

Frogs, Fleas & Flies!

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Date: 30 January 2022

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. The book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 8.

Exodus chapter 8. And we'll just read again in verse 1. Then the Lord said to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, Thus says the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me. Let my people go, that they may serve me. As those living in the Western Isles, even if I was to say the word midgie to you, if I was to say the word midgie to you, you'd probably start to feel itchy. I don't know what it is about midgies, but just talking about midgies or even thinking about midgies, it makes me itchy. In fact, while I was preparing this sermon earlier this week, you know, I found myself scratching my hands and scratching my head at just the thought of midgies.

Because we all know what the midgies are like. We're thankful it's a winter. They're not out just now. But as you know, midgies are horrible creatures that make you so itchy and so irritated.

[1 : 30] They bite your skin and they suck your blood. And they make you so frustrated and sometimes even so furious, especially when it's a beautiful and calm evening where there's finally no wind and no rain.

And yet when you go outside to work in the garden or to mow the lawn or in some cases go out to the moor, to the pits, but within minutes you're surrounded by swarms of midgies and they're looking for a piece of your flesh.

And more often than not, when midgies come out, you have to submit and you have to surrender and just abandon whatever it is that you're doing and go inside for shelter. But what's remarkable about these itchy and irritating creatures is that they're tiny.

They're tiny. An interesting fact for you is that they're only two to three millimeters in length. And each midgie, each midgie weighs one eight thousandth of a gram.

One eight thousandth of a gram. They're tiny. I'm getting itchy already, talking about them. And you know, when you're ambushed and attacked by a cloud of midgies, they feel anything but tiny.

[2 : 42] And you know, it's in those moments of being itchy and irritated by midgies, maybe I shouldn't say this, but I often wonder why God created midgies at all. But you know, I'm reminded then that even the smallest of creatures, they are stronger than me.

Even the smallest of God's creatures are stronger than me. And in many ways, that's what Pharaoh was reminded here in Exodus chapter 8, that even the smallest of God's creatures are stronger than the king of Egypt.

Even the smallest of God's creatures are stronger than Pharaoh. And you can't get much smaller than frogs, fleas, and flies.

Frogs, fleas, and flies. And they are our headings this morning. We see three plagues in chapter 8. Frogs, fleas, and flies.

So first of all, we'll look at frogs. Look at verse 1. Then the Lord said to Moses, Go into Pharaoh and say to him, Thus says the Lord, Let my people go that they may serve me.

[3 : 47] But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your country with frogs. The Nile shall swarm with frogs that shall come up into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed and into the houses of your servants and your people and into your ovens and your kneading bowls.

The frogs shall come up on you and your people and all of your servants. Now last week, you remember that we were all standing ringside.

We were all standing ringside as Pharaoh stepped into the ring to go ten rounds with God. Because as we said, the word plague, The word plague that's used throughout the story of the Exodus, it literally means blows in the sense of coming to blows.

They're getting into a fight. But the thing is, the fight wasn't between Moses and Pharaoh. The fight was between those who were standing in their corner, the ones who were supporting them in their corner.

Because in Moses' corner, he had the strength and the support of the Lord, the Creator and the Covenant God of Israel. But in Pharaoh's corner, he had all the Egyptian gods on his side.

[4 : 58] And with these ten plagues that we see in the story of Exodus, or ten blows, we see that there's this huge clash, there's this huge conflict between Israel's champion and Egypt's champion.

And last week, during round one, we saw that the Lord delivered the first blow to Egypt's champion. In many ways, you could say that the Lord went straight for the jugular, because the heart of Egypt's lifeblood was said to be in the hands of this God called Happy.

He was the Egyptian god of the river Nile. And Pharaoh, he was so dedicated and so devoted to Happy, that every morning before he washed, he went down to the Nile to worship Happy.

But the Lord, as we saw, the Lord made Happy unhappy when he struck his first blow by turning the water in the river Nile into blood.

And then all the fish died and it all stank. And so in a moment, we saw in round one that the Lord proved that happy is nothing more than an impotent and ineffectual God.

