

# Look to God and Not to Egypt

by Erlo Stegen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting God and not men, and warns against the dangers of a culture of entitlement and seeking help from the wrong sources.*

**Duration:** 1:10:03

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 17:16, Isaiah 31:1, Isaiah 31:3, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

**Topics:** "Egypt"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of trusting in God rather than relying on worldly wealth and success. He shares a story about a visit from an older person who advised against starting a water factory, stating that it would not succeed in the market. The preacher emphasizes that preachers, in particular, should not be consumed by worries about money and should instead trust in God for their provision. He also warns against forgetting one's calling and the importance of staying true to God's word, using examples from the Bible to illustrate the consequences of straying from God's path.

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## Transcript

Our text, we find in the book of Isaiah, and we find it in chapter 31. Isaiah 31 from verse 1. Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel nor seek the Lord. Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster and will not call back His words, but will arise against the house of evildoers and against the help of those who work iniquity.

Now the Egyptians are mere men and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the Lord stretches out His hand, both he who helps will fall, and he who is helped will fall down. They all will perish together.

We'll read thus far. The theme for this message is, woe to those who go down to Egypt. In English, woe to those who go down.

Woe to those who go down. We could ignore the rest of the text and just stay upon these first few words, which simply say, woe to those who are on the downward way and who are not going upward, who are not going forward, but who are backsliding. So right from the beginning, let's ask you the question, are you going up spiritually or are you going down? You might say, no, I'm very stable and on a plateau.

No, you can never stay put. If you're on the same level, then you're automatically going down. And God cries for you and says, oh, woe to you who are going down spiritually.

It is a heartbreaking thing to observe a person who is not going forward spiritually. And as you look at them, you sense that they're going down. I wonder where you are spiritually.

We've heard of certain times like with Dirk and Ruth being married for five years. How have you progressed over these five years? Maybe it's 25 years. Where are you spiritually? What growth has there been? In the letter to Hebrews, God says that the Lord says there are those who should be teachers already if it went according to the time that they were crucified.

But no, they still need to be nursed with milk. Now can you just picture the scene of a man with a beard already having to suckle milk? In his mother's arms. And in nappies.

Quite a picture. But spiritually, many are in that category. If it went according to time, they should be helping others, but they still need to be helped.

Why so? How is it possible that a person who's been on the road of faith, they've been a Christian for 10 years, 20, 30 years, yet they're still bumping from disaster to disaster. They still are being deceived and it boggles the mind as to how such a thing is possible. I'd ask Esther just to bring some of my notes here which I'd forgotten in my office.

I remember there's a story of two students. These two students were at Duke University. And one day it was to be a certain drama or pantomime and these students dressed up as devils, blue devils.

And so they were walking along on the way to the place where this was to happen. Now, on the way, it was unfortunately a place with many offices and buildings and they walked into the wrong building. And in that building they had a prayer meeting.

The Christians were there. The saved ones. They were there and had a prayer meeting.

So here were these students. They'd walked into the wrong service. They'd meant to go into that drama thing and here they were suddenly in the prayer meeting.

Now, those who were praying heard the noise of these students coming in and they lifted up their heads and saw these devils coming in. And they said, And they said, Now, one of the ladies who was very well dressed and was also showing off her clothing and her jewelry, she tried to shuffle away through the pew. And then it was heard as she shouted out in fear.

And they screamed in terror. Now, These two men forgot and didn't understand the reason why they were all running away. And when they saw this woman screaming out in terror, they went to her to console her and embrace her.

And she screeched even more. She lifted up her hand and said, And in that split second, in that moment, the truth came to life. And she says, And by the way, these 25 years I've been on your side.

That's what's called a moment of truth. A moment of truth will come to you, dear brother and sister. It will come to you, the moment of truth.

It will happen one day, whether you like it or not. You can be 25 or 52 years old, but that moment will come in your life. She thought she was a Christian.

She had claimed that she was a Christian for the 25 years. I think she wasn't a believer at all. And yet, if you look at their lives, you've got to say that the evidence is that they've never been a Christian.

Now, we've heard of these in our text, who went down. Where to? To Egypt. Why? Because they were counseled in that way.

