

Exodus 022
Necessity of Testing
Exodus 7:8-13
November 2, 2025
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I would invite your attention this morning to Exodus 7:8-13, as we are continuing our movement through the Book of Exodus. The title of our message this morning is "The Need to Test." It is not so much the need for a test, although we need that from time to time, but the need for us to test.

God, in the Book of Exodus, in the first major section of the book, is redeeming a nation. God has explained in Exodus 1 why redemption is necessary: Slavery of His chosen nation, Israel. He has raised up, in Exodus 2-4, the instrument through which He will work. The instrument goes out on his first assignment and confronts Pharaoh, the leader of the known world at that time, and says, "Let God's people go." Pharaoh says, "No, I do not know the Lord."

Moses probably thought things were going to be a little bit smoother in terms of sailing, at this point, but he becomes very discouraged. Beginning in Exodus 6:1 all the way through Exodus 7:7, which we completed last week, God reassures and encourages Moses. It is amazing what God has done with Moses to prepare him for this moment by way of training, preparation, and even encouragement, when things from the human perspective did not seem to be working out. The forbearance of God and the longsuffering of God, and how you as a Christian are in the same process, He is preparing you for something. He wants to use you for something, and He wants to encourage you in the midst of difficulty.

Now Moses goes out for round two in Exodus 7:8-13, which we are going to look at today. It deals with a power encounter between Moses and Pharaoh. It is not Moses through his own power, but Moses through the power of God working through him.

Second Confrontation with Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1-25)

- I. The Prophets (1-7)
- II. The Power (8-13)
 - A. God's miracle (8-10)
 - 1. Instructions (8-9)
 - 2. Obedience (10)
 - B. Pharaoh's miracle (11-12a)
 - C. God's supremacy (12b)
 - D. Pharaoh's hardening (13)
- III. The Plagues (14-25)

First of all, Exodus 7:8-10, God's miracle. We have some instructions (Exodus 7:8-9), and then some obedience on the part of Moses (Exodus 7:10). Notice, if you will, Exodus 7:8-9, which says:

"Now Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'When Pharaoh speaks to you saying, "Work a miracle," then you shall say to Aaron, "Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent"' (Exodus 7:8-9).

This is interesting because God did this through Moses earlier. This harks back, if you will, to Exodus 4:1-4:

"The Lord said to him, 'What is in your hand?' And he said, 'A staff.' Then he said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. But the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail'—so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—" (Exodus 4:2-4).

Down in Exodus 4, about three chapters earlier, you might remember these words:

"You shall take in your hand the staff, with which you shall perform the signs" (Exodus 4:17).

It is interesting that before Moses did anything for God of this caliber, he was trained well in advance. He was trained to do this in Exodus 4. Now, the power encounter is about to begin here in Exodus 7. It is not just this miracle he was trained in, it is his whole life. By the time you get to age 80 to age 120, in Moses' life, he is going to lead the children of Israel for a period of 40 years in the desert. That is a long 40-year chunk of time.

How would you like to spend age 80 to age 120 of your life, assuming we live that long, doing that? What is very interesting to me is God already prepared Moses to do that in the middle section of his life, age 40 to age 80. Where was he? He was in the desert. What was he doing? He was tending the sheep in this case, not human beings, but animals. How long did he do that for? He did it for 40 years.

God trained Moses for the same period of time, in the same arena, where Moses would have his most prolific and productive years. His training occurred between age 40 and age 80. That is where he got what I call his B.D. degree—backside of the desert degree—tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro. It was when he was out doing this work as a simple shepherd, that he received the manifestation of God at the burning bush there near Midian.

I find it interesting that God did this for Moses, trained him in the same arena, doing the same kinds of things, but on a much smaller scale for the same duration of time. A lot of us are really in a hurry to get to phase three of our lives where God wants to use us,

and He does, but we are really not willing to walk with God in the middle phase. Moses had to learn the basics. He had to learn how to do what God was ultimately leading him to do.

Most of us, if we are honest, would rather start at the top. The truth of the matter is that God does not work that way. God typically will put us in an arena where He will require of us, as we walk with Him, faithfulness with whatever He has put in front of us. "But Lord, I want big things." God says, "You are not ready for big things until you learn how to be faithful in the little things."

