



ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Bible Study

JUL 2013

THE BOOK OF EXODUS (PART 1)

The English title 'Exodus' comes from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) which means 'way out'. It captures the main theme of this Book; in the words of a commentator (Fretheim) – "The community of faith stands in need of both deliverance and forgiveness. Exodus issues relate to law and obedience, to divine presence and absence, and appropriate worship places and practices would also have been important for Israel in an exilic setting."

Written sometime in the second millennium B.C. the authorship of this Book has been attributed to Moses since the time of Joshua (Joshua 8:31-35; cf. Exodus 20:25) and affirmed also by Jesus Christ (cf. Mark 12:26).

The Book of Exodus is more than a historical narrative concerning Israel; it is a theological narrative concerning God's work in and through God's people in fulfilment of the promise of Genesis 15:13-14 and the birth of the nation Israel. Therefore, a proper reading of this Book must rightfully direct readers to the unchanging characters and covenant of God. It should inspire our trust and obedience to him who is trustworthy, good, merciful and gracious.

SERMON DATE **7 JUL 2013**

GOD'S PEOPLE GROANING
EXODUS 1

SERMON DATE **14 JUL 2013**

THE DELIVERER PREPARED
EXODUS 2

SERMON DATE **21 JUL 2013**

MOSES' CALL AND COMMISSIONING
EXODUS 3

SERMON DATE **28 JUL 2013**

EXCUSES, EXCUSES
EXODUS 4:1-17

GOD'S PEOPLE GROANING

EXODUS 1

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

God's covenant with Abraham as recorded in Genesis 12:2-3 promises to make him a great nation. This is understood later on in terms of the magnitude of Israel's population, prosperity and power. The fulfilment of God's promises comes with it the tension of power struggles and also the pressure of allegiances to foreign nations as the people of Israel journey towards the Promised Land. In this study, we acquaint ourselves with the persecution of Israel and the protection of God. Who will the people of Israel serve?

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. The People of God Grow (1:1-7)
 - a. What circumstances brought the sons of Israel/Jacob to Egypt and subsequently to settle in this foreign land? (v1; cf. Gen 46:26; 47:13-27)

 - b. With the passing away of the entire pioneer generation that first settled in Egypt (v6), what potential challenges could the second generation face in a foreign land?

 - c. How does verse 7 describe the second generation of the sons of Israel? Is this good news or bad news in a foreign land? Why?

 - d. Compare the descriptive language of verse 7 with God's creative language in Genesis 1:28. What do you notice? Do you think Israel's population 'explosion' was merely the result of remarkable human fertility?

Comment/Consider: The chapter begins with a focus on the twelve sons of Jacob included in the seventy immigrants to Egypt. Verse 7 then shifts from this focus on the family of Jacob to the people of Israel. By the time of the census at Sinai (Number 1) two years after the Israelites left Egypt, there were 603,550 males 20 years and older (v46). It was estimated that the entire population including females and children was 2 million. An annual population growth rate of 5% is simply remarkable by any country's standard even today! The first seven verses are not merely presenting a sociological report card on the sons of Jacob/Israel; it is a testimony to God. The creative God (Gen 1:28) is also the covenant-keeping God (Gen 12:2). Anything impossible by human standards is possible with him. Is this the God you know and trust?

2. The People of God Groan (1:8-14)

Knowing God who is powerful and promise-keeping is vital to the people of Israel for the challenges they would face. To whom would the Israelites surrender their allegiance - God or Pharaoh?

 - a. How did the Egyptians oppress the Israelites? Why did the new Pharaoh do this to his long-term residents?
 - b. If you were an oppressed Israelite, how would God's word in Genesis 15:12-15 minister to you? How would you respond to your situation? Why?
 - c. Verse 12 presents an ironical outcome to Pharaoh's oppressive strategy. It again echoes in verse 7 and the creative language in Genesis 1:28. Is this irony the result of Pharaoh's ineffective strategy, the Israelites' resilience, or something else?