[6 : 07] Of course, the key question is, how did the king respond? How did Pharaoh react when the Lord defeated his dead God? And unsurprisingly, we read that Pharaoh hardened his heart.

Pharaoh refused and resisted and rejected the Lord. As we said, that's what it means to harden your heart. It's to stubbornly refuse and resist and reject the Lord as your God.

And so after receiving the first blow, we see that Pharaoh, he refused to bow. Pharaoh, he hardened his heart. He refused to submit and surrender his life to the Lord.

But the Lord wasn't done with Pharaoh. Because when we come to chapter 8, a week has now gone by. Seven days have passed and the Lord is back for round two.

They're going to go back into the ring. And you know, what we see here in the story of the Exodus is that one by one, blow by blow, the Lord is going to reveal and reaffirm to Pharaoh that he's the champion.

[7 : 13] He's king. He's the world's greatest. He's the living and the true God. But you know, as we stand ringside, as we're watching this great, this great conflict taking place, as we stand ringside and watch Pharaoh go ten rounds with God, the question we all have to answer is, whose side are you on?

Whose side are you on? Whose side are you on?

Whose side are you on? And so we come to round two out of ten rounds with God. And round two is initiated and instigated by the Lord.

We see that in verse one. The Lord said to Moses, go to Pharaoh, say to him, thus says the Lord, let my people go, that they may serve me.

And you know, what we ought to notice straight away is that the Lord gave Moses and Aaron the same mission and the same message as before. The Lord didn't say to his servants to alter the message or amend the mission to Pharaoh.

[8 : 27] No, Moses and Aaron were to preach to Pharaoh with passion and with power, just like before. They were to go to Pharaoh with confidence and conviction and say, as they were told, thus says the Lord, let my people go.

And you know, the fact that they had to go with the same mission and the same message, it should be a reminder to us and even a reassurance for us that we don't need to change the mission of the church.

We don't need to change the message of the church. You know, just because there are hardened hearts in our congregation or in our community, we don't need to change the message or the mission.

We don't need to conform anything to make the gospel more attractive or more appealing or more flashy or more fashionable. Because the thing is, my friend, there's nothing wrong with the mission. There's nothing wrong with the message. But there's something wrong with man. There's nothing wrong with the mission or the message, but there's something wrong with man. And as my good friend J.C. Ryle always reminds us, the heart of the problem stems here.

[9 : 36] The problem of the heart. And as you know, my friend, it's only this God-given mission and God-given message of the gospel that will save souls. And we need to be reminded of that.

That nothing else will do. Nothing else will change lives. Nothing else will convert sinners. Nothing else will bring souls from darkness to light, from death to life, from the dungeon to liberty. Nothing else will do your soul any good, my friend, apart from the old, old story. Nothing else will do your soul any good apart from the old, old story.

Does that know what the hymn writer said? Tell me the old, old story. Of unseen things above. Of Jesus and His glory. Of Jesus and His love.

Tell me the old, old story. And you know, my friend, the mission and the message of the gospel, it doesn't need to change or conform because nothing else will do your soul any good apart from the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

[10:47] And that's what we see here. The Lord sends Moses back to Pharaoh. He sends him back for round two with the same mission and the same message.

But you know, when the Lord comes to blows with Pharaoh in round two, He comes to blows by this infestation and this invasion of frogs.

And you can see, well, the Lord is taking another swing at the gods of Egypt. In fact, this god was an Egyptian goddess called Heket.

Heket. Heket, that's her name. And you know, what's fascinating about this Egyptian goddess, Heket, is that she's described and depicted by the Egyptians as a frog-headed goddess.

So she's a frog-headed goddess. And because of Heket, the frog-headed goddess, frogs were often thought to be special and sacred in Egypt.

[11:48] Frogs weren't to be killed. You didn't kill a frog because it was special and sacred. Frogs, they said, encouraged and enabled women to conceive and have children.

But when the Lord plagued Egypt with frogs, the Egyptians were being made to see that frogs weren't anything special or sacred. They were anything but special and sacred because, as we read, the frogs, they invaded and they infested their houses and their homes, their cupboards and their couches, their ornaments and their ovens, their beds and their bowls, the frogs were absolutely everywhere.