This is a pattern that you will see not only in the life of Moses, but you will see it in every significant character that God uses in the Bible. Joseph was tending the sheep long before he became second-in-command over the Egyptian Empire. David was tending the sheep long before he became the second king of the united kingdom of Israel. For Moses, the same thing.

"Before you become the lawgiver, the deliverer, the author of the first five books of Hebrew Bible, called Torah or Pentateuch, I want you to be faithful in something small." Then we say to the Lord, "When is the smallness going to end?" God says, "That is none of your business. It will end when I say it is going to end, because I am in control of this training process."

Jesus, in Luke 16:10 says:

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is also faithful in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much" (Luke 16:10).

When selecting elders for a church, we learn in 1 Timothy 3:4-5:

"He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)" (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

There is nothing here about starting at the top. It is about allowing God to promote us when God deems it appropriate to do so, as we demonstrate our faithfulness to God in the little things. Most of us are really focused on the big things, but God is focused on the little things because He knows if we can be faithful in the little things, we can be trusted with the big things. It is a very different way of thinking.

Moses is going to do this miracle before Pharaoh, and God has already prepared Moses in advance to do so. Now, Moses goes out and he does the smartest thing a person can ever do, which is to obey—do what God says. Notice, if you will, Exodus 7:10:

"So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the Lord had commanded" (Exodus 7:10).

Smart, smart guys. When Jesus performed His first miracle at the wedding ceremony in Cana of Galilee, and the wine ran out, His own mother said something very interesting in John 2:5. She she did not know how this issue was going to get fixed, but she made this statement:

"His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you, do it'" (John 2:5).

"I do not know what is going to happen. I do not know how it is going to happen. I do not know if it is going to happen. I just know that He knows what He is doing and you need to submit to His authority."

There are all kinds of things going on in your life that you cannot navigate through. You do not understand them. I have the same issues going on in my life, but I know this much: at the end of the day, God wants me to obey Him.

When we talk about obedience to God, it is a big category. How do you obey God? There are a lot of things here in the Bible that God wants us to do. As you pray to the Lord and ask the Lord about this, He will start to surface things in your mind in which you are not obeying Him concerning what He wants you to do. It is a matter of walking with the Lord. I may not have an exhaustive knowledge of the Scripture, but there are things in my life that are left undone. God says, "I want you to obey Me over here. I want you to obey Me over there."

We like to kick the can down the road and make excuses, but the truth of the matter is, this blessing in John 2 would not have occurred if they did not follow the exhortation of His own mother: "'Whatever He says to you, do it'" (John 2:5).

Do you remember Saul who obeyed God, sort of, kind of, and how he was confronted by Nathan the prophet in 1 Samuel 15:22?

*"Samuel said,
'Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?'" (1 Samuel 15:22).*

Saul thought he could cover up his disobedience by getting religious and doing the sacrifices. Samuel makes this tremendous statement:

*"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams" (2 Samuel 15:22).*

"Do not cover up your disobedience through religious activity and religious behavior. What I want you to do is to obey Me in something small, because that is where the blessing comes from."

Jesus said this in the Upper Room to the disciples:

"If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).

He did not say, "You are blessed by knowing about it." He says, "You are blessed by doing."

What He did there is He got down on His hands and His knees, and He began to wash the feet of the disciples. "I have set for you an example that what I have done for you you might do one for another. Now that you know these things—this life of service, this life of sacrifice—your blessing is going to come not from knowledge, but it is going to come from doing."

There is a big difference between knowledge and wisdom. The Bible says you ought to get both. Knowledge is the acquisition of information. Wisdom—the Greek word "sophia"—is the application of knowledge.

One of the dangers of being in a Bible church is that people think that the high point of spirituality is to come to a church and learn new things about the Bible and to learn new things about God. Praise the Lord, because you cannot live out what you do not know, but knowledge was never intended to be a last step. It was intended to be a first step, because eventually knowledge needs to be transformed into what the Greeks called "sophia" and what the Hebrews called "hakma," which is knowledge applied. Jesus, in the Upper Room, says that the blessing is going to come through "hakma."

