

Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 4, Exodus 7-8

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This is Dr. John Oswalt and his teaching on the book of Exodus. This is session 4, Exodus 7-8.

I believe the hour is here. You're here, and I'm here, so I think we might as well begin. Let's pray together. Father, we come to you again with joy in our hearts.

We thank you that by your grace we have been privileged to know you. We think of billions in the world who do not have that opportunity and we do not know any reason why we should be favored ones, but we thank you. Thank you that in whatever way it was for each of us, you got the message to us and we heard and responded.

Thank you. Praise you. We thank you for the privilege we have this evening of studying your word.

And once again, we ask that you give us your Holy Spirit. Let your word come to life again, and as we learn and gain increased understanding, we will gain increased sensitivity to your Spirit's work in us. Deliver us, O Lord, from that vain increase in knowledge, which is only increase in barrenness, unless you come and give your Spirit into our hearts that this knowledge may indeed become wisdom and insight. In your name we pray. Amen.

All right, we're looking at chapters 7 and 8 tonight, and as always, the study guide for next week is on the table there, and I invite you, let's see, is this, yes, it's working, good.

So, we're looking at the events of deliverance. We've talked about the need for deliverance in chapter 1. In chapter 2, the preparation of the deliverer. In chapters 3 and 4, the call of the deliverer.

Chapter 5, the offer of deliverance. And now we're ready to talk about the events of deliverance as they carry us through chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. And this evening, looking at chapters 7 and 8, we're looking at the first four of the plagues.

We talked last week about chapter 6 and the probable reason for the genealogy, establishing who these people are, and the connection all the way back to Abraham. This is not something that is just a Johnny-come-lately sort of thing. It's not something that has happened out of God's arbitrary interest in this bunch.

It's indeed the fulfillment of those ancient promises. And so, as we saw last week, chapter 6, verse 26, it was this Moses and Aaron to whom the Lord said. Now then, we look at verses 28, 29, and 30, and when we compare those with chapter 6, verses 10, 11, and 12, we see that they're very, very similar, but not exactly similar.

What's the difference between the commandments in chapter 6, verse 11, and the commandment in chapter 6, verse 29? It's not a big difference, but it's a difference. Okay, exactly. In the first place, it's go tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to let the Israelites go.

In the second one, it is I am the Lord, tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, everything I tell you. So, one suggestion is that there's a different level of authority in the second one than in the first. Do you have any other thoughts about the significance of that difference? Yeah, yeah.

Look at chapter 7, verses 1 and 2. How do they relate to this discussion? Aaron is going to deliver the message, and he's going to get it from whom? He's going to get it from Moses, and Moses is going to get it from God. So, God is reaffirming that you are not speaking for yourself. You're not merely saying what you've sort of learned and gained and gleaned.

You are speaking for God to these people. And I think then that may make a difference in terms of Moses' response because even though Moses says the same thing, and we talked last week about the possible significance of the literal, I'm a man of uncircumcised lips. Moses says the same thing here.

Nevertheless, Moses does go ahead and do what God told him to do. So, I think that sense, the renewed sense that Moses, you are an ambassador. You're not speaking on your own terms.

You are simply speaking for me, and if Pharaoh doesn't like it, it's not your problem. I think that's an important thing for anyone in the ministry to remember. We are ambassadors.

We're simply carrying the message. Sometimes, people kill the messenger, but it's still not our business. It is his business.

And so, I think that element that I'm the one speaking, you're carrying the message to Aaron, Aaron is carrying the message from there, ultimately, it's not your business. It's my business. Look down now at verse 5. What is the purpose of the plagues? Each of the plagues has something to do with the gods, and what is this verse saying? They're going to know I am the Lord when I stretch this out.

It's almost bringing the Israelites out is sort of secondary. They're going to know who I am when I do these things, resulting in the Israelites coming out. Potentially, it does.

