

God's Message to Us in Exodus 12-40

Halifax, NS

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Introduction

Presently on Sunday afternoons, we are looking at God's message to us in every book of the Bible.

- The Bible was not just written for the original readers,
 - but God's Spirit directed the writing of it in such a way that it speaks to God's people in every generation after.
- In many ways, now that Christ has come, we can get much more from the Old Testament than anyone could before He came,
 - Because now we see the fulfillment of all that was written there.
 - It all centers around our Lord Jesus Christ.
- And let me remind you again as we are still not very far along in this series, that this is a great time for you to read through the whole Bible.
 - Next week, we will be doing Leviticus, so that is the book to read in preparation over this coming week.
- This week, we are finishing up Exodus.
 - Some of the books will require two sermons, and that is the case with Exodus.
 - Last week, we looked at Exodus 1-15, and this week we are looking at Exodus 12-40.
 - The overlap is deliberate—we went to chapter 15 last week because I wanted to include the crossing of the Red Sea.
 - But this week, we are going to go from chapter 12 because that is where the Passover occurs and that is the foundation of the new life they have as God's people.
 - God Himself instructed them mark the date of the Passover as the New Year, reminding us that life begins with the cross.
- I told you of three things that God teaches us today from Exodus.
 - First, that until we are redeemed, we are in bondage to Satan and to the rebellion that he started.
 - Second, He shows us that He is the LORD (Yahweh) who redeems us from bondage.
 - And third... the thing we are looking at this week... He shows us how He forms us into a people for Himself.

TRANS> Let's briefly review the two points from last week and then move on to take up this third lesson.

I. So first, remember how God shows us that we are in bondage to Satan...

- A. Exodus opens with a description of Israel (God's people) in bondage in Egypt.
- They cannot serve God and worship Him because they are serving Satan.
 - They are in bondage.
 - God commands Pharaoh to let them go out into the wilderness to worship Him, but Pharaoh refuses.

- B. The bondage and oppression that Israel is in here is the same kind of bondage that we are all in to Satan and the world until God redeems us.
- We cannot do the will of God because sin has such a grip on us—we are committed to rebellion with our father the Devil until that bondage is broken.
 - We saw that the people did not believe that God could deliver them until He actually did it.
 - And so it is with us—God has to change us before we repent and come to Him to be His people.
 - He has to break the grip that Satan and that rebellion has on us.

TRANS>And that brings us to the second thing we looked at that God shows us in Exodus

II. That He is the LORD who redeems us from bondage.

- A. Right away in Exodus, we see His unwavering commitment to redeem them.
1. First, He raises up a deliverer for them—Moses who appears in chapter 2 & 3.
 - God preparing, protecting, and calling Moses to deliver His people shows His commitment to deliver them.
 - Moses is like an evangelist that comes with the good news that God has come to save His people so that they can be His people instead of Pharaoh's.
 2. We see God's commitment to His people in the things He says to Moses about redeeming them.
 - First, He tells Moses of His compassion for them.
 - He sees them groaning under bondage—and He yearns to deliver them.
 - It is very precious to think that God looked on us with compassion when we were in our sin.
 - Second, His commitment is seen in telling Moses that He will remember His covenant promise to their fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - He had solemnly promised that He would bring their descendants out of Egypt, and He was committed to that.
 - But all the more, God has made the covenant promise from the beginning to bless all the nations with salvation.
 - He will keep His promise.

TRANS> Such is His commitment to redeem us from bondage...

- B. And next we saw how He reveals His power to redeem us from bondage.
1. He declares it to be His intention to reveal that He is LORD.
 - His name *LORD* refers to Him as the sovereign self-existing one who has all power and so is able to redeem His people.
 - He declares that it is His intention to reveal that He is LORD both to the Egyptians and to Israel—to Satan and the world as well as to us.
 2. Much of the book of Exodus is taken up with God displaying Himself as LORD by redeeming His people.
 - a. First there are the ten plagues (showing His superiority over the idols of Egypt).
 - Everything they worshipped from the Nile River to the sun to Pharaoh is shown to be under the sovereign power of God.

- The ten plagues show that Egypt cannot stand up against God because He is LORD—Yahweh—the sovereign self-existing one.
- b. And then there is the Red Sea crossing—where God opens up the Red Sea to bring His people out of Egypt forever...
 - and causes the waters to close again when the Egyptians try to pursue them—He is the LORD who redeems His people.

TRANS> And this brings us to the portion of Exodus we are looking at today. God having delivered us from Satan by His mighty arm, then makes us His people.

- This is our focus today.
 - We will look at how the LORD, having delivered us from Satan and the world, forms us into a people for Himself.

