

Sermon: Deliverance, Courageous Faith, and the Power of God

Bible Verses Mentioned: Exodus 14:10-31. Exodus 4:21-23. Colossians 1:11-14, James 4:7-8

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of our salvation. Wherein we receive not only the forgiveness of our sins, the settling of a debt we could never pay. But we also have received deliverance through the waters of baptism and the waters of victory through the gift of your Spirit, liberating us from every bondage to sin, Satan, the world, and death.

And so, we praise You and thank You for the gift of our salvation, and may the preaching of Your Word be Your Word, for the sake and glory of Your Son, Jesus, in His name we pray. Amen. Please be seated, and we're working our way through the Book of Exodus, and today we're talking about deliverance and the great victory that we read about with Moses leading the Israelites through the Red Sea and the deliverance from the bondage of Pharaoh and his armies.

I want us to think practically about it first in our own lives in terms of deliverance. Salvation, first and foremost, is multifaceted. And one of the things that's a mistake that Christians make, actually, is we sometimes only think of our salvation in terms of the status change that we receive by virtue of the redemption in the blood of Jesus that we talked about last week.

So we see ourselves as forgiven people, and that is indeed what we are. But just as the wicked servant learned from the king, being a forgiven person must also translate into liberation from some of the bondages which control our lives. And so, the status change must also result in a practical, tangible change in the way that we live our lives.

And one of the big bondages in our life that the gospel passage is talking about is the bondage of unforgiveness, which can become something that actually rules your life and drives you through resentment into all kinds of unhelpful patterns and places. So, thinking about salvation, it's a process. I'll use another example.

When I was in training to be a priest, I had to serve as a chaplain in the hospital, and I was doing this at St. Francis Hospital in Evanston, Illinois. It was run by a group of Catholic nuns, actually. My mentor was a nun named Sister Aloysius. What a great name for a nun, huh? And so I liked it because I got to be called Charlie Chaplin, which was kind of cool.

But one day, I was on call in the middle of the night, and you had to respond to every code in the hospital, but there were sometimes things that they particularly called chaplains to respond to. And this was a woman that had come into the emergency room, and she was struggling with emotional distress, and so they called me to help with a person who is depressed, basically. And so I get in there and I say, "Hey, hello, my name's Charlie Chaplin.

I'm the chaplain here." And she said, "Pastor, I'm depressed." And you could tell that she was. Her face was down, her eyes were closed. She was very, you know, physically manifesting that she was oppressed and depressed. And so she asked me for a Bible. And the Bible that the Church Pension Fund had given me was a little small book with a lot of little prayers, and there were some Psalms in there, and I said, "Well, this is what I have on my person," but they didn't have all the Psalms in there, just a few that they had picked out.

And what the pension fund had picked out was a bunch of happy Psalms, you know, ones that make you, you know, the Happy Clappy Psalms. And what she was looking for were Psalms of lament, and so we're paging through the little book. She's like, "None of these Psalms work." She wanted the ones that were angry and upset and sad, and there's a lot of Psalms in the Bible that are like that. They're real honest prayers.

And so I had to go find another Bible, and when I got to those Psalms, and she was able to read some of those, she was like, "Yes." And so we started to read some of those Psalms together, and all of a sudden, because of the empathy of the Scriptures with the plight that she was going through, she actually started to experience a measure of liberation and freedom and joy. And you could watch, her face began to lift, and her eyes began to open.

Well, her pastor called the church, or I'm not called the church, called the hospital emergency room. He was on the phone. And so I was kind of standing by as she was talking to her pastor, and he started to say to her, "You've got the victory. You've got the victory." And I was watching her respond. She's like, "I've got the victory,

Pastor. I've got the victory. I've got the victory." And all of a sudden, all the progress we had made in reading the Psalms of Lament, she started to just go back into despondency.

And what it was is just declaring a status change is not enough. It's not enough to say, "You've got the victory," if you don't actually have the victory. We need the victory. We need to experience liberation from the powers and principalities and sins and temptations and difficulties that we have in our life. There's the four evil horsemen of the Bible. You have Satan and the spiritual forces of evil that are constantly trying to destroy us.