It does, and you see, as we get on into next week, some of the Egyptians responding. So, yes, I think it does at least subliminally indicate that God is interested in everyone, not just the Israelites, but everyone knows who he is. Now, well, essentially, in Hebrew, the word that's translated everywhere has the basic idea of knowledge, which is a result of personal experience.

So, it's, you know, I may know that the earth is 93 million miles from the sun, but I don't know it in the biblical sense. In the biblical sense, it is you who have experienced this and, as a result, have this experiential awareness. So, that's what it is here.

They're going to experience the reality of my identity and my being. Now, we've talked a little bit about the second part of the question. Why not just get the people out of Egypt? Okay, okay.

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm. God wants people to know that I am. Now, why? Why do people need to know that? Okay, okay.

The God of the Fathers, the God of the promise. Why do the Egyptians need to know that, though? Why does anybody in the world need to know that he is Yahweh, that he is the I Am? All right, we're all his creatures. What else? We all need to know that he's the one and only God.

That's right. Why? All right, so that we can worship him. Why do we need to worship him? So that we can be in a relationship with him.

If I don't know this, what am I likely to believe? I'm likely to believe that, and I'm likely to believe that I'm God. In other words, God is concerned that we have the correct understanding of reality. At the core of sin is a false understanding of reality.

I am ultimate in my life, and I can make it up as I go. And God says, sorry. I can say when I jump off this tall building, I am going to go up.

That's a false view of reality. And much of the world is laboring under a false view of reality. So, God is passionately concerned that we get our heads screwed on right.

There is no salvation unless we come to that understanding. And I've talked about this before, and if you stick with me long enough, you're going to know everything I know and then some. But there are two essentials to enlightenment.

Number one, there is a God. Number two, you're not him. That's what this is really about.

You are not ultimate. I am. And you need to organize your life on that basis.

So, does God want to get the Israelites out of Egypt? Of course, he does. That's because of his promise. But there's something even deeper than that.

This whole enterprise is revelatory. And that's what the Bible is all about. The Bible is all about the Creator's passionate desire that we should know what life is about.

And he is life. So, this whole book is about the fact that the Creator speaks. And his passion from Genesis 1 to Revelation 21 is that we might know him.

As the New Testament says, whom to know aright is life eternal. So, we're going to see this nothing coming up and I'll be asking you next week to go back and make a list of what it is that we know as a result of these things. And it'll be an ongoing list because it occurs about 14 times between chapter 7 and chapter 14.

Okay. Let's move on then. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, when Pharaoh says to you, perform a miracle, then say to Aaron, take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, and it'll become a snake.

So, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh. Now, here again, you see, just as in chapter four, we didn't have a big emotional, okay, Lord, okay, I've said I couldn't say anything. I said I wasn't going to do it.

But all right. All right. I surrender.

No. He went and did it. And in the end, that's what comes.

He did just as the Lord commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers.

The Egyptian magicians also did the same things with their secret arts. Each one threw down his staff, and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard, and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord said. Good question. Good question.

I think, again, it is tempting to identify these are real people. If this is a fictional story, it doesn't matter how old they were. These are real people.

The second thing I think it is saying is these are people of, from the biblical point of view, late middle age. Well, middle age is always just 10 years beyond wherever you are. But it is saying, again, that these are mature people.

These are not people who, in a blast of enthusiasm, are out to serve God. These are people who have been on the road a while. And if they say yes, we'll do what he wants; that's the result of some mature decision-making.

Thank you. Good question. And these are the kinds of things I've said before; I'll say it again: nothing is here by accident.

Everything here has some significance. We may not always know correctly what that significance is, but that is not a reason why we shouldn't try to think about it. In fact, we should think about it.

Now, what does the action of the magicians? They do it again in verse 22, and they do it again in chapter 8, verse 7. What does the action of the magicians tell us about miracles and the reception of miracles? They can be counterfeited. They can be counterfeited. There is black magic.

Yeah, that's what the text says. Okay. Okay.