They were even in Pharaoh's palace. But to add insult to injury, then we're told that Pharaoh's magicians, Pharaoh's magicians, they add more frogs and more frogs to the story.

They produce more and more frogs and instead of making the situation better, they make the situation worse. In fact, the situation becomes so bad that Pharaoh had to call for Moses and Aaron to get rid of the frogs.

The magicians can't get rid of them, so they called for Moses and Aaron to get rid of the frogs and we read that in verse 8. Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, Plead with the Lord to take away the frogs from me and from my people and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.

[13:12] And you think they are, well, Pharaoh, he's surrendering. You think, oh, there's a glimmer of hope. Pharaoh's giving his word and promising that if the Lord takes away the frogs, then he will let the Israelites go out into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord.

But when we read the narrative and when the Lord did as Pharaoh requested and took away the frogs, we read in verse 15, but when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them as the Lord had said.

And you know, my friend, there's great application for us here because have you ever encountered or experienced a difficult or a dangerous situation, something that's come into your life and it's made you anxious or afraid or even apprehensive.

But did you find yourself bartering or even bargaining with the Lord? Where you would say to the Lord, well, Lord, if you do this for me, if you get me out of this situation, if you help me here, if you protect me, if you provide for me, then I'll follow you.

I'll trust you. I'll go to church. I'll read my Bible. I'll become a Christian. Lord, if you do this for me, then Lord, I will do this for you. And in the heat of the moment, maybe you do it in your own mind, you're bartering and bargaining with God, just like Pharaoh did.

[14:51] You're bartering and bargaining with God. But then, like Pharaoh, when the problem has maybe passed and there's relief and there's recovery and as it says in the passage, there's respite, then prayer stops.

There's no more pleading. There's no more bartering. There's no more bargaining with the Lord. The situation is fixed, but you've forgotten the Lord. The situation is fixed, but you've forgotten the Lord.

You know, I was once like that. I would pray in an emergency. I would use God like a lucky charm. I would treat Him like a genie in a lamp.

I would treat Him like this safety net for my life. I would call upon God only when I needed Him. I would come to God on my own terms and with my own conditions.

I would barter and bargain with God. But you know, my friend, that's not how we treat the Lord, is it? That's not how we should treat the Lord because we're not to bargain or to barter with the Lord.

[15 : 59] The Bible tells us to submit and to surrender to the Lord. We're not to bargain or to barter. We're to submit and to surrender our lives to the Lord.

But as we see with Pharaoh, Pharaoh wasn't for submitting. He wasn't for surrendering to the Lord. He hardened his heart, which brings us to round three. Round three is fleas.

So there's frogs, then there's fleas. Look at verse 16. The Lord said to Moses, Say to Aaron, Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth so that it may become gnats in all the land of Egypt.

And they did so. Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth and there were gnats on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats in all the land of Egypt.

The magicians tried by their secret arts to produce gnats, but they could not. So there were gnats on man and beast. Then the magician said to Pharaoh, This is the finger of God.

[17 : 03] But Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he would not listen to them as the Lord had said. Now as we said before, all the plagues of Egypt, all of these blows that they came together, they're all demonstrations, they're all declarations of the Lord's power and the Lord's promise to His people.

And they're all presented in comparison to the impotence and the ineffectiveness of the gods of Egypt. And so with Happy out of the picture, with Hecate now being knocked out, up next comes Seth, the Egyptian god of the desert.

Seth, the Egyptian god of the desert. But round three with the Lord, round three came unannounced for Pharaoh. Pharaoh had just broken his promise with the Lord.

Pharaoh had gone back on his word with the Lord. Therefore the Lord didn't give him a word of warning. In the past, the Lord had sent Moses and Aaron. We saw that. He sent them declaring and demanding, thus says the Lord, let my people go.

But this time, the Lord was silent. The Lord was silent with Pharaoh and the Lord sent yet another plague upon Egypt. which, you know my friend, this third plague, it should be a reminder to us, as it was a reminder to Pharaoh, don't test God.