And then we have the corrupt, worldly powers that are also seeking to manipulate us and bully us and control us. And then we have our own internal tyranny, which is our sin nature, which we also are being bullied by and tempted by and controlled by. And then the final enemy that we ultimately will face is death. And so all four of these things are our enemies that are trying to take us out and control us.

And in this world, we will experience, as Christians, liberation from some of these things. If we are going about it with the Lord, we will experience deliverance from the power of Satan, deliverance from the power of sin, deliverance sometimes from the corrupt and evil powers of this world. Now, in this world, it will never be full deliverance because we live in a sinful and fallen world.

And so, for our entire lives, we will always be struggling against spiritual evil. We will always be contending with the evil and corrupt powers of this world. There will always be bullies like Pharaoh in our life that we have to face down and contend with. There will always be a sin nature until we're glorified with our new bodies and our new spirits on the other side of our resurrection.

We will always have a sin nature, and death, of course, is the final enemy that we will contend with. But we will have victory and deliverance ultimately even over that. But we can experience some of Deliverance now. And so I want us to think about, one, what is deliverance? What does it mean to be delivered?

Last week we talked about redemption, which is that we have been purchased with the price, the blood of the lamb, the atoning sacrifice that we have been redeemed. And that's our status change. Remember what our verse was? "You are no longer belong to yourself, but you have been purchased by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You belong to another, but the status change must have its practical effect in our lives by an actual transference of power from one dominion to another." Now, it will never be the case that we are liberated from all dominions. I mean, you know Bob Dylan, right? And the old album, his Christian album that was "Slow Train Coming." Does anybody know of that album?

Not seeing a lot of Bob Dylan fans out there. But there was a song on "Slow Train Coming" that is simply, "You've got to serve somebody." Now, it might be the devil, or it might be the Lord, but you're going to serve somebody. I mean, Bob Dylan kind of sings in a way that you can't really understand what he's saying, but that's what he was saying. And he's exactly right. Listen to the way Paul puts it, "May you be strengthened with all power." He's talking about deliverance here, okay?

And he's going to use the word deliverance in this passage, just as in Colossians chapter 1, verse 11, "May you be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you, there's the status change, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. But then He has delivered us." Here's the power change.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. We are given the status change through the blood of Jesus Christ and the Passover, the work of Jesus on the cross. We are given deliverance through the power of His resurrection and the outpouring of that power in our lives through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And so, how are we going to practically participate in this deliverance? Because Deliverance actually does, on the one hand, you have the mighty act of God, where Moses puts his staff in the water and then the water's part on either side. Only God can do deliverance.

Walking through the Red Sea, it's a miraculous event by the power of God. They are set free from the power of Pharaoh. The crushing of Pharaoh's army and the closing of the waters, again, all the mighty acts and the power of God at work in their lives.

But what I want to think about is what is the practical things that Moses and the Israelites had to do in order to realize and to see that power at work in their life. There was a book written by a rabbi named Edwin Friedman, who's one of my favorite authors.

He really is very wise on dynamics and congregational life and systems and families and so on. And he has a book on leadership called *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership and the Age of the Quick Fix*, which is the age we live in.

And so, the rabbi says that in order for terrorism to hold sway, in other words, in order for there to be this controlling power to be over our lives, there have to be three emotional prerequisites, and this is the case in every kind of terrorist situation, whether we're talking about something like a hijacking of an airplane or a young child wanting cookies in the grocery store.

You know that's a terrorist situation, right? Why is that a terrorist situation? Well, because of the three emotional prerequisites. The three emotional prerequisites are, one, there is in the system, whether that's a family, a church, a country, the world, whatever it is, a business. Number one, there must be a perception that at the top of that organization, there is no leader with any nerve, that the leadership has been, in a sense, fillet of its backbone.

The second emotional prerequisite is that there is a vulnerability among those who are being controlled or bullied by the terrorist through fear that the terrorist is exquisitely sensitive to. You know, so the mom is going through the grocery store and the young terrorist child I know children are not terrorists. Please, don't hear me wrong, but this is the dynamic.

