

The Gospel According to Moses

Exodus 13-15

I want to tell you I make no apology for being patriotic. I believe it is logical, I believe it is reasonable, I believe it is biblical to be patriotic.

INTRODUCTION: Holidays always pose a challenge for a Pastor that is committed to an expositional approach to preaching. Do you stay in the series you've been working on, or come out of it and do a stand alone sermon that focuses on that particular holiday? But occasionally God in His providence allows the two to line up like they have on this day.

It's the 4th of July and we are in that portion of Exodus that pertains to the crossing of the red sea. What on earth do those two things have in common? I'm glad you asked!

- If one particular passage was instrumental in leading our forefathers to part way with Great Britain, it was this passage.
- If there was one particular passage that heroes of our history have leaned on again and again, it's this passage.

This has been the, "Go to" spot in times of struggle, when we've need courage the most.

- **Columbus** referenced this passage comparing himself to Moses in 1492 when he sailed the ocean blue.
- Thomas Paine referenced this passage in his pamphlet, "**Common Sense**", comparing King George to the pharaoh.
- In 1776, **John Adams** wrote to his wife, Abigail, about "*a Parallel between the Case of Israel and that of America.*" John Adams had heard this preached in a sermon, and he thought it was enlightening because it "indicated strongly the Design of Providence that We should be separated from G. Britain."
- In 1776, when **Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson** discussed what should be on a "Great Seal" for the new nation, they both thought of the Exodus story. Franklin wanted the seal to feature the parting of the Red Sea, with Moses raising his staff while Pharaoh and his chariots of soldiers drowned as the waters closed in on them. In contrast, Jefferson wanted another scene from the Exodus, with the Israelites led through the wilderness by a cloud in daytime and a pillar if fire at night.
- Many patriots adopted this story, viewing themselves as the new Israel, and naming George Washington the American Moses.

- Ever visited the Liberty Bell where the Declaration of Independence was signed?? Engraved on it is a passage from Lev. 25 which God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai: PROCLAIM LIBERTY THROUGHOUT ALL THE LAND UNTO ALL THE INHABITANTS THEREOF.
- Just north of us in Savannah, GA 13 letters hang in one of the nation's oldest **Synagogues** hang 13 letters from US Presidents to the congregation regarding religious freedom. The president of the congregation Levi Sheftall wrote a letter to **George Washington** on May 6, 1789 to express his appreciation for Washington's leadership.

Here is a passage out of President George Washington's response: "May the same wonder-working Deity, who long since delivering the Hebrews from their Egyptian oppressors, planted them in the promised land, whose providential agency has lately been conspicuous in establishing these United States as an independent nation, still continue to water them with the dew of Heaven, and make the inhabitants of every denomination partake in the temporal and spiritual blessings of that people, whose God is Jehova."

- **Abraham Lincoln** was eulogized after his assassination as the incarnation of Moses.
- In wartime we find references by Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson to this passage.

The references to this passage in American History are staggering.

What was it about this passage that gave our founding fathers the courage to forge a new Nation and wage war against the Super Power of the Kingdom of Great Britain?

Let's look at it together.

CONTEXT: So far we have seen the 10 plagues leveled by God against Egypt, culminating in the death of the first born. We saw last week that Israel was not touched by the death angel because they believed God and applied the blood to their doorpost and lentils of their home. We pick up with the departure from Egypt in chapter 13.

Imagine if you will well over a million individuals leaving the land of Goshen with all they could carry and with the gold that had been given to them by the Egyptians.

TEXT: Exodus 13:17–22 (ESV)

¹⁷ When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt."

War would come in time, but it would be averted as long as possible.

18 But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle. 19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here." 20 And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. 21 **And the Lord went before** them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. 22 The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

Imaging if you will, over one million Hebrews, leaving Egypt, marching into the wilderness. Uncertain of what the future held - the only thing of which they were certain was a great pillar of fire before them which was the manifest presence of God. Wouldn't that be amazing to go through life with God personally leading your every step?

- Don't know what job to take? Follow the cloud.
- Don't know which man to marry? Follow the cloud.
- Don't know where to go to college? Follow the cloud.

No guess work, no possibility of missing God's will. Just follow the cloud.

Exodus 14:5–9 (ESV)

5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" 6 So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, 7 and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.

An Egyptian chariot was the absolute standard of military excellence in its day. Each chariot had at least two men on it. One driving the horses and another firing the weapon - which was typically a long bow. We are told here that 600 chosen chariots and ALL THE OTHER Chariots were called up to pursue the Hebrews. According to one source the Egyptian army is estimated to include over 100,000 soldiers.

8 And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. 9 The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

Now the area by Pi-hahiroth, in front of baal-zephon, is basically a natural cul-de-sac. The Red Sea was before them, mountains to the left and the right - and the largest military force on the planet behind them. God, via this pillar of cloud, has lead Israel directly between the quintessential rock and hard place.

From man's perspective - In a military sense this was a horrible strategy - Pharaoh has the high ground. The people of Israel are sitting ducks. But from God's perspective - Pharaoh was just where God wanted him.