You say, "Do you have a good book on this that you would recommend?" You bet. It is called the Book of Proverbs. It is what the whole book is about. It is about divine wisdom. It will take divine knowledge and apply it to every single circumstance you could ever think of in your life—money, debt, who to partner with, family relations, how to deal with authority figures, and on and on and on.

That is why at this point, Moses and Aaron are so impressive because at least here they are doing what God commanded. Guess what? God came through at the end of Exodus 7:10:

"...and Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent" (Exodus 7:10).

Exactly what God said would happen in Exodus 7:9 has now been fulfilled. This is an example of a short-term prophecy, which your Bible is loaded with. It is loaded with prophecies of future things yet to come, and it is loaded with prophecies of a very short duration that happen in real time. All of them come to pass literally. Therefore, it gives

me a great deal of confidence that the prophecies yet to come are going to come to pass in the exact same way, because God is outside of time. He knows the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end. To God, tomorrow is already today, because he is not bound by time the way we are. For tomorrow to come, I have to wait for tomorrow, but God does not have to wait. He is higher than time.

It is like going to the Rose Parade. You sit there in Pasadena, California—I have done this, I actually would go and watch. You sit there on Colorado Boulevard, and you see the floats coming by one at a time. Then one day we get smart and watch it on TV and stay home. They give you the aerial shot where you can see the first float and the last float. You do not have to wait. That way is a lot more comfortable.

If you can understand the aerial shot, you can understand God's viewpoint. If you can understand what you are seeing camped out there on Colorado Boulevard, you see man's perspective. Everything that God says is going to happen, because God is not bound by time the way we are bound by time. That is why your Bible is filled with short-term prophecies and long-term prophecies.

Jesus talked about this all the time in the Upper Room. Just before His death He says:

"From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur you may believe that I am He" (John 13:19).

"I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. Hey, folks. Listen up!" As He is huddled there with His disciples in the Upper Room, "I am going to start making some short-term predictions. Many of them are going to happen this week, right down to who is going to kill me and how many pieces of silver they are going to betray me for and how I am going to die; where I am going to die. You are going to watch it all happen in real time this week. When it happens—it is not if, but when—you are going to say of Jesus, 'He is the great "I AM" because only God could reveal the end from the beginning.'"

These guys went out and boy, they were ready to die for Jesus because of that truth. James the son of Alphaeus went to Jerusalem and he was clubbed to death. Simon the Zealot went to Jerusalem, where he was martyred. James, the son of Zebedee, was executed. Thaddeus went to Mesopotamia, where he was beaten to death. Peter went to Babylon, some speculate ultimately to Rome, where he was crucified upside down. Matthew went to Tehran, where he was beheaded.

John was stubborn. He would not die—a stubborn, old man. They tried to kill him. They boiled him in oil, but he would not die, so they threw him out on the desert island. It was not really a desert island, but an island in the Aegean Sea called Patmos, where he would receive the vision for the End Times, called the Book of Revelation. They tried to fry him in boiling oil.

Philip was tortured and crucified. Thomas went to India, where he was speared. Bartholomew went to India, where he was flayed, which is an unbelievably torturous way to die, and crucified. Andrew went to Ukraine, Russia, Greece, where he was eventually hanged. Why would these guys do this for something they thought was false? Jesus convinced them it was true through many, many things that Jesus did, one of which was these short-term predictions.

What God said concerning Moses and Pharaoh happened. In Exodus 7:13 we are going to see that happening again, but in the interim, when God does a work, so does the devil. Did you know that? Notice Exodus 7:11-12:

"Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents" (Exodus 7:11-12).

In other words, what Moses and Aaron were able to do, Pharaoh's magicians were able to repeat, the exact same miracle. By the way, we know who those magicians were. They have names. We only learn about them in the New Testament in 2 Timothy 3:8. Their names are Jannes and Jambres:

"Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith" (2 Timothy 3:8).

Jannes and Jambres did, under Pharaoh's court and authority, exactly the same miracle that Moses and Aaron had performed. What we are learning here is that Satan has power. He has very real power.

When I first became a Christian, I was so blessed to be disciplined by a gentleman that said, "Read your Bible. Start in Genesis and start reading. Next week when I get together with you, you can ask me whatever question you want." That week I had read Genesis, I had read a little bit of Exodus, and I came here to Exodus 7, and that was my question for him. "If these magicians, Jannes and Jambres presumably had no relationship with God whatsoever, how could they do the exact same miracles that Moses and Aaron were doing?"

