

## **Set Free (Exodus 1-40) | 11.24.13 | Kevin P. Larson | KarisChurch.org**

Today we wrap up a series in Exodus that began on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011. A lot of things have happened since that intro sermon back two years ago:

- We had not yet transitioned to Missional Communities. We were still in C-Groups.
- We had just moved from the Tiger Hotel to here in Calvary.
- Ryan Worley was not yet an elder in our church.
- We had twenty-five or so less babies crawling around here.
- Our athletic teams were still in the Big 12 conference.
- Steve Jobs had just passed away.
- Barack Obama had just been reelected.
- The Penn State sex abuse scandal was blowing up.
- Occupy Wall Street had just kicked off.
- We had just been introduced to Siri.
- The Joplin tornado clean up was in full swing, as was that from the Earthquake in Japan.
- The Iraq troop pull-out was about to take place.
- Moammar Gadhafi of Lybia had just been killed. Osama Bin Laden had been found and shot a few months before. Kim Jong II of North Korea was just about to drop dead.

A lot has happened, huh? How many of you were here when we launched this series in Exodus? Why would a church spend just over two years in one book of the Bible? **First, this is a highly important Old Testament book.** We see the gospel of Jesus so clearly here. Tim Keller states this:

Imagine what an Israelite would say on the way to Canaan having coming out of the Red Sea... 'I was in a foreign land under the sentence of death in bondage but I took shelter under the blood of the lamb. Our mediator led us out and we crossed over and now we're on our way to the promised land but we're not there yet. He's given us his law to make us a community and he's give us the tabernacle because you have to live by grace and forgiveness and his presence is in our midst and he's gonna stay with us until we get home.' That's exactly what a Christian says, almost word for word. (Tim Keller)

The New Testament is filled with Exodus imagery. This Old Testament book gives us the language for understanding our salvation. It points ahead to Jesus and to us, His church. It's a critical book in the Bible.

**Second, it's important to preach the details of any book in Scripture.** We believe all of God's words are inspired by Him and are profitable for us, as **2 Timothy 3:16** puts it. Preaching through verse by verse keeps us from leaping over texts that seem difficult or controversial or even boring. The Lord wants to teach us things through those details. We can't afford to skip over them.

But all those details in Exodus point to one main idea. Here's what I think is the theme of the book: **we are set free through Jesus from bondage to life for worship by God's grace and for His glory.** This morning, we'll walk through each word of that theme, reviewing the meaning of the book of

Exodus. But we'll also do something a bit different. For each of those main points, I want to point out some prayers to go along with them. And we'll then pray them together here this morning.

### **Set Free... From Bondage**

The book opens with Israel in bondage. Transplanted to Egypt, they flourish there. But that threatens the powers that be. They make the Israelites slaves. Conditions are rough. God's people then cry out to the Lord and He answers them. Look at **chapter 2, verses 23-25**:

**Ex. 2:23** During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. **24** And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. **25** God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

God is determined to help His people. He reveals Himself to a man named Moses on a mountain. He speaks to the Israelite through a burning bush. He tells Moses He's sending him to deliver His people from Egypt and her leader, the Pharaoh. Through ten plagues the LORD does exactly that. The last sees all the Egyptian firstborn slain. The Israelite families, however, offer a lamb. Their kids live. They "come out" of Egypt as a nation. They depart from there. That's what the word Exodus means. It's a coming out, a departure.

The Egyptian king pursues the Israelites to the Red Sea. God's people have no where to go. But God makes a way. The Lord parts those waters, and they walk through on dry land. When the Egyptian soldiers pursue them, the waters sweep them away. On the banks of that sea, God's people sing the words we read just a bit ago from **Exodus 15**. Israel is delivered from her bondage. And friends, if we are Christians, we've been delivered, as well.

That's the first point we must see in the book of Exodus. **We've been set free from bondage**. We see our rescue in **chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 15, verse 21**, the first section of the book. We see our redemption. We've been brought out of slavery. We've been bought with a price. By blood, also. We've been delivered. Now we're free. No more bondage for us.

Recently a man in Dearborn, Michigan got pulled over for a DWI. What's so unusual about that? The University of Michigan had gotten drubbed 29-6 by rival Michigan State the night before. The reason for this offense, he said, was the Michigan offense. That and offensive coordinator Al Borges were to blame. Now that sounds crazy, right? Yes. But really it sounds a lot like us. We like to play the victim. We want to blame our sins on

others. Maybe we're blaming our headaches on our kids. Or our anger on someone else in a relationship. We think, "We're like Israel in Egypt. We're just oppressed. We're trapped. We can't help it!" But if we read on in Exodus, they aren't just sufferers. They are sinners. They curse Moses and God and try repeatedly to go back to that bondage.

