

Delivered – Time to Throw Down

2/8/26

Exodus 7:8-13

Sunday AM

So, I went to Home Depot the other day and unfortunately – won the lottery of *that* shopping cart. You know the one – the one w/ the possessed wheel? As soon as I pulled it, it began squealing like a wounded animal as it pulled hard to the right. But did I ditch it for a different cart? No! For some reason, I chose humiliation/frustration instead. For as I pushed this cart thru the store, people were staring at me like I'd done something wrong. The crazy part is – I limped thru the store for at least 10-min. until I realized that I don't have to live this way. W/ 100's of other carts, I could get a new one. So, when the patron next wasn't looking, I swapped carts (JK). No. I ditched my lame cart for a new one. Then it hit me – we all do this spiritually speaking. We stay stuck in bad habits, poor patterns, and heavy burdens longer than we should b/c of pride, laziness, and poor decision-making, while God has been working to deliver us if we'd just wake up to the situation and turn to Him. **SEE** – *Deliverance is realizing we don't have to keep wrestling broken carts, broken hearts, or broken anything if we'd just trust and surrender to God's better way.*

In case you weren't here last week, we started a new series in the book of Exodus entitled **Delivered** that I am already finding to be incredibly relevant to our lives today.

As you're likely aware, the book of Exodus records Israel's exit from Egypt to the Promised Land via the wilderness – yet tucked w/in this journey are many valuable lessons for our lives today.

To discover these lessons, including last week, we're going to take 12-weeks b/w LIFE Groups and the pulpit, to consider the (24) most important lessons of the Exodus relevant to our lives today. To help us, we have provided a daily reading plan/journal, a daily commentary from me, and a weekly podcast. I hope you'll take the time to immerse yourself in these items b/c I believe God has a message for each of us.

Recap – some 400 yrs after God elevated Joseph to rescue Israel and Egypt from famine, Joseph's name was all but forgotten and the Israelites had become slaves in Egypt. In their enslavement, they began crying out to God – and God miraculously provided them w/ a savior in a man name Moses – whose life serves as an archetype of Jesus.

Moses was born to two Levite parents – Amram and Jochebed – in a time when Pharaoh was having little boys executed at birth much like Herod was having little boys executed when Jesus was born. But thanks to two courageous Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, Moses was sovereignly spared as his parents set him afloat on the Nile to be found by Pharaoh's daughter and raised in Pharaoh's palace – btw – only after he was given back to his birth mom to be nursed.

A fascinating side note regarding the basket of Moses is its connection to Noah's ark and the sacrificial system. In Genesis, the ark was sealed w/ pitch (*kōpher*), a word that comes from the same Hebrew root (*kaphar*) used in Leviticus to describe the blood that covers sin in the atonement. While Exodus used a different term for the pitch on Moses' basket, the basket itself was called an “ark” (*tēbah*) and served the same purpose – ***a vessel of deliverance thru deadly waters***. Together, the ark, basket, and altar form a picture of God's grace – pointing to Jesus as the ultimate provision who covers our sin and delivers us.

Some 40 yrs after being raised in Egypt, God took Moses to the backside of the nowhere in Midian where unbeknownst to Moses, he'd spend another 40 yrs getting prepared by God to return to Egypt to lead the people out of bondage. So, when the time arrived, God revealed Himself to Moses thru a burning bush calling him to return to Egypt, face the Pharaoh, and request that he let God's people go. And Moses finally agreed.

As we pick up the story, Moses and his big brother Aaron have made his way back to Egypt, and have entered Pharaoh's court for a divine showdown.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "When Pharaoh says, 'Perform a miracle,' say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,' and it will become a snake." 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. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he wouldn't listen, just as the Lord had said. Exodus 7:8-13

In any great confrontation, there's that brief, electric pause before the action begins. Like the first play of the Super Bowl. The stadium will be shaking, millions will be watching – and the ball will be snapped. Chances are, the first play won't be flashy – a simple run or a short pass into the flat. But it'll declare: *we're not here to feel things out – we're here to rubble!*

This is exactly where Exodus 7 places us. Moses and Aaron have walked into Pharaoh's court – not w/ an army, an entourage, or w/ any political leverage – but w/ a stick. Yet when Aaron throws down his staff, it's heaven's opening move and God saying, *"It's on like Donkey Kong."* For what looked like a small move by Moses/Aaron was a defining statement by God.