III. The third thing God reveals to us in Exodus is how He forms us into a people for Himself.

- His whole reason for delivering us from bondage is not so we can be free to do what we please, but so that we can serve Him.
 - The reason God saves you is so that you can worship Him forever.
- There are three things that we will look at today that are revealed in Exodus about God taking us to be His people.
 - First, that He takes us as His people by grace.
 - Second, that He provides what we need to live as His people.
 - Third, that He gives us His law to direct us how to live as His people.

So let's begin...

A. First, we are taught in Exodus that it is all of grace that God takes us to be His people.

- All through Scripture, there are two ways that God's redemption is seen to be all of grace.
 - First, that it is all of God's power and doing that we are saved to be His people—it is by His grace because it is by His power.
 - Secondly, that it is all completely undeserved.
 - He freely forgives and accepts us, not because of any righteousness that we have done, but by grace alone.
- 1. That it is all of God's power that we are redeemed has already been seen in the exodus itself...
 - It is all of God's grace that Satan is forced to let us go and that he is brought to ruin, and that we are brought from his kingdom across the Red Sea.
 - All the glory goes to God and His grace, not to us and our power.
- But that His acceptance of us is completely undeserved is shown at the Passover.
- 2. He shows us with the Passover (in chapter 12) that we do not deserve to be His people any more than the Egyptians do.
 - a. The Passover occurs in connection with the tenth plague.

- In the tenth plague,
 - God tells Pharaoh that He is going to kill all the firstborn males in Egypt—both among the people and among the animals.
 - And not just children, but the firstborn males whatever age they were...
 - Understand that in both Israel and Egypt, the firstborn males were typically in charge of the whole family.
 - So if there were five brothers who were retirement age, the firstborn of them was in charge of them and their families,
 - so if each of them had four sons, that firstborn son would be overseeing twenty five households plus any new households that might start being formed among the grandchildren.
 - For the firstborn to be killed was to bring judgment on every family.
- b. With the Passover, God shows that the firstborn in Israel deserves to die just as much as the firstborn in Egypt!
- How so?
 - Because He requires the people of Israel to kill a lamb and mark their door way with the blood of the slain lamb if they want to be spared (passed over).
 - The lamb is killed in place of the firstborn males in their households.
 - In 12:13, He says: **“Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.”**
- c. And of course He does pass over them, and He appoints that they commemorate this pass over every year by offering a lamb.
- 1) This reminds them that their firstborn sons (who represent the whole family as priests to God) all deserve to die the same as the Egyptians.
 - The only reason they are allowed to live is because God graciously accepts a sacrifice in their place—not because they are any better than the Egyptians.
 - Those households who believed God did as He told them and killed a lamb in the place of their firstborn sons.
 - 2) This, of course, speaks volumes to us about God’s grace now that Jesus has come!
 - In 1 Corinthians 5:7, Paul calls Jesus “our Passover” who “was sacrificed for us.”
 - It is only because God graciously accepts Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for us that we are able to be pardoned of sin and be His people.
 - He is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
 - God accepts us as His people only because we trust in Christ who died for us.
 - He is the Son of God, and He is the only sacrifice that can take away our sins.
 - How we should praise Him for His free grace!

- We are no different from than the Egyptians as far as our merit—it is only by His grace that we are accepted through faith in Jesus Christ our Passover.

TRANS> What marvellous grace God has shown to us... that we might be His people!

- Not only does He accept a substitute for us to die in our place, but He provides the only substitute that is acceptable, His one and only Son.
 - Such is His grace in making us to be His people!

B. Next, we see in Exodus how the LORD provides for us as His people.

- We learn from this that after we are redeemed, He provides for our ongoing life with Him.
 1. In Exodus, He brings them out from Egypt into the wilderness where they are completely dependent on Him...
 - Let's look at three ways that He provides for them.
 - a. In Exodus 16, they have no food—and there are over a million of them in the wilderness.
 - They complain to Moses, and in Exodus 16:4, God says: **“Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.”**
 - He does it in a way that shows that it is from Him...
 - instructing them to collect it each day and not to try to save it except on Friday when they are to save it for the Sabbath on Saturday.
 - Some of them try to save it on other days, and it spoils...
 - Some go to find it on the Sabbath, and it is not there.
 - b. And in chapter 17, they have no water—they complain—and once again God provides.
 - In Exodus 17:5-6 it says: **“And the LORD said to Moses, “Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.**
 - c. And then in chapter 17:8-16, the Amalekites come to attack Israel.
 - God teaches them (and us) that He is their protector.
 - He does this by enabling them to win only when Moses raises his staff. As soon as he lets it down, they start to lose.
2. How powerful these three lessons are to teach us that God takes care of us and preserves us as His people!
 - In 1 Corinthians 10, we are told that the rock from which they drank and the bread they ate in Exodus was Christ who also delivers us from temptation as believers.
 - He is our provision by which we are nourished to serve God.

