

9AM & 11:15AM Notes 11/17/19 – Jeff Lyle

“Just Before Deliverance” Exodus 5 | 9 AM

For four centuries, Israel had been captives in Egypt. There was an intentional, cultural and spiritual bondage which had robbed them of their identity as the descendants of Abraham. As their cries had gone up to their God for deliverance, immediate relief did not arrive. Moses was now an old man who had been commissioned by God to lead His people out of slavery and into their inheritance. There was one major obstacle: Pharaoh. If Israel would ever experience deliverance, the leader of Egypt would have to break. This message shows twenty first century believers the realities of what often happens in our lives when God determines that it is time to deliver us from all oppression from the enemy. The devil, the culture and our own flesh work together to keep us from walking in the full freedom purchased for us by Jesus. We need complete deliverance! In the story of God preparing Israel to be set free, we are able to see some what occurs in our own lives just before deliverance finds us.

I. God Determines that It Is Time to Get Free (1-4)

A. The glorious author of freedom - “Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’”

God’s fullest wisdom is only able to be seen in God’s perfect timing. The highest authority in existence had now determined that it was the right season for His chosen people to go free. Why it did not occur previously in their four centuries as slaves in Egypt is not known. What is known is that the cries of His people for rescue had now merged with desire of God for those cries to be answered. Moses had been brought back from his forty-year journey into Midian. He enters Pharaoh’s court and declares the decree of the God of the Jews that His people must be allowed to worship Him. God was authoring Israel’s freedom, and Pharaoh was being commanded to comply.

B. The tenacious adversary of freedom - “...Pharaoh...”

The word Pharaoh is a title like king, president or Caesar. It is used to describe the highest authority in Egypt over many centuries. Pharaohs were worshipped as gods in Egypt, and they ruled with uncontested authority. This particular Pharaoh, about whom scholars debate the precise identity, was enjoying the benefits of the Hebrew slaves. Their national economy was built upon the production of the slaves, and he had a deep interest in keeping them under his authority. Pharaoh is a clearly symbolic representation of what often serves to keep modern believers in

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bondage. He is a fitting emblem of **Satan, the world system, and the flesh**. These three forces work together to serve as a tenacious adversary which resists the Christian walking in the full freedom provided to us in Jesus. As Pharaoh held the people under his control, these three forces seek to keep Christians in bondage to anything other than the love and power of Jesus Christ.

C. The highest goal of freedom - "...that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness."

God is desiring to set His people free for their own benefit and His own glory. The first demand that God presents through Moses to Pharaoh is that he would allow the Hebrew people to come together as one and worship Him in a consecrated place. Ultimately, this is the highest goal of spiritual freedom. It is not merely that God wants us free from bondage, but that he wants us freed unto Himself. The highest goal of freedom is consecration unto the person of Christ and the liberated WORSHIP of Him.

D. The militant resistance against freedom (2-4) - "But Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go...get back to your burdens."

Not surprisingly, Pharaoh refuses to allow the people to go. He militantly resists the desire of God to set His people free. He has no regard for the God of the Jews and is not interested in knowing Him at all, much less submitting to Him. Moses is rejected and told to leave the presence of Pharaoh. The message is loud and clear: the people would not be allowed at all to experience freedom and engage in worship of their God. This is the exact same response that the devil, the culture and our own flesh release in response to our call to be free in Jesus. The devil wants us to live under the crack of his whip. He wants us afraid and enslaved. The culture wants us wearying ourselves year after year, building up things under sweat, fatigue and idolatry. Our flesh itself will never cooperate with sanctification. The flesh will not cooperate with spiritual freedom. We, like ancient Israelites, need a supernatural deliverance to be set free from the world, the flesh and the devil.

II. The Enemy Pushes Back at His Hardest (5-21)

A. Burden the people! (5-9) - "6 The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, 7 "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. 8 But the number of bricks that they made in the past

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you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it...9 Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it..."