Comment/Consider: 'the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread' (v12) Pharaoh could get nowhere with his stubborn and oppressive regime. The harder he rammmed at the wall, the more painful it became. That 'invisible wall' was God himself who was determined to pursue his covenant promise to Abraham, and to stand with his people. God's people have reason to groan, but they have absolutely no reason to give up on God. Is anything stopping you from having confidence in this sovereign and faithful God?

3. The People of God Saved (1:15-22)
 - a. Pharaoh 'turned up the heat' on the Israelites from oppression to persecution (v16). What could potentially happen to the people of Israel and threaten God's covenant promise to Abraham?
 - b. Ironically, the Hebrew midwives were instrumental in thwarting Pharaoh's murderous edict. Why were they willing to risk their own lives in disobeying Pharaoh? Identify one repeated phrase in verses 17 and 21 that explains how this could be possible.

Comment/Consider: The midwives who were in the business of delivering new babies knew full well the sacredness of life and feared God who is the Giver of life. Their moral conscience before the creative God guarded their professional ethics from the destructive influence of Pharaoh. God alone is the silent protector actively working to preserve his people. This sets the stage for the preservation of a boy whom God would eventually use to deliver Israel from Egypt. This boy was Moses. Do you fear God or men?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

The creative and covenant-keeping God preserves and protects his people amidst oppression and persecution.

- The Church as God's people in Christ throughout the world will continue to multiply and be kept mighty for his purposes in spite of oppression and persecution.
- Throughout history, no oppression and persecution has ever been successful in exterminating God's worldwide church.
- Ironically, Gospel and church growth is often most evident in areas where Christians are severely persecuted. God is the faithful and powerful protector of his people who will punish their persecutors on the Day of Judgement. God's people have reason to groan on earth, but no reason to give up on God. Our allegiance must remain with him.

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

1. What is causing you to 'groan' as a Christian today?
2. How much of it comes from direct/indirect opposition to you as a child of God?
3. Have you ever thought of giving up on God and fighting it out on your own?
4. What have you learnt from this lesson that is immediately relevant to your situation?
5. How would you respond to God in your situation?

THE DELIVERER PREPARED

EXODUS 2

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

Any major rescue operation takes time to plan and careful preparation to implement. When it comes to God's rescue operation for his people, time is of the essence to prepare a deliverer faithful to God and dependent on him; a son of Israel who dwells amongst the Egyptians and is familiar with their customs and ways, yet is a Hebrew at heart. Moses is such a rescuer called and prepared by God.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Moses Early Life (2:1-10)
 - a. What do we know about Moses' family?
 - i. His father was _____ who was married to _____, who was his _____ (Ex 6:20).
 - ii. His older brother was _____ (Ex 4:14, 6:20), who was about 3 years older than him (Ex 7:7).
 - iii. His older sister was _____ (Ex 2:4; Num 26:59).
 - b. Why did Moses' mother hide him for 3 months after his birth? (Ex 1:22)
 - c. When they were no longer able to hide the baby, what did they do? What does having the sister of Moses to watch tell us? (Ex 2:3-4)
 - d. God then does something extraordinary.
 - i. Who became Moses' adopted parent? Why? (Ex 2:6, 10) His adopted parent provided Moses with three things – his name (what does it mean?), protection and education (Acts 7:22)
 - ii. Moses was returned to his mother's care until he was older. Why? (Ex 2:7-9)

DISCIPLESHIP POINTER

What is your impression of Moses' parents? Hebrews 11:23 offers the following conclusion about Moses' parents: 'By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.' Would your conclusion have been the same?

2. Moses Kills the Egyptian (2:11-15)
 - a. When Moses was 40 years old, he went to visit the Israelites and during the visit, he killed an Egyptian man. Why? (Acts 7:23-24)

 - b. Acts 7:25 tells us – ‘Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them.’ Instead, what was their reaction? (Ex 2:14)

 - c. What did Moses do when Pharaoh found out? (Ex 2:15)

DISCIPLESHIP POINTER

Hebrews 11:24-26 – ‘By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.’

