

Open your Bibles to Exodus 9:8-12.

- We're continuing our study of the Book of Exodus.
- This morning we come to the Sixth Plague: Boils.
- And our theme is God's Judgment on Idolaters and Advocates of Sin.

In our text today, we'll read how God struck Egypt with a Plague of boils/sores.

- And an interesting fact will be highlighted: The magicians of Egypt were struck most severely by the Plague.
- The text actually says, "And the magicians **COULD NOT STAND** before Moses because of the boils..."
- Of all the Egyptians, the magicians, who served as priests to the gods of Egypt, are singled out as not being able to stand when God's judgment fell.

The magicians, those wicked men who devoted their lives to false gods, found no help when the Living God judged.

- The men who attempted to imitate God's works, mocking God's power, were laid low.
- The men who encouraged Pharaoh to continue in his rebellion against God were unable to bear God's wrath.

This morning, I intend to remind you of the foolishness of idolatry and sin.

- That the reward of idolatry is eternal shame and punishment.
- That those who encourage others to sin will be dealt with most severely by the LORD.
- And that our God will judge all His enemies, but

reward all His servants.

•So may God bless the preaching of His Word today.

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

Exodus 9:8-12

[8] And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw them in the air in the sight of Pharaoh.

[9] It shall become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and become boils breaking out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.”

[10] So they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast.

[11] And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils came upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians.

[12] But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

(PRAY)

Holy God,

•Your Word is good and true. But without your blessing it won't profit us anything.

•So, Lord, we ask that you would make your Word effectual by the work of your Holy Spirit.

•Convince us of our sin, convert the unbelieving, and build up the believing in holiness and comfort through faith unto our salvation.

•Work mightily among us this morning for the glory of your holy Name.

•And we ask that you would do so, not for our sakes, for we are unworthy sinners.

•But we ask that you would grant our request for the sake of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

•So we ask it all in His Name.

•Amen.

1.) The Sixth Plague, like the Third, was a Plague with no warning.

•God doesn't tell Moses or Aaron to go and speak to Pharaoh. They don't give God's command or threat.

•They're just to go and, as God's instruments, work another sign/Plague in Pharaoh's sight.

•Pharaoh has been obstinate all this time. God has warned him.

•But God doesn't have to warn even the first time. He is well within His rights to simply strike sinners.

•The time for another outpouring of wrath has come.

No warning was to be given. But an action was to be done before Pharaoh.

•“And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron ‘Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw them in the air in the sight of Pharaoh. It shall become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and become boils breaking out in sores on man and beast throughout all

the land of Egypt.”

- Moses and Aaron were to find Pharaoh outside somewhere.
- And when they found him, Moses was to take soot from a kiln and throw it into the air.

Now, why soot from a kiln?

- Well, the Israelites might have used kilns as part of the brick making process as slaves.
- Some scholars dispute that. But if they did use kilns then this is poetic justice: God was going to afflict Egypt using an object that they used to afflict the Israelites.
- God was turning the abuse of the Egyptians back on themselves in judgment.

And Moses was to throw the soot into the air.

- He was to throw it toward Heaven, where God dwells. And from there the Plague would spread.
- This was a sign that the Plague came from God.

And the soot would become a fine dust that spread over all the land of Egypt.

- Imagine seeing that!
- Moses' two cupped hands full of soot spreads out by divine power and covers the whole land, falling on all the Egyptians and their animals.
- And as it falls upon them, as this fine dust comes to rest on their bodies, they break out in boils.
- How terrifying and awesome! This would've really been amazing to witness!
- This was nothing short of a miracle. Judgment, yes. But a miracle, nonetheless.

A Plague of boils that broke out into sores would come.

- To get the idea across better, maybe it would be helpful to think of them as skin ulcers.
- Putrefying sores, painful open wounds breaking out on both man and animal. That's what we're talking about here.
- And, not to be crude, but no part of the body was exempted. There's no mention of limitation as to where on the body.
- And for this to be a Plague, I highly doubt that it was just a couple of sores on each person. Rather, tons of boils and sores breaking out all over the body.
- This wasn't to be a mild inconvenience. Plagues were meant to be horrible. This was a taste of God's wrath.

And v10 tells us that Moses and Aaron obeyed God to the letter:

•“So they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast.”

- This would've been absolutely dreadful.

Have you ever had pain that just wouldn't go away?