Wasting no time, Pharaoh actually responds by intensifying the level of burden upon the Hebrew slaves. If they think for a second that they are going to get free, he will show them otherwise. Before any notion of being delivered could root in their hearts, the enemy seeks to lay even heavier burdens upon them, reinforcing to them just exactly who is in charge. Moses, the appointed deliverer of Israel, would not be heard any further. If he wants freedom, then Pharaoh wants to remove all doubt that it was not going to be permitted. He chooses instead to make the burdens heavier. Things were getting worse in the same season where God was seeking to bring deliverance.

B. Break the people! (10-14) - "Thus says Pharaoh, 'I will not give you straw. 11 Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least. 12 So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. 13 The taskmasters were urgent, saying, "Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw." And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?"

The point of Pharaoh increasing the burdens of Israel was so that he could break them down in every way. His strategy was aimed to increase the demands upon them while simultaneously decreasing their abilities to get the work done. The slaves were also physically abused in order to force them into defeat and submission. Mercy was not offered. Relief was not going to arrive if Pharaoh could help it. These foolish Hebrew slaves and their ignorant leader, Moses, would be crushed under the tyrannical rule of Pharaoh. Those slaves belonged to him, and he was not about to watch them walk away. Moses was sent to bring deliverance, but all the people were seeing was that his efforts were taking things from very bad to irreversibly hopeless.

C. Accuse the people! (15-17) - "Then the foremen of the people of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, "Why do you treat your servants like this? 16 No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' And behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people." 17 But he said, "You are idle, you are idle; that is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord."

Some of the Hebrews were given positions of leadership over the other slaves. They served Pharaoh as the foremen of the work crews. Seeking

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to reason with Pharaoh, they explained the unreasonable system he set up. They could never provide for him what he was demanding. Believing that they might find an agreeable solution, they engaged Pharaoh in discussion. In response to what they shared Pharaoh came back with nothing but accusations. His reasoning was that, since they had time to plan a gathering for worshipping their god, they were obviously idle and needed more workload to keep them busy. Pharaoh viewed them in only one way: his property who were meant to do his will. There would be no reasoning with him. He spewed out his accusations of their idleness and refused to lighten their loads. We should all know that there is no ability to negotiate with the devil, our flesh or the culture. There is no fellowship between light and darkness. If we seek to manage the level of our enslavement, we will always be slaves and will never experience deliverance. Pharaoh did not negotiate. The Hebrews were running out of hope.

E. Embitter the people! (18-21) - “Go now and work. No straw will be given you, but you must still deliver the same number of bricks. The foremen of the people of Israel saw that they were in trouble when they said, “You shall by no means reduce your number of bricks, your daily task each day.” 20 They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; 21 and they said to them, “The Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

You can be burdened, broken, and accused from the outside while still being free on the inside. However, you cannot be bitter and be free at the same time. The external burdens had now made their way inside of the Hebrews and they ended up turning on their appointed deliverer, Moses. Along with Aaron, Moses was called by God to lead the people out of slavery. He was being obedient, but things were getting worse. Nothing was working as Pharaoh seemed more determined than ever to bring down the Hebrews. It is hard not to sympathize with them. Though they were slaves, they had learned how to exist that way. They were not really ever expecting to get free. Moses shows up with a message of deliverance from God, and they rejoiced in it, fully expecting that God would act on their behalf. To the visible eye, however, God was not doing a thing. Moses' efforts were resulting in a more intense warfare against them. If there was to be deliverance, then why were things getting worse? The people began to get bitter against Moses and called down the judgment of God upon them. Blame and accusation now fell upon the one appointed to deliver them. How common it is in our day for people to experience and intensifying of trouble right before God brings deliverance. Many people begin to become bitter towards God who is their Deliverer. As Moses experienced the bitterness of those he was sent to free, Jesus

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is often to target of bitter hearts from burdened and broken people who simply need relief. What the enemy loads on us from the outside must never work its way inside of us, lest we begin to live with bitter hearts.

III. God Determines to School Everybody (5:22 - 6:2)

A. The problem is presented (5:22-23) - “Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, “O Lord, why have You done evil to this people? Why did You ever send me? 23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people, and You have not delivered our people at all.”

