

Exodus 5-7:7

At 10 years old I sat with my sister on a dock at the foot of the Grand Tetons. It was a spectacular view of the Rockies! I left the dock believing I had seen the Rocky Mountains. But a further drive across the mountain range navigating the treacherous switchbacks to a mountaintop outlook showed me a mountain range that stretched endlessly in every direction. The jagged snow covered peaks, valleys carved by rivers and a horizon of blue and golden light. This vantage point provided a greater understanding of the vastness and the glory of these mountains. One I did not have sitting on the dock or even traveling the narrow and challenging switchbacks.

Today as we begin in Chapter 5 we find the Hebrews on the dock with a limited view of their deliverance and in Chapter 6 God will reveal more of his identity and intent as their deliverer. As you have read there are a few switchbacks along the way so let's see what we might learn as they navigate them.

As we finished last week, Moses and Aaron have indeed arrived in Egypt. They have met with the elders of Israel. There Aaron obediently spoke the words Moses had been given. The elders believed. They recognized Moses and Aaron's God given leadership. There is unity among God's people and they all bowed and worshipped God together. The people of God are filled with hope of deliverance. It is a long awaited and beautiful moment. In Chapter 5, we see Moses and Aaron set aside their hesitations and courageously go to Pharaoh. They are granted access to the palace and Pharaoh

as well as protection in going. They obediently follow God's instructions and make his request of Pharaoh.

As I read this account, I was struck by another glorious moment in scripture, when the Jews gathered along the streets of Jerusalem to celebrate waving palms and shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is ^uhe who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" Cheering their deliverer and the hope of deliverance from their circumstances. But that week would unfold very differently than they expected just as today's narrative will present some difficult and unexpected turns for the Hebrews.

Opposition and suffering following obedience, trust, unity and worship. An earthly viewpoint on this is challenging. They are being asked to walk by faith and not by sight. The hope in God's deliverance is much greater than what is seen and previously understood or even imagined by the Hebrews. God is engaging a battle for the hearts of his people.

So isn't it fitting that God request his people be released for three days in the wilderness to feast and worship God? This request is a foreshadowing of God's intent. This confrontation is not just about bricks and straw but God seeks the opportunity to be with his people. He knows through worship their hearts will be aligned with his. They will remember who he is and who they are. They will find hope and strength and be prepared for what lies ahead. This is how God chooses to make known his intent for the hearts of his people. The King of all Kings makes this request of an earthly king. In this God gives Pharaoh opportunity to reveal his heart.

Pharaoh denies God's existence, his authority and his request. His opposition is undeniable. In this response, we are given a clear understanding of who Pharaoh is. His twisted reasoning questions the validity and intent of the request. His interpretation of the request is that it is a result of idle hands. He accuses Moses and Aaron of "lying words" and pretends himself to be a protector of the people against such deception. He even justifies the increased tasks as a way to keep them from this false hope. Meanwhile we get a glimpse of his fear, as he cites the threatening population growth of the Hebrews despite their slavery, oppression, persecution and even the past attempts of genocide by the Egyptians. Could it be Pharaoh recognizes God's protection of his people and his own lack of control? Instead of surrender he further opposes by trying to assert his control with unfair and cruel hardship. The people of God will now find their own straw for brick making and the previous quotas will remain.

Opposition to include denial, twisted reasoning, accusations, self deception through justifications, and cruelty result from a fearful ruler confronted by the King of Kings. Sound familiar? Jesus, too, would endure the mocking of the Godhead, and the denial of his identity, false accusations, and twisted reasoning by self deceived religious leaders and a fearful Pilate, The resulting suffering was the cruelty of the cross. In both these confrontations a hardened heart is exposed and juxtaposed against a compassionate God in pursuit of his people.

God's pursuit is not easily understood.

Isaiah 55:8-9 assure us

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

⁹ ¶ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

And Proverbs 3:5 instructs us

¶ Trust in the Lord with all your heart,

and ¶ warns us further

do not lean on your own understanding.

This is not easy for us and it was not easy for the Hebrews either.

The people are now scattered as they scrape together straw for bricks.

