

**Title:** Almighty Power

**Scripture:** Exodus 7-10 ESV

**Main Point:** God is Almighty and All Powerful and will do whatever is necessary to accomplish His Will

**Fill In The Blank:** There is No ENEMY That God Cannot DEFEAT

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## INTRO

Well, hey folks! Y'all doing alright? If we haven't met before my name is Judah and I am the Young Adults Pastor here and if you're between the ages of 18-25 and we have not connected yet, I'd love to connect with you today. I'll be at the Information booth in the lobby after service, stop by and say Hi.

## RECAP

For the last three weeks we've been walking through the Book of Exodus in a series we are calling Discovering God and the heart behind the series is that the things we go through, the circumstances of our lives help us to Discover more about God and more about ourselves. And over the last three weeks Pastor Brian has done a marvelous job of unpacking the beginnings of the Exodus story. If you missed a couple of those weeks, don't worry, I'm going to catch you up right now.

In our story, our main character Moses has had quite a journey. He is a Hebrew born into slavery and with a hit out on him. His people had immigrated to Egypt 400 years before and had grown so numerous that Egypt's Pharaoh decided they were a threat to his Kingdom. You'll find that often growth is a threat to the insecure, (but I'll preach that another time).

To save his life His mother Jochebed, puts him in a basket and sends him down the longest river in the world, The Nile River. Now I've been on the Nile, it has crocodiles in it, black mambas, Egyptian cobras, hippos, and disease carrying mosquitoes.

But through God's providence, Moses is found by none other than Pharaoh's daughter and adopted, which is miraculous, but it complicated Moses' life and he struggled with identity. He was too Hebrew to be Egyptian and too Egyptian to be Hebrew, and that identity conflict comes to a head when he murders an Egyptian slave Master and becomes a fugitive. And perhaps trying to find some new identity, he runs away, marries a woman that is neither Hebrew nor Egyptian but a Midianite and has two children and starts business and just when he settles into a more peaceful life rhythm in the land of his wife's family, Suddenly God introduces himself to Moses. And in that same introductory conversation, God gives Moses an impossible task.

*"I want you to go, back to land to which your wanted posters decorate the community, and I want you to go and say to the President, to the King, to Pharaoh,*

*Pharaoh who is both*

- *the head of state and the supreme religious leader in the most powerful country in the world.*
- *makes laws, wages wars, collects taxes*
- *To the one who has no checks and balances*
- *Who speaks and it is so*

*"And tell him, to let go of the centerpiece of his country's economy and power structure, let go of my people, and when he asks why, tell him because I, God, said so."*

*“Oh, and Moses, when you go, I’m not sending a military with you, I am not sending military grade weapons, infantry, money, all I’m sending is your brother (You’ll find the usually calls us to do the hard thing in partnership (but I’ll preach that another time) and your walking stick”*

### **TRANSITION:** Challenge that Circumstances have on Faith

And Pastor Brian talked to us about how hard this circumstance, this task, was for Moses. And for some of you here today you can imagine how Moses is feeling because Some of you know what is to have been assigned an impossible task, and tools that don't seem adequate for the job

- For some of you just maintaining your family, raising your particular children, being married to your spouse (if they’re sitting next to you just look straight at me [joke]) is an impossible task
- For some of you just getting up in the morning, with the depression is on you, the way that addiction is on you, the way anxiety is on you is an impossible task
- Some of you know what it is to have an impossible task, and inadequate tools

And the issue for Moses was that he kept running into moments when God’s method was inconsistent with Moses' Expectations. Moses does everything that God tells him to do, He goes to Pharaoh, says what he’s supposed to say, performs the miracle God tells him to perform but *Still* in **Exodus 7:13** says **13 .... Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.**

I don't care how much faith you have, if you live long enough you will have a moment where God does not meet your expectations. Even when you have been obedient, exercised faith, the outcome is *still* not what you expected or wanted and you find yourself discouraged.