They were those who advised them like that. Their reason for going down to Egypt? They were looking for help. They sought help from the Egyptians.

They sought help from the Egyptians. That's why I say one marvels that people can go back after so many years, they make no spiritual progress. Here we find them going back down to Egypt.

They should have remembered that it was from Egypt that they had been redeemed. They were the ones the Israelites had cried out years before for redemption, and God sent Moses, and they were led out of Egypt. Now, we mean this in a spiritual and not a geographical sense.

Children go to school and are taught that, well, sex is just as natural as can be, it's just your instinct, you just do it. And so the children are counseled and advised that that's the way that things just are, that's the norm. Many, many schools today, most of them are simply Egypt.

The teachings, the philosophy of it is just Egypt. And you find people advising each other with the wisdom of Egypt. And so people easily accept these deceitful ways and that you can be financially dishonest and do what you please and get away with it.

One person who had been with us and was a preacher, very eloquent too, he would say, but you've got to separate business, your business life is a completely separate issue, Christianity must be kept out of it. Business is business, and Christianity is Christianity. Well, if your faith hasn't reached all parts of your being, including your pocket, then your faith hasn't gotten hold of you, you still have Egypt in you.

And God says, woe to you if you go down to Egypt, because that is the way down leads there. And I'd ask the question, why did they go down to Egypt? You see, the context of this is that they were seeking help and military support against the Assyrians because the king of Assyria was threatening to come with all his armies and they wanted assistance. And as the enemies approached, God's people said, well, who are we anyway? We can't stand, we cannot resist, we've got no chance against these.

They saw themselves as too few, too weak, and so they began to shake with fear and trembling, saying we can't conquer these people. Just look at their strength, their weapons, we cannot resist such a mighty army. And they saw themselves as being in dire danger.

So down they went to Egypt to seek military assistance, help us they said, Assyria is going to swallow us. Because the Assyrians at that time were renowned for their chariots, their horse-pulled chariots, and they were famous for it. The archaeologists have uncovered some of the art of that era.

And found that these chariots of the Assyrians were being pulled by three horses in the front and there were also some horses behind them. Now Palestine and these areas where the children of the Lord were living were just hills and dusty places where horses couldn't graze. But in Assyria and in Egypt there were

these wonderful grassy plains where the horses were able to be reared.

And as they looked at these chariots of the Assyrians, they said, These chariots and these fierce military machines, they felt so incapable of being able to resist them and they said that they have no hope. They felt completely useless. How would you feel facing such an enemy? And so they counselled together and they shared ideas and they said we cannot resist them.

We are going to be annihilated. We are going to be completely finished off. They saw this giant Satan in front of them.

And so as they discussed it seemed only logical to them that they should go down to Egypt where they too had these wonderful chariots and wisdom. They were known for their intellect and intelligence. So the Egyptians were known for their strength and for their wisdom.

Remember that Moses was trained in all the wisdom of Egypt. And so God's people said well that's the end of us. That's just going to be our finishing off by them.

We are going to come to an utter end. Maybe you're faced with an enormous difficulty. Perhaps it's a sick child.

Some obstacle that seems such a mountain before you. You say well it's hopeless, it's useless, what can I do? Maybe your friends influence you. And your friends influence you.

To be even more afraid. And so you'll find that there are those who are counsel will go to those who can see into the future. Those who can prophesy for you.

Those who are able to use their occult powers to give you some advice. There's nobody who doesn't come to a point where they'll say what shall I do? Perhaps you're from a pagan family. Perhaps they worship the ancestors, the spirits of the dead.

And you are there now as a Christian. And they threaten you. They say if you don't participate in these rituals we're going to hit you, we'll hurt you.

If you don't go with us to this certain place we'll fix you. I remember about five years ago Visited by somebody from overseas Quite an old person, a mature person, grey haired, wise. The grey hair should show it.

He said He said He said to me I noticed that you people are trying to build a water factory But I tell you, you don't stand a chance in the market. Look, there's Coca-Cola and Nestle in the water industry. Who are you? You small fry.