That's the next question. What would that have said to the Egyptian magicians? Uh-oh. Uh-oh.

We're face to face with some practitioners here who are sharper than we are. Yes. Don't get too far ahead here now.

Hang on. Why does God permit this? All right. It makes a bigger impact.

All right. All right. Maybe he's trying to expose the magicians for what they were.

Let's look, let's back up and say, okay, the magicians never did this. The magicians were never able to duplicate it. What might the Egyptians then say about what Moses and Aaron did? It's just black magic.

That's all it was. God wasn't involved in this, whatever God there is. So, there's a sense in which by allowing the magicians to duplicate it for a period of time and then making them admit they could not do any more of this, it becomes very obvious Moses and Aaron are operating on a different plane than these magicians are operating.

I think that's exactly right. I think that's what's going on here: God permits this precisely so that you can't argue that this was black magic. You have to say what the magicians say, and again, we're getting ahead of ourselves.

This is the finger of God. That's a great, great line. And that's an admission about what they had been doing.

They may have been doing it in the name of their gods, but in the end, they knew that it was their skill that was producing that. Let's look at Mark chapter 10, verses 13, and the following. We've looked at this in the past, but I think it's still a very important point to make.

Mark chapter 10, verses 13, and following. Whoops, that's the wrong reference. Oh, yes, yes, yes.

Okay, let's see here if I can find what I want. Yeah, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

I misled you there. No, well, Matthew, Mark, Luke. Okay.

Now, the one I want is the one where Jesus says, the reason I teach in parables is so that those who will not believe cannot believe. Now, we always, I mean, the standard line is, oh, Jesus was such a master communicator. He spoke in parables so it would be perfectly clear to everybody.

Well, that's not what Jesus says. Matthew 13, 10. Hmm, how interesting.

I wonder where in the world I got, maybe it's, is it 10 to 16? Yeah, okay. At any rate, that's the point is that God is not going to force anybody to believe. This is one of the reasons I'm not a five-point Calvinist.

He's going to enable those who choose to believe to believe. But for those who choose not to believe, he's going to help them down that road, too. And so somebody who doesn't want to believe in Jesus says he's not a preacher.

He just tells these funny little stories. The same thing is going on here. Pharaoh, would you like to believe? No.

Call your magicians. We'll talk more about this process as we go along. But there it is, as God is saying, if you don't want to believe, I'll help you not believe, which is pretty frightening.

All right. So, as has been said, the plagues are an attack on the Egyptian gods. And it is very significant that the first attack comes upon the Nile.

Because, as I said in the background there, if there were no Nile, there would be no Egypt. But in southern Egypt, it is possible to stand with one foot in a wheat field and the other in the desert just as far as the irrigation water of the Nile reaches. And before the Aswan Dam, it was clockwork.

During the same week of the calendar every year, the Nile would flood. And during the same week of the calendar every year, the Nile would recede because there are no tributaries for the last 400 miles of the Nile.

All the water that's going to come into it has come into it by the time it crosses the southern borders, and that water is going to go right down the river. So, every year, here it comes, laying down a fresh bed of silt and washing last year's debris out into the Mediterranean. The world's first flush toilet.

So Egypt called itself in ancient times the gift of the Nile. The Nile then is life giving. And Moses holds his staff over it and turns it into blood.

What does that say? God is the source of life, not the river. In fact, what is the river the source of when it becomes blood? Death, death. And, in fact, that's what we're going to see right through the plagues.

Whatever you think is the source of life apart from the life-giver, the I am, is death. And how true that is in our world. I may think that my achievements are a source of life, not apart from God.

Apart from God, all my achievements are death and will end in death. Now, it's fascinating that Jesus turns this on its head. Think about Jesus' miracles.

What did Jesus do in his miracles? He turned the death-dealing into the life-giving. He healed sickness. He delivered from the demonic.

He ruled a chaotic nature. He raised the dead and ultimately rose from the dead. So, all those things that the world says are death-dealing, Jesus demonstrated his lordship over that he could bring life out of all of that.