That's a picture of us. In a fallen world, we'll suffer much at the hands of others. But our hands will also sin, causing others to suffer. Apart from Jesus, we're in bondage to sin and Satan. We need to be set free. If we're Christians, we've been delivered by God. The Lord has heard our cries. We no longer have to sin. Our suffering has purpose. We're redeemed.

For each of the main points of the book, I'll give you prayers I think we should offer the Lord this morning. What's the first? What fits this reality that we've been rescued from bondage? **Let's ask God for more thanksgiving in our midst.** The Lord has done great things in our lives. He has brought us so far. We should look back to where we've come from and praise Him for His rescue. Our church should be full of thanksgiving. He has changed our lives. His gospel is so real and great. Let's ask God to create more thanksgiving in us.

**Here's a second: let's ask Him for more compassion.** All around us - at work, in class, in the checkout lane - there are people hurting. Will we take our eyes off ourselves and put them on those people - those who are in bondage - suffering due to others, entangled in their own sin. Think back to your Red Sea moment. Wasn't there someone there helping you? How can we be that to others? Let's ask Him for compassion. **Let's pray together now. Lord, give us more thanksgiving. Give us more compassion.**

### **Set Free... To Life**

As we move on in Exodus, the Lord leads His people right into the desert. Immediately He tests them. They grumble. Still the Lord gives them food from the sky and water from a rock. There God also gives them their first victory in battle on that side of Egypt. From there, the Lord calls Moses back up that mountain again. There God gives commands to His people - and in a way that terrifies them. He appears in fire and smoke. The people shake in their boots. He gives His desire for Israel. Look at **Exodus 19, verses 4-6.**

**Ex. 19:4** You yourselves 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, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, 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 that you shall speak to the people of Israel.

God reminds them of how He graciously rescued them. He also shares with them His purpose. He wants them to be His special people. He wants them to do what He says. He wants them to draw the nations to Him. On that mountain, the LORD gives Israel Ten Commandments or "words" - principles that should guide how they live. He then gives a longer section of "rules" that demonstrate how they should be applied. Here the LORD gives Israel the pathway to true life. He offers us the same thing.

Here we see the main point from the second section in Exodus. **We've been set free to life.** We see God's law in **chapter 15, verse 22, through chapter 24, verse 18.** We see God's covenant. That's an agreement or pledge He makes with Israel. He demands things of His people. He makes promises to them. He expects things from us, as well. And he also offers us life.

I admit it. I often use Apple Maps on my phone. It's been highly publicized that it has errors. People make fun of me for it. And it has led to taking wrong roads. Siri has definitely led me astray. Like Israel, we want to go the other direction. We want to heed bad advice. We convince ourselves false things are true. We believe freedom comes from throwing off all constraints. But, we were made to live inside boundaries. It's there we have freedom, find life. The LORD has given us His will in His word. He tells us to do what He says. He'll never lead us astray. If we listen, we'll experience life as it was intended.

What are some prayers that correspond to this truth - that the Lord offers life? **First, we should ask for more reverence.** We should tremble in His presence, as well. We should take what He says seriously. We should crave His Word and desire to do what it says. Let's ask Him to make us better listeners. Let's ask Him for a fear of Him that will lead us to do what He says.

**What's a second prayer? We should ask Him for more holiness.** He wants us to obey Him. He wants us to become a "**holy nation,**" as **Exodus 19:6** says, so that the nations will come to God. Everyday you and I are making choices that say something about God to others. Let's ask the LORD to make us holy, resplendent, different as we fear Him and obey Him. **Let's pray together now. Lord, give us more reverence. Give us more holiness.**

## **Set Free... For Worship**

Part three of the book starts with God calling for His people to build a big tent in the wilderness. Look at **chapter 25, verses 8-9**.

**Ex. 25:8** And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. **9** Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

The LORD wants to dwell among them. He wants to fellowship with Israel. He wants His people to worship Him. In the next seven chapters, the Lord gives the Israelites directions on how to build this tabernacle.

There's tent in the middle. That tent has objects inside. A courtyard is to surround that tent. They're to make things for the court, as well. God wants His people to follow His directions exactly.

But bad things happen in **chapter 32**. While Moses is up on the mountain-top, getting the instructions, God's people decide to break His law and find their own way to worship. The LORD is about to destroy His people. But Moses steps in and pleads on their behalf. The Lord then renews the covenant with them. The people then build the tent as God directed. The LORD then comes to dwell in the tabernacle. That God dwells among us, as well.