Moses could have sided with the Egyptian man – after all he was an Egyptian prince near the top of the country's leadership. He could have remained there. Instead he was angry with what he had seen. So he attempted to correct the problem.

But he did it in his own impulsive way – not in the way that God wanted. In his anger, he killed the oppressor and suffered the consequence of his impulsive action.

Let us be willing to side with the suffering people of God even if it means disgrace and suffering for us. However, let us do this in the will of God and not impulsively and when angry.

3. Moses in Median (2:16-22)
 - a. How did Moses meet his wife – Zipporah?

 - b. What was Moses' new profession? (Ex 3:1)

 - c. How long was Moses in Median? (Acts 7:30)

DISCIPLESHIP POINTER

Moses was 80 years old when God called him to deliver Israel. During these years – 0 in Egypt and 40 in Median – Israel suffered slavery and cried out to God (Ex 2:23) – that is two generations of suffering! Why did God not act earlier? Well, Moses was not yet ready.

Similarly, why was Jesus 30 years old when he started his ministry? Could he not have started it when he was 12? Luke 2:40 tells about the child Jesus - ‘the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him’. At 12 years old, Jesus was amazing. But the time was not right – He was not ready. Luke 2:52 says the following about Jesus after his 12th birthday - ‘Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.’ Jesus needed to grow before he was ready for his ministry. Hebrew 5:8-9: Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

Jesus needed to grow and Moses also needed to be prepared! God always has a deliverer for his people. Jesus is the ultimate deliverer who saves God's people from the oppression of sin. Do we accept this deliverer that God has prepared and sent in the person of Jesus Christ? (John 1:1, 14)

MOSES' CALL AND COMMISSIONING

EXODUS 3

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters, we see that God has not forgotten his people, Israel. He works according to his schedule to execute his plan and fulfil his promises made to Abraham. After running away from his crime for 40 years, the old Moses is now tending sheep in the desert, a humbled man with all his lofty dreams dashed. Yet such is the time which God deems ripe to call and commission him for the greatest rescue operation in the Old Testament.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. God executes his plan and promises
 - a. Observe how God takes the initiative to come to Moses. He is a personal God.
 - i. Who does God say He is in verse 6?

 - ii. What about verse 14? What does this mean?

 - iii. What does God's name mean to you?
 - b. What are the attributes of God seen in the following verses?
 - i. Verse 5

 - ii. Verses 7-8 (cf. with Gen 12:7)

 - iii. Verse 9

 - iv. Verse 10
2. God calls and guides

Observe that whenever God sends his people to do his work, he reveals his plan. It is unbiblical to think that he sends us to try it on our own (Blackaby & King, 1994).

 - a. What is Moses' first objection in verse 11? How does God guide, direct and reveal his plan to him? (See vv12, 18, 20; 4:12)

 - b. Since nothing is too difficult for God himself to do, why does he invite Moses (and us) to be involved with his plan? According to Amos 3:7 – when God reveals, what responsibilities do his servants have?

 - c. What struggles does Moses have with God's call? What is his doubt with himself or God? What does Moses need to do in order to serve God's plan?

- d. Whenever God calls you to participate in his work, do you have doubts? What does this say about you? How must you change in order to do his will?

God involves Moses to deliver his people. It is not about Moses but about God's love for his people. Similarly, when doing God's work, it is not about yours or my big God-ego but rather a privilege to be a servant, an instrument for God to execute his plan for his people through you or me. The LORD is the potter and we are his clay (Jer 18:1-6). The potter moulds the clay into whatever shape and vessel he wants. The clay can do nothing, but is totally dependent on the potter's decision and moulding. Similarly Jesus says that 'The Son can do nothing by Himself' (John 5:19); 'Apart from Me you can do nothing' (John 15:5). Hence servanthood means obedience; and to be an effective servant, one must relate to, remain in, and respond to his Master accordingly; and adjust one's life to him, the Master.