- No matter how you try to adjust yourself, it's just there.
- No rest. No peace. No comfort. No breaks. Just gnawing, constant pain that is increased should anything come in contact with the sores.
- Bending your body, walking, any kind of stretching reopens the wounds. Clothing burns against them.

- Some commentators think, based on Deuteronomy 28:27, that these sores itched terribly, in addition to being incredibly sensitive and painful.

- So you itch and are driven to scratch. But even touching the sores brought horrible pain.

- This would've been a living nightmare.

And this was a strong insult to Egypt's gods.

- They worshipped Sekhmet, a lion-headed goddess of war and HEALING.

- She was supposed to be sovereign over epidemics, sickness, and healing.

- But she could provide no protection for her servants against the LORD, the true Warrior and Healer.

They also worshipped a goddess named Isis.

- She was associated with magic, medicine, and healing.

- But what's happened to Isis? Where has she gone? Why doesn't she help the Egyptians?

- Once again, the gods of Egypt are shown to be what they truly are: NOTHING.

And now we come to v11:

- “And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils came upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians.”

- The magicians are singled out in this narrative. And that's important for us to consider.

Remember, these men are “sorcerer-priests.”

- They're not magicians like we think of. They were

pagan priests who served the gods of Egypt.

- They had replicated, to some extent, the staff into a serpent, the Nile to blood, and the frogs from the Nile. But they were unable to imitate anything else.

- They even confessed that the Plague of Gnats was the “finger of God.”

The magicians were part of Pharaoh’s court.

- And they were present to give Pharaoh religious counsel concerning what he should do in response to the Plagues.

- The magicians were there to encourage Pharaoh in the lie that the gods of Egypt were superior to the LORD.

- They were a great source of strengthening to Pharaoh in his rebellion against God.

These men were deceived deceivers.

- And it seems that God singled them out to suffer more than anyone else in this Plague.

- They were so covered with boils and sores that they could not even stand before Moses.

- Moses stood before Pharaoh to confront Him with God’s Word and works. But the magicians couldn’t continue the fight. They were overwhelmed by God’s wrath.

- They could no longer physically stand to dispute with Moses, give Pharaoh counsel, or oppose God in any way.

- The LORD crippled them with this Plague.

The gods of Egypt had utterly failed to defend their

servants.

- But Moses continued to stand firm under the protection of the LORD.
- The magicians who once stood so proudly against God now retreat in shame and pain, shown to be powerless before the whole nation.
- And we never hear of the magicians again. They completely exit the narrative in disgrace.
- God conquered His enemies spectacularly!

Now we come to our final verse:

•“But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.”

- The Plague didn't change Pharaoh. Only grace could do that. And God was sovereignly withholding grace from Pharaoh.
- And we must remember that grace is owed to no one. Grace cannot be demanded.
- Pharaoh was a sinner. And God is not under obligation to be gracious to sinners.

This is actually the first time that it's recorded that God Himself hardened Pharaoh's heart.

- Up to this point we've read that Pharaoh's heart was hardened or that he hardened his own heart.
- But now we read that the LORD did it.
- And this reminds us that twin truths must be maintained if we're to embrace everything the Scriptures teach:
 1. God is sovereign over man.
 2. Man is responsible for what he does.

Pharaoh rejected every warning and call to repent. He really did harden his own heart against God.

- And God also hardened Pharaoh's heart, in judgment, so that Pharaoh could not repent.

- Both are true at the same time: Man does what he wants and is responsible for it. And God is sovereign over all that man does.

- This is a great mystery that none of us can unravel. And we must not emphasize one truth over the other. For Scripture teaches both.

So God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh would not and could not repent.

- So more judgment was to fall upon Egypt.

- Thus ends the Sixth Plague.

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

- Well, the inability of the magicians to stand before Moses is highlighted in our text.

- They were supposed to know the gods the best.

- They were the most devout worshippers of the gods and Pharaoh's counselors.

- In the past, the magicians contested the significance of God's wonders by imitating them and encouraged Pharaoh in his rebellion and unbelief.

- They said, "Don't worry about this, Pharaoh. The God of Israel is nothing. Our gods are better. They'll defend us."

But now look at them!

- What has their idolatry paid? What reward has it given them?
- What safety did they find in their gods?
- What help did all their false religion give them in the day of God's wrath?
- NONE! Absolutely none!
- My dear friends, see the magicians and remember that false gods cannot save you.

Now some of you may be thinking, "What false gods? I'm not tempted to trust in statues, or believe silly myths."