Moses is doing his best at eighty years old to obey God and lead the people into freedom. Remember that he did not really want this assignment in the first place. Now that he was obeying God, why were things not getting better? Where was the promised freedom? When would breakthrough come? Moses' desperate prayer to God conveys the struggle in his heart. He seems to be saying to God, **“Why is this happening? How am I going to get out of it? It does not appear that You are doing what You promised!”** Moses presents the dire situation to God in broken prayers. He was running out of options and the people were not yet delivered. It was getting very dark in Egypt and Moses was beginning to question if he would make it to the dawn.

B. The answer is assured (6:1-2) - “But the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.” 2 God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord.”

KAPOW!!! With Pharaoh rebelling, the people accusing their leaders, and Moses questioning God's ways, the Lord releases a simply, power-packed promise concerning what He was about to do. God's timing must be considered as He declared to Moses “NOW.” Everything had been building towards a moment of crisis and God had determined that now was the exact moment wherein He would initiate Israel's deliverance from slavery. The Lord allowed things to reach the most intense level before He acted. God's power also must be remembered. He told Moses that everyone was about to see the power of God on display as He began to do with Pharaoh whatever He chose to do. Finally, God's character must be trusted as He reminds Moses of just who He was. He told Moses, “I am the Lord.” When things go from bad to worse, we must remember who our Father is. When we ache for freedom, rescue and deliverance, we must humbly accept God's timing. When it seems that the devil, the culture or our flesh are winning, we must fix our faith-gaze upon the glory and goodness of God. He will complete what He begins. Just before our deliverance arrives, things will usually grow more intense. Warfare is real and our three-fold enemy fights hard against our freedom. If we will continue to cry out expectantly, God will move decisively. Pharaoh and all Egypt were about to learn that the God of Moses never fails at delivering those who wait for Him.

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“Regaining Some Gospel Grit” Acts 14:19-28 | 11:15AM

Every Christian desires to see the glory of God released in the earth during their lifetime. None of us would ever vote against authentic revival breaking out in our generation. To see numerous souls saved, healings, deliverances and the advance of the Gospel toppling the strongholds of darkness is something we internally long for. But who among us is willing to pay the price for all of this to happen? Sustained Kingdom moves from the Holy Spirit occur in partnership with believers who have laid it all down on the altar of surrender. When revival from God arises, so does resistance from the enemy. The spiritual warfare intensifies before revival falls, while it falls and only relents after God’s purposes are complete...or if those to whom revival is offered retreat when the price for it becomes more costly than they care to pay. For breakthrough to occur in our generation, the Church will need to regain some Gospel grit, refusing to back down or give up. This message highlights a season in the life of the Apostle Paul wherein God was using him to reach the unreached. Every single square inch of territory was contested, but Paul retained his spiritual spine and completed his assignment from God. Through his example, we can clearly see some areas where we might need to learn more deeply how to rest in God’s grace even as we cultivate some spiritual grittiness of our own.

I. Grittiness Against Kingdom Opposition (19-20)

A. Always expect opposition (19) - “But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.”

As Paul and Barnabas head out on their first missionary journey, they were met with much resistance. Religious people resisted them at every possible turn, seeking to undermine their advance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Israel’s Messiah and the Savior to Gentiles. So fierce was the resistance that some of the Jewish opposition followed them and eventually incited a riot against Paul. Believing him to be heretic, they sought to stone him to death. When they concluded that he had died under their execution, they dragged his body out of the city and left him to rot. Paul had committed his life to Jesus and was willing to pay the ultimate price. Everyone who looked at him believed that he had been martyred as a disciple of Christ that day.

B. Always remember your tribe (20a) - “But when the disciples gathered about him...”

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Some who had been converted remained loyal to Paul even as he was being stoned by the opposition. When his body was dumped outside the city gates, these loyal brothers closed the ranks, remained loyal and chose to hazard their own safety by publicly attending to his body. As spiritual family, they understood not to leave his body behind. They likely wanted to give him a proper burial and they all gathered around him to mourn and prepare for what needed to happen to their beloved Apostle.