- d. What adjustment must you make in order to obey, remain, respond and rely on God to do his work?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

(Abstract from 'The Daily Devotional Commentary' by Lawrence O. Richard, 1990, Victors Books, p44)

'Who am I?' Ex 3:1-22. When God spoke to Moses from a bush that burned without being consumed, the 80-year-old seemed a very different person from the angry firebrand of age 40. Four decades of life in the desert had humbled Moses. The one-time prince of Egypt who dreamed great dreams had learned his limitations. When God said, "I am sending you to Pharaoh," Moses replied, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

The rest of the passage, which reports Moses' dialogue with the LORD, shows how hesitant Moses was. Moses brought difficulty after difficulty – a pattern that continues into Exodus 4 despite God's repeated promises to be with Moses and bring him success.

Again we can identify with Moses. As we grow older, and discover our limitations, the dreams of youth fade away. We won't be famous. Or rich. Or find the cure for cancer. Or become a well-known evangelist. As our early self-image shrinks, we find ourselves less willing to risk. Instead of opportunities we see problems. Instead of trying, we think of all the reasons why we are sure to fail.

This is what happened to Moses. Even promises from God weren't quite enough to change a view that had developed over 40 years of failure. Yet in a sense it was Moses' awareness of his weaknesses that made him suitable for God's purpose! Moses had finally realised that there was nothing he could do. Now all Moses needed to learn was that God can do anything!

It's the same with you and me. It's healthy to acknowledge our weaknesses. But we need not dwell on them. What we really need to do is to fix our eyes on the Lord, and remember that there is nothing too hard for Him. Any task God may call you or me to do is a task that He can accomplish through us.

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

When Moses held back, fearful, on the doorstep of commitment, God told Moses His name. The name the LORD revealed was, 'I AM', which is Jehovah or Yahweh. It is constructed on the Hebrew verb, 'to be' and is best taken to mean 'The God Who Is Always Present'. Thus God's name means that He is all-present, always present to us. Is there a time or situation in which you need to hold on to the fact that GOD IS, and that He is present with you? (Richard, 1990)

This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word. (Isa 66:2)
"God isn't looking for brilliant men and women, nor is He depending upon eloquent men and women, in sending His Gospel out into the world. God is looking for broken people, for those who have judged themselves in the light of the cross of Christ. When He wants anything done, He takes up men and women who have come to an end of themselves, and whose trust and confidence is not in themselves but in God." (H.A. Ironside). Are you esteemed by God for him?

Reference:

Richard, L. (1990). 'The Daily Devotional Commentary'. Victor Books, Scripture Press Publication. p44-45.

Blackaby, H & King, Claude. (1994). 'Experiencing God'. Broadman & Holman Publishers.

H.A. Ironside's quote – Extracted from 'Magnificent Prayer: 366 Devotions to Deepen Your Prayer Experience', by Nick Harrison.2001. Zondervan, p48

EXCUSES, EXCUSES

EXODUS 4:1-17

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

Exodus 4 continues with Moses' calling and commissioning to be God's agent to rescue Israel. Moses continued to express reservations, but God patiently addressed them point-by-point, up to a point (!). Throughout Exodus 3 & 4, we glean more than just the calling process of a man who felt he could sufficiently excuse himself for the task (he couldn't be more mistaken!). We glean the One who reveals himself to be supreme and sufficient beyond every conceivable way, so that Moses, Israel and Egypt might know him who declares – 'I am the LORD'.

FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Moses' Insecurity and Deficiency
 - a. What two challenges / fears cause Moses to hesitate in accepting God's call? What past experiences (Ex 2) might have increased his reluctance to return to Egypt?

 - b. Observe the emphasis on believing and listening in 4:1-9. Ironically, who was really slow to believe and listen to God? At what point in the dialogue was this resistance made fairly clear?

Reflect:

- i. What challenges / fears keep me from working out God's calling to know and to serve him - in private life, in the home, in the church and in the world? Are they due to:
 - External factors which I cannot control, I create, or I over-anticipate (i.e. the 'what ifs')?
 - Personal inadequacies : (dis)abilities, personality, character traits, weaknesses?
 - Bad past experiences which I regret ('if only!'); I hope to avoid; I cannot let go?
 - ii. Are these challenges / fears valid reasons or mere excuses for cover-up? Can the former slip into the latter? How do I guard against the latter? Bring these issues before the Lord in prayer and share with others if comfortable.
2. Yahweh's Supremacy and Sufficiency
 - a. In response to Moses' deficiency in word and deed, what did God promise to do? What is God really saying to Moses? How did He want Moses to respond?