You don't stand a chance. You're just a little mission. This is the Goliath before you.

Don't have a chance. Even if you try and enter into the market They'll just squeeze you out of it and squash you like a fly. And he said And he said And let them buy the equipment and be in charge of it And you people can get a few cents a bottle And you can get some commission But let it be a negotiated deal.

Another businessman A multi-millionaire He said He said to me Hey, I can see what's going on. You can never succeed like this. He said What you should rather do If you want to make a success of ministry Is you need to raise funds You need to go to Christians and ask them to donate into the fund And then you'll

be able to propagate the gospel more effectively To invest their money.

Do it like that. Because if you really want this water factory to succeed You're going to need at least 33 million rands worth of equipment And where will you get it from? Now, that's just in the business arena Where one must be careful It can be in many other things Maybe just your own family life at home There are problems and you're wondering about it You're pondering as to what the way out is How are you going to handle your children You're afraid of this and scared of that And people do come with their advice Now, she said, I've heard, it's been rumored abroad that you're wanting to start a water factory. What I've done is I've arranged an appointment for you tomorrow at a certain very wealthy businessman owns a number of factories and you talk to him, let him loan you some money.

That's how to do it. That's how to succeed. Now listen, you preachers in particular, you who love money and worried by money all the time, listen to the application of this.

God calls you. How will I live? Where will the money come from? Where will the food come from? And that's just a sign of the time of people who can't trust God. I don't force you to live by faith.

It's not all people, if I live by faith, trusting the Lord, you say hello, you don't, you don't trust the Lord. Look, there are so many things, so many things. You've got so much money.

That's not true. And secondly, I didn't start like that. I don't want to disappoint the elite, the elite, the elite, the elite, the elite, the old lady, and seeing that she had already made the appointment, I then went to the appointment the next day.

We were, we dressed very well for the occasion because we were told it's a top class venue. It was a glass hotel. You should have seen what it was like and the crockery and cutlery and they served us excellent food.

The thought came to me, how much would this food cost? It must be in the hundreds. And then this businessman said, now that lady has spoken to me and told me that you want to build a water factory. And we would like to help you with it.

Here's something, here's something to help you with and they gave 500 Swiss francs. Now, that amount was less than the value of the meal we had been eating. You see, the council of people.

Now, it is also true that if you're really in need, don't go to a rich man, go to a poor man. They are far more generous. There are the exceptions.

There are, there is Job, Abraham and men like that who despite their wealth, they are also men of God. And God showed me, do not put your faith in man. And don't look to man before the Bible.

So you need to learn also, Africa needs to know, it doesn't help to have a culture of entitlement where you say, well, I want this, I want that. It'll never enrich you and never make you prosperous. It doesn't help to go down to Egypt and say, well, this is what I want.

The same mistake that Israel and Judah made again and again, seeking from the armor flesh. It doesn't help to have a culture of entitlement where you say, well, I want this, I want that. It doesn't help to go down to Egypt and say, well, this is what I want.



If I, as a human, hire somebody to work in our kitchen or in the garden and pay them their dues, isn't God going to make sure that those that he hires, those that he calls, he will certainly look after them? Yes, Paul also had his tent making while he was in the ministry, but he did it so that he could financially support himself and those who were with him. Remember? Remember? Remember the parable of the sower, where the Lord Jesus warned about the good seed that is sown, and then weeds and thorns spring up and choke the good seed. And the Lord said that is the cares of this world that so crush a person that the good seed cannot come forth because of the worries and the wants of this world, worrying about food and that, instead of trusting God.

So to you who are in ministry, look to God for your sustenance. He will care for you. Don't rely on people.

Don't be like those who say, well, I think I'll preach in that place. It's more lucrative there. That other place I get far less and the people are so poor there.

God says these Egyptians are but men. They are not God. They are horses of flesh and not spirit.

The Lord says, but when he stretches out his hand. God says, because you trusted in flesh, in verse 3, he who helps God will strike him and he will fall. And he who has helped will fall too.

End of verse 3, and they will all perish together. If you could just learn one thing, trust God and not men. No horses, no chariots.