- Friends, there are just as many idols today as there were in Egypt.
- Idolatry is just more sophisticated in our culture.
- Not statues; but stuff. Not temples; but titles. Not pantheons; but public approval.
- And are you so sure that you're not surrounded by myths about life, its origins, and its meaning?

Myths abound all around us.

- "Nothing exploded into everything. Order came from chaos. Man came from animals."
- "Life has no inherent meaning."
- "Life is about pleasure."
- "There is no truth. You do you. Do what feels right."
- "This world is all there is."
- "The only way to live forever is to be remembered."
- "You are the master of your fate. You are the captain of your soul."
- That's all idolatry. It's a denial of the Living God. It's replacing God with self and the things of this world.

- And these myths end in eternal misery.

The gods of our age aren't found in temples. But they're everywhere.

- Some devote their lives to physical appearance.
- For others, sexual gratification runs their lives.
- For some, every moment is spent pursuing authority and putting others in their debt/pocket.
- Money is the god of most. Everything is about the almighty MORE. More money, more stuff, more comfort, more supposed security in this life.
- Let's not forget the gods of cultural acceptance and popularity.
- Climbing the corporate ladder, gaining respect from peers, being seen as the best can be a god.
- The pursuit of a significant other utterly dominates some.
- Related to that is the idolatry of children. For some, every hope and dream, every bit of energy is given over to the comfort, pleasure, and success of their children.

The list could keep going. But there are many "functional gods" around us.

- And people devote themselves to them just as diligently as the magicians did their gods.
- The LORD of Heaven and Earth is cast to the side, disbelieved, forgotten, and made nothing in the minds of many as they trust these instead.
- And we see in that short list that mankind can take good things and make them ultimate things.
- But when good things are turned into gods, they will fall.

We would do well to remember that all these things are passing away.

- When we die, we take nothing and nobody with us.
- On the day when you stand naked before the judgment throne of Christ, you'll look at the approval of men, money, beauty, earthly power, and every other thing as NOTHING compared to knowing Christ and having His righteousness and mediation.
- ALL will be seen as worthless compared to the value of the forgiveness of sins; worthless compared to Christ.

Friends, those who live for idols and die without repentance, will suffer the same fate as the magicians of Egypt, only worse:

1. Consider the SHAME of idolatry!
 - The magicians were disgraced in the eyes of everyone when God struck them.
 - They trusted in idols and were rewarded with shame.

But that's nothing compared to the eternal shame that lies ahead for idolaters!

- What a moment of dreadful realization the judgment will be for them! How they'll mourn turning their back on the God who offered salvation!
- Think of the burning-faced, icy-gutted realization that they were abject fools!
- And they will eternally face their own foolishness. They will live with eternal regret at following after the gods of this world instead of trusting and living for the only true

God.

- They will burn with eternal shame at having lived for everything except the One who actually matters and who was staring them in the face the whole time.

- They'll see their wasted life for the madness it was.
- Please hear me: Shame is the reward for everyone who trusts in idols!

2. And consider the horrible PUNISHMENT for idolatry!

- The gods of Egypt couldn't save the magicians from the Plague.

- And the gods of this world cannot save sinners from the wrath of God.

Intelligence. The wisdom of man.

- What worth will your arguments against His existence have when you stare Him in the face?

Money.

- What will you pay for the forgiveness of your sins?
- Does your money have value equal to the blood of the Son of God?

Beauty.

- What do you, a sinner, have to attract the holy God to you?

Power.

- What strings can you pull against God?

Career.

- What can you do with all your abilities to turn away His

wrath?

The world's acceptance.

- What can the world do for you on the Day when God judges the world in righteousness?

Love/Family.

- What can one sinner do to save another sinner?

Idolaters will not escape the judgment of God.

- They will be damned.
- Friends, remember this: FALSE GODS CAN'T SAVE!
- They will fail you in the end.

Only Jesus Christ can save.

- Only Christ has merited right standing with God.
- Only Christ has bore the sins of those who believe and made satisfaction to God by His sufferings on their behalf.
- Only Christ can grant you the forgiveness of sins and give you His perfect righteousness that makes you acceptable before God.
- And Christ is received only by those who forsake their idols and trust in Him alone to be their God.

Only the LORD, the God of Israel, could save from the Plague.

- And only the Lord Jesus Christ can save sinners from the wrath of God.
- You must look to Him in faith! Make Him your only God!
- Forsaking all others, trust only in Him!

For while idolaters will suffer, He will save His People.