C. Boldly finish your assignments (20b) - "...he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe."

Shockingly, as Paul's tribe loyally gathered around his seemingly lifeless body, he rose up. We cannot be positive as to whether this was a resurrection miracle or if it was merely a miracle that reversed the catastrophic injuries that he incurred from being stoned. Either way, the Apostle Paul was alive. As he regained his bearings, he did what seems like an insane course of action. Paul went right back into those city gates into the very place and among the very people who had just sought to murder him. His assignment was to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus with signs and wonders and miracles. What greater proof could there be of the power of Jesus Christ than for Paul, whom everyone believed was dead, to show right back up in the city to complete his assignment? Paul not only did not run from danger, he had enough Gospel grit to stand against his opposition. We can imagine the total shock on the faces of all those who thought they had silenced him. What more could they have done to silence him? Paul operated in faith, brokenness and boldness and completed the task given to him by God for the city of Lystra. A test of our character as Jesus-followers is what it takes to get us to quit. The writer of Proverbs 24:10 declares, **"If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small."** Paul was no such quitter.

II. Grittiness for Kingdom Advance (21-22)

A. The work of evangelization (21a) - "When they had preached the gospel to that city..."

After finishing his assignment in Lystra, Paul kept pressing forward alongside Barnabas and the others who were with them. There was no ability to slow down, quit or retreat. When we observe Paul's tenacity, we also find ourselves motivated. He was not deterred by pain, danger or fear of the unknown. Arriving in Derbe, they proclaimed the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and called on people to repent and believe on Him. The gospel was preached unto the salvation of souls in yet another city on Paul's first official missionary endeavor. Kingdom advance must include the Church's ongoing awareness that the Gospel must be

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proclaimed where there is no witness. Untold millions have never once heard the message of Jesus. Before the end of the age arrives, the Gospel will be proclaimed to all people groups. Paul made it his habit to take the message of Jesus where nobody else had taken it (see Romans 15:20-21). The work of evangelization is not for the faint of heart. While Christians must remain witnesses wherever we are, there is also the ongoing work of God whereby He calls out some to go to the farthest and spiritually darkest places to release the good news of Jesus Christ.

B. The work of edification (21b-22) - "...and had made many disciples they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch..."

Paul ensured that all those who were saved had opportunity to be discipled. He wanted them rooted and grounded in love before he moved on to a new location. We do well to remember that the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19 requires discipleship, not just evangelization. Once Paul and his team led people to Jesus, they worked diligently to establish them in the faith before moving on. Verse 22 gives us a glimpse of some of what Paul's primary teaching priorities were for the new converts:

- 1. Working to spiritually strengthen one another (22a) - "...strengthening the souls of the disciples..."**
- 2. Working to continually motivate one another (22b) - "...encouraging them to continue in the faith..."**
- 3. Working to deeply root one another (22c) - "...saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."**

He taught them truths that would bring strength to their souls. He exhorted them not to stagnate as new Christians but, instead, to persevere in their growing love and loyalty to Jesus. They had to take ownership of their new faith-journey by continuing to grow in relationship with Jesus and one another. Paul, likely still bearing the clear scars and wounds from his recent stoning, declared that the new converts must follow his example by pressing forth from persecutions and tribulations that would find them as Jesus-followers. Imagine the visual impact that the people would have experienced as Paul stood before them as a living object lesson of what it meant to endure trouble for the sake of Jesus. Paul was giving his all for the work of edifying the Church. He pressed on in Gospel grittiness in order to advance the mission of Jesus.

III. Grittiness for Kingdom Leadership (23)

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A. The need to recognize & release leaders (23a) - “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church...”

Paul developed the pattern of winning converts, getting them established in the faith, organizing them into local fellowships and appointing leaders to shepherd them after Paul moved on. Every area in which he established a local church would need qualified people to lead them. The method was that the Apostle and his team would appoint these leaders, here called elders. These men would oversee the work of the believers in their particular town. Scripture reveals that the qualifications for these leaders were primarily based on their character. They were to be faithful, spiritually minded, living out a blameless testimony, given to prayer and study, humble servanthood possessed and displayed, Spirit-filled, led, and controlled, sacrificial, steadfast, and loving.