- Unless we depend on Him, drinking the living water that He provides and feeding upon Him as the bread of life, we cannot live.
 - We can no more live for God in this world without Him than Israel could live in the wilderness without Him.
3. But in Exodus, the people continually struggle to trust the LORD—to believe that He will provide and that He can provide...
- We struggle in exactly the same way.
 - But He continues to show them again and again that He is their life.
 - In Exodus 24, He gathers their elders together and renews the covenant that He made with their fathers and promises that He will be faithful to them.
 - Over and over He declares to them (and to us) that He is their God and that He will provide for them as His people.
 - In our day, God has commanded the gospel to be preached among us each Lord's Day.
 - Each Lord's Day, the day that Jesus was raised from the dead, we are called together and God renews His covenant with us through the ministry of the word and sacrament, setting forth Christ to us as our provision by which we live as His people.
 - We live for God in the wilderness of this sinful world only because He continually provides for us through His Son.
 - Not only initial grace and forgiveness to make us to be His people and to free us from bondage, but also grace to sustain us in the wilderness.
 - Keep your eyes on Him in faith.

C. And thirdly, God shows us in Exodus how He establishes us as His people by giving us His law.

- The law He gives us falls under three different categories...
 - *The moral law* in which right and wrong are distinguished.
 - *The judicial law* in which God authorises judges to punish crimes for the purpose of maintaining justice and restraining crime.
 - *The ceremonial law* in which He directs them about how they are to worship Him until Jesus comes.
 - Let's look at each of these and consider what each has to say to us as God's people today.
1. The moral law is given in Exodus 19 & 20.
- a. God begins by reminding them of how He had redeemed them to be His people—His people who serve Him as God and who obey Him.
- They are now to be distinguished as His people by obeying Him.
 - Remember that we fell by joining Satan in rebellion against God, rejecting Him as God and our God by disobedience.
 - But now God has redeemed Israel from bondage to Pharaoh that they might obey God as their God.

- We are redeemed by Jesus so that we can be God’s servants—not so we can go on sinning and not be punished, but so we can serve and obey the Lord as our God.
 - Look at 19:4-6: “**You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.** ⁵ **Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.** ⁶ **And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”**
 - No longer are they to serve Pharaoh and idols—no longer are we to do what we want—we are to obey God who has redeemed us.
- b. But notice the terrifying way in which God presents His law to them.
- 1) He appears on Mt. Sinai with thunder and lightning and smoke and a voice that terribly shakes the earth.
 - In 19:16, it says: **Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled.**
 - And He also warns them that they dare not so much as touch the mountain lest they die.
 - Look at verse 21: **And the LORD said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the LORD, and many of them perish.”**
 - In Hebrews 12, we are told that even Moses trembled at this exhibition of God’s holiness.
 - 2) By why should our gracious heavenly Father appear to them in this way?
 - He does this to show them that their obedience is not acceptable to Him—that they are still sinners who come short in their obedience—terribly short.
 - We now know this even better than they who experienced it did.
 - Now we know that we come so short of what God requires that there is no way to come to Him except by the blood of Jesus Christ.
 - Our disobedience is no trivial matter that can be overlooked and forgotten.
 - It is a great dishonour to God—a grave injustice—a wrong that can only be put right by the cursing of God’s Son for us.
- c. And then He gives them the Ten Commandments—a very simple summary of how every human being should live.
- 1) The Ten Commandments begin with a strong prohibition against idolatry—the setting aside of the true God as God and our God...
 - We are told to have no other gods before Him, nor to make any graven image or likeness of Him to worship.
 - It was the setting aside of God as our God that brought about the ruin of the human race and set the world under God’s curse.

