

“The Plague of Boils”  
Exodus 9:8-12  
(Preached at Trinity, February 11, 2007)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 5** we read that God commanded Pharaoh to release the Israelite slaves.  
**Exodus 5:1** – “. . . Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.”
2. This command was repeated in **Chapter 7**  
**Exodus 7:16** – “The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness . . . .”
3. Pharaoh’s reply was that of stiffnecked arrogance.  
**Exodus 5:2** – “And Pharaoh said, Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.”
4. This led to a series of plagues designed to bring God’s judgment upon Pharaoh’s rebellious heart, to show the impotence of the Egyptian gods, and to demonstrate the power and glory of the one true God.
  - First God, working through His agents, Moses and Aaron, turned the Nile River into blood killing all of the fish.
  - After Pharaoh refused to heed this God sent a plague of frogs that covered the land. Still, Pharaoh would not let Israel go.
  - This was followed by a plague of lice that tormented the Egyptians – Still Pharaoh would not repent.
  - The lice were followed by a plague of flies – probably blood sucking dog-flies. The amazing thing was that no fly crossed into the land where the Israelites dwelled. The suffering of the Egyptians must have been great, yet still Pharaoh remained stubborn  
**Chapter 8** ends:  
**Exodus 8:32** – “And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.”
5. **Chapter 9** records three more plagues—plagues five through seven:  
The killing of the livestock, boils, and hail
  - A. Last time we looked at the Fifth Plague – a terrible plague upon Egypt’s livestock.  
**Exodus 9:3** – “Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which *is* in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: *there shall be* a very grievous murrain.”
  - B. Once again, like the plague of flies, this plague did not touch the Israelites. Not single one of the cattle of the Israelites died. It was a supernatural act of God.
6. **Verse 7** describes Pharaoh’s reaction to the destruction of Egypt’s livestock.  
**Exodus 9:7** – “And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.”  
This resulted in the sixth plague. God sent a terrible plague of boils upon the Egyptians.

7. God uses many means to get our attention. Sometimes He uses physical affliction. Such is the case in **1 Cor. 11** where God chastened those who came to the Table unworthily. **1 Corinthians 11:29-31** – “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. <sup>30</sup> For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. <sup>31</sup> For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”
8. God will not be ignored. He will have His way.  
**Galatians 6:7** – “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”
9. God sent a terrible torment of boils upon the stiffnecked Egyptians.
  - A. We are not told the precise disease that afflicted the Egyptians. The Hebrew word שֶׁחַיִן {shekh-een'} can mean a boil or inflamed spot or it can mean leprosy. **Verse 8** refers to the boils as causing blains in the KJV which means blisters or boils. It is further described in **Deut. 28**  
NAS **Deuteronomy 28:27,35** – “The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The LORD will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils, from which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.”
  - B. There have been various efforts to define exactly what kind of disease this was. Some say that it might have been an outbreak of smallpox which produces terrible boils. Others say it might have been anthrax which can also produce boils. These are all speculative. What we do know is it caused great torment.
10. What we do know is this. Like the other plagues, this was a supernatural act of God. It came unannounced and without warning. Moses cast black soot from a furnace into the air and it became fine dust that covered the land that caused boils to break out – but only upon the Egyptians.
11. The soot probably came from one of the furnaces used to make bricks. You can see a sense of justice here. God often uses our own folly to condemn us.
12. And like the other plagues, this was a direct assault upon the Egyptian gods.
  - A. Among the multitude of Egyptian gods, they had several that were called upon to protect from sickness and disease. The priests of the god Sekhmet formed one of the oldest medical fraternities of antiquity.
  - B. Whenever someone became ill they would go to these priests who were able to go through the religious ritual calling upon the appropriate god for healing.
  - C. When the Egyptians were faced with this disease they responded by trusting in these pagan gods. God was sending this plague of boils to prove the impotence of the gods the Egyptians trusted for healing.
13. This passage has a couple things to say to us as we face our own times of sickness and disease.

