

Message Notes February 7th, 2021
The Bible in One Year Week 6: Exodus – A Guided Tour (Pt. 1)
(Exodus 3:1-10, 15:1-3; John 8:34-36; Romans 8:31-32)

- **Exodus and the Great Symphony of Scripture**

- Today in our Bible in a Year Journey, we're beginning the book of Exodus! This is an *amazing* story: it's one of the most exciting and interesting narratives in the Bible. It has complex characters, crazy plot twists, and some incredible revelations about the Lord that are foundational to the whole Bible.
 - What I'm saying is, you won't get bored on this tour! That's how we're going to walk through Exodus—we're taking *guided tour*, if you will. There's enough here that we could preach on it for an entire year! But with just two weeks, we're walking through the book like a tour through a historic country or a wild safari, stopping to look at the most important and interesting stuff before we keep the bus moving. Your daily readings will be your chance to explore things more thoroughly. But for now, buckle up and enjoy the ride!
- Before we get into Exodus, I want to remind you of something really cool about the Bible: at the beginning of this journey, I told you that the Bible is not a *simple* book—it's complex and rich. The Bible is not a pop song; *it's a symphony*. You can't take everything in with one listen: it's multilayered and nuanced. It's *living and active*. You can come to it again and again, always finding new treasures and greater depths.
 - Symphonies often will take you on a *journey* that develops a particular musical *theme* throughout, presenting it in various ways, bringing it all to a dramatic fulfillment at the end.
 - One of the most famous Symphonies, Beethoven's Fifth, takes one theme and repeats it dozens (if not *hundreds*) of times in different ways over four movements. I bet you know this one: "*ta ta ta TAAA, ta ta ta TAAA.*" What makes it so rich is that you can't process it all at once; you can come back repeatedly and spot new surprising ways the theme is woven in.
 - Something like that happens in the Symphony of Scripture: God has woven not just one or two, *but dozens and dozens* of themes, interweaving, throughout the story of Scripture that are introduced, gradually developed, then brought to full-strength in Christ. Learning to spot this is one of the joys of reading and studying the Bible.
- The reason I bring this up is that the story of Exodus is one of the most powerful examples of this: Exodus introduces the theme of God's salvation of His people in an unforgettable way—yet, this amazing story is a foreshadow of the greater salvation and redemption of Christ, and it's a theme that continues to play out in our own lives. We can read Exodus and see *our own stories* in it, the good and the bad. What God did in the Exodus, *He's doing for you and me in Christ*.
- **4 Quick Facts about Exodus**
 - So, let's begin this fast expedition through Exodus! Here are a four quick-facts to get us started:
 - **1) Exodus Carries the Story Forward:** it's the second book of the Pentateuch or Torah (which is the title given to the first five books of the Bible that lay the foundation of God's covenant people and their mission in the world.) Exodus carries forward the story of Genesis, bringing God's promises to Abraham to fruition—from a *promise* to a *people*, from a *family* to a *nation*.
 - **2) Exodus is Foundational:** the Exodus is to the Old Testament and the people of Israel what the Cross and Resurrection are to the New Testament and the Church. *This was the event and celebration on which Jesus based the Lord's Supper. It's a big deal!*
 - **3) Exodus is 40 Chapters in 2 Parts:** the book can be broken down into two main sections, based on the location and events of the story. The first section, chapters 1 to 18, is about the **Exodus from Egypt**. The second section, chapters 19 to 40, are about **the Covenant at Mount Sinai**. The movement of salvation is from Egypt to Sinai. From *slavery* to *worship*. It's about being freed *from* captivity and freed *to* holiness, being rescued from *death* to *abundant life*.
 - Which brings us to, **4) Exodus is about the Journey from Being Set Free to Living Free:** when it's all said and done, Exodus reveals to us a truth that affects all of our journeys:

It's one thing to get people out of Egypt. It's another thing to get Egypt out of people. It takes one moment to set someone free; it takes a lifetime to learn how to live free.