[18 : 31] Don't, don't mess with God. Don't play with God. That's what these plagues should teach us. Don't play with God because you're only playing with fire.

And the Bible says that God is a consuming fire. So don't play with God. Don't mess with him because the Lord said to Moses, say to Aaron, stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth so that it may become gnats in all the land of Egypt.

Now, it's not clear as to what specific species of insect came up from the dust of the desert.

Whatever it was, they were itchy and they were irritating insects.

They were itchy and irritating insects. Some suggest that they were gnats, as it says in the passage here, which were very similar to midges, which bite and suck your blood.

And the thing about gnats is that they fly together in large numbers. And that when you see them flying together, it's like a black cloud moving across the sky.

[19 : 42] Other commentators suggest that the insects which came from the dust of the desert were lice or gnats or fleas or cockroaches or termites or mosquitoes and, you know, just talking about them makes you want to scratch yourself.

But as we said, this plague, this coming to blows, it was a fight between the Lord and Seth, the Egyptian god of the desert.

And the interesting thing about this god, Seth, is that he's just depicted and described by the Egyptians as having the head of an aardvark.

The head of an aardvark. Now, as you know, an aardvark is a mammal. It's a nocturnal mammal with this long, long nose which is used for sniffing out all its insects.

It only eats insects and termites. In fact, the name aardvark, it's apparently Afrikaans and it means earth pig or ground pig which doesn't seem like a very ferocious animal at all.

[20 : 45] But aardvarks are said to have sharp claws and very powerful legs that they would use to dig deep burrows. But the thing about this god, the Egyptian god, Seth, this aardvark god, is that

there would be no way he would be able to sniff and to swallow all these insects that the Lord has sent.

There's no way the aardvark god would protect the king of Egypt against the Lord. That's the point that's been emphasized here which is why once again the Lord proves, he proves that Seth is an ineffective and an impotent god.

He's ineffective. He's completely impotent in comparison to the Lord. What's more is that when Pharaoh's magicians try to mimic this miracle, they can't.

They did with the frogs, they did with the water being turned into blood, but this miracle, they can't do it. And they confess, as we read there, they confess in verse 18 that this is the finger of verse 19, this is the finger of God.

This is the finger of God. God. And notice it's only one finger. Just one finger. Wasn't even the fist of God.

[22 : 12] Wasn't even the foot of God. Just the finger of God. And you know, my friend, one finger of God has more muscle and more might than all the gods of this world.

One finger of God has more muscle and more might than all the gods of this world. And that's why the Bible calls us to submit and to surrender to Him.

He is the living and true God. But Pharaoh here, Pharaoh could see that the Lord is God, but still he stubbornly refuses and resists and rejects the Lord.

He hardens his heart. Verse 19, Pharaoh's heart was hardened. He would not listen to them as the Lord had said. He had seen these miracles. He knew who was God and yet he refused and resisted and rejected.

And you know, my friend, there are actually many people who often say to me, I've been told this so many times, Murdo, if I saw a miracle, I'd believe. If I saw these miracles that Pharaoh saw, I'd believe.

[23 : 25] If I saw what Jesus was doing, I'd believe. If I saw what others saw Jesus doing, I would believe. I would believe if I saw Jesus healing the sick or causing the blind to see or the deaf to hear or the lame to walk, I'd believe.

If I saw lepers being cleansed or storms being calmed or 5,000 plus people being fed or water being turned into wine or the dead being raised, then I would believe.

I promise you, I'd believe. And the thing is, you wouldn't. You wouldn't believe. You just say that as an excuse.

Because, my friend, you look at the, you look at the evidence in Scripture of how many people, Pharaoh included, saw miracles. how many people saw Jesus performing miracles and yet they stubbornly refused and rejected and resisted Jesus.

In fact, like Pharaoh, they hardened their heart. The people of Jesus' day, they hardened their heart against Jesus so much that when they were given the opportunity to say something about Him, what did they say?

