of those who trust in Jesus is just as certain as Israel's salvation from the Plague.

- On the Day of Judgment, the Lord will make a distinction.

- Though the world is condemned, we won't be. All by sovereign grace given to the unworthy!

4.) If you're an unbeliever, please, listen closely:

- Would you have this sovereign God as Friend or Foe?

- He reigns. He conquers every rebel sinner and judges the wicked. No one escape His rule.

- And only those who trust in Christ are friends of God.

- They alone are His People for whom He makes a distinction in all things, governing them for their good.

- You must turn from your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ or God will be your eternal Enemy.

- And who can bear the enmity of such a sovereign God?

God's sovereignty is a terrifying reality if you don't belong to Him.

- He controls your future. He can take everything. He can turn all men against you. He can choose to never bring relief. He can take your life. He can cast you to Hell.

- All His power stands against you, as it did Pharaoh, as you remain in rebellion against Him.

- But God offers to make you His own, if you'll only repent and believe.

- His enemies don't have to remain His enemies. They

can become His children.

- Those who are not His People become His People through faith in Christ.
- So believe in Christ and be saved!

Now, let me end by speaking to my fellow Christians:

- Brothers and sisters, our God IS GOD!
- So you need not worry or be afraid of anything.
- Not the future, or men, or trials, or death, or even the Judgment.
- Why? Because the LORD is your God.
- Take your peace and comfort in life and in death. For you belong to God through Jesus Christ.

May the sovereign God grant His People peace as we remember that He's in control.

- Amen.