This is why the plagues in the Old Testament are called signs. This is why Jesus' miracles are also called signs. In many, many ways, Jesus is shown to be the other side of the coin from Moses.

It's often said that the Sermon on the Mount is designed to be parallel with the covenant given on Mount Sinai. Some people would go so far as to say it's designed to reverse it. I do not believe that, I think that's wrong.

But to be the complement, to be the other side of it, yes. And the same is true with his miracles. So then, in verse 17, this is what the Lord says: by this, you will know that I am the Lord.

The Nile will be changed into blood, the fish in the Nile will die, the river will stink, and the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water. And again, the repeated statement, verse 20, Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. This phrase is going to roll all the way through this whole section.

They did just as the Lord commanded. And here again, in verse 22, Pharaoh's heart became hard. As we talked last time, this is not simply a mechanical kind of thing where the Pharaoh would really like to be a nice guy and let the Hebrews go, and God forcibly hardened his heart against Pharaoh's will.

That's not the point at all. To be sure, Pharaoh thinks that he has absolute freedom and he can decide, yeah, I'll let him go or I won't. But in fact, from all the choices that he has made in his life, he is now down to the point where he may think he has freedom, but he doesn't.

His pride won't let him let those people go. If he were to admit that, he'd have to admit that he wasn't God. If he were to admit that, he'd have to admit somebody could do something that he couldn't stop.

No way. So is God, bottom line, the hardener of hearts? Yes, but that's not in some sense against people's will, as if they have no choice in it. It is in the sense that God has made the world so that our choices eventually become inescapable.

So, this various mix of statements, God hardened his heart, his heart became hard, his heart was hard, Pharaoh hardened his heart, all of those are part of that larger picture. And so, when we, Arminians, talk about free will as though every choice was a brand new choice and we have perfect freedom to do whatever we want, that's not right either. Our choices shape the next choices and the next and the next.

And as I said last time, that's why deathbed conversions are almost unheard of. Did God harden the person's heart? In one sense, yes. But not against their will.

God has made the world so that a succession of choices brings us to a point where we really have no more choice. Now, praise God, there are deathbed conversions. Praise God. He's still God and can break through.

But that's not the ordinary way in which it happens. All right. Yeah.

The grace that goes before and gives us the capacity to choose. Wesley was more Calvinist than many people believe in that he would agree with Calvin, by ourselves

in our unconverted state, we do not have the capacity to choose right. But where Wesley then came in is to say, but God in his grace has acted and by that grace has given us the capacity to choose.

Hallelujah, yes. Okay, chapter eight. Everything goes back to God, ultimately, that's right.

What are you talking about? Yeah, I'm not. Yeah, there's something not right about it, that's for sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

The place is the dividing line between orthodoxy, which is the Arminian view, and unorthodoxy, which is the so-called Pelagian view. Pelagius, who was a good man, believed that humans are innately good and that we can on our own choose. We can on our own choose to do right.

Pelagius and Augustine had a big struggle there. Augustine is over, on the other hand, as sort of the father of Calvin, basically saying, no, no, we're absolutely helpless, and unless God decides to give each one of us the opportunity to choose, we won't do it. Arminius stands between those two poles, particularly Wesleyan Arminian, saying that God, in his grace, gives humans the capacity to choose, but not because they're innately good.

Okay, verse 25 of chapter seven really goes with chapter eight, and that's why I have it there, 725 through 814. As I said in the background, the Egyptians worshipped amphibians. Because amphibians have this remarkable ability to live in two different worlds.

They can live in the world of water or they can live in the world of air. That's a handy, handy skill. It's often said that the Egyptians were obsessed with death.

That's really not correct. The Egyptians are obsessed with life. And what they were worried about was that maybe heaven is worse than Egypt.

