

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

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For the Scripture text today I'll read Exodus 19:3–6. These verses in the middle of the Book of Exodus really serve as the great divide for the book. In verses 3 and 4 we see the writer review the first 18 chapters. God's deliverance. And in verses 5–6 the writer anticipates what is to come—the giving of the law and the ordinances given pertaining to worship. "Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, 'This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites'" (Exodus 19:3–6, NIV).

We want to look today at the Book of Exodus from three contexts: Old Testament, New Testament, and then personal for us.

I. First, the Old Testament context of the Book of Exodus

We recognize this as the second book of the Bible, the second of the Pentateuch. "Pentateuch" is the word standing for five books, a reference to the five books of Moses, beginning with Genesis and ending with Deuteronomy. It starts with the word "And" or "Now", an unusual way to begin a book—with a conjunction. It's probably poor grammar in English. As you look through the historical books of the Old Testament you will frequently find that these books began with a conjunctive or a connective, translated as "and" or "now" or "thus." It is significant that this should be so, for it means that the particular book is not to be seen as an island or in an isolated

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

context. The book belongs to a larger whole. In this case the connective connects Exodus with Genesis, for God's revelation has a continuity, a flowing. This book is but one part of that stream of God's revelation.

In the Greek Bible the translation was made from the Hebrew. This book is entitled "Exodus" which is a combination of two Greek words meaning "out of" and "the way." Therefore the title of this book might be literally translated "out of the way" or "the way out." Or "the going out." Or "the escape." Or "the exit." Or "deliverance." All of these ideas are associated with the meaning of Exodus. It therefore describes God's way to freedom.

II. The New Testament context of the Book of Exodus

A. As we look at the book from its New Testament context we are immediately drawn to several observations. The book, of course, is inspired. The Book of Exodus is literally, according to Paul's writing in 2 Timothy 3:16, an inspired book. That literally means it is "God-breathed out." It is the product of God's activity. Therefore, when we look at a book like the Book of Exodus, we do not look at it from the standpoint of historical interest or cultural interest alone. We do not look at it as something from an antiquated past which has only a relic of meaning for the present. Rather we see this book as God still speaking to us. It is more than simply a text belonging to an ancient people. It is a text belonging to us, because it has been inspired by the very activity of the Spirit of God.

Thus the New Testament bears witness of this inspiration factor in the Book of Exodus. We know that the book is inspired. We trust by experience we will find it inspiring.

B. In the New Testament context, also, this book speaks to us of our Lord. There's so many ways that the book speaks to us of our Lord. In fact, it is a sort of pictorial book, which in many

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

symbols and figures represents the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. For example, the great event in the Book of Exodus is the Exodus itself, the going out through the Red Sea.

The great event in the life of Jesus Christ is His own “exodus.” It’s striking that in the Gospel of Luke 9:30–31, in the transfiguration event, His countenance is changed so that His divinity is very clearly seen in a visible and physical way. It is when Moses and Elijah come down to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration that they speak to Him of His departure, which He is to accomplish in Jerusalem. The word which is used for departure is literally the word “exodus.”

Moses and Elijah were speaking to Jesus of the Lord’s own exodus. And the Lord had an exodus greater than the exodus of the people of Israel. It was an exodus out of life, out of and through death and into triumph on the other side of life.

The exodus in the Book of Exodus is also represented in the person and life of our Lord. Is there a sacrificial Passover lamb in the book of Exodus? Then in the New Testament in the life of our Lord there is seen this representation of the Passover lamb. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:7, “Christ, our Passover lamb” has been sacrificed.

The great person in the Book of Exodus is the person of Moses. The great person in the New Testament is the person of Jesus. Thus, the writer of Hebrews in making a comparison between Moses and Jesus says this “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house” (3:5–6). It will be well to compare the personalities of Moses and Jesus as we proceed through the Book of Exodus. The priesthood is described as being instituted in the Book of Exodus. Aaron and his sons are set aside to be the mediators between man and God. Therefore, in Exodus we see in seed form that which will develop in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews says, concerning the Old Testament priests, “Now there have been many of those priests, since death

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (7:23–25, NIV).