That is where he began to disciple me and teach me about the power—not to get too Star Wars on you—but the power of the dark side, which is very real. In fact, did you catch it in Exodus 7:11? They did these things through their "secret arts."

Jesus said something interesting to the church at Thyatira in Revelation 2:24:

""But I say to you, the rest of who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no burden upon you"" (Revelation 2:24).

Look at that. If there is a god, there is a devil. We talk about the deep things of God all the time, do we not? Hey, let us go deep into the scripture.

If there are deep things of God, there are deep things of Satan. If there is good, there is evil. If there are unfallen angels, there must be fallen angels. The Bible teaches this absolute reality, that the devil does miracles. It is right there in the Bible. We are reading about it.

This is a slide that I introduced when I was teaching at the Bible College:



I said, "This is probably the most important slide you will ever see me put up because that PowerPoint point slide has every example I could find in the Bible where a miracle happens and God has nothing to do with it. In Exodus 7-8, Pharaoh's magicians, Jannes and Jambres, replicate what Moses and Aaron were doing. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 says:

"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer or dreams" (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

How about early Job, when all of the trouble that was brought into Job's life—skin, affliction, whirlwind, destruction of his family other than his wife who said "Curse God and die"? All of that came into Job's life because of satanic power. Satan caused that.

First Samuel 28 I have with a question mark because we are not sure if that was actually Samuel or a demon masquerading as Samuel. I have a tendency to think it was actually Samuel, but that is Saul consulting the dead in an actual conversation.

Jesus, Himself, in Matthew 7:21-23, will talk about people in the End Times and at the final judgment, whom He did not know. Yet they are saying to themselves, "Did we not prophesy in Your name? Did we not perform many signs and wonders in Your name?" But He will say plainly, "Depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you."

Matthew 24:24 talks about false prophets in the End Times, doing miracles on such a scale that if it were possible, it would deceive the elect. Luke 4:5 talks about Satan testing Jesus in the wilderness and displaying for Him, in an instant—it was visual—in a moment of time, all the kingdoms of the world. He says, "You can have them all, just a moment of worship."

Acts 8:9 talks about Simon the sorcerer who wowed a whole area of Samaria through his miracle-working powers. Acts 16:16 talks about a little slave girl who had a demon inside of her. She was bringing to her master *"no little profit"* because of her capacity to predict the future. That is what got Paul tossed in the Philippian jail. He cast the demon out of her and the gravy train stopped rolling in.

In Galatians 1:6-9 Paul says:

"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"
(Galatians 1:6-9).

An angel could materialize at your bedside tonight, and it could be an absolutely real experience, but can give you something contrary to what Paul taught. Second Corinthians 11:14 says:

"No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

It is so interesting to listen to these kinds of testimonies of people, these out of body experiences, near death experiences, how they are raised over their body, and they can look down and see the doctors operating on the operating table. They always see this light in all of these testimonies. It is like a tunnel and they are drawn to the light and they think the light is God.

Then the light says something like, in many of these testimonies that I have watched, "Now you are going to go back into your body and I want you to go back to the earth, and I want you to preach unity, tolerance, and all roads lead to God. You have been selected because you are a famous person." They are famous in media or acting, Shirley MacLaine types. They come back and they do what they are told because they encountered God, because it was a light, not understanding that Satan comes as an angel of light.

Revelation 13:3 talks about the Antichrist and his kingdom that looks like it is killed, and then it comes back to life. Sounds like an imitated resurrection. Revelation 13:15 talks about a talking statue. Revelation 16:13-14 talks about demons gathering the nations of the earth together for the final battle, known as the Battle of Armageddon.

I am here to tell you that Satan has tremendous power. Therefore it becomes incumbent upon us to test all things, hence the title of this message. There is an area called epistemology where we get the word "epistle" from. It is a study of how we know what we know. How do you know what is true? The epistemology of the current world system is, if there is an experience, it is true. If I had an experience, it is true. If I saw the dream, it is true. If I had the vision, it is true. If I had the feelings, it is true.