The expectations are greater,
they work harder and they suffer great injustices.

Their leaders are physically beaten when they do not make quota.

The situation is unfair and abusive.

God's people's suffering has intensified within their deliverance. Their trust in God and his chosen leadership is challenged. They are vulnerable to deception in their hardship. Their actions tell us they believe that it is up to them to change their circumstances. They have forgotten the identity of Yahweh, their true deliverer and their own identity as his beloved. They act as orphans; striving to change their circumstances,

insecure in their position,

and self reliant without faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In this place they are easily self deceived about the extent of their bondage. So they choose to go to Pharaoh *to reason with him* about their suffering. This is a moment isn't it? To use a Paul Tripp term, this choice is further "troubling their trouble". In this encounter, they identify themselves as Pharaoh's servants three times. They are in real danger as they confront a tyrant as orphans with their complaints and accusations against his people. It does not go well. Pharaoh does not lessen his demands and cites the request to worship as proof that they are indeed idle. Out of this encounter they blame Moses and Aaron for their hardship and fear the circumstances will bring them death rather than deliverance. They turn away from God in their suffering.

Doubts and disappointment lead to despair, division, and disobedience. God's children need to be delivered from themselves.

Let's step aside for just a moment to consider our own hearts. What tempts us to forget our identity as a beloved daughter of a loving heavenly Father and instead choose an orphan's heart? Where do we seek to protect ourselves and abandon the rest found under his wing? In the midst of life's disappointments, opposition and even suffering are we given to fear:

Disbelieving God does not see our hurts?

Does not hear our cries?

Does not remember his promises to us?

Do we lose sight of our inheritance?

Galatians 4:4-7 says,

But ^dwhen the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son,
^eborn ^fof woman, born ^gunder the law, **5** ^hto redeem those who were

under the law, so that we might receive ⁱadoption as sons. **6** And because you are sons, God has sent ^jthe Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” **7** So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then ^kan heir through God.

Romans 8:15-17 says,

For ^gyou did not receive ^hthe spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of ⁱadoption as sons, by whom we cry, ^j“Abba! Father!” **16** ^kThe Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, then ^lheirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, ^mprovided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

It is this secure identity that provides a way and a hope for us. Recently I was confronted with my own orphan heart in a difficult and sometimes painful relationship. I needed to enter into the relationship in obedience to God but I was fearful of further hurt and honestly, I was weary of the situation. I confess a hopelessness. I really did not want to go but I knew I needed to go. I cried out to God in my weakness, my reluctance and my fear. He heard me and he reminded me of his forbearance with me, his unending grace spilled over and over again on me. He reminded me I had received grace abundant, enough to walk into this place and enough to share with one he created and loved.

God was faithful to remind me who he was to me and who I was to him.

I can tell you honestly I went joyfully as his daughter. The circumstances were not changed but I was. As his daughter, I was

confident in my Father's care for me and his promises. So I was enabled to give grace and bless out of the abundance that is mine instead of looking to protect myself, justify my past hurts or seek control. God used this hard place to remind me of my identity as his daughter and his good purpose for this relationship in my life.

Moses knows he is God's chosen. However, doubts and disappointments enter his heart as he looks at the results of his encounter with Pharaoh and listens to the people's complaints and accusations. He questions why he was sent. He complains that the people have incurred more hardship without the promised deliverance. He is dissatisfied with God's plan at this point. But instead of turning away from God, Moses brings his confusion and anguish to God. It is this choice that makes all the difference.

God meets Moses in this moment. You see God is not surprised by the opposition or the suffering of his people. Jesus say in John 16:33 "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

God is and always has been intent on the deliverance of his chosen. God will deliver his people and dwell with them as promised, but they are not ready, yet. In my roles as a teacher, a mother, a Nana, and a "believer in process" myself, I have come to love the word "yet!" It is a hopeful word. It indicates something is going to happen but the timing is just not for today. It reminds me to persevere trusting God knows the beginning from the end and he is always at work to accomplish his good purpose in us even through hardship.

In II Corinthians 4:7-18 Paul reminds us that opposition and suffering are a part of life in the already but not yet.

