

February 16th, 2020 **Finding Freedom From Bondage**

Sermon Summary

This message begins with an introduction that shows how much of the Old Testament points to the Cross! Over and over in Old Testament history, we see the stories which point to the sacrifice Jesus would make as the perfect and pure lamb of God. Jesus made that sacrifice in order that we might find freedom from our spiritual bondage.

There are four major points:

1. Finding Freedom From Bondage is Only Found in God.
2. Finding Freedom From Bondage Requires a Softened Heart
3. Finding Freedom From Bondage is God's Desire for You!
4. Finding Freedom From Bondage Requires a Sacrifice

The first two points look at the plagues and Pharaoh's response to God's request through Moses to let His people go. Third point reiterates how our freedom is God's desire! The last point is the crescendo of the message and is based on the main text for the message, Exodus 12:21-28. This passage talks about the passover lamb and is a foreshadowing of Jesus becoming the Passover Lamb, sacrificed so we could find freedom from spiritual bondage.

Full Sermon Notes

Intro: Aren't you thankful we can say those things about our God? He's a waymaker, a miracle worker, a promise keeper, and a light in the darkness? Today we will behold our God in a powerful way and see that He is all of those things as we look at the actual events surrounding the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. They were in terrible bondage and God used Moses to set them free from that bondage. God knows bondage is still very much a part of people's lives and He's still willing to work miracles in order to set us free! Let's pray and ask Him to help us find freedom from our spiritual bondage! Pray!

If you've been with us from the beginning of our 260 plan of reading through the Bible, starting from Genesis, you might remember how God had given Adam and Eve a choice to have a relationship with Him through trust! Their decision to distrust God and eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil brought about the fall of humankind and terrible spiritual bondage! We saw how details of the story actually pointed to the future sacrifice of Jesus! Remember Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame with fig leaves, but God gave them animal skins to cover themselves. This indicated that something had sacrificed its life in order for their sins to be covered and it was a foreshadowing of the death of Jesus and the blood He would shed to cover their sin and our sin.

A few weeks ago we looked at the story of Abraham and his son Isaac. While God did not allow Abraham to sacrifice his son, but provided a ram, we discovered this story too was a type or foreshadowing of the sacrifice Jesus would someday make in order to redeem humankind!

And then there was Jacob and his son Joseph. I don't know if you've ever thought of this, while Joseph was not Jacob's only son, he was the son closest to his father's heart and Jacob was separated from his son for around 13 years believing he had been killed. It was a tragic time for Jacob, but God used those circumstances to save Joseph's family and the nation of Israel from starvation! Another foreshadowing of how God's Only Son Jesus would face separation from His Heavenly Father on the Cross to make a way to save the human race from spiritual depravation and starvation.

Last week we started the story of Exodus by looking at the call of Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. Another Pharaoh had come to power who did not know about Joseph and the good things he had done for Egypt, and as we discovered, he feared the Hebrew people and enslaved them. Today we come to the story of the Exodus. This story is yet another powerful foreshadowing or prophetic example of how God was not only working in the circumstances of the Hebrew people to set them free from the Pharaoh, but was also setting the stage for the sacrifice His One and Only Son, Jesus, would someday make. Sometimes the stories of the Old Testament are relegated to children's story books and are seen to have little application to deeper theological concepts. Nothing could be further from the truth! Let's look at the definition of theology...

Theology - The study of the nature of God and religious beliefs

In the great stories of the Old Testament, God begins to reveal Himself to us and when we look through the lens of the Cross, we see the stage being set for the great rescue God would someday make on behalf of humanity. Today I will share with you some amazing truths you may have previously overlooked or been unaware of. Truths that could change your life! We'll pick up with our story from last week in Exodus 3:18. Remember God was calling Moses through the burning bush, and Moses, a usually very tough man, was having some fears about what God was asking him to do and so he came up with several different excuses. However, God assured him of this...

Exo 3:18 "The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.'

Exo 3:19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him.

Exo 3:20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

What are the wonders God is talking about? The ten plagues! That's right. The plagues teach many lessons! One is this...

Finding freedom from bondage is only found in God

Remember, theology is the study of the nature of God and religious beliefs. There are some powerful theological reasons God chose the methods He did to obtain the Hebrew

people's freedom. God could have just overpowered the Pharaoh from the get go, but He didn't. Why? God wanted people to know the truth about who God was. He wanted them to understand that freedom from bondage would only be found in the one true creator God! He wanted the Egyptians, the Hebrews, and all the world to know the One true God. The "I AM WHO I AM" God!! He knew the only way for people to find freedom from the bondage of sin, the futility of false god's, the deception of pagan religious practices, and the emptiness of worldly priorities, was through a personal relationship with that Creator God! So here's why He used the plagues. The plagues were chosen because of the spiritual lessons they could teach. I don't have the time to go into all the plagues, but we'll look at the first two and the last two plagues, and see how God was using the plagues not only to free His people from slavery, but also to show them the One True God!