In spite of our doctor friend here, Egyptians to this day are not great travelers. Why would you want to leave heaven? A lovely average temperature year-round, sunshine almost all the time, and the river is supplying all your needs. It's very easy to imagine that the next life might be worse than heaven.

It might be like Canaan. So, their passion concerning death is the attempt to do everything in their power to be sure that the next world will be at least as good as Egypt. This is why we know so much about Egyptian life because they would make models of their livelihood and put it in the tomb.

So, we've got beautiful models of an Egyptian dairy farm. So, when the farmer wakes up after he dies, he's got the ritual written on the roof of his tomb or written on the inside of his mummy case in some cases, and he can read the ritual, and boom, there's his dairy farm again. So, should we worship the frog? Oh, absolutely.

A frog, a frog can live in two worlds. I'd like to have that skill. I want to be able to live in this world and in the world to come.

God says, you want frogs? I have a few frogs. In your cupboard, in your bed, on your table. Do you want frogs? Have a frog or two.

Are frogs the source of life? No, they are death. Apart from the I am, anything that claims to be able to give life here is lying. He is life.

And life is a gift from him, which we cannot create and we cannot preserve forever. Now, I do kind of hope that I can live to be 102 because in 2042, I think they say April 10th, we will all be God. At that point, they will have computers that are smaller than blood corpuscles that can be implanted and we will know everything.

We will have absolute control over our lives, and we will be God. Now, people are saying that seriously. They're not joking.

So. Sounds boring. Sounds boring? Well, I don't know.

If I have to spend my whole day googling things, that does sound pretty awful. But at any rate. They're working with it.

What are the repercussions for you? I don't know how to get around this. There's a science fiction story there somewhere. Let that worm get out of control.

Okay. So. The frogs come, the magicians do it, but look at verse eight.

What's the point there? Exactly. Exactly. Exactly.

Against his will, he's being forced to admit that Moses is in touch with somebody or something. Notice he doesn't ask his magicians to take him away. Now, what's the point of Moses' statement in verse nine? What's the significance of the time setting? It proves the power of Yahweh.

I'll discuss this a little more next week, but this is just to whet your appetite—by the way, to whet your appetite, not wet your appetite.

I get that from my students all the time. I want to wet your appetite down. No, it's wet; it's sharpening your appetite.

Anyway, that's free. People, through all the years, have attempted to find quotes and natural explanations for these miracles. In the 1880s, there was a terrific flood on one of the tributaries of the Nile where the soil is sort of like Georgia.

It is red soil. And so, this glut of red mud went into the Nile and came right down the Nile as just sort of a red glob. Ah, that's it, that's it.

And the frogs didn't like the mud, so the frogs came out and the frogs died and the flies. What's the difference between a natural event and a miracle? And I'm just going to give you the points now, and you can think about it. Number one is intensity.

Number two is timing. Isn't it amazing? That glut of muddy water got there just at the moment that Moses held his rod across it. He must have had good telegraphic service.

And here it is again. Oh, the frogs just came out of the water because they didn't like the water, huh? Give me the time when you want those frogs to go away. Intensity, timing, and discrimination.

Suppose tomorrow morning there's a crack in the earth on the seminary campus and a curl of smoke comes out of it and in a few minutes some ashes come shooting out of it and more ashes and more ashes and more ashes and finally it's lava. What's that? It's a volcano, it's a natural event. But suppose I were to say to you tonight, God has judged Asbury Theological Seminary and tomorrow morning a volcano will appear on the campus.

That's a miracle. Same event, but again, these kinds of issues. So that timing is very significant.

Yes? If I'm Pharaoh, I'm going to say, no, I'm not going to say tomorrow, I'm going to say now. I'm going to say tomorrow. That's a great question, and I wish I had known the answer.

I'm just kidding. Maybe that will bring more people there to witness it. Well, Pharaoh doesn't want them to witness it.

So yeah, I suspect it's got something to do with Pharaoh still trying to manipulate things. I don't know what this. Put out an announcement that tomorrow I get rid of the probe.