*"I knew it would be hard, but this hard  
I knew it would be long, but not this long  
I knew I would need faith but not this much"*

But one of the things that I find so encouraging about the Exodus story is that it displays the Omniscience of God-that is to say, that nothing but nothing but nothing but nothing but nothing catches God by surprise

- Before the disaster hit your house, rocked your world and stressed you out, God knew what would occur-it didn't catch God by surprise
- And that is particularly comforting when you know that God is on your side. And not only is God on your side but the real good news and it's your fill in the blank

**FILL IN THE BLANK:** There is No ENEMY That God Cannot DEFEAT

I want to stir you up around this truth because There is No ENEMY That God Cannot DEFEAT.

What that means is that You can lobby every manner of hell against me Devil and still you will lose!

**POINT A:** Importance of declaring truth to the enemy *[Humor]*

See Pastor Brian, who is a much better man this week stood on this stage and told yall that he is not a fan of talking trash. But see I come from a neighborhood where trash talking is a means of survival. When the bully up the street came riding his bike by your house and talking about how ugly you were or how raggedy your mama's car was, you had to learn how to talk back and tell him about himself, because if you didn't say something back and make him shut up, he'd come by the next day and say something else mean and nasty to you, and then come the day after that throwing rocks, and the day after that he'd be ready to fight you.

So, you learned how to stand on your porch and stand up for yourself and tell the bully about himself.

And some of yall have been letting Satan come by your house and talk trash to you, and treat you any ole kind of way, and you started to believe the things he said, but I came today to let you know that talking back is a means of survival.

And sometimes you declare God's truth to the enemy. *[EXPOUND-on truth to say to the enemy]*

There is No **ENEMY** That God Cannot **DEFEAT**

## **POINT B: God is the God of Power**

The Story of Exodus is about Discovering God, and one of the central characteristics that this story reveals about God is His Power! I think sometimes we forget who it is that we are dealing with when we talk about Yahweh. Yes, God is kind, and loving, and good, perfect, but let us not forget that when we talk about Jehovah we are talking about the all-powerful, almighty, God. To whom nothing is out of reach or too hard or not possible. I think it's easy to forget that in a world where technology gives us so much power that even if you have the nuclear codes, it is but dust in comparison to the Power of God. This is what the

bible means when it talks about fear of the Lord, a respect for God. When you understand *who* you're dealing with, *who* you're in a relationship with, it changes *everything*.

## TRANSITION

While Moses may have been surprised and discouraged by Pharaoh's refusal to free the Hebrews, the Almighty God of Unmerited and Limitless Power, was not.

## POINT C: Dangers of Hardening our hearts

God tells Moses in verse **Exodus 7:4**

### **4 Pharaoh will not listen to you**

In fact, God goes on to say that Pharaoh's heart would be hardened. Now this is an important detail in this story.

So important that its used

20x between chps 4-14 -

10x Pharaoh hardened his heart

10x the Lord hardened.

Now wait a minute, why would God harden Pharaoh's heart? Like isn't that counterproductive? Is God setting Pharaoh up for failure? Is he setting Moses up for failure? Is he taking away Pharaoh's free will? What is going on here?

So first we need to understand the idiom being used. "Pharaoh's *heart* was hardened."

I need you to understand that this language is not about emotion. When we talk about heart today, we are often talking about feelings and emotion (EX. she

broke my heart—my heart was full.) But in this text the “Heart” is being described as the seat of the will, as the central location for the intellect, reasoning, cognitive capacity - and as the birthplace of our actions.

It is really describing that Pharaoh is intentionally suppressing his ability to reflect, to self-examine, to think this thing through.... to surrender his own biases. To do what makes the most amount of sense. Letting the children of Israel go in light of what has happened is what makes the most amount of sense.