One of the mistakes I made early on in ministry is that I would listen to people giving me their experiences, and I would try to talk them out of their experiences and try to tell them that that really did not happen to them. That was a waste of my time because they had an experience. If you have an experience, you cannot talk someone out of it. The right thing to do is not to try to convince people that they have not had an experience. It is simply to ask a question. "Have you put the experience to the test?"

God is not the only source of signs and wonders in our world. The Bible teaches the reality of satanic signs and wonders, and you know that it is counterfeit. Even though the experience is true because the doctrine contradicts what God already said. That is your test.

"You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all of your soul" (Deuteronomy 13:3).

"You are going to go into the land," Deuteronomy is saying, "and there are going to be people in the land that are actually performing signs and wonders, and they are giving predictions that will happen, and they are going to simultaneously say, 'Let us go against the first two commandments in the Decalogue. Let us follow other gods.'" It is at that point you could recognize a counterfeit.

Paul says in Galatians 1:6-9:

"But...if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!" (Galatians 1:8).

You do not determine if it is true based on the visitation from the angel. You determine it is true by the doctrine emanating from the angel, because God cannot lie. In fact, I understand that it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). God cannot say something on Tuesday and contradict Himself on Wednesday. Yet all of these manifestations involve people that do not know that, and they do not know the Bible well enough to even figure out if it is true or if it is false.

That is why we are living in an epistemology that is being prepared for the Antichrist himself. The world is looking for the experience. They are looking for the sign or the wonder. Do you know what? They are going to get it. They are going to get it in spades. In fact, the false prophet is actually going to call down fire from heaven itself, just like Elijah (Revelation 13:13). Do you think that is going to make the 7:00 news? You bet. The world will think this is true because look at the miracle that just happened.

There was a man named Joseph Smith, a young person who had a vision. I think it was a real vision. He talks about his contact with the angel Moroni. I know for a fact that Angel Moroni was not a real angel. It was Satan or his minions masquerading as an angel of light. How do I know that? I know that because the doctrines that came out of that, the doctrines of Mormonism, whether it is the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, Doctrine and Covenants, etc., go right against this book.

They do not even believe in the Trinity. It is a different Jesus that had Lucifer as his brother. It is some kind of 1600 to 1800 appearance of Jesus in North America. It is a gospel of works. I mean polygamy, you go right on down the list, it contradicts, it contradicts. Yet there are people today that have signed on to that because they never put it to the test. If you put it to the test, it is easy.

There was a man named Muhammad. He had his angelic revelation. He was not contacted by Moroni; he was contacted by Gabriel. That is even a biblical name. When you talk to Muslims, they call him Jibril. At first, I did not know who they were talking about. Then I figured out they are talking about Gabriel—as in Gabriel, early Luke, Mary, prenatal narratives, infancy narratives—that guy, that angel. That is the guy they think they are talking to. That is who Muhammad thought he was talking to. Yet the doctrines of Islam have nothing to do with the Bible. In fact, Islam could not do a better job contradicting the Bible.

Because the test was never made and people thought it was true, we now have the fastest growing religion in the world that calls itself the religion of peace—tell that to the Christians in Syria that are being executed as I speak—because of the manifestation of that demonic spirit. This testing thing, it is a big deal.

"Do not despise prophetic utterances" (1 Thessalonians 5:20).

This was in an early time in church history where prophecies were normal in the body of Christ. The canon of Scripture had not been formulated yet, and so they were dependent upon these kinds of oracles from prophets within the church. Paul endorses them, and he says:

"Do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21).

How do you examine everything carefully? You say to yourself, "God cannot contradict Himself." If this prophet is saying something that contradicts the revealed Word of God, you do not reject the revealed Word of God, but you reject this alleged prophecy.

"Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment" (1 Corinthians 14:29).

"Let the prophets prophesy, let him speak. As for everybody else, I hope they did not take a mental check out, I hope they are screening it through God's revealed Word." I hope you are doing that right now with what I am saying. I hope you do that every single Sunday. Everything you hear in this church needs to be filtered through your own Biblical grid.

You say, "I do not have a biblical grid." There's a problem. How in the world do you test things when you never consulted the roadmap? This is your roadmap. This is how you live the Christian life. You do not live it by emotion. You do not live it by experience. You live it by what God said. You say to yourself, "God is not the only One who performs miracles. I must test all things."