- I. We must be warned about where we place our own trust in times of sickness
  - A. Our secular culture places great faith in medicine
    1. We marvel at the technology
      - a. There are CAT scans, PET scans, and MRI's  
There are scopes to examine almost every part of the body  
We've bypassed clogged arteries and replaced organs
      - b. Drug developments have brought relief to multitudes including the marvel of antibiotics that wondrously heal infections
      - c. Vaccines have all but ended many formerly terrible diseases such as polio and smallpox
    2. We look forward to cures for diseases such as Cancer
    3. We expect modern medicine to relieve us of every pain. 50 years ago there was only aspirin. Now there's Tylenol, Motrin, Advil – the list goes on and on.
    4. Anesthesia has made surgery painless.
    5. When we go to the doctor we fully *expect* to be cured
    6. Doctors have become the priests of our own medicine gods.  
We expect modern medicine to relieve us of every pain
  - B. As Christians we must see God in all things
    1. All sickness and disease has been ordained by God
      - a. For the lost man its testimony to God's judgment upon sin
      - b. For the believer God's purposes are all motivated by love
    2. All healing is accomplished by God
      - a. Moses will affirm this truth to Israel  
**Exodus 15:26** – “And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I *am* the LORD that healeth thee.”
      - b. David affirmed it  
**Psalms 103:2-3** – “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: <sup>3</sup> Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;”
      - c. Paul testified it on Mars Hill  
**Acts 17:28** – “For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.”
    3. This doesn't mean we don't go to doctors
      - a. Where did the doctors get their knowledge?
      - b. Where did we get the knowledge or materials to make the drugs
    4. Ultimately, our bodies are in the hand of God  
He created us, He sustains and keeps us
  - C. God must be the object of our faith
    1. The doctors or medicines or Emergency Rooms must not be the objects of our faith
    2. We must trust our sovereign King in all things and find peace in His sovereign will

3. Pharaoh trusted in his gods and his religious priests and magicians
  - a. As he became covered with boils he must have called for the priests – but they too were covered with boils
  - b. He called for the magicians – but they too were covered with boils  
**Exodus 9:11** – “And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.”
  - c. In fact, the magicians are so utterly humiliated and discredited they are never mentioned again in the Book of Exodus.
4. Modern medicine is also not infallible – doctors make mistakes. Drugs have side effects. There are many things medical experts just simply do not understand about the human body. Only God has control over life. We must place our faith in the One who determines all things.

- II. We must take care to make the right use of our illnesses – In other words, if God does everything with purpose and particularly with His children how should we look at our own illnesses?
  - A. We must always remember that there is a great difference in God’s dealings with a lost man and God’s dealings with one of His children
    1. The lost are under God’s judgment and affliction is a sign of His judgment and foretaste of His wrath. Sometimes God will use illness to draw a sinner to Himself.
    2. The saved are objects of His love and affliction is designed for their good
    3. We should always use our illnesses as an opportunity to grow nearer to God
  - B. God often uses afflictions to increase our faith in Him.
    1. Unlike Pharaoh, when we face times of illness and suffering we should flee to God trusting in His power and purposes
    2. We can see this with Job.
      - a. Job lost his livestock and servants and even his children. He was afflicted with terrible boils from head to toe. The Scripture records he scraped the scabs with pieces of pottery.  
**Job 2:7-8** – “So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.”
      - b. He was in such torment his wife encouraged him to give up, curse God, and die.  
**Job 2:9** – “Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.”
      - c. Job, however, maintained his trust in God  
**Job 2:10** – “But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.”
      - d. Will you only praise God during the good times? It is our duty to accept God’s will in all things.

3. We can also see this proper response in the Gospel of Mark
    - a. A woman had an infirmity for twelve years
    - b. The text tells us she had suffered much at the hands of the doctors.  
**Mark 5:25-26** – “And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, <sup>26</sup> And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,”
    - c. She found a much greater source of trust – she went to Christ.  
**Mark 5:28** – “For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.”
    - d. Jesus told her, “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole”
    - e. Pharaoh fled from God. We must flee *to* God.
  - C. God sometimes uses our afflictions to humble us
    1. We are so full of pride. We actually think we deserve to have all good things. We actually believe the whole world rotates around us
    2. God knows how prone we are to pride and independence. God will often send sickness to remind us of our weakness and His power.
    3. This is what he did in the life of Paul. Paul sought God to remove his thorn in the flesh. God knew it was better to keep Paul humble.  
**2 Corinthians 12:9** – “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”
  - D. God sometimes uses sickness to awaken us to our sin
    1. We don’t like to think of this and we seldom search our hearts when illness comes. We are so influenced by the world that we almost always look for a medical reason and a medical cure.
    2. Most often we do not know the reason for our adversity but we should search our hearts. It may be an opportunity to renew our repentance.
    3. David knew the consequences of his sin. He was suffering from some physical disease and he knew it was an act of divine judgment.  
**Psalm 38:3-5** – “*There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.* <sup>4</sup> For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. <sup>5</sup> My wounds stink *and* are corrupt because of my foolishness.”  
David responded with repentance  
**Psalm 38:18** – “For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.”
  - E. How did Pharaoh respond to his affliction of boils?
 

**Exodus 9:12** – “And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.”

    1. Instead of surrendering and trusting in Almighty God he despised him and refused to submit
    2. Even when he saw the impotence of his magicians he refused to submit to God.
- Conclusion:
1. God is the Lord over all things. He is working His purpose in all things.
  2. When we suffer with a sickness we need to turn to Him, trust Him – His power, His purposes.