*[Incredulous] “Pharaoh, you just saw in Exodus Ch.7 that even when your magicians and wise men could imitate the miracle of God in the transforming of the stick into the snake, still Yahweh’s snake gobbled yours up. So, reason says at the very least, Pharaoh ought to take this conversation with Moses seriously.”*

**STORY/EXAMPLE TRANSITION-** *(Pharaoh Doubles Down- Blackjack, UFO Cult)*

*[Humor]* I know you're all good church going people so you probably have never been to the casino before but once or twice I have found myself in a casino, but I never play the machines because I just can't get with the idea that I'm going to put my money in a machine and hope it gives some of it back. I have too many control issues for that, so when I've gone to the Casino I'm interested in the games, particularly the ones that require skill and tactic. And one of the games that I find most interesting is the game of Blackjack.

And if you've ever played blackjack, you may be familiar with the term double-down. Its when you increase your bet at the risk of losing the game.

Double Down is also a term used to describe someone who is stubbornly clinging to an idea even when all the evidence of that idea is to the contrary.

In Seminary I took a class studying cults and one of the books on the course reading list was the 1956 Classic “When Prophecy Fails” In the book the psychologist describes what happened to a UFO cult that believed they had received messages from superior beings from a planet they referred to as Clarion. These messages included a prophecy that Lake City and large portions of the United States, Canada, Central America and Europe would be destroyed by a flood before dawn on December 21st, 1954. They believed a mother ship would come and save the folks in this cult from the destruction before it happened. And so, many of the folks in that cult left or lost their jobs, neglected or ended their studies, ended relationships and friendships with non-believers, gave away money and / or disposed of possessions to prepare for their departure on this mother ship. Well of course December 21, 1954, came and went and no global flood happened, and no mother ship came. And instead of admitting their error when the mother ship didn’t arrive like they had prophesied it would, the members of the group sought frantically to convince the world of their beliefs, their prophecy was still accurate, and they made new prophecies that supported the first one and explained away the reality that no global flood happened, and no mother ship came

In the world of Psychology this behavior is known as the Backfire Effect. It is the weird notion where being corrected actually makes some people feel more correct in their original, disproven faulty belief.



All of this points to the reality that we as humans tend to believe whatever we think is right, and we're not above a little embellishment of reality to fit that belief. And I think it's easy to think that operating in The Backfire Effect is the territory of the less intelligent, but that is not necessarily true, The Backfire Effect it is very human. And you and I can easily fall into it.

In this story, we see Pharaoh operating in the Backfire Effect, Doubling Down on the idea that ISrael belongs to him, on the position that he is a god, even though the evidence is contrary.

And so often when we read the Exodus story, we see ourselves as Moses (the one sent by God to do the hard right thing). Or we see ourselves as The Children of Israel (the ones oppressed by ungodly culture and system). But I wonder if maybe, just maybe, sometimes we're actually Pharaoh. And we're so attached to the idea that we are right that we harden our own hearts to reason and logic, self-examination and critical thinking, new information and the possibility that God may be doing a new thing.

Often when we tell this story, we say it's the story of God freeing the Israelites, but might I suggest that it was *almost* the story of God freeing Egypt too. God is revealing himself to Moses and Israel, but he is also revealing himself to Egypt, but Pharaoh refuses to see God, and refuses to perceive what God is doing now. I think this is because often, when God does a new thing, in a new way, sometimes that is hard for us to deal with.

What happens when God's plan is disruptive to yours? What happens when God's plan requires you to think in a new way, do things differently than the way you used to do them, and are comfortable doing them?

What happens when God's plan puts you in a situation of uncertainty?

- [Pharaoh's Perspective] Freeing the Hebrews would force him into a situation of uncertainty, what happens to my economy if I don't have millions of hours of free slave labor? And dictators don't like uncertainty. Neither do we, do we?

What happens when God's plan requires you to reimagine people around you.

- Pharaoh had no concept of a Free Israelite (EXPOUND)

What happens when God's plan requires You to reimagine YOU? And requires you to let go of some harmful ideas that you may have inherited.

- We often tell this story in a way that paints Pharaoh as inherently wicked, but his ideas were ideas he had *inherited*. From the day Pharaoh was born he had been taught that *he* was Divine, was a God himself (EXPOUND) and to free the Hebrews Pharaoh would have to acknowledge that not only is he NOT a God, but the people which he had always known to rightfully belong to him, actually belonged to someone else. In fact, it would mean acknowledging that he, Pharaoh himself, belonged to someone else. What if God's plan means you have to give up what you feel is rightfully yours? (EXPOUND/EXAMPLES OPTIONAL)

The trouble with obedience is that it requires a surrender of power. And People at the top of the power totem pole often struggle the most with giving up power and autonomy.