The great part of the Book of Exodus, particularly the latter part, is given over to describing the making of the tent of worship. It was the first center or place of worship specifically instituted by God for the people of Israel. It also becomes a symbol of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the writer of Hebrews describes: “Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence” (9:24). If we really get into Exodus and look at things like the Exodus, the Passover lamb, the tent in the wilderness, and Moses, we will see the Lord laying down the kinds of things which will help us better understand the person and work of our Lord. Therefore Exodus is seen in light of our Lord’s work. And in fact, the Lord taught us to look for His presence in this book. It was this Book of Exodus which He studied as a young person. This familiarity with the book dominated His ministry so that at one point on the sermon on the Mount He is able to declare that all the things that are written in it are now to be fulfilled in His life. When He is resurrected from the dead He appears to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). On that first day of His resurrection, Jesus’ concern was to take the Scriptures, this very book, the Book of Exodus among others, and relate it to these two disciples so they could understand the things in this book which were written concerning himself. Later that same day, He repeats the event of looking at the Book of Exodus with the rest of His disciples in Luke 24:44–45: ““This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."

I pray that in our experience with Exodus the Lord will do the same thing. That He will open our minds to understand it.

III. The personal context of the Book of Exodus

We've looked momentarily at the Old Testament context for the book and the New Testament context for the book. I want for the most of our time today to look at the personal context for this book. What this book means for us. It's not insufficient to simply get a biblical setting for the book. We must always when we look at Scripture find that personal application. There are some things that we're going to see together in the Book of Exodus which I'll simply highlight this morning and we'll leave for later detail as we move systematically through the book.

A. In Exodus we are going to see the judgment of God displayed. We will see His judgment upon Egypt, we will see His judgment on occasion of the people of God, Israel, as well.

First, we will see His judgment poured out upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh. If we are to really get something out of the Book of Exodus, we must understand something about the principle of representation. There is something which can come to us as we look at a person like Pharaoh, and as we look at Egypt—we can let them stand for something larger. God really designed this book to be used in that context, that we associate Pharaoh and Egypt with all of God's enemies universally that have existed. That we associate these persons and personalities with those things which stand as representatives of godlessness in our own life. Pharaoh is in *small* what all the enemies of God are in *large*. God's judgment on Pharaoh is a sure word to believers of all ages that He is in control of all human rulership and authority. That He governs over the capitals of today. Egypt to the average person usually means massive pyramids, ornate temples, beautiful

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

hieroglyphics, mummies, strange forms on monuments. But to ancient Israel, Egypt was something of quite a different manner. For the ancient Israelite, Egypt meant slavery and humiliation. For us it will represent bondage and godlessness.

As we look at God as Judge, and understand this in light of personal and world context today, we cannot help be drawn to the fact that the Book of Exodus teaches us that when God moves in judgment, His judgment is slow in coming. It was years and years of slavery in Egypt before God pulled the ripcord on Egypt and on Pharaoh. We are taught in Scripture that when God enters into judgment, He never enters hastily. In fact, from a believer's standpoint, His judgment always seems to be somewhat slow and long in coming. The New Testament explains the delay in Christ's own return which will initiate the final judgment by saying that God is being patient; that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should have life. God therefore does not enter into judgment without giving an individual, even Pharaoh, a sufficient opportunity to change their mind. God's judgment is never capricious. It is never the snapping of His fingers on one given day. It is always given from the standpoint of preparation.

It is striking as you read the Book of Exodus when Pharaoh and Moses confront one another for the first time. Moses has come back from forty years of being in the wilderness. Now He stands in Pharaoh's court. We might suppose that as younger persons they may have known one another. The text never tells us. The book simply says he stood before Pharaoh. When Moses says to Pharaoh, : "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go,'" Pharaoh responds with this caustic reply. "Who is the LORD?" (Exodus 5:1-2). The word "Lord" in all capital letters meaning the formal name for God is used—"Yahweh," the Hebrew name for God. We sometimes say "Jehovah." "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

not know the LORD [What a confession!] and I will not let Israel go" (verse 2). By the time the Lord is done with Pharaoh, Pharaoh will know who the Lord is.

Pharaoh may say at the outset "I do not know the LORD," but God will not enter into judgment with him on that account. He will give Pharaoh the opportunity of first knowing Him. But even when Pharaoh is through knowing Him, he still will not bow the knee.

Therefore, when God judges, He does not enter into judgment lightly, or in a quick way, but when God finally judges, His judgment is total and complete. Thus His deliverance of Israel from Egypt is not a partial deliverance. It is a complete deliverance. His devastation of Pharaoh's army is one which is so complete and radical that Israel will not be facing again the threat of Egypt for some years to come. As Miriam proclaims in her poem of deliverance in Exodus 15:4: "Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea." We may expect, therefore, that when God enters into salvation or into judgment it is total. It is a total salvation or it is a total judgment.