- **5 Stops On the Exodus from Egypt**

- Alright, so, let's get into the story, shall we? In this first section, chapters 1 to 18, where the Israelites are rescued by God from slavery, we're going to make five stops on this tour to look at some key moments and messages from the story. (Obviously, there's a lot we'll leave out, so go read the whole thing with the Bible in One Year readings!)
- **Stop 1: The Journey from Favor to Slavery.** Remember how Genesis ended? Jacob's dysfunctional family almost fell apart—threatened by famine on the outside and by murderous-division on the inside. But, they eventually reconciled, and God used what was intended as evil for good. All of Israel's family were given the best part of the land by the Pharaoh of the time. But a new king came to power who knew nothing about Joseph and his family. This new Pharaoh was a tyrant who ruled from fear and arrogance rather than wisdom.
 - *“Look, he said to his people, ‘the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.’ So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor...but the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread...”* (Exodus 1:9-12)
 - Notice how they went from being in a place of *favor* to a place of *slavery*: I don't think it happened instantly. *It's not like it jumped from thriving in Goshen to suddenly their babies being thrown into the Nile River.* At first everything was going great; they multiplied and prospered for several generations. But the winds changed and they started to be oppressed. Even though their numbers were great, they apparently went along with it, until they were worked ruthlessly and forced to harsh labor. Then, worst of all, Pharaoh began the systematic genocide of their baby boys. Things got so bad that they finally began to cry out to God. (*Why is it that sometimes we wait until the absolute worst moment until we cry out to God?*)
 - But that's how it sometimes goes with evil: it happens gradually, it works its way subtly into our lives until it's too late. At first, we might make a choice, an unfortunate agreement. Then, we simply cease to resist it. Finally, it has us enslaved. But as we've already seen in Genesis, God can take the evils of this world, even our own failures, and use them for good. He is both the Creator *and* the Redeemer.
 - If you find yourself captive to something and you long for freedom, *cry out to God.* He is the great redeemer who brings freedom. Jesus said, *“...anyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to in forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed,”* (John 8:36).
- **Stop 2: The Desperate Act of Faith.** While Pharaoh is manifesting the work of Evil, opposing God's good will by attempting to destroy God's people—like the Serpent in the Garden and the Satan in Job—several brave women quietly and valiantly defy the darkness. We hear about two Egyptian midwives who refuse obey Pharaoh's order to kill the baby boys born to the Hebrews.
 - Then we see Moses' mother and sister Miriam: rather than give in to evil, they make this desperate act of faith. They take this boy and place him in a basket, doing their best to water proof it and let it go down the river. Now, you might be thinking, *how is that any better than soldiers throwing the kids into the river?* but it was their only choice apart from simply giving in to death. And it turns out, Pharaoh's own daughter ends up rescuing Moses out of the water to raise him in the very heart of Egypt's power! This same child would one day help rescue God's people *through* the waters, while Pharaoh's army would be drowned. *The irony!*
 - There's a rich history of female heroes in the Bible and we can learn so much from them. Moses' mother here gives us an example of defiant hope and desperate faith: her actions demonstrate the most tangible example of that cliché, *“let go and let God.”* I mean, that's literally what she did! And look at what happened, from her single act of desperate faith! Rather than give in to total despair, *she does what she can*—she let's go of her son, entrusts him to God, that he might find life. We see similar courageous, sacrificial faith in the mother Hannah with her