SEE – before a single plague fell, before the Nile turned to blood, and Egypt trembled before God – God was at work ¹ preparing Israel for an exit, ² allowing Pharaoh's heart to harden, ³ inviting the Egyptians to salvation, ⁴ defeating Satan, and ⁵ working out His sovereign plan.

For Moses/Aaron – God asked for their *obedient trust* – b/c the question wasn't if Pharaoh was going to resist; but whether they were going to step into faith and obey. The same is true for us today – b/c *obedience is always the visible expression of invisible trust*.

WTM – let's break down what occurred to learn about the connection b/w obedience and faith – and how it applies to our lives today.

I Obedience is Stepping Out in **FAITH**

What's significant about this encounter is that it wasn't some casual meeting b/w (2) parties, but rather, a divine appointment. God brought Moses/Aaron directly into the seat of absolute power to confront Pharaoh w/ truth and expose his impotence. Yet they had to trust God in faith to show up and show out.

In this encounter, we learn (3) things about faith.

A – Faith is Responsive – not Initiating

Moses/Aaron didn't invent a plan to confront Pharaoh, they responded to God's call – teaching us that faith is the **yes** that follows God's call to **go** – that is, God initiates the call and we have to decide how to respond.

Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading. O. Chambers

B – Faith is Obedience w/out Guarantees

I'm not sure if you noticed, but Moses/Aaron obeyed God w/ no assurance that they would succeed or at what pace God would move. God didn't tell them if Pharaoh would listen, soften, or change – He simply told Aaron to throw down the staff – and he obeyed.

Faith, in this moment, wasn't a guarantee of results but submission/obedience to God's calling. They acted not knowing how God's plan was going to unfold.

C – Faith Requires Our Surrender of Control

Yeah... you heard me you bunch of control freaks! Moses/Aaron had zero control of the situation, of Pharaoh's response, of the pace of deliverance, or the cost of their obedience. They only had control over their response to show up and trust God – teaching us that faith isn't our power over outcome but the ability to trust God w/ the results.

Faith isn't believing that God can; it's trusting that God will – whether we see the outcome or not. Taylor

II Obedience is Trusting **TRUTH**

While Pharaoh thought he was a god – he did as what most people do when it comes to being asked to bend a knee and bow before God – he wanted proof.

In context, this reflects the ancient belief that gods must validate themselves thru displays of power.

When it comes to not wanting to *believe*, *bend*, and *bow* to God, it's b/c people want proof not the truth.

Recently, I was counseling someone who said – *I've asked God to speak to me about what I'm doing if He wants me to change direction*. In this instance, my response was simple – God isn't going to speak to you in an audible voice b/c He's already spoken about it in Scripture – and it's clear. You just don't like it.

Wanting proof is **NOT** the same as wanting truth.

III Obedience is an **ACT** of Worship

When Aaron threw down his staff, it was a decisive act of obedience and a deliberate act of surrender. He took what was ordinary and unimpressive and placed it fully under God's authority – and b/c he trusted God, it became a tool of divine power. W/out argument, delay, or embellishment, Aaron did what God asked – not out of compliance but as an act of worship.

In Scripture, worship isn't only what we sing, it's what we surrender. Aaron honored God by trusting Him enough to obey Him publicly and completely by stewarding what God had given him for God's glory. This is worship: offering ourselves and what we have back to God in obedient trust.

This is what Paul meant in **Romans 12:1** when invited us to *offer your bodies as a living sacrifice*. Worship is offering ourselves to God in obedience to His call.

IV Obedience Leads to Spiritual **WARFARE**

Interesting – Pharaoh's sorcerer's, empowered by Satan, replicated the snakes which allowed Pharaoh to think Yahweh was just one more power among many.

This battle pitted Jehovah, the true God, who moved Moses and Israel, against the false gods of the Egyptian pantheon, backed by a host of fallen angels as a part of Lucifer's original rebellion. Boice

It wasn't a coincidence that God turned Aaron's staff into a snake consuming the other snakes. Snakes were a big deal in Egyptian culture. They were fascinated w/ them b/c they feared them. Most Egyptians carried an amulet w/ them to protect them from Apophis – the serpent-god who personified evil.

Although they feared snakes, they worshiped them too – revealing how Satan uses fear to gain power and control. They even built a temple to the serpent-goddess Wadjet, symbolized by the cobra hieroglyph, whom Pharaohs believed granted them protection and power. By placing their security in the serpent-goddess, Pharaoh was aligning w/ Satan. Ancient records note that when a new Pharaoh ascended to the throne, he'd recite these words to affirm this alliance.