So, what happens when God's plan requires us to admit, I was wrong  
(EXPOUND)

### ***STORY-The Apology that Judah Received***

But Pharaoh couldn't bring himself to do that. And so, ten times we see Pharaoh hardened his heart, suppress the part of himself that would lean to right thinking, and then we see God reinforce that which Pharaoh was already leaning into another 10X. God is reinforcing Pharaoh's own irrational, absolute resistance

### **INTRO to Ten Plagues**

So, Pharaoh says, I'm not letting them go.

And God Responds. God proceeds to demolish Pharaoh's country, his economy, his power, his relationships, his home, his health, his ego, his pride and eventually his future.

And he does this through a series of plagues. We are going to look at nine today (the tenth is the slaying of the firstborn, which is in a class by itself) and we will unpack that one next week

But he unleashes the plagues of Egypt,

Now as we look at these plagues, it's easy to feel like God is being extreme here, but I think it reveals the depths to which God will go, to get our attention and get us to change course. And what is profound is that these plagues are not some random spankings for Egypt, but some scholars believe each one corresponds to a specific Egyptian god. There is some debate about whether that is historically accurate but what I need you to hear is the reality, God will do **whatever is necessary** to knock down the idols in our lives, and I'm not saying that if something bad is happening in your life, it's God knocking down your idols or trying to catch your attention, sometimes bad stuff happens simply because the world is broken and sin tainted, but in this case, God is responding to Pharaoh's refusal to submit and doing what is necessary to rescue Israel. We are going to move through these plagues pretty fast and I'm going to summarize them for you because it is a lot of text to read.

### **First Plague-Nile to Blood- Ch. 7**

Pharaoh was warned at the Nile (7:14–18), and the water was struck with Aaron's staff (7:19–21), turning all the Nile into blood. There is debate about whether it was literal blood or some sort of mineral impact that reddened the water and made it toxic but either way, it was visibly striking and completely unusable. And Egypt's witch doctors performed the same sign (7:22a) (which doesn't actually solve their problem) and Pharaoh's "heart became hard" (7:22b–25)

Now I want you to pay attention to how each plague that follows escalates in impact and in intensity. What that says to me is that there didn't have to be 10 Plagues. Pharaoh could have repented and surrendered after the first one or the second one or the 7<sup>th</sup> one, but you're going to notice that after each plague, Pharaoh's heart is hardened. And still God gives him chance after chance, warning after warning. So, when we look at this story of the plagues, we need to

see the God of Power but also of Mercy. ~~The God of correction but also the God of grace.~~

### **Second—frogs (8:1–15)**

Pharaoh warned of frogs, he did not heed the warning and the land became overrun with frogs. Again, the wizards performed the same sign (8:7) (Which is STUPID! For all their skill and powers, all the magicians could do was make more frogs! They could only make the problem worse). Pharaoh agreed to let the Israelites go sacrifice if the frogs were taken away, and God relents, and the frogs die, but later Pharaoh “hardened his heart” (8:8–15)

And what you’ll see is that this becomes a familiar pattern: where Pharaoh gets warned, doesn’t heed the warning, the plague comes, Pharaoh agrees to free the Hebrews, and when God removes the plagues, Pharaoh then changes his mind, rinse, and repeat. Pay attention to your Patterns! They tell the truth

By the time we get to the third plague, God ups the ante because this time, the plague comes with no warning.

### **Third—gnats (8:16–19)**

This plague struck at the heart of all Egyptian worship, especially at their priests. The Egyptian priesthood was extremely careful about hygiene and ritual cleansing; an infestation of lice made them unable to worship their gods. The plague of lice was also upon every beast. The gods of Egypt would not “receive” the sacrifice of lice-infested animals, so this stopped their sacrificial system.