Mm-hmm, yeah, yeah. I think there's got to be something of that sort going on because your question, I think, is a very natural one. Why not right now? But there's something going on in his continuing attempt to manipulate them.

Then of course, come the bugs. It's interesting if you've got different versions, some versions will say lice, some will say gnats, some will say other ones. Hebrew is sort of a little bit like Karen.

A bug is a bug is a bug. And that's the Hebrew word that means bugs. And it'll cover just about anything you want.

And that's what's going on. The Egyptians also worship insects. Again, for the same reason.

It appears that they have these dramatic abilities. As you know, in the mummies, you find lots and lots of so-called scarabs, little stone amulets. You look down on it from on top, and I was going to bring mine with me tonight and forgot.

You look down on top and look at it from the side. So, these amulets look like this. They're called scarabs.

It's the scarab beetle or the dung beetle. Dung beetles are sacred for the simple reason that they lay their eggs in a ball of manure and push the little ball of manure down the road until the larva hatch. That's pretty cool.

This bug knows how to turn manure into life. That's why there are hundreds of them wrapped up in mummies. Because our bodies turn to manure.

And this little bug, hey, it can turn manure into life. Same thing with flies. Flies are wonderful.

They can turn rotting flesh into life. Kind of squeamy, screaming, crawly life, but anyway, it's life. God says, you want insects? Have some insects.

And they won't bring you life. They'll bring you death. So then, verse 19, the magicians say to Pharaoh, this is the finger of God.

This is not black magic, Pharaoh. This is not something you learn in Harry Potter school. This is God at work.

Why did they say Abraham is the magic? No, that's not. Okay, that's not the magic of the Bible. That's an excellent point.

When Egyptians want to talk about the deity, the realm of the gods, they literally say the God. One of the few pieces of Egyptian that I remember. Pa-netur, the God.

And that's the way they express. So, this is the finger of deity. This is the finger of divinity.

That's the point they're making. Okay, I call your attention again to the point that is made every time, as in verse 20. This is what the Lord says.

Let my people go so that they may worship me. He does not say, let my people go so they can be free in the land of Canaan. That's going to be a byproduct.

But the real point of the release is that they can be part of this process of knowing Yahweh. So, over and over again, that point is made. Okay, yeah, we talk about the deathbed conversions there.

Let's see if I do any better on this Hebrews reference. Look at Hebrews chapter three, 8 and 15. Yes.

So, the Holy Spirit says, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion during the time of testing in the wilderness. You hardened your heart. God offered you the opportunity to enter the land of Canaan and you hardened your heart and refused.

Again, in verse 15, as has just been said, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion. And the whole book of Hebrews is written to people that the author fears are going to be like the Israelites. They have accepted Christ as their savior, but they're not going into full surrender.

And so, he's saying, don't be like them. They saw what God did. They experienced what God did.

They had the opportunity to enter into that full relationship with him and refused. Don't you be like them? So again, for each of us, wherever we are on the road, the question is, am I in danger of hardening my heart? Is God calling me to another step of faith? And I'm saying no.

The writer of the Hebrews says, don't do it, don't do it. All right, back to Exodus 8. Here comes the discrimination that I mentioned. Verse 22, on that day, I will deal differently with the land of Goshen where my people live.

No swarms of flies will be there. So again, we're not talking about simply a natural event. Are there swarms of flies at various places in the world at various times? Certainly, there are.

Is that what's going on here? No, because of this intensity, intensity, and the intensity is going to get more and more as we'll see next week. The timing, and then the discrimination. So, we see then in verse 25, what is Pharaoh doing? He's trying to bargain with God, isn't he? He's still trying to maintain a range of control.

He's still trying to maintain control. Yes, okay, you can sacrifice to your God, but I'll decide where you sacrifice. Why do we do that? We still want to be in control, and like with Pharaoh, if he could let the people go three days out of Egypt, that would have been out of his bounds.