B. The means of recognizing & releasing leaders (23b) - “...with prayer and fasting...”

Notice that these leaders were appointed after intentional times of prayer and fasting. So much would ride upon the influence of these leaders, therefore Paul knew that the wisdom from the Holy Spirit would be required. Denying themselves the comfort of food for a time, Paul and his team would seek the face of God about who the right people were to lead once they left the area. Kingdom leadership is different than the leadership structures of the world system. In Kingdom endeavors, we need men and women who have the heartbeat of God beating in their own chests. Humility, love, faith and patience are required. Paul did not lean unto his own understanding about who to choose. Their practice was to pray, observe and wait on the Lord to show them who was qualified to lead.

C. The confidence for recognizing & releasing leaders (23c) - “...they committed {deposit, entrust} them to the Lord in whom they believed.”

Once the leaders were chosen, there would have been the laying on of hands by Paul and his team. The leaders were ordained and entrusted to the work assigned to them. At that point, Paul would move on to his next assignment, committing the new leaders to the care of the Lord. This practice reminds us that leaders in the church must be freed up to hear the Lord and act upon what He says. It is common today for people in churches to try and control their leaders. It is also common for some leaders to presume to be accountable to nobody but God. Both of these extremes do great harm to Kingdom work. God would have churches recognize and release the right leaders so that they may accomplish what God has given them to do. Those leaders will also serve the people in humility which will welcome appropriate accountability that protects both

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themselves and those whom they serve. When churches have the right leaders, and those leaders are released to work in freedom, amazing things can happen.

IV. Grittiness For Kingdom Laborers (24-28)

A. We must strategically advance (24-26a) - “Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia... Perga...Attalia ...Antioch...”

Kingdom service is demanding. Both evangelizing and discipling require investments on many levels. The travels that Paul and his team embraced would have been physically exhausting. On top of that, the spiritual warfare surrounding this first missionary journey was intense. They were opposed on the human side by both Jews and Gentiles. Moving from territory to territory, it would seem that no fewer than a dozen cities were evangelized and disciplined. Long spates of rest from the work were not likely available. There was a strategy that they had received from God and they had to invest deep labor to bring it to pass.

B. We must remain connected (26b) - “...they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.” They headed back home. Specific missions can be accomplished but the Commission goes on!

As they completed their first missionary journey, Paul and his team returned back to Antioch to reconnect with the believers who had originally sent them off. Scholars calculate this first missionary journey to have been about two-and-a-half years long. They had been tirelessly laboring in some of the most extreme conditions for a very long time. They needed to travel back home and experience the nourishment of fellowship. Though they were dutiful and gritty servants, they also were mere mortals who needed rest and relationship. None of us are meant to go full steam ahead indefinitely. We are not robots. We need fellowship, relationship and refreshment. They boarded a ship and headed back to Antioch to reconnect with the brethren.

C. We must intentionally rest (27-28) - “And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. And they remained no little time with the disciples.”

What an amazing reunion this must have been! The church at Antioch would have been able to see the marks of a long and costly journey on the faces of Paul and Barnabas. We can imagine the silence and even the tears as Paul recounted his stoning at Lystra. What joy must have flowed

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as testimonies of both Jewish and Gentile conversions were shared. The work to which Paul had been commissioned proved fruitful. All of the believers shared in that work due to their shared investments through financing and prayers. Paul and Barnabas would rest there back in Antioch. More churches would need to be planted. More souls remained unreached with the Gospel. Established churches would need to be revisited and strengthened in the faith. For now, however, the Apostle and his team would need to rest their minds, bodies and spirits. It is no virtue to continuously run ourselves into the ground, seeking to prove our validity by some overemphasized display of functional productivity. Certainly, laziness is a sin. So also is addiction to work. No, Paul was not seeking to prove anything, so he was wise to rest himself. Their next adventure would soon begin. **We never retire from Kingdom advance.** Our assignments change. Our strengths ebb and flow. There is only one Savior...and even he rested Himself when He was upon earth. Kingdom callings are demanding and rewarding. Following Jesus is not for the faint of heart. Through it all, we persevere through a strange and enduring mixture of grace and grit.