 - b. What do the following reveal about who God is and how he relates to his people?
 - i. He performs reversible signs involving creatures, disease and nature (vv3-9)

 - ii. He uses a shepherd's staff (v2, 17, 20); a man not good with speaking (vv10, 14)

 - iii. He connects with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Hebrew slaves (v5; 2:23-25)

 - iv. He claims responsibility for physical abilities and disabilities (v11)

 - v. He is angry at his resistant servant, but still uses him (v14)

Reflect: How did God speak to those challenges / fears (1c. above) and demonstrate his presence and sufficiency? How did it help me?

3. Moses to the Messiah to Me

- a. In many ways, the life of Moses anticipates the greater prophet (Deut 18:15) whom God would raise up - Jesus the Messiah. What is similar or different in their lives?

	Moses	Jesus
Mission	To liberate God's people from slavery in Egypt.	Isa 49:6; Gal 4:4-5
Response to call	Please send someone else, Lord! (Ex 4:13)	Jn 4:34; Heb 10:7
Signs	Israel to know Yahweh and believe in his servant.	Jn 2:11; 20:30-31
Assurance	I will be with you (Ex 3:12; c.f. 4:12)	Jn 8:29
Overall appraisal	He is faithful in all my house (Num 12:7)	Heb 3:5-6

- b. As Yahweh called and sent Moses, so Jesus now also calls and sends me (Jn 20:21).

- i. What is the mission for which I am sent (Lk 24:46-47)?
- ii. What excuses do I give? What preparation can I ask from God?
- iii. What can I depend on (Matt 28:20b; 2Cor 12:9)?
- iv. Who am I aiming to be (Matt 25:21; Acts 11:23)?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

God reveals his supremacy and sufficiency to us when he uses us in our deficiencies to pursue his redemptive mission in Christ. He takes our weaknesses into account and assures us of his power, presence and provision. He patiently encourages us and disciplines us that we might be faithful and fruitful as we do his work.

1. God's servants have often felt a deep sense of inadequacy and frailty when called to serve him (e.g. Jer 1:6; 1Ki 3:7-9; 19:4; 2Co 3:5; 12:7-9). Our struggles are not ignored or trivialized, nor are our ordinary lives and 'stuffs' unusable to him.
 - Only let us take heart not to be paralyzed by our challenges and unwittingly turn them into excuses for disobeying God and neglecting his mission to the world.
 - Let us surrender our struggles and resources for him to mould us.
 - Let us be 'Aarons' to support and complement one another because God is present among his people.
2. God uses our weaknesses to make known 'the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ' and show that 'the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us (the jars of clay)' (2Cor 4:4, 7). It is in those weaknesses and sufferings that we learn dependence, trust and humility and experience his sufficiency and faithfulness in our lives.
 - Let us not short-circuit God's moulding process in our lives.
 - Let us remember that God is the source, the means and the goal of all our spiritual strength, growth and gains (Rom 11:36; 1Co 15:9-10), so that the glory belongs only to him.

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

'No time', 'no money', 'no energy', 'no faith', 'no gifts', 'no sense of calling', 'no appreciation'. Examine your life if these common 'no' reasons typically given are really excuses that mask more subtle issues that need to be dealt with:

- Is there a need to re-organise (time management, priorities, responsibilities, etc.)?
- Is there deep spiritual hunger and love for God and His glory?
- Is our compassion for the lost, the sick, or the poor waning?
- Has spiritual fatigue and service fatigue set in?
- Is there deliberate self-humbling in order to relate with, serve and submit to others?
- Do I need to learn about matters like Christian giving, spiritual gifts, God's calling?
- Do you need a good amount of physical rest, or a time of silence and solitude?