[24 : 35] Crucify Him. Crucify Him. Crucify Him. You know, my friend, it's not a miracle of God that you need to see. It's the mercy of God you need to seek.

It's not a miracle of God that you need to see. It's the mercy of God that we all need to seek because the promise of our Bible is that the Lord says to us, when you seek Me, you will find Me. When you seek Me with all your heart. When you seek Me, you will find Me. When you seek Me with all your heart.

But Pharaoh, oh, Pharaoh, how's your heart? And it's just getting harder. Pharaoh continues to go ten rounds with God and he's been reminded that even the smallest of God's creatures are stronger than Him because you can't get much smaller than frogs and fleas and flies.

That's what we see lastly. Flies. Frogs, fleas, and flies. Look at verse 20. Then the Lord said to Moses, Rise up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh as he goes out to the water and say to him, Thus says the Lord, Let My people go that they may serve Me.

[25 : 57] Or else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and on your servants and your people and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies and also the ground on which they stand.

Do you know what's remarkable about those opening verses? Is that regardless of the fact that Happy, Hecate, and Seth were defeated, proven to be powerless gods, none of that deterred or discouraged Pharaoh from worshipping before he washed.

None of it stopped him carrying out and going the same way he was going. Because once again, right at the beginning of these verses, we read that Pharaoh is on his knees at the Nile. He's back on his knees at the Nile worshipping his Egyptian gods. And you know, it's just as Solomon said in one of his Proverbs, Like a dog that returns to its vomit, a fool repeats his folly. Like a dog that returns to its vomit, a fool repeats his folly. Despite all the exhortation and the evidence of the impotence and the ineffectiveness of these Egyptian gods, Pharaoh still has a heedless and a hollow and a hardened heart.

[27 : 29] And yet the Lord isn't done with him. The Lord isn't done with Pharaoh yet because in round four, round four begins, and the Lord commands Moses and Aaron to go to Pharaoh with the same mission and the same message as before.

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, let my people go. But this time in round four, it was a word against another Egyptian god called Uachet.

Uachet, the god of flies or the goddess of flies. Uachet, the goddess of flies. And you know, it's interesting when you read the chapter, there's actually no Hebrew word for flies here.

It's just swarms. So literally, the Lord sends swarms of swarms. The Lord sends swarms of swarms to the point that the flies were told that they not only filled the air, they covered the ground.

They filled the air and they covered the ground. You aren't open your mouth because they'd go straight in. They infiltrated, they infested the houses and the homes of Egypt, all the people, all the places, even the palace was filled with flies.

[28 : 44] They were in the air, they were on the ground, they were flies everywhere. And as you know, the thing about flies is that they transmit and they transfer disease. It's said that the normal house fly that we see in our own homes, it can transfer and transmit up to 65 diseases to humans.

But you know, the fact that these swarms of flies devoured, we're told that they devoured the Egyptians, it indicates that these type of flies, they stung the Egyptians. In fact, commentators suggest that the swarms of flies were called dog flies.

And they were called dog flies because they were the kind of flies that were apparently around in Egypt at the time and they would often sting people and suck their blood.

So they were bigger midges, let's say. They were dog flies and those dog flies that carried and transmitted and transferred disease, they often brought blindness upon people.

They were known for giving, for causing people to become blind. And yet, what we read here, again, the fourth plague, despite the demonstration, despite the declaration of the Lord's presence and the Lord's power, we're told once again, right at the end of the chapter, verse 32, but the Lord, but Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also and did not let the people go.

[30 : 17] Pharaoh hardened his heart. He had seen it. He knew the Lord was powerful, more powerful than all the Egyptian gods and yet he hardens his heart and did not let the people go.

But you know what's fascinating? And with this, I'll conclude. Uachit, the Egyptian goddess of flies, she shared many similarities with the Philistine goddess of flies.

He was called Balzebub. Balzebub. So Uachit, the Egyptian goddess of flies, she shared similarities with the Philistine god of flies, Balzebub.

And when you hear the name Balzebub, you probably know that's a name that was often attributed to the devil. In the New Testament, Jesus refers to him as Balzebub, the demon, the prince of demons.