ILLUSTRATION: Lewis Puller, in his thirty-seven years of service to the Marine Corps, became the most decorated Marine in American history. Puller and his men found themselves in a similar situation - A corporal said to Puller in one particular battle, "Sir, they are in front of us, behind us, and we are flanked on both sides by an enemy that outnumbers us 29:1." Puller responded, "Great - they'll not get away from us this time! We can shoot at them from every direction."

Well God has Pharaoh right where he wanted him. From God's perspective this was the worst scenario Pharaoh had ever walked into. But can you imagine how it felt from for Hebrews? That started complaining!

Exodus 14:11–14 (ESV)

¹¹ They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?"

¹² Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: '***Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?***' For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

No, not one time did they say that. They had actually cried out to God for years to rescue them. But how quickly we forget.

¹³ And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

That's good advice btw, when you feel like you are in a cul-de-sac of life. **FEAR NOT, Stand Firm, and watch...**

Exodus 14:21–31 (ESV)

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³ The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴ And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵ clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians." ²⁶ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." ²⁷ So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst

of the sea. ²⁸ The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. ²⁹ But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ³⁰ Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

The army of Egypt decimated. We are told historically that Egypt gave up any claim to this portion of land between Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon for the next 25 years. Obviously shaken by the fact that Yahweh fought for his people Israel.

THREE THINGS I WANT YOU TO SEE FROM THIS PASSAGE:

1. A Sketch of Conversion

One of the things a Christian asks when studying an OT passage is, “How did the NT writers use this passage?” Well over and over again this passage was used in the NT as a sketch of conversion.

The NT draws a direct correlation between the EXODUS of Israel and the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

- In **LUKE** at the Mt. Of Transfiguration we read that Jesus stood talking with Moses and Elijah about his impending “departure” the Greek word for departure is the same as the word “Exodus”.
- **HEB 3-4** describes Jesus as the greater Moses.
- **HEB 11**, uses the Red Sea crossing as a paradigm for having Christian faith.
- **1 COR. 10** - tells us the Hebrews crossed through the Red Sea by faith.

ILLUSTRATION: Tim Keller tells of a time he heard **J. Alec Myter** - OT Scholar from Great Britain - How would an Israelite say on the way to Canaan Land, coming out of the Red Sea. Who are you? I was in a foreign land under the sentence of death, in bondage, but I took shelter under the blood of the lamb and our mediator led us out and we crossed over. Now we are on our way to the promised land. He’s given us his law to make us a community and he’s given us a tabernacle so that we can live by grace and forgiveness. His presence is in our midst and he’s going to stay with us until we get home. That’s exactly what a Christian says.

When you read this story you see a living parable of OUR story.

Think of the correlations.

- a. **They were legally freed from Egypt** - but Egypt wanted them back. ***How many of you know that you are out of Egypt, but Pharaoh is still in hot pursuit.*** Some days you walk in boldness and confidence and feel that you may never sin again, but then at times you can hear the rumble of the chariot wheels coming after you.

ILLUSTRATION: You say, Well Pastor I thought the battle was won on the cross? In a very real sense it was – but Satan has not yet conceded defeat. It is as if you and I live between **D-Day and V.E. Day**. That is when the battle of the bulge was fought. The enemy gets the most fierce when he is cornered.

- He starts breaking out the roadside bombs
- Engages in Guerilla Warfare
- He uses human shields
- And the rules of war go out the window.

- b. **They crossed over by faith** - now be careful not to put too much emphasis on the size of your faith. Listen, Some walked through boldly and confidently, I'm sure others walked through trembling. But the point is they all crossed over.

The issue is not the SIZE of your faith, but rather the OBJECT of your faith.

Not only a sketch of conversion...

2. A Source of Courage

If you read these stories and realize that you serve this very same God, it can become for you a source of great courage.

I believe that's why our founding fathers stood up to Great Britain. They had God on their side. The odds were stacked against them physically, but through spiritual eyes, they could not lose.

ILLUSTRATION: 5 Hatton boys following me and Ben Sanderson. Legs trembling, but then I remembered God.

I don't know what has you trembling today - but remember who you serve.

What's the absolute worst that could happen? Death - but we serve the God of the resurrection. Cancer doesn't stand a chance ultimately.

God moves in a mysterious way
 His wonders to perform
 He plants His footsteps in the sea
 And rides upon the storm

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings, yea, in blessings
And in blessings on your head

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

My friend Jim Purdue tells the story of - A roving reporter came up to a man on the street and said, "Do you know what the two biggest problems in America are?" The pedestrian said, "I don't know and I don't care." The reporter said, "You have them both." The two biggest problems in America: number one is ignorance and number two is apathy. People don't know and they don't care.

Let me say - we need a group of men and women to read these old stories and see a picture of our county.

I know at times it seems like our great nation is in the cul-de-sac of history. Crooked politicians to our left, dead churches to our right - and the enemy in hot pursuit. But let me remind you - it's in times like these that our God does His best work. So rise up, get involved - stand for truth and watch the waters part before us.