- God wants us to be horrified by such deeds. He want us to be humbled by our sin.
 - With the incident of the golden calf—when the people make an idol like the Egyptians had as recorded in Exodus 32,
 - God threatens to destroy them—because idolatry is the very sin that leads people away from the true God as their God.
 - He makes it clear that it will not be tolerated by Him, so today—idolatry begins when we move away from Christ our Saviour.
- 2) The third commandment tells us not to take His name in vain—not to treat Him and what He says lightly—as something that we can ignore...
- And the fourth commandment tells us to remember the Sabbath Day that He appointed for us to worship Him, all the more now that we not only remember creation about also the new creation that began with the raising of Jesus from the dead.
- 3) And then there are the commands that have to do with loving our neighbour—
- honouring and respecting parents and all others who are in authority,
 - refusing to unjustly take the life of our neighbour or to be unchaste or to unjustly take his property
 - or to lie and gossip and be greedy and covetousness.
 - All these are commandments that are binding upon all people in all ages, and that we only need to be told of because we are sinners.
 - If we were not, they would all be obvious to us.
- d. The moral law does us so much good!
- It shows us our need of Christ because we see how we come short.
 - It sets before us the beautiful way we ought to live where we love God with all our heart and love our neighbour as ourselves.
 - As Christians who are forgiven in Christ, we love His law because rather than condemning us, it guides us.
 - We do not want to keep the law in a formal way.
 - We want it to permeate every part of us—to fill every nook and cranny of our being.
 - For example, the commandment about adultery—it is from God!
 - That means that we are not only to avoid the act, but also to refuse to lust after a woman in our heart.
 - And it means we will have no interest in profane jokes.
2. Next there are the various judicial laws that are recorded in Exodus.
- a. With these, God instructed the judges of His people to punish crimes in the community with just punishments.
- The general principle was that the punishment should be equal to the crime—if you steal, you have to restore it with a penalty; if you kill, then you should be executed; if you don't put a rail up on a high place, you are responsible if someone gets injured.
 - A just society in our day will follow these principles.

- Many of the laws we have inherited are based on these principles, even things like distinctions between voluntary and involuntary man-slaughter.
- b. Israel also had some judicial laws that were peculiar to them in their day.
- For example, there were rules and regulations for the division of property or laws related to their tribes.
 - These are no longer binding on us of course, but even here, there are many principles that apply.
- c. Judicial laws have three purposes...
- 1) The first purpose is to restrain crime within a community.
 - When a person knows that there will be consequences for murder or theft or adultery, it makes them think twice.
 - 2) The second purpose is to shape the conscience of the people—
 - If our society did not penalise people for having sex with children, there would be more of such behaviour going on than there is...
 - And more and more people would start to accept it...
 - Do you want proof?
 - Just look at what has happened where infidelity in marriage is not penalised—or the murder of unborn children—or sodomy.
 - 3) The third purpose of judicial law, and one that is not often recognised, is that it was given to uphold (satisfy) justice before God within the nation.
 - The idea being that if the community does not punish those who commit crime, then God will punish the whole society.
3. And finally, there are ceremonial laws given to us in Exodus.
- a. There is more written about ceremonial laws in Exodus than there is about moral or judicial laws.
- There are descriptions of the tabernacle and how it is to be built, of the furnishings for it like the altar and the table of showbread and the lampstands... the bronze sea and the ark of the covenant.
 - There are descriptions of the feast days and of the garments of the priests.
- b. Even though we no longer are bound by these ceremonial laws, they still have a lot to say to us today!
- Overall, they symbolise how God is able to dwell with us as sinners.
 - The tabernacle is His tent, pitched in the midst of His people.
 - No one can come near without a sacrifice to atone for sin, and only the priests can offer the sacrifices.
 - What God showed in giving the Ten Commandments—that we cannot come near to Him because of our sin—is symbolically rectified by the sacrifices of the ceremonial law.
 - The people can come to God to worship Him and can have Him dwell in their camp, when they have priests offering the proper sacrifices.
 - The priests themselves must have sacrifices offered for them because they too must be purified.
 - And then they must offer sacrifices for the people's sins.

- There must be washings and consecration, and besides offerings for sin, offerings to show the dedication that is due to God.
- So how do these things speak to us today?
 - In that they point to Christ.
 - He is the tabernacle—John 1 speaks of Him as tabernacling among us—and He calls His body the temple...
 - He is also the pure and holy priest who offers sacrifices in our behalf to atone for our sins and to represent the dedication that we ought to have toward God.
 - And He is the sacrifice itself that was offered to God.
 - As we saw with the Passover, He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.
 - He is the one that was cursed in our place.
 - Now that He has come, we no longer have a temple or a tabernacle made with men's hands—but we rather have the assurance that God is with us through Christ...
 - We no longer have the priests of Aaron, but we have Christ as a priest who offered the true sacrifice that takes away our sins.
 - We no longer offer bulls and goats, but we have Christ who was crucified for us two thousand years ago.
 - By Him, we are able to come to God with full assurance.
- c. All of this means that when we read these things in Exodus, we need to see Jesus Christ and rejoice in Him as our Saviour.
 - With the lampstand, we are to think of Christ as our light.
 - With the showbread, we are to see Christ as the bread of life.
 - With the altar of incense, we are to see the prayers of Christ ascending to God for us.

Conclusion: We haven't time to go into any more details.

- But how gloriously our gracious redeemer is presented to us in Exodus!
 - What power is His, what grace is His, what love!
 - Who but He is LORD, who but He can redeem us? who but He would?
- Let us turn our eyes to Him in faith as He is revealed to us here,
 - And let us thank God that He has taken us out of bondage that we might serve Him as His people, cleansed from all our sins.