Now the Magicians start to figure it out at this point because in **Exodus 8:19** **Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.**

The hardness of Pharaoh’s heart is so prevalent when he would not even listen to the analysis of his own advisers. There was no rational reason why he insisted on resisting and rejecting God.

#### **Fourth—flies (8:20–32)**

Pharaoh was warned at the Nile in Goshen (8:20–23) The plague came (8:24), and Pharaoh suggested they sacrifice in Egypt close by, but later “hardened his heart” (8:25–32).

***Exodus 8:22 But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. 23 Thus I will put a division[f]between my people and your people.***

So, this is the first plague we see God explicitly describe protecting the Israelites from. We don’t know how they were impacted by the former plagues, but we do know they were protected from this one. As I read this, I can’t help but to wonder what kind of impact this had on the Israelites? To witness God warring for them, while protecting them, while they are **still** enslaved (Multiple things can be true-You can be **BEING** delivered while your situation still looks the same) (EXPOUND)

And again, we see Pharaoh promise to release the Israelites in exchange for relief from the plague and again we see him break his promise and harden his heart.

#### **Fifth—death of livestock (9:1–7)**

Same Pattern. Warning. Plague. Commitment to Free Hebrews. Plague is pulled away. Broken Promise.

#### **Sixth—boils (9:8–12)**

Moses and Aaron threw dust in the air and boils spread on the people and cattle (9:8–10). The wizards could not come before Moses because they had boils (9:11). “Yahweh hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (9:12)

For the first time the lives of humans are attacked and endangered—it is dangerous when your ego and pride put others in danger and cause others harm, but we see God now reinforcing Pharaoh’s posture.

#### **Seventh—hail (9:13–25)**

God gave Moses an extended warning. Again, we see God’s mercy even in his discipline.

### **Exodus 9**

**13 “Let my people go, that they may serve me. 14 For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself,[a] and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. 15 For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. 16 But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. 17 You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go. 18**

**Behold, about this time tomorrow I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.**

Pharaoh doesn't listen. So, Moses stretched his staff to the sky and the storm began- to thunder AND Hail-AND Fire (9:22–26). (This is how you know it's supernatural—Fire AND Ice?)

Repent, Relief, DoubleDown Pattern AGAIN

### **Eighth—locusts (10:1–20)**

Pharaoh is warned AGAIN-How long will you harden your heart? (10:1–6).

Pharaoh's servants asked him to let the men go (10:7), and Pharaoh suggested that only the men go (10:8–11). The problem is God isn't interested in partial obedience (EXPOUND) God is not willing to compromise regarding our hearts.

Same Pattern

### **Ninth—darkness (10:21–29)**

Moses stretched his hand to the sky and darkness fell—except in Goshen where the Israelites were (10:21–23). This is so symbolic to me of what happens when we reject God. We are in the dark. We're in Hell.

And it seems like God did not even allow artificial light sources to work. The Egyptians attempted to use candles and lamps but were unable to produce light. This was a dramatic show of greatness over the prominent Egyptian god Ra, thought to be the sun god.

And again, we see Pharaoh agreed to let go all the people but not the animals, but later "Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart" (10:24–29)

## **CLOSING**



That is a lot of Plagues, but the fundamental issue of the plagues concerns Pharaoh's heart.

Listen, my message today is for two groups of people, and if you're complicated like me, you might be in both.

**Group 1**-Folks who have been suffering for a long time and you need to be set free from that. God's message to you is simple, he says "I'm doing it" (EXPOUND) No one let the Israelites go. It was God who brought them out of Egypt by his fear-inspiring acts of judgment.

**Group 2**- Maybe you're like me and can get really caught up in your own way of doing things (EXPOUND) my encouragement to you would be to listen for where the Lord may be calling you out of, the ways he may be trying to get your attention, bring you back to himself.

God is sovereign and he is going to have his way in your life one way or another. Perceive the power of God, perceive his divinity as the Almighty. And allow your life to be in alignment with him.

Let me pray for you

**PRAYER**