The Lord also occasionally enters into judgment with His own people. Thus, when Israel in the wilderness absolutely rebels against God through the making of the golden calf, God before extending His grace executes judgment upon those who do not repent. We may expect from the New Testament standpoint judgment to begin at the house of God, judgment to be upon God's people in the event of a complete and willful and prolonged disobedience to the Lord. We may expect this in our own life if in an amount of time we continue to be disobedient to the Lord in a given area; we may expect that when He has exhausted all other possibilities of reaching us, He will enter into judgment with us that the thing might be dealt with.

B. If in Exodus we see God's judgment, we might also say that in this book we will see God's grace, God lavishly taking care of and providing for the salvation of the people of Israel. Not on

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

the basis of their own good works, but on the basis of the covenant that God had made with Abraham centuries before, that He would bring from Abraham's seed a people into being, a nation into being that His covenant would be perpetually on them. When God therefore acts in the Book of Exodus, He acts on the basis of His grace, upon something which is undeserved. Isn't it striking as you read the Book of Exodus that there is no record of Israel's wanting out of Egypt until they have been in slavery. Until they are in trouble. How often it may be that sometimes our first recollection of wanting God is when we are in trouble. As long as life is ok and the seas are smooth, we may be able to get along without God. But with the advent of slavery, which comes in so crushing, Israel begins to cry out for deliverance from Egypt. In a graphic series of statements in Exodus 2:23–25, when Israel cried out for help, God remembered His covenant, God saw their afflictions, and God knew what they were going through. God is gracious enough to save us even if our only motive for wanting His help is that we are in trouble. God is so humble He will save us if the only reason we want to be saved is to escape hell. That is almost an affront to God that we should see Him as asbestos from the judgment to come, rather than wanting to relate to Him personally as the sovereign Lord and friend of ours.

One writer has said in respect to the grace of God and the call of God from Egypt, "Is God not always calling His sons out of Egypt?" The grace of God not only brings Israel's deliverance from Egypt, but it is continually exhibited toward Israel throughout their experience in the wilderness. No sooner is Israel on the other side of the Red Sea than they begin to do what you and I have often done after experiencing God's forgiveness, God's grace, or some specific act of God which has overwhelmed us. No sooner are they out on their journey when complaining sets in. All through that time God's grace is demonstrated to them in being true to them in spite of their feelings.

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

C. If in Exodus we see God's judgment and God's grace, we might say also we see God's power displayed. Deuteronomy 26:8 reviews the power by saying "The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders." Throughout the entire Old Testament, the Exodus itself—including the deliverance through the sea, the walking on dry ground with water piled up to the right and to the left—will be the sign of God's greatest miracle. It'll be a way of saying throughout the centuries of Israel's existence that will follow—whatever jam it's in, whatever need it has, that its situation is not greater than when Israel stood at the Red Sea. If God worked a miracle then, then in the current situation His power is available also. The Exodus sort of becomes in the Old Testament the measurement of determining how much power God has. Thus Micah in 7:15 says "As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show them my wonders." His power in the Exodus is the measure of His power available afterward.

I think I can best illustrate it this way. These activities they sometimes have at carnivals or circuses where you have a small platform like a scale and there's a wooden mallet and you hit it. There's a big thermometer that measures the pounds of pressure. Let's take this illustration to the Exodus. Here is the need that Israel has for deliverance from the Red Sea. There is a degree of power and might that is unparalleled. Israel or the human race has never seen anything like that before. God, in effect takes His hammer of power and smashes it upon the scale so that all the way to the top the pressure comes up and sounds the bell. That is the unit of God's power. The Exodus is the scale. Then down the road centuries later when Israel gets in some kind of predicament it may not need God's power to the highest level. In effect, Exodus is saying "Israel, no matter what situation you're in, it can never be as bad, it can never be as needy. You've got a God who is able."

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

I use that illustration to say that the New Testament has another unit of measurement to show us God's power. In the New Testament, the unit which measures God's power is not according to the Exodus but it is according to something else. Paul describes it in Ephesians "...his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:19–20). According to his great might when He raised Christ from the dead. If the Exodus involved a "5,000-pound" level" then you can be sure the resurrection of Jesus Christ represents the "50,000-pound" level.

No matter what your need is in life, the basic needs have all been met by Christ Jesus. We all need power, and the time we're going to need it the most is when we face that moment of our own personal "exodus" from this life into the presence of God. There will need to be a power which can put us there. There is no doubt about the sufficiency of the power because we measure God's power by the resurrection of Christ Jesus our Lord.