Learn to trust God, Jehovah. But God says they don't want to. If only they would remember what God had spoken to them in the past.

In Deuteronomy, chapter 17, verse 16. God says, do not trust in Egypt and the horses because God has said to you, you shall not return that way again. God expressly told the children of Israel not to trust in the horses of Egypt.

And not to go to Egypt. He says, I led you out of it, don't go back to it. They had forgotten.

Dear Christian friends, don't forget what God has told you in the past. Don't forget your calling. Don't forget what you heard him telling you.

Many have forsaken us and gone back. Left their calling and they forgot where God had called them and what God had said. And they went back.

You too may forget. If they would just remember what God told them in the beginning. And what they said.

But they commit the same sin as Israel. They don't stand on what God had said in the beginning. Their vision is only filled with obstacles and horses and chariots.

And they are so obsessed by it that they cannot see God anymore. And what was their sin? They did not want to pay the price of looking to God. And repenting of their sinful ways.

If we have problems, it's good to seek help. That we must never bypass God or his word and what he has spoken to us. Or the directions he gave to us in the beginning.

But then, a pious demon can enter a person. He says, oh, I only believe in God. I don't listen to men.

If you don't listen to the right men, I can guarantee you, you listen to the wrong men. And these people, in the end, had nothing but man-made objects. These people had nothing, in the end, but man-made objects.

Objects they made themselves. They produced themselves. They were serving idols.

Such as gold, silver, money, fame, success. Those were their idols. It was very interesting to me these days, I read about Saint Augustine.

I read about Saint Augustine. He was born around about 354. I say, regarding intellect, he was just on another level.

Paul, firstly, and then Saint Augustine, secondly. They are those who comment and say, well, they were never such great thinkers like they were. He was born in Africa, northern Africa.

Now, his mother was a godly woman and reared him in the faith. I wonder you women, you wives, are you bringing up your children for God? Or are you helping them along in their evil ways? She cried day and night and wept for her son, till one priest comforted her and said, Look, God won't overlook and forget those tears. You can rest assured your son, he'll still get saved.

She cried day and night and wept for her son, he'll still get saved. You can rest assured your son, he'll still get saved. She cried day and night and wept for her son, he'll still get saved.

You see, you heard what Ernie read, what that man said. It's still the old gospel that saves us from our sin. We don't want theological studies that don't teach us.

Your pride has got to be dealt with. Your bitterness has got to be dealt with. Till God dealt with him, with sin in his life, then all his clever words faded away.

You see, it's still the old gospel that saves us from our sin. Your pride has got to be dealt with. Your bitterness has got to be dealt with.

Till God dealt with him, with sin in his life, then all his clever words faded away. Now I think of Paul. He says, when I preached to you, I didn't come with great words and clever words, but in simplicity, so that your faith won't rest on wisdom, but on Christ.

And he didn't want to. I didn't come with the great eloquence of powerful, persuasive arguments, but rather with the power of God, that it would rest upon the cross only. He didn't want to make the cross to be in vain.

He even said to them, when I came to you Corinthians, preaching to you, I came in trembling and fear. I didn't come with great and mighty words, I just preached the simple gospel. But it's Egypt, if you seek the things of this world, you run off to sexual promiscuity, and all manner of sin, that is Egypt, if you put your trust in that.

And of Egypt, God says, I will destroy Egypt and those that she has helped. You who go down to Egypt, you will be destroyed together with her. So if you're faced with an obstacle or problem, don't say, well, I've got to go back to where I used to be.

Look to the Lord Himself, trust only in Him. He can help you. He helped David to conquer the giant.

And you too, through Jesus Christ, you can be more than conqueror. Look to the Holy One of Israel, look to God Himself. Don't look to the Egyptians, they are flesh just like you.

You won't get help there. Look to Him. Get rid of your idols, away with them, part from them, and seek God.

He will help you so that you are more than conqueror, that you're led in triumph. Shall we pray? Lord Jesus, I pray that these words would reach each and every heart. Teach your people to trust you.

That their eyes would be upon you, the Holy One of Israel, never removing their eyes from you, but rather that they'd always depend and trust in you and do what you tell them. Amen.

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