- boy Samuel (1 Samuel) and in the mother of the Messiah, Mary. *When it looks impossible, when evil seems unstoppable, don't despair, don't give up hope. "Let go and let God."*
- **Stop 3: The Burning Bush.** Moses grows up right in the house of Pharaoh, the very one who tried to destroy his life—and he goes on to be the one that destroys their evil tyranny. Through a crazy series of events, he ends up in exile. He's a troubled, angry, conflicted individual. But after decades of exile—in his 80's!—God suddenly shows up in the wilderness to give him a mission that would completely disrupt his life. He sees a burning bush that isn't burned up. God says to him, *"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground,"* (3:5).
 - When Moses asks what he should tell the people when they ask the name of the God who sent him, God responds with one of the most profound revelations of the entire Bible: *"I AM WHO I AM...tell the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you...' YAHWEH, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob..."* (3:14-16). (*Watch the Bible Project video in the notes!*)
 - But Moses tries to turn Him down! *"You've got the wrong guy! I'm not good enough, I can't do this!"* And God's response is basically, *"I will be with you." Is that enough for us?*
 - God has a high and holy purpose for your life. It's bigger than you can handle. That's ok. He chooses the weak to show His strength. Say yes, and watch Him work! You'll never regret saying, "Yes" when calls—you will regret turning away. Don't pass by the burning bushes; stop what you're doing and listen. God says, "I will be with you," and that's really *all* that matters.
 - **Stop 4: The Rescue and the Song.** Well, you probably know the story of the 10 plagues and Pharaoh's hard heart: it's crazy, it's wild, it's mysterious, it's intense. And yes, there are so many details and questions we could explore, but we'll have to save that for another time and focus on the big picture (if you want to go deeper, join our Facebook group where we can discuss stuff and watch the "further study" suggestions in the study notes!)
 - Here's the big point: *Nothing will stop God from fulfilling His good purpose on the earth, no matter how great the resistance of evil.* God takes what the Enemy means for evil and turns it for good. God allows evil to ripen, hardens its wickedness, *until it destroys itself in its own reckless hatred.* Just when all seemed lost, the waters opened, Israel walked through on dry ground, and their enemies were washed away.
 - And there, on the shores of God's victory, they do what God said the whole time He wanted them to go free to do: *they worshiped.* They shouted and danced and sang aloud to the living God! *"I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him."* (15:1-2)
 - And who is the one singing at this moment? None other than Miriam, Moses' sister, who all those years ago helped him float down the river that eventually led them all through this sea.
 - *We are set free to Worship:* what we're going to see throughout this book is that living the life of freedom boils down to living a *life of worship* and a *life of justice*—a life that glorifies and delights in God, and a life that pursues fairness and goodness for others. Loving God, loving others.
 - **Stop 5: The Wilderness.** But after this *high* point, reality sets in. The people realize that they're free from their enemies, spared from death, but now they're out wandering through the wilderness to an unknown future. *Freedom can be a scary thing to embrace when you're used to living the familiar life of captivity.* And even when God does a great work in our lives, we so easily slide back into comfort, complacency, and forgetfulness.
 - Out there in the wilderness, on the other side of the Red Sea, when all the singing is over, the people complain to Moses and they *actually want to go back to Egypt!* They have the insolence to say to Moses, *"...you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death,"* (16:3). *Seriously?! Where had they been?!* It wasn't the last time.
 - Don't underestimate how easy it is to forget. You're saved? Amazing! God's delivered you, with a mighty Hand and outstretched Arm? God's re-oriented your destiny from destruction and ruin to goodness and eternal life? *Wonderful!* Stay the course. *We forget so quickly.* Immerse your life in this Story: in His Word, in His presence, in His people. *Don't forget what He saved you from and what He saves you to.*

- **This is My Story, this is My Song**

- We said at the beginning that, because of this Big Story of God, the story of Exodus is *our story too*. In Christ, we are a part of this big family of God, we are those who have been *blessed* through the *blessing of Abraham*.
- There's an amazing song by Jonathan David Helsler called "No Longer Slaves" that shows us how this works. The chorus goes like this: "*I'm no longer a slave to fear / I am a child of God...*" and the Bridge goes: "*You split the sea so I could walk right through it / My fears were drowned in perfect love / You rescued me so I can stand and sing / I am a child of God.*"
- Do you see how this is bigger than just one time and place in history?
- And do you see how it's not just about being rescued from sin, slavery, fear, and death, but it's about stepping *into* a whole new life, a whole new identity—a life of worship, a life of holiness, a *life with God*: "*You rescued me so I can stand and sing / I am a child of God.*"
- *That's why* Miriam sang all those years ago on the shores of God's great victory and why we're still singing today. We'll watch how the story continues next week. For now: go, by the grace of God, through the love of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit—and *live free*. Amen.