The first plague was the plague of blood. Egypt rarely got rain, so the Nile river was their life line. Drinking water, fish for food, irrigation for their crops. Very important life line for them!

As a result, the Nile river was worshipped as a god! But it was a created thing not God! When Moses lifted his staff the Nile turned to blood and had an awful stench and the fish died. The Creator God wanted everyone to know the Nile was not a god, but was in fact a life giving gift from the Creator God!

The second plague was the plague of frogs. "Within Egyptian mythology the frog was the embodiment of life-giving power." Broadman Commentary 1, pg 338. The frogs had now become a pestilence, and to reinforce the truth that life-giving power was not to be found in the frog, the frogs died rather than return to the river as they usually did.

There were 6 more plagues and then we get to the ninth. The ninth plague was the plague of darkness. And what a lesson this would teach! As you may know, Egyptians worshipped Re the sun god. Pharaoh was considered the embodiment of that god. When God Almighty used Moses to bring about total darkness for three days straight, it struck a blow to the Egyptian theology of the sun and Pharaoh being god! However, Pharaoh was a very stubborn man, and it would take another more drastic plague to get his attention.

The death of the first born. Pharaoh was about to find out he was not a god who could rule the world, and in fact he didn't even have the power to save his own son. Now I must be honest with you. This part of the story is difficult for me. I have struggled with the harshness of this plague. However, I've put my questions in the hands of God and from all I know and have seen of God in my life, I believe He is a just God. And because He is God, He doesn't owe me an explanation, but I believe someday He will show me why certain things had to happen the way they did and it will all make sense to me then. In the meantime, I trust Him with my life, my eternity, and my questions! In fact, let me just say this: In history many people have questioned and sometimes misinterpreted who God really is and what His true nature is, because of some of the historical things in the Old Testament. I want to take just a moment and speak to this. God has always worked with people where they were in their understanding of Him and in history God

has progressively revealed Himself to humankind as our understanding of Him grew. This is known as Progressive Revelation. Just like a verse you would have read last week in the reading plan and may have wondered about, Exodus 4:24...

Exo 4:24 At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met Moses and was about to kill him.

Most theologians believe Moses became sick. At this time in history, when someone got seriously ill people believed God had made them sick. They had no concept of secondary causes, like we understand today, disease, germs, cancer and so on. They believed everything both good and bad were from God. And early on in human history there was no concept of Satan. You might have noticed that Adam and Eve never referred to the serpent as Satan because they had no concept of Satan and evil opposing God. The development of that theology would come later and Scripture would begin to reflect that understanding. I don't have time to go into more detail, but I will say this: If you want to see the true nature of God, look at Jesus. Once He was discussing some deep theology with His disciples and this happened...

John 14:8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

John 14:9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father..."

God's nature of love, mercy and willingness to forgive is on full display in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, in our story today, God was seeking to reveal Himself to Pharaoh, to the Egyptians and especially to the Hebrew people. Remember, there may be many great spiritual powers, but only one can be the Supreme Being. Only one!! I love the way Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr. put in his commentary on Exodus...

"Every aspect of the plague narratives touches in one way or another upon Egyptian theology as it related to the natural order. The triumph of Yahweh in the plagues is indicative of His sovereignty over creation. The earth belongs neither to a divinized king, Pharaoh, nor to the gods of Egypt. Whether in a world dominated by concepts of primitive gods interwoven into creation, or in a modern scientific world with theories of astrophysics and an expanding universe, the earth is the Lord's."

So we've established that finding freedom from bondage is only found in our Almighty and Sovereign God, but God in His sovereignty has given us the responsibility to choose.

Finding Freedom From Bondage Requires a Softened Heart

God knew Pharaoh was going to harden his heart and refuse to let God's people go, but I believe Pharaoh did have a free will and could have changed his mind. Why do I believe this? Look at Exodus 7:8-13...

Exo 7:8 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

Exo 7:9 "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Perform a miracle,' then say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,' and it will become a snake."

Exo 7:10 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake.

Exo 7:11 Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts:

Exo 7:12 Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

Exo 7:13 Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

Exo 7:14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go.

I want you to notice the Scripture says Pharaoh's heart became hard, and God said...

Exo 7:14 ..."Pharaoh's heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go.

After the first plague where the Nile turned to blood, it also says Pharaoh's heart became hard. The second plague was the frogs, as we said, one of the Egyptian gods.

Exo 8:8 Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Pray to the LORD to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD."

Exo 8:9 Moses said to Pharaoh, "I leave to you the honor of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile."

Exo 8:10 "Tomorrow," Pharaoh said. Moses replied, "It will be as you say, so that you may know there is no one like the LORD our God.