O Great One, O Magician, O Fiery Snake
Let there be terror of me like the terror of thee.
Let there be fear of me like the fear of thee.
Let there be awe of me like the awe of thee.
Let me rule, a leader of the living.
Let me be powerful, a leader of spirits.

So, this battle of the snakes was both physical and spiritual. It wasn't only putting Pharaoh in his place and exposing his impotence – it was confronting Satan and defeating him yet again as He would on the cross.

This is important – while the Bible treats other gods as if they have no power, God permits the demonic to have spiritual power for a season over those who worship the idols of this world and the desires of the flesh – meaning any form of false worship we engage is Satan-worship. This is why the 1st commandment says that we shall have no other gods before Him.

Don't miss – we all were created to worship, and if we refuse to worship the one true God, we will worship whatever we're unwilling to surrender to God.

This is the theological apex of this text. God didn't merely compete w/ these snakes – He dominated them. Pharaoh/Satan's power was swallowed up proving that Yahweh alone is superior/sovereign over all.

Why does this matter? B/c obedience to God always places us in a spiritual conflict – like it or not.
Notice the result – Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

V Obedience is **RELENTING** to God

Despite overwhelming evidence, Pharaoh resisted. The problem wasn't intellectual but volitional. **His will was set against God.** This raises a tough question – how many times can we say *no* or *not yet* to God before our hearts stop feeling the weight of His voice?

SEE – from Exodus 5 thru the plagues, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart unfolds in (2) movements: (1) Pharaoh hardens his own heart thru persistent resistance; then, (2) the Lord allowed Pharaoh's heart to become hard in an act of judicial judgment. This preserves human responsibility first then divine judgment only after continued rebellion. This is consistent w/ Paul's words in Romans 1, where God *gave them over* after they refused to respond to truth.

In Exodus 5–9, Pharaoh hardens his own heart thru continued stubborn resistance to God's word. The Hebrew verb *kāvēd* used in ch. 5-8 describe a heart that becomes dull and unresponsive thru repeated, uncoerced choices. Then in Exodus 9, the language shifts to *hāzaq*, showing that God judicially allowed Pharaoh to experience the consequences of the path he had persistently chosen – w/out violating his will.

Meaning – Pharaoh's heart wasn't hardened against his will; it was hardened b/c of it.

The same danger exists today. When a person persistently resists/rejects God's Word over and over in favor of what feels right. After a person continually refuses to turn away from sin to God, God may remove restraint and allow that person to experience the full consequences of their chosen path – even though *He wishes no one to perish and that all would to come to repentance* – teaching us that the hardening of our hearts occurs when repentance is continually rejected.

WTM – let's take a step back and look at this moment in Exodus. This story isn't really about a staff, a snake, or even Pharaoh. **It's about what happens when God speaks – and how we respond.** Moses/Aaron trusted and obeyed, while Pharaoh resisted and was hardened. They had the same revelation, but w/ two different responses. And that leaves us w/ a choice of our own.

Let's go back to my shopping cart for a moment.

The strange thing wasn't that the wheel was broken – it was that I kept pushing it. It didn't matter if I adjusted my grip or compensated for the tug to the right – or that I was willing to tolerate even for a moment the noise and frustration. The whole time I was struggling, there were better carts sitting available – free for the taking. Thus, I didn't need more strength. I didn't need better technique. I only needed to let go and switch carts for a better experience.

This is what deliverance looks like spiritually. God isn't asking us to push harder, try longer, or manage broken systems w/ more effort. He's asking for obedient trust. And just like Moses/Aaron didn't negotiate, or wait for guarantees, or demand proof – they chose to trust God enough to obey – and God moved. Pharaoh, on the other hand, saw the same power and refused to relent. And over time, his resistance hardened his heart.

Question – *What are you still pushing that God is asking you to surrender?* What habit, fear, control, or pattern have you learned to manage – when God has already made a way to be delivered?

Deliverance doesn't begin w/ dramatic miracles, but w/ obedient trust. It begins when we stop saying ***not yet*** and start saying ***yes***. B/c obedience is the visible expression of invisible faith – and God always meets obedient trust w/ His power and presence.

Truth is – we don't have to live in wonkiness. We don't have to keep wrestling w/ broken carts, broken heart, or hardened places if we would simply hear His voice, soften our hearts to His love, and let go to trust Him to deliver us as He is wanting to do.

It only requires our obedient trust.