- In the next life, for sure.
- But even now, He will save you from the nothingness of life in this world apart from God.
- He'll save you from hopelessness, despair, meaninglessness, and a joyless existence.
- He'll give you true life now which will only increase in the life to come.
- With the true God there is life. But idols bring death and judgment.
- Remember the magicians and look to Christ!

3.) This text also reminds us that God deals most severely with advocates of sin.

- The magicians led others into idolatry. They encouraged Pharaoh to continue to reject the LORD. They taught others to sin.
- They strengthened the hands of the wicked.

The magicians are actually used as examples of false teachers in 2 Timothy 3:1-9:

- “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those

who creep into households and capture weak women, burned with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the Faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.”

Just as Jannes and Jambres, the magicians of our text, opposed Moses and encouraged Pharaoh to sin, so also there are many who continue to do so.

- But they will all meet the same fate when God judges them as He did the magicians.

Leaders of false religions, false teachers, false prophets, and all the like will have to face God.

- They will have to face the one who “repays to his face” those who hate Him. (Deuteronomy 7:10)

- This Plague is a warning to all who encourage sin: “Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” (2 Peter 2:3b)

- God will judge them. Count on it.

This may sound strange to some, but this should encourage us as God’s People.

- Their day will come. Sometimes it may not seem like it. But God is no liar.

- The Lord is not mocked. He will deal with them in His wrath, unless they repent.

- If God hates sin, then how much does God hate those who promote it?

- If God condemns sinners, then what wrath does He

have in store for those whose lives revolve around encouraging others to sin?

I don't know if you realize this or not, but we are currently outnumbered.

- Genuine Christians are the minority in our day.
- But false teachers and their followers abound.
- Even in our small, fairly conservative area, the amount of false teachers is much greater than many realize.

In Scioto County, there are at least:

- Three mainline Liberal congregations who reject the Scriptures as God's Word, promote all manner of sexual perversion and other sins, and reject the idea of unbelievers going to Hell.
- Six anti-Trinitarian, Oneness Pentecostal congregations.
- Four Roman Catholic congregations.
- One deity-of-Christ-rejecting Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall.
- One polytheist, you-can-become-a-god Mormon Ward.
- Two congregations that are off-shoots of Mormonism who also champion all forms of sexual sin.
- Four congregations who teach faith alone won't save but must be supplemented with baptism.

That's twenty-one formally heretical groups.

- And who knows how many in our region are practical legalists, leading many to believe that faith in Christ isn't enough to save?
- And who knows how many there are who teach "Easy-

Believism?” (Pray this prayer, walk the aisle, agree to these facts about Jesus and be saved with no repentance.)

- And that’s not counting teachers of atheism, New Age, or our cultural religion of “acknowledge God and be a decent person.”

Brothers and sisters, it’s all around us.

- And you can get on the internet and see such a mess of satanic lies promoting sin that it’ll make you sick.

- Now, we’re not the only true church around here. Far from it. And I praise God for that!

- But we’re not the majority.

- There are false teachers, everywhere. Many of whom claim Christ.

But, friends, it’s all idolatry!

- They’re worshipping gods of their own creation, even if they call them “Jesus.”

- Their’s are gods who love sin, offer salvation through a worldly system of works, who aren’t holy, who have not spoken a clear Word, who are comprehensible to human reason, who encourage the worship of created things, who encourage the worship of self.

- Their gods aren’t real. They can’t save!

- And their worshippers are encouraging others to rebel against God and join them in their idolatry!

This can be incredibly discouraging to see.

- I know it bothers me.

- It seems that the magicians of our day deceive and strengthen others in sin with no consequences.

- They soothe the consciences of little pharaohs and tell them all is well when Hell itself is breathing down their necks.

- They say that everything is fine as the earth quakes and threatens to swallow them up.

- They mock God and His Word. And they mock us for loving both.

- And we sometimes find ourselves saying, “How long, LORD?”

But our text today reminds us what those who encourage sin and idolatry will receive: Judgment.

- He will not allow it to go on forever. Their day will come.

- Our Lord will shame every adversary! He will conquer every enemy!

- He won't allow His holy Name to be blasphemed forever.

- He won't permit this wickedness to go on.

- Every magician will have their Plague!

It may be in time.

- God strikes down the wicked in history all the time. The magicians of Egypt are one example.

- Even in my lifetime, I've watched Him take down congregations who forsook His Word.

- I've seen him remove wicked men from positions of religious authority; some of them with great shame.

But even if it's not in time, it will certainly be in eternity.

- Everyone must stand before Christ.