Exo 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.

After the third plague, the plague of gnats, this happened...

Exo 8:19 The magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.

After the fourth plague, the plague of flies, Pharaoh again agreed to let the people go...

Exo 8:32 But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.

After the fifth plague when all the Egyptian livestock died we see this...

Exo 9:7 Pharaoh sent men to investigate and found that not even one of the animals of the Israelites had died. Yet his heart was unyielding and he would not let the people go.

However, something changes with the sixth plague, the plague of boils...

Exo 9:11 The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians.

Exo 9:12 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.

After plague seven, the plague of hail falling from the skies, destroying their crops it says once more that Pharaoh and his officials hardened their hearts,

Exo 9:34 When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts.

Exo 9:35 So Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.

After every other plague, from this point on, we read that "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart!" What happened?

When God comes to a person, that person can choose to accept or reject. Many times when God first calls out to a person, their heart is touched by God and they at least consider accepting God. If they decide to harden their heart to God they can do so. But here's what can happen. After so many times of hardening your heart, the same Holy Spirit of God that once softened your heart and brought conviction will begin have the opposite affect. It will begin to make you hard, cold and calloused. It's kind of like when I worked years ago roofing houses. When I first started, that hammer handle softened my hands and blistered and broke the skin. But as the summer wore on, calluses began to build up! The same hammer handle that had once softened and broken my skin was now having the opposite effect of making them tough and hard. It's the same way with a person who continues to reject the call of God. They become spiritually hardened. The same Holy Spirit, different impact! I don't know where you are with your heart and it's receptivity to God, but I know where God's heart is in regards to you. We discover this when we understand that...

Finding Freedom From Bondage is God's Desire for You!

Remember these verses from Exodus 6:5-8?

Exo 6:5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.

Exo 6:6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

Exo 6:7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

Exo 6:8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD."

This was God's desire for Moses and the children of Israel, but it is also true for you. If you are in bondage and seek the freedom only God can give, you must know He desires this for you. Jesus once quoted this passage from Isaiah...

Isa 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,
Isa 61:2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,
Isa 61:3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

And here's the amazing thing. Jesus, God in the flesh, was willing to be the sacrifice that you might find freedom from bondage! Why do I say this? Because...

Finding Freedom From Bondage Requires a Sacrifice

We've talked about plagues and we've talked about Pharaoh. We will close the message with a special part of the Exodus story...The Passover Lamb!

The people were oppressed and enslaved. God was going to rescue them, but there were special instructions they were to follow in order for the rescue to be successful. We find this in Exodus chapter 12 beginning with verse 17...

Exo 12:17 "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.

Exo 12:18 In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day.

The reason the bread was to be unleavened was that leaven or yeast was associated with fermentation and that was associated with corruption. So during this time they were not to eat it. Let's read on...

Exo 12:21 Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb.

Exo 12:22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning.

Hyssop is a small bushy plant, with flowers in bunches that could soak up liquid, so it was sometimes used as a brush. It was used to offer vinegar to Jesus when He was on the Cross. Moses continued...

Exo 12:23 When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

Exo 12:24 "Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.

Exo 12:25 When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony.

Exo 12:26 And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?'

Exo 12:27 then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'" Then the people bowed down and worshiped.

Exo 12:28 The Israelites did just what the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron.

You might be inclined to say at this point, "Pastor Larry, that was a good history lesson but what does all of that have to do with me? I live in a free country and I am the slave of no one! How does this apply to me?" We are a free people politically, but spiritually we are as enslaved as we've ever been. Sin has become our pharaoh! Moral depravity has become our taskmaster and it is destroying individuals, families, and communities! You might say, "but I'm better off financially than I've ever been!" Let me tell you, if wealth is your main measure of success in life, you've just confessed your bondage. Paul described spiritual bondage to his young apprentice Timothy.

2 Tim 3:1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.

2 Tim 3:2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

2 Tim 3:3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,

2 Tim 3:4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--

These things will enslave you as bad if not worse than the Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptians. There's only one way to find freedom from these forms of bondage and that is through sacrifice. The amazing good news is that the sacrifice has been made for you and if you will acknowledge that sacrifice and accept it, you can be set free from your spiritual bondage to sin as the Hebrews were set free from their physical bondage to Egypt. Both of our memory verses for this week point to the sacrifice that was made on your behalf...

MEMORY VERSE John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

And in...

MEMORY VERSE Heb 9:22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Heb 9:11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

Heb 9:12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

Heb 9:13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

Heb 9:14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Heb 9:15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Folks we are under the new covenant. The new covenant was sealed with the very blood of the lamb, the perfect and precious lamb of God, Jesus Christ, and as a result we can find freedom from spiritual bondage!! Paul said it well when he said...

Gal 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Let's pray!!