Verses 17-18 say,

17 For ⁱthis light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, **18** ⁱas we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

And in Romans 5:3-6 Paul writes:

We ^frejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering ^gproduces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and ^hhope does not put us to shame, because God's love ⁱhas been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Paul suffered a thorn in the flesh, a ship wreck, trials, imprisonment and more! Here he tells us that God can be trusted to work his good purpose even in moments when we do not understand or see it! Suffering is a tool in the hand of God that is used for our good. So we are called to rejoice in the sovereign work of God through it and the opportunity that is given to us to walk by faith and not by sight.

In Chapter 6, God meets Moses in his doubts and anguish. God is patient to provide Moses with all he needs. He does not specifically address the hardship of the people or Moses complaints but instead reveals more of himself to them. He reminds them who he is! He begins with 8 declarative statements that establish his identity as the Lord and the redeemer. He then establishes the identity of Moses and Aaron in relation to his covenant and promises. His statements begin and end proclaiming **I am the LORD.**

The 6 statements between describe his acts of redemption. He makes it clear that redemption is **all his doing** as each statement begins with the phrase, “I will”.

Let’s look at them more closely.

I am the LORD. This is the redemptive name of God. He is giving his people a further understanding of his character and intent. He has appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty, but now he wants his people to know him as LORD.

He goes on to share the actions by which they will know him.

I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I promised Abram and I am faithful.

I will deliver you from slavery. You will not belong to another, you are mine. I am a jealous God.

I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgement. I am just.

I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God. We will belong to one another in relationship.

I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I am a promise keeper.

I will give it to you for a possession! You are my heirs.

I am the LORD. This is who I am!

Then God provides the genealogy to establish Moses and Aaron’s identity. Genealogy was everything in this society. It determined business arrangements, marriages and the transfer of property. Moses and Aaron are of the lineage of Levi of the race of Abraham and thus God establishes the truth of his promised deliverance as given to Abram in Genesis 15:13-14

The Lord said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”

God is willing to continue to engage his suffering and sinful people that we might belong to him. He recounts his longing for them in verse 7 of Chapter 6.

” “I will take you to be **my** people, and I will be **your** God, and you shall know that I am the Lord **your** God,”

He is making clear that we will belong to each other and he is the one who will bring us into relationship! This is God’s desire for his people, and for us. For this purpose he sent his Son to suffer the unimaginable to deliver us from our bondage to sin and bring us into relationship with him as sons and daughters and fellow heirs with Christ.

This is who he is and his sacrifice defines who we are.

After establishing God’s identity and purpose and reminding Moses and Aaron of their identity God gives Moses divine authority and power. He will make Moses God to Pharaoh. In this we see the limitlessness of God’s being and his extraordinary power. God is not compromised in this but rather he is shown to be both omnipresent and omnipotent. Moses is equipped by God to challenge the Pharaoh as well as his defiance against God. God arms Moses for the opposition’s resistance by warning him that Pharaoh’s heart will be

hardened and that God will work in contrast to pursue his people's hearts that they might understand that "I am the Lord your God." He is patient and long suffering to show them the extent of their bondage and the magnitude of his deliverance.

II Corinthians 3:18 Gives us a glimpse of what the magnitude of our deliverance looks like!

18 "And we all, with unveiled face, ^tbeholding ^uthe glory of the Lord,² ^vare being transformed into the same image ^wfrom one degree of glory to another.³ For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

Now that is a mountaintop perspective!

This has been a lot to cover today. So can I just encourage you to ask the Lord to help you grab one of the truths from these chapters?

To bask in your identity as God's child and live in the joy of belonging to him.

To turn toward God with your pain in times of opposition and suffering that he might remind you who he is and who you are.

To worship the LORD, as he continues to pursue us and delivers us unto his likeness.

To praise God that He is LORD.

Let's pray.

Thank you Jesus for the price you paid for our deliverance. We ask for your continuing work of deliverance in our lives recognizing it is all you Lord! Help us to live in the freedom and fulness of our deliverance as your daughters that we might see you more clearly. In Jesus precious name. Amen

Sources:

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