

“Sacred Cow Tipping”

Ex. 9:1-7

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- What will it take to get Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt? Nile to blood, frogs, gnats, flies. What would it take to soften Pharaoh’s hard heart?
 - What would it take to soften yours? What would it take?
 - To get you to leave your sin? To get you to stop making excuses? to stop living in sin and get married? To get you to agree with God and do things His way?
 - For many people it would take a lot. These plagues will start to escalate.
 - If flies weren’t enough, maybe a hit to Pharaoh’s bank account will do it. What if He wiped out your 401k, wiped-out social security or took your livelihood away?
 - What if your money, your source of security, is ripped from your hands?
- God has at His disposal the option of escalating rather unpleasantly until we soften our hearts.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh” Moses has more confidence now to do what God says because his experience has shown Him God’s power and faithfulness. That’s spiritual growth. Experience with God that leads to obedience.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, “Let my people go, that they may serve me.”’ 2 Things made clear.

1) The Israelites belong to God and not Pharaoh – God identifies Himself as the God of the Hebrews and then says, “Let MY people go.”

- You belong to God, not Egypt. You belong to Jesus, not this world and sin.

2) Freedom is for God’s sake. Not just the Israelites.

- Freedom is for the purpose of serving God, not to do whatever we want. It’s freedom from bondage so you are free to live the purpose you were created for which is to serve God with the gifts He has given you.

² For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, God is giving an ultimatum here.

“If”. In other words, what happens is up to you, Mr. Pharaoh.

Bad things sometimes happen to us, but many wounds are self-inflicted.

- This is God being gracious. Giving a warning. You can avoid this .

² For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, ³ behold, the hand of the Lord (Notice it’s not the finger of God now like the magicians said caused the plague of gnats, but the hand of the Lord) *will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks.*

- This is an agricultural area. Livestock is their occupation. Livestock is their 401k. Livestock is their social security. Livestock is what is in their portfolio.
- Pharaoh, If you don’t let my people go, I’m gonna bring a plague on your livestock in the fields and donkeys, camels, horses and flocks, and they will all die. That’s a lot of cows. A lot of MOOOOOOLA.
- This will kill the Egyptian economy. It’s also the first plague of death and the first plague that will directly affect Pharaoh financially.
- Here’s the irony that we are going to build on this morning. In the last chapter when Pharaoh told them they could worship, but that they couldn’t leave. Why? What was the reason? Cows are sacred. Ex. 8 *²⁶ But Moses said, “It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to the Lord our God are an abomination*

to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? They would stone them because cows are considered sacred. You can’t kill a cow!

- Now I told you that these plagues are directed at particular gods of Egypt,
- Many of Egypt’s God’s were depicted as livestock. Especially Cows
- There is actually a recorded battle where the Egyptians lost because their enemy put a herd of cattle in front of their advancing troops and the Egyptians wouldn’t shoot for fear, they may accidentally kill a cow.

Phillip Ryken says in his book, “Exodus: Saved for God’s Glory” says, “Some Egyptians worshiped the bull, which they viewed as “a fertility figure, the great inseminator imbued with the potency and vitality of life.” Cults dedicated to the bull were common throughout Egypt. There was Buchis, the sacred bull of Hermonthis, and Mnevis, who was worshiped at Heliopolis. Sometimes bulls were considered to embody the gods Ptah and Rah. But the chief bull was Apis. At the temple in Memphis, priests maintained a sacred enclosure where they kept a live bull considered to be the incarnation of Apis. When the venerable bull dies, he was given an elaborate burial.”

The Apis cow had its own palace. Slept on fine linens. Consult the bull as an oracle noting his actions in their presence as favorable or unfavorable. The bull’s mom got her own apartments in the palace. 2-day celebration for bulls’ birthday. This is serious cow worship.

- **SHOW SLIDES OF SAQQARA** - The Serapeum of Saqqara was the ancient Egyptian burial place for sacred bulls of the Apis cult at Memphis. Mummified.
- Why do you think when the Israelites get into the desert and Moses is nowhere to be found that they make a golden calf? returning to worship a god of Egypt. Yahweh is wiping out their gods. Those gods are what the people depend on. God is stripping them of their false gods. What do you depend on? What are false gods of security in your life?

⁴ But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die.””

- Here’s the 2nd miracle. None of the livestock that belongs to the Israelites die.
- You see, this plague is personal, purposeful and directed.

Here’s some irony. Being distinct and set apart from the Egyptians is God’s blessing upon Israel, yet God’s people resist that separation and want to live like Egyptians. They will make a golden calf. We are to be different; distinct.

1 Peter 1:14-16 *¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”* We are to live differently. Christians want the benefits of not having their cows die, but want to worship the gods of Egypt. Sex, money, position,

⁵ And the Lord set a time, saying, “Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land.” ⁶ And the next day the Lord did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died.

- This shows without a doubt that this happened at the hand of God. The specific day the disease will hit the livestock is told ahead of time.
- Now, we read about “tomorrow” a few places in scripture. You probably remember Matthew 6 where Jesus says, ³¹*So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’* ³²*For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* ³³*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* ³⁴*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*

Tomorrow is a day for those who aren’t God’s people to worry about. Pharaoh should be worried about tomorrow, because if he doesn’t let the people go, it’s the day his livestock will die! But, God’s people need not worry about tomorrow.

⁷*And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead.*

- Pharaoh sends investigators to Goshen to see if any of the Israelite’s livestock was dead.
- But that’s the problem with the sceptic. They learn just enough to make excuses. Just enough theology to have a REASON to not repent

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

- Pharaoh’s reasoning is jacked up. Because a hard heart makes you believe the unreasonable. We make decisions from our heart. But a hard heart closes off the possibilities of God.
- Here’s an example. God has just sent 4 plagues your way. Now this God says if you don’t let the people go, I’m gonna kill all your livestock. What would a reasonable person do, given the evidence? **Let them GO!**
- He can’t reason right from wrong because his heart is hard.
- This is why the Christian, the hard-hearted world seems so irrational!
 - Of course, a fetus is a human being. *But you don’t believe it because your heart is hard.* Of course there are only 2 genders.
 - Of course, boys shouldn’t be able to compete in girls’ sports.
 - Of course, laws should be enforced.
 - Of course we don’t have the right to do whatever we want
 - Of course, life didn’t come about randomly, but from an intelligent designer we know as God.

You don’t believe these things because you want your own way. That’s called selfishness. And to avoid accepting any of these things that are true, you become unwilling to even consider that they may be true. What have you done? You’ve hardened your heart. You are unwilling to believe the truth.

- And God in His mercy, not wanting you to perish, begins to dethrone those gods in your life; to soften your heart. Tip the sacred cows in your life so your heart will be soft and able to be led by on the One True God.