The child says, "I want those animal crackers on the shelf, and the mom has a vulnerability." What is it? She does not want to look like a child abuser in a grocery store, right? And the child throws a fit and the mom gives the crackers because of the vulnerability. The child knows the vulnerability.

And the third one is an unreasonable faith in being reasonable. So Pharaoh is barreling down on the Israelites, and the people of Israel lift their eyes up, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. This is a terrorism situation. The people of Israel cry out to the Lord, but then they say to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?"

What have you done to us bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not 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." So these are vulnerable and weak people, and they're vulnerable to being controlled by the fear of Pharaoh and Pharaoh's armies. And so here is the leadership moment for Moses.

Will he be fillet of his backbone in this moment, or will he have courage and a failure or have nerve to stand up to those who have been controlled their entire lives, the Israelites? And in this moment, there will be other places where Moses lacks nerve, but in this moment, Moses stands up. His backbone is still strong at this point, and this is what he says.

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. The Lord will fight for you, and you only have to be silent." There was a leader with courage, and that's what the Israelites needed in that moment in order to first be liberated from the terrorism of the Pharaoh.

But then the second thing is to release them from that vulnerability. And so here you have the Red Sea on one side, and you have the chariot army of the Egyptians on the other. One could not be in a more vulnerable place, right? And what's the vulnerability that the Israelites are facing? Certain death.

And so they can either capitulate to the demands of the Pharaoh and his army and go back to being slaves, or they could have courage and resist the vulnerability. And so the third piece of this is this unreasonable faith in being reasonable. What they needed to have faith in is not the power of negotiating with the terrorist. Well, okay, Pharaoh, I see your army. That's very strong. It looks very, very intimidating.

Uncle, uncle, we'll go back to bondage. Just tell us what we need to do. Oh, you want us to make even more bricks? Okay, we're willing to do it. No, they needed to not rationalize and argue or reason with Pharaoh. There's no reasoning with a terrorist. What they needed to do was to move. And so they had to have faith, but not in reason, but in the Lord.

Courageous faith. And so the test of that is actually to do something that is very unreasonable. Put a staff into the water and that's going to part the sea. Are you kidding me? And then you want us to walk through that parted sea? Are you nuts, Moses? There's nothing reasonable about walking through the Red Sea, is there? It's crazy.

But this is the kind of faith that the Lord continually asks His disciples to exercise. Crazy faith. You know, the kind of faith that, like we said in the first sermon here, that gets out of the boat and tries to walk on water, the kind of faith that believes in the one who says, "That cross right there is what's going to be your salvation.

And my resurrection will translate into power, real power in your life if you will trust me as your Lord and believe in my power and my strength." So whatever terrorist situation you're facing, and we all have them. And our family dynamics could be the bondage of resentment and unforgiveness. Could be a bully at school or at work.

It could be just the controlling stuff of this society that we live in with all of its bondages and craziness. Or it could be an internal battle that you're facing with an addiction of some kind. Whatever the battle or the bondage that you're facing, the power will come strong by faith, and your trust in the power of God for deliverance.

I'll end with this wonderful little verse that I hope that you'll memorize, actually. It comes from James 4, and it says this, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he'll draw near to you." Can you say that with me? It's very simple. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Say that. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Commit that one to memory, because in a sense, that's the basic practical work that the Israelites and Moses did when it came to Pharaoh. They resisted, they stood, they moved forward, they continued in courageous faith on their calling and journey with the Lord, and ultimately it led to the defeat of that evil power in their life.

And as they drew near to the Lord, the Lord drew near to them and delivered Him. I mean, going back to Bob Dylan's little phrase, "You got to serve somebody." It's in serving the Lord that, as our colleague for peace and morning prayer says, "We find perfect freedom." Listen to the way that the colleague puts it, "O God, the author of peace and lover of Concord, to know you as eternal life and to serve you as perfect freedom.

Defend us, your humble servants, and all assaults of our enemies that we surely trusting in Your defense may not fear the power of any adversaries through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord." To serve Him is to be delivered, to be experiencing perfect freedom. That little phrase from Thomas Kramner's colleague that he wrote there came from St.

Augustine, actually, where he says it this way, "God whom to know is to live, whom to serve is to reign, and whom to praise is the health and joy of the soul."