You say, "Is it not unspiritual to be judgmental like that? Pastor, you are very close-minded." Do you know what Paul says about judging? I understand we do not judge people with hypocrisy. We do not try to pull out the splinter from someone's eye when I have the plank in my own eye. I do not judge people's hearts, I tell you, I judge content all of the time. I have the ability to do that because I read the Book and you have the ability to do it, too.

"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

What does that mean to appraise? Have you ever had your property appraised, evaluated?

"But he who is spiritual appraises all things" (1 Corinthians 2:15).

Not some things, but all things. Any content you ever receive in this life has to go through a grid. "If you will not do that, you are not spiritual," Paul says. He says, "The height of spiritual maturity is the capacity and the willingness to do this." Here in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, he describes four kinds of people. There are the unsaved, and then he divides the saved into three categories: the infants, the carnal, and the spiritual.

Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote a famous book on this called "He That is Spiritual"—not the believer that is sinless, but a believer who is sinning less as they are learning to walk under the guidance and the direction of the Holy Spirit. What does Paul say about the spiritual? *"But he who is spiritual appraises [makes evaluations, judgments about] all*

things" (1 Corinthians 2:15). The height of spirituality, the height of spiritual growth, the height of spiritual maturity is doing what I am talking about here.

Have you ever studied what the Bereans did with Paul? *"Now these [the Bereans] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica" (Acts 17:11).* In other words, the Bereans were more on the ball in terms of spiritual growth than the Thessalonians were. That is what he is saying. Why, Paul? *"...for they received the word with great eagerness." (Acts 17:11).* Not just eagerness, but great eagerness. They were not against learning spiritual truth. They did not shut their minds off to spiritual things. They loved to hear the teachings of Paul, but when they heard it, they said, "Not so fast. Hold the phone." And they examined the Scriptures how often? Daily. Do you do that? Do I do that? "To see whether these things were so."

They did that with Paul. Paul does not put them down for it. He says, "Thumbs up. Way to go." If they did that with Paul, how much do you need to do it with me or anybody else you listen to? There are a lot of voices out there telling you all kinds of stuff. You have to have a grid. You have to have a roadmap. You are not going to find it anywhere else than in these 66 books.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

As a pastor, you hear about everything that can be heard. People have come to me constantly with their private dreams, private visions, and private experience. I, in many cases, believe they have actually seen those things, but what I typically say to them is, "Have you tested it?" That makes people upset when I say that because they say I am quenching the Spirit, when in fact the Spirit wrote the Bible and the Spirit says, "Put it to the test." If people will not do that, they are disobeying a command of God. That is a command; it is not a suggestion.

Have you ever read what Jesus said to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:2? Before He criticizes them, He tells them what they are doing well, and He says this:

""I know your deeds, your toil and your toil and your perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you have found them to be false"" (Revelation 2:2).

Jesus does not say to them, "You all are so close-minded." He is saying, "Thumbs up, because your tolerance stretches all the way from Genesis to Revelation." That is where my tolerance is, from Genesis to Revelation. If it matches that, I am not against it. If it does not match that, we have a problem, because there is another source of miracles and the miraculous in this world.

Yet particularly around Halloween, you can get so focused on Satan and the devil and false teachers and hyperventilate about that stuff to such a degree that we forget that Satan, although powerful, does not have as much power as God. Did you know that?

Look at the second part of Exodus 7:12. Moses and Aaron do their thing; Pharaoh's magicians respond with their miracle. *"But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs" (Exodus 7:12)*. We are starting to get a picture of who is going to win this thing? The ten plagues are coming up. We will start with the Nile next week. In every single plague, God is going to win.

Does the devil have power? You bet he does. Does God have power? Oh yeah, and way more. "How can you be so confident?" Because of Ezekiel 28:13, speaking of the fall of Satan, says this:

"On the day that you [Lucifer] were created" (Ezekiel 28:13).

*"You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created" (Ezekiel 28:15).*

The moment I see in the text that the devil and his kingdom are created beings, I say, "This is no contest. This is over before the battle even starts," because as a created being, Satan is not God. He does not have omniscience, does not know everything. He does not have omnipotence, all power, and he is not omnipresent, everywhere at once. God is. Satan is not.