Exactly. So, he still had his thumb on top of him. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

We think we can have God's way and our way. We think we can have God's blessings and still maintain control of our own lives. And God says you're not God.

And so, we're brought to that place of surrendering control, letting him choose how, where, when, and why. And that is scary. So, Moses says, we can't do that.

The sacrifices that we would offer would make Egyptians sick. They'd stone us to death. No, we can't do that.

And so, well, verse 28, I'll let you go to offer sacrifices to the Lord your God in the wilderness, but you must not go very far. And I would simply ask you to look at your own lives. When have you done that? I could give you chapter and verse in my own life.

Okay, God, I'll give you this much. That's not enough? Well, let's try this much. That's not enough? Well, I say, no, the issue is not this much or this much or this much.

The issue is you, you. I want you, not this much or this much or this much. He wants all of us.

He wants all of us. And you see, that's what love is about. I've said this at various points here and elsewhere, but if when Karen and I sat on that Lake Michigan beach, and I had a little velvet-colored box in my pocket, and I had said to her, I want you, and she had said that you couldn't have me.

But I'll give you gourmet meals for the rest of your life. I'll wash your clothes for the rest of your life. I'll give you a million bucks, but you can't have me.

I wouldn't have been satisfied. I didn't want what she could do for me. I wanted her.

Now, those other things have been very nice. She's given me more than a million dollars, I'm sure, across these years. But I didn't want what she could do for me.

I wanted her. And it's the same with God. God's in love with you.

He's in love with me. He doesn't want what we can do for him. He's God.

He wants us. But we tried a nickel and dime. I'll do this for you.

No, you can't have me. But I'll do this for you. I'll do that for you.

God says I don't want that stuff. I want you. All of you.

Why? Because you're a nasty God who's demanding? No, because he's in love with us. I will stop, but not yet. I love what G.K. Chesterton says at one point in one of his writings.

He's talking about marriage. And he says, you know, it's not old people who are trying to force young people into these lifelong commitments. It's the young people who say, oh, I love you forever.

As I said in one marriage homily that I preached, I'm quite sure it was not a 55-year-old man who hung over the ledge of a bridge and wrote on it, I love you forever, Julie. And Chesterton says what we old people are doing is trying to help young people to indeed understand the reality of a lifelong commitment. And to bring them to the place where they will make such a commitment now in the heat of passion, and it will survive when the passion is cooled.

That's God's love for us. He wants everything. Well, let's look at Psalm 106.15, and we'll go home.

I want to start with verse 12. Then they believed his promises and sang his praise, but they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his plan to unfold. In the desert, they gave in to their craving.

In the wilderness, they put God to the test. So, he gave them what they asked for, but sent them leanness of soul. My, my, my, my.

Oh, God, I don't want you. I want what you can do for me. I don't want you, but I want your gifts.

And God says, really? Yes, yes. God says, okay, here are the gifts. But you don't understand.

Apart from me, those gifts are deadly. Oh, America, America. We've received all of his gifts and tried to hold on to them, hold on to them, apart from the giver.

So, he gave them what they asked for. But sent them leanness of soul. Now this, I'm translating literally there.

The NIV, I do not like here. He sent a wasting disease among them, to which I want to say, come on. Leanness of soul is so much more graphic.

That's what we're talking about. Let's pray.

Oh, Lord, have mercy upon us. We confess, we confess that we're too much like Pharaoh. We want to have your blessings, and we want to have our own way. We want to have your gifts while we maintain control over our own lives.

Have mercy on us. Have mercy on me. Help us, Lord, not to believe the lies of the devil who tells us that you are out to manipulate us and use us.

Help us to know that he's the liar and the father of lies. Help us to know that you love us to the very end, and you know that so long as we hold control, we destroy ourselves. Help us, Lord.

Help us. In your name, we pray, amen.

This is Dr. John Oswalt and his teaching on the book of Exodus. This is session 4, Exodus 7-8.