D. In Exodus, we will also see God's guidance and His provision. When God leads us out He then takes care of His own. You can be sure when we come to Christ and confess Him we're not treated as orphans. The children of Israel were led by the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night. They were given manna. All of these things were emergency provisions designed not to last forever, only until they reached the Promised Land when they could take care of their own. But the provisions of the cloud, the pillar of fire, and the manna were there when they were needed. So I would think and know that God would always be with us, giving us what we need in the time that we need it. In Exodus we will also see God's way to freedom.

E. It's striking that this book falls into two divisions. The first 18 chapters through 19:2 deal with the theme of God's deliverance and judgment. Then from 19:7 to the end of the chapter we see

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

the two great themes that emerge which are the giving of the law and worship. In other words, God's total way to freedom is not to simply loosen the chains from a captive so that he can walk around free. For God's way to freedom involves a complete dimension. Once He leads Israel out it is not necessarily completely free. It may be free from Egypt, but it is not yet free in its thought life, in its moral life, and in its spiritual life. To be truly free, it must be fed by the teaching and the concepts that God wants it to have. Thus the great attention on the law and on the place of worship.

So that freedom is a kind of total thing. It is not only the act of salvation, but it is the whole life and walk with God which brings freedom. It is freedom from the bondage of Pharaoh, but it is not freedom from God. It is not a freedom where one becomes his own owner. Rather, the title to the property has been transferred. Pharaoh held the property of the people of Israel; now it is God who holds the title. We may be sure from the Scriptures that He is the wise and just and loving owner of his people.

F. As we approach this study we will continually see the difference between the Book of Exodus and the gospel of our Lord. Having communion this morning reminds us of some of these differences. There's a difference between the gospel and the Book of Exodus in terms of the means of salvation. In the Book of Exodus, particularly the Passover night when the lamb was slain, the means of salvation was an animal—a lamb. In the New Testament, the means whereby we are saved is the lamb of God. In the Book of Exodus, many lambs. In the New Testament, one lamb. The lamb of God.

The extent of salvation in the Book of Exodus is Israel, and perhaps a few others who may have applied the blood of the Lamb to the doorposts and lintel. But in the New Testament, the extent

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

of salvation is “whosoever.” It is not confined to the children of Israel by the flesh. But the salvation is available to all.

In the Old Testament, the effect of salvation opened the way up for them to go from Egypt to Canaan. But in the New Testament, the effect of salvation is such that God opens the way for us to go from earth to heaven. So here is a comparison of immense weight in the gospel and in Exodus.

As we approach this Passover time today ,as we take these emblems that represent Christ on Passover, I’m reminded of the fact that in the Book of Exodus this act, when it was first instituted by the Children of Israel, was an act of faith. It was the night they were to be delivered, when they sat in their family groups behind the doorposts that had the blood applied. They had yet no experiential knowledge that God was actually going to lead them out and part waters that were ahead of them. They had seen some of God’s might already displayed in the first plagues. But that night as they ate, they ate in faith. They were packed and ready to go. When they took the meal they took it as a sign of trust that God would open the way for them. They did not take the meal after they were delivered. But they took the meal before they were delivered.

There is that symbolism that may be applied to this as well. That we ourselves take communion with our Lord before our final deliverance. It was Jesus who took communion with His disciples the night before He was crucified and then raised from the dead. The meal was an act of faith where He promised, “You will take it again in My Father’s kingdom with Me” So when we take this we do something which began in ancient Israel. We take in faith, knowing that God has established a covenant with us, a fellowship with us, in which He is present. We will see not only this meal but we will see His acts, which are yet to follow His deliverance.

Closing Prayer

GOD'S WAY TO FREEDOM

Exodus

We're a community called by Your grace. Called not in virtue of our own works, lest any of us should boast. But called in virtue of Your love for us. We are a community of faith who take this event of being together as a sign of the final gathering together that we will have about Your throne. We worship today in faith, recognizing that there will come a moment when we will no longer worship in church buildings nor hear earthly ministers. But we will see You and worship under the canopy of Your presence and the banner over us will be love. Lord, as we come to this communion table we also come in faith, recognizing that what is represented here is only a foretaste of the messianic meal You're providing for us in the age to come. As we sit in our seats today and take the bread and the cup we leap ahead in our mind to envision that moment when we are seated at Your great banquet table where we draw the chair and are seated down and partake of the meal with You and hear Your blessing. So Lord, from this side of glory, on this side of Canaan, we take in faith that You are the God who not only saves us from our sins but who saves us from the power of death and from the power of the enemy represented in the figures of the world and Satan. You bring Your people through. We praise You for the great deliverance accomplished through Jesus Christ our Lord according to His might and power we take today. In Jesus' name. Amen.