- Nobody gets away with anything.
- False teachers will answer for every word, every blasphemy, every encouragement to sin.
- They may be praised now. But in the judgment, they will be condemned.

Brothers and sisters, Christ will win this war.

- Jesus shall reign!
- Remember the magicians and be encouraged, even as you see darkness all around you.
- Do not lose heart! Our God is the God of the Exodus!

His enemies will not stand when His wrath falls.

- Those who strengthen the hands of the wicked will not stand.
- But we who trust in Christ will stand in that day, clothed in His righteousness, beloved by God for His sake!
- Remember that and rejoice in the victory of God!

4.) But let's not forget that God judging those who encourage others to sin speaks a warning to us, too.

- Christian, beware of encouraging others to sin.
- Remember the words of our Lord:
- “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.” (Luke 17:1-2)
- Those who encourage sin without repentance will wish they had instead died a most horrible death.

Now, you may be thinking, “I’m a Christian. Surely, I don’t encourage people to rebel against God!”

•Consider the Apostle Peter and his hypocritical actions mentioned in Galatians.

•Peter, by siding with the Judaizers about observing OT ceremonies, temporarily strengthened them in their false doctrine and received a public rebuke from Paul.

•So, yes, it’s possible for a true Christian to encourage sin for a time.

Just think with me for a moment:

1. How many times have we heard genuine Christians foolishly encourage an unbiblical divorce?

•“I wouldn’t stay with him. I wouldn’t put up with that. I’d leave.” (But there has been no adultery or abandonment.)

2. How many believers have we seen promote godless political candidates who promise to intentionally increase sin/ease of sin in our nation?

3. How often have you heard believers claim that false doctrine isn’t “that big of a deal?”

4. How many times have you seen a Christian mock his brother for “being too extreme” in piety?

•“That’s just ridiculous! That’s too strict! Lighten up.”

5. How many times have you, by your laughter and amusement at a story of sin, implicitly encouraged some

to think their sin is a light thing?

6. How often do you encourage bitterness in the heart of your spouse or friends?

•“I wouldn’t apologize. She deserved it. I wouldn’t talk to your dad anymore. You’re right to hate that person.”

Don’t fool yourself.

•Christians can act like the magicians in our text by, either implicitly or explicitly, encouraging others to continue in sin.

Beware of this, Christian!

•The Lord disciplines those whom He loves. And He hates this stuff.

•He won’t damn you. You’re one of His People. But He will, in some way, cause you repent.

•If you persist in this kind of thing, you can expect pain to come. It will be for your good. But the Lord will get your attention and bring you to repent.

You may be asking, “What kind of discipline?”

•Who knows? I’m not sure. But I know it’s not pleasant.

•Search the Scriptures and see how God disciplines even His own People. (It’s not pleasant.)

•The Lord has many ways to bring His children to repentance. And He loves you too much to have you persist in this sin. So He will not spare the rod.

But do you really want to find out?

•This isn’t a game! This is sin and righteousness, life and death, heaven and hell.

- Souls aren't toys. And we mustn't encourage anyone to rebel against the Lord!

So if what I've said speaks to you, as I know it's spoken to me, God calls you to repent.

- The Lord has more mercy than you have sin.
- Christ died for your sin. Christ beckons you to come to Him for cleansing.
- So turn back to Him in faith, knowing that He welcomes you with open arms.

Instead of encouraging others to sin, our goal as God's People is to encourage others to submit to Christ!

- Well tell the unbelieving about Christ's kindness, His death for sinners, His righteousness given to those who believe!
- To the believing, we give encouragement and correction in hope that they grow in obedience and love for Him.

So let it be our aim not to be advocates for sin but faithful servants of the Lord!

- Brothers and sisters, as hard as the magicians of our day influence others for sin, may we even more strongly strive to influence others for Christ.
- Whatever ability we have, let's use it for righteousness, that our God might be glorified in the world!

5.) In conclusion, hear the words of Psalm 1:5-6:

- "...the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor

sinner in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

- Remember that, friends.
- Every idolater, every false teacher, everyone who encourages sin, will not stand in the judgment.
- But the LORD knows His own.

Keep that in mind and you won't despair when you see the wicked raging around you.

- Keep that in mind and you won't desire idols.
- Because you'll remember that they won't win and false gods fail.

So, brothers and sisters, onward!

- Hope in the LORD's coming victory.
- And strive to be found faithful servants of Christ.

May God help us to do so for His glory and our eternal good.

- Amen.