I do not have to get my theology from the movie "Rocky."

I remember the first movie my dad ever took me to see was "Rocky" there in Long Beach, California. Then it was just "Rocky." We did not know about "Rocky II" or "Rocky III." It was "Rocky I." You have two guys in the ring that are pretty fairly matched. I had to give a slight edge to Apollo, but the Italian Stallion was a tough guy. You are sitting there through the whole movie, even the people in the movie started chanting, "Rocky!" rooting for him. You are sitting there watching and you do not even know who is going to win exactly.

A lot of people get their theology from movies like this. They think God and Satan are rivals. Who is going to pull it off? We do not know. But the truth of the matter is, you do know this is no contest. Genesis 1:1 says: *"In the beginning God created."* That means atheism is not true because God is a Creator. It means pantheism is not true because God is transcendent over creation. It means that polytheism cannot be true because only one God created. Materialism cannot be true because matter comes from a source, it comes from God. Humanism cannot be true because man is not even on the scene yet. Naturalism or evolution cannot be true because it says, "God created."

Right out of the gate, that dualism, which is this theology here, cannot be true. Dualism is the idea that God has a rival. There is no rival. There is no rival because it says that

he was a created being (Ezekiel 28:13). Does he have a lot of power, a lot of trouble? Absolutely. Should you fear him? I like the idea of respect better. I do not want to mess around with Satan. I do not want to start yelling at him or screaming at him, or trying to give him a black eye and running him out of town. If the devil wants to encounter me, I am doing it through God's resources or I ain't suiting up. Let us just put it that way. Even though he can put tremendous pressure on a mere human being, he is no rival for God.

Consequently, Aaron's staff swallows up their staffs. What about Pharaoh? Would he listen? Not yet.

"Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them"
(Exodus 7:13).

That is a dangerous place to be in, folks. Proverbs 29:1 says:

*"A man who hardens his neck after much reproof
Will suddenly be broken and without remedy"* (Proverbs 29:1).

It is true that God hardens Pharaoh, but as Charles Ryrie points out:

"Seven times Pharaoh hardened his own heart before God first hardened it, though the prediction that God would do it preceded it all."¹

Ed Hindson says the same thing:

"For the initial five plagues, the text registers Pharaoh as the agent of hardening. Not until the sixth plague does God participate in the confirmation of Pharaoh's own volitional choices."²

Yet God in advance said, "This is how it is going to play out". There is another short-term prediction right there at the end of Exodus 7:13. Speaking of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, it says: "...as the Lord had said" (Exodus 7:13).

If these short-term prophecies are coming to pass with such accuracy, then the long-term prophecies are coming also. Here is the long-term prophecy for you: Unless you enter heaven with the right passport, you cannot enter; you will not get in. What is the passport? The passport is the transferred righteousness of God. I did not say your own righteousness. I said righteousness that is God's, transferred to you.

A fancy name for that is imputation at the point of faith alone in Christ alone. If you want to understand Paul and his ministry, you could sum it up with Philippians 3:9 where he says,

¹ Charles Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible*, page 96.

² Hindson, E. E., & Mitchell, D. R., eds. (2010). *King James Version Bible Commentary for Today: The Most Up-to-Date Commentary on the Time-Honored Text of the King James Version* (p. 86). Thomas Nelson.

"not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Law...but the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith" (Philippians 3:9).

The Protestant reformers called this alien righteousness. You know the word "alien"? It is something coming from the other world. That is what alien righteousness is. It is righteousness that is transferred to you as a gift the moment you place your trust in Jesus for salvation. Unless you have that, you cannot get into heaven. When you travel, the passport is a big deal. If you do not have the right passport you are limited—what you can do, when you can leave. Heaven is the same way. There is a passport to get in. A lot of people think they are going, but they are not because they are trying to do it through self-righteousness.

I do not know about you, but I have no intention, absolutely no intention, of standing before God one day in my own fig leaves and self-righteousness, because I know myself, and I know that is not going to get me very far in the presence of a holy God. The greatest need a human being has is the transfer of righteousness of Jesus Christ. I hope today, right now, you can receive it just by placing your trust in Jesus.