What's the main point of the third section of Exodus? **We've been set free for worship**. We see the tabernacle described and built in in **chapter 25, verse 1, through chapter 40, verse 38**. We see God's presence among His people. He draws near to them. Israel is meant to worship the LORD in their midst. We are meant to worship Him, as well.

How long will we be in Calvary? We're not sure. In the last seven years, we've been in the Larson basement, in the Tiger Hotel, in the Missouri Theatre, back to the Tiger Hotel and now here in Calvary. God has been faithful. We're not that worried about it, friends. That's because the church is not a building. The Lord doesn't dwell in a house. The whole earth is His sanctuary. He's near. He's given us His Spirit. He calls us to worship Him where we are.

How should we respond to this idea - that God is among us that we might worship Him? **First, we should ask for more intimacy**. He is among us. He seeks a relationship with us. When you wake up, while you work out, as you sit in your cubicle, as you drink coffee with a friend, are you enjoying His presence? We should ask Him for more of that.

**Second, let's ask for more celebration.** His glory is around us. We can see it in us and among us. Is there joy here in our worship Gatherings? In our MCs? In our families? Are we known for holding the best parties in our city? **Let's go to the Lord now and ask for those things. More intimacy. More celebration.**

### **By God's Grace and for His Glory**

Well, there are a couple of phrases in that theme sentence that we haven't gotten to yet, right? This is all "**by God's grace and for His glory.**" Look at **chapter 6, verses 6-7** with me.

**Ex.6:6** Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. **7** 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, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

These words come right before the plagues. We learn a couple of things here that are reinforced all over the book. **First, Israel's rescue to life and worship was God's doing.** It all came about by His mercy. It was nothing Israel had done.

**Second, it was all done that God's name might be made great.** It was so Israel would know Him as the one true God, so the nations would see His glory and worship, as well. God tells this to Pharaoh several times. It's grace. It's glory. Same for us.

Did you all hear what the word of the year is according to Britain's Oxford University Press? It's "selfie." Yep. We like pictures of ourselves. We like being the center of attention. We think we're pretty awesome people. But there is no hope in the mirror. We're not that talented. We're not that good-looking. We have lots of issues.

But that makes what's going on in our lives - as well as here together - point to Him. It gives Him praise. We aren't saved by our own goodness. We're saved to display His goodness. Therefore, we should be humble people. We should be all about Him, and not ourselves. We should long to see others proclaim His glory.

What should we ask for here? **We should ask Him for more humility.** At home, at work, in class, as we serve in our city, are we known as humble people? He saves by grace so He gets glory. It's all through Him. It's all about Him. **Let's ask for more humility now.**

## Through Jesus

We should humbly want people to see the glory of Jesus. I've said over and over in Exodus and today that God's people here point forward to us. But there is so much here that points ahead to the person and work of Jesus. **This is all "through Jesus." He is the one who sets us free from our bondage.** Remember the Passover lamb that was slain so the Jews could go free? That points ahead to Christ's death on the cross for us. His blood paid our redemption. Moses also points to Jesus as He leads Israel out to victory. Christ does that for us. He gives us freedom.

**He is the one who leads us to true life.** Jesus calls Himself the "**life**" in **John 14:6**. He's the one who keeps that Old Testament law, that covenant for us - the one Israel couldn't keep. We could never keep it, either. He also pleads for us before the Father, like Moses did, asking God to forgive us and let us live.

**He is the one who brings us to worship.** Jesus is "God with us." He has given us His Spirit now. And remember the sacrifice that had to be made each year and sprinkled in this tent? That points ahead to Jesus, too. He provides atonement so we can draw near to the Father in worship. And as Jesus is God, He's the one we worship, as well.

What should we pray for here? **More trust in Jesus.** We need more trust in His life. More trust in His death. More in His resurrection, as well. Let's be a humble people who don't count on ourselves but on Him and His works alone. In your relationships, in your routines, in your responsibilities, are you trusting in Christ? Christian, trust in Jesus alone. If you're not a believer, cry out to Him. **Let's ask the Lord for more trust in Him right now.**

## Two Years in Exodus

So what has happened the last two years we have been in Exodus? A lot! I began with some of those things. But let me tell you what else He's done. He's been at work in us. He has grown us in thanksgiving. He has given us more compassion. He has built into us reverence. He has worked in us obedience. He has given us more intimacy. He has created in us more celebration. He has moved us more toward humility. He has given us more trust. All those things we just prayed for, as we have sat before and under His Word. Let's just ask for more.