Balzebub, the prince of demons. And you know, this is so important to understand for us because you know, what's really going on here with Pharaoh's hardened heart is not that Pharaoh wants to come to blows or battle with the Lord.

[31 : 36] It's not that he wants to enter the ring and go ten rounds with God and see who can stand at the end. It's that Pharaoh is blind. The god of this world, the prince of demons, has blinded his mind.

He's blinded by the god of this world. In fact, the Bible reminds us and reaffirms to us that the god of this world, the devil, he has blinded the minds of unbelievers.

He has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The devil, the god of flies, we'll call him, the prince of demons, he has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel in Jesus Christ.

And you know, my unconverted friend, whether you are here or at home, watching at home this morning, sadly, that describes you.

That describes you. The god of this world has blinded your mind to keep you from seeing the light of the gospel in Jesus Christ.

[32 : 51] Christ. Now, does that take away your responsibility to seek the Lord? Not at all. Not at all.

Your responsibility, my friend, this is your God-given responsibility. And hear me when I say this. Your God-given responsibility is to ask the Lord to open your eyes to see your ears to hear and your heart to understand what the Lord is saying to you.

That's your God-given responsibility. You're to ask the Lord to open your eyes to see your ears to hear and your heart to understand what the Lord is saying to you.

Because as a spectator standing ringside, as a spectator standing ringside, watching blind Pharaoh coming to blows with God, you need to answer this question.

Whose side are you on? Whose side are you on? Because the call of the gospel is to submit and to surrender to the champion.

[34 : 10] You're to submit and surrender to the Lord and confess Him as King over your life and over your heart. Whose side?

Whose side, my friend, are you on? Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for Thy Word and that even though we are considering words that were written thousands of years ago, that Thy Word is still living and still active.

It is still relevant and able to speak into our hearts and into our lives. And even as we're reminded about Pharaoh, that the God of this world had blinded his mind in unbelief.

And Lord, our prayer is that for our unconverted friends, our unbelieving friends, our uncommitted friends, that they would ask that they might receive, that they would seek, that they would find, that they would knock and know that the door will be opened to them.

O Lord, our prayer is that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God would be seen so clearly for them in the face of Jesus Christ. Lord, bless Thy truth to us, we pray.

[35 : 28] Apply it by Thy Spirit that Thou wouldest have all the glory, that Christ would have the preeminence, and that we, as Thy people, that we would know blessing, not only today, but for time and for eternity.

Lord, do us good and we pray, go before us, keep us, we plead, for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 78.

Psalm 78, it's in the Sing Psalms version. Psalm 78, it's on page 103.

we're singing from verse 35 down to the bottom of the page, verse 45.

Psalm 78 and verse 35. And Psalm 78, like Psalm 105, which we were singing earlier, it recounts the history of what we're looking at in the book of Exodus.

[36 : 35] It recounts the history of all these plagues that were brought upon the Egyptians. So Psalm 78 and verse 35. God their rock, then they remembered.

Their Redeemer, God Most High, but their words were meant to flatter. What they told him was a lie. In their hearts they were untrue. From his covenant they withdrew.

Yet in mercy he forgave them. From destruction he refrained. Many times he curbed his anger and his utmost wrath restrained. that they were but flesh he knew like a passing breeze that blew.

And we'll sing on down to the verse 45 of Psalm 78 to God's praise. Amen. God their rock, they then remember their Redeemer, God Most High.

God their words were meant to platter. What they told him was I.

[37 : 50] In their hearts they were untrue. From his covenant they were untrue.

Yet in mercy He forgave them from destruction he refrained.

many times He curbed his anger and his utmost wrath restrained.

That they were what flesh he knew like a passing breeze himself blue How they reaped him in the desert ever ready to rebel Thanks the Holy One and tested, the great God of Israel.

They forgot His wonders show to them in the fields of stone.

[39 : 33] They forgot His signs in Egypt, when from hardship they were saved.

When to blood He turned His river, making foul the drink they grieve.

God sends forms of peace to fight, or to cross their land to fight.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.