# A People Set Apart: Exodus 19:3-6

**Main Idea:** God brings His people near by His mercy and calls them to live together under His authority, devoted to Him.

## I. To God | Exodus 19:3-4

In last week's study, God promised to make Abram a great nation (Genesis 12:1-9). At the base of Mount Sinai, his offspring have become that nation, and the Lord has delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Before giving them His commands, God tells them to remember what they have seen Him do. Their life, in relationship to Him, begins with His mercy. It didn't take long after their rescue for them to already complain about food and water and question His faithful nature (Ex. 16:2–3; 17:1–7). Being carried on eagles' wings included days when they felt helpless and could not see how their needs would be met. God's care towards us doesn't always make our lives easier to understand. Deuteronomy 8:2–3 explains that God used Israel's hunger and His provision of manna to teach them dependence upon His word. **They needed to learn that their lives depended upon the Lord even when HIs provision wasn't obvious to them.** Remembering God's faithfulness should shape how we approach our present needs. We must resist the assumption that a lack of clarity in the midst of difficult circumstances means He has stopped caring. God brought Israel out of Egypt and continued sustaining them when they had nothing to offer Him except their need.

God describes the purpose of their deliverance with the words "I brought you to myself." Earlier, He had promised Israel, "I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God" (Ex. 6:7). The Lord has freed them from Pharaoh's rule and gathered them before Him to hear His voice and learn to live as His people. As Exodus continues, He will give instructions for a sanctuary so that He may dwell among them (Ex. 25:8). God's purpose in delivering Israel includes establishing their life together around His presence. **The relationship God promises is one of the best parts of the blessing of their deliverance.** We see a similar promise made to those in Christ with Peter's statement that Christ suffered for sins "that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). Our sin has made us guilty before God and separated us from fellowship with Him. Through His death, Christ deals with that guilt so that we can be in right relationship with the God we have sinned against. We are welcomed to know Him, hear His Word, and bring our needs before Him. But if our affections for Him falter when life is easy, we might not truly understand the fellowship Christ brought us into by His sacrifice. Having been brought near, we have reason to continue seeking Him, both when we need His help and when we are enjoying His provision.

The Lord also brings an entire people to Himself. Ephesians 2:19–22 describes believers as members of God's household, being built together into His dwelling by the Spirit. Our relationship with God is not exclusive to just Him and us, it is Him and his people. Hebrews 10:19–25 connects our confidence to draw near through Christ with considering how to encourage one another toward love and good works. **Belonging to God gives us a reason to invest in one another's lives.** That involvement requires both willingness to give and humility to receive. The shared life God gives His people makes room for our weakness. We come together as people who continue to need His mercy and who can help one another remember and live in light of it.

**To Ponder:**

1. What might cause believers to question God and His provision despite His ongoing care for them? How does Deuteronomy 8:2-3 help us understand God's provision during difficult circumstances?
2. What is the difference between being grateful for God's gifts and finding joy in belonging to Him? How can we grow in both?
3. How does Hebrews 10:19–25 challenge the idea that we can have a healthy relationship with Jesus without involvement in a church? What makes it difficult for us to give or receive the encouragement described there?

## II. For God | Exodus 19:5-6

The words “now therefore” connect God’s commands with the mercy God has shown Israel. Their obedience could not earn the rescue that had already happened. The covenant condition in verse 5, Israel’s enjoyment of these covenant privileges required faithfulness to the Lord. They could not claim to belong to God while disobeying His commands. Our acceptance before God rests upon Christ’s righteousness, and Ephesians 2:8–10 teaches that we are saved by grace through faith and created in Christ for good works. Our obedience contributes nothing to the sufficiency of Christ’s work, but His saving work changes how we live. Titus 2:11–14 describes grace as training us to renounce ungodliness. **Grace gives us both reason and help to obey God who has made us His own.** God knows the things within our hearts, but if we use that truth to dismiss what He calls us to do, we are appealing to His kindness while resisting His authority. His patience gives us opportunity to repent, and His forgiveness gives us confidence to come before Him when we do.

God calls Israel His treasured possession while reminding them that all the earth belongs to Him. His choosing of them gives them a place of privilege and responsibility before the God who rules over every nation. As a kingdom of priests, they are set apart for His service. Peter applies this language to believers who have received mercy through Christ (1 Pet. 2:9–10). He also explains that their spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God through Jesus (2:5). What we offer to God is acceptable because we come through Christ. Every believer shares in this privilege of serving Him, whatever role we have within the church. Romans 12:1 calls believers to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, placing the whole of their life at God’s disposal. Work done quietly and without recognition, can be done for His glory. If we become more concerned with whether people notice our service than with the good it does for them, we might find ourselves reluctant to help if we think someone else will get the credit, or leave us frustrated when no one acknowledges what we have done. Appreciation is good, and churches should express it. But **belonging to God gives us ample reasons to continue serving faithfully even when we might receive no recognition.**

God also identifies Israel as a holy nation, a people whose lives are to reflect the character of God. Leviticus 19 explains this, beginning with the command, “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (v. 2). The instructions that follow remind us that our everyday conduct is under His authority. God addresses both outward actions and the heart, while also commanding His people to love their neighbors as themselves (vv. 17–18). Throughout the chapter, He repeatedly reminds them, “I am the LORD.” His character and authority are the standard for how they are to live, including how they treat those whom society would consider of lesser means or strength. **We cannot be satisfied just because we aren’t causing someone harm. We must also consider whether we have neglected opportunities to do good.** It is easy to become so occupied with our own lives that we fail to give any attention to those around us. Jesus affirms the command to love our neighbor alongside the command to love God (Matt. 22:37–40), reminding us that our devotion to Him must affect these everyday relationships. Where we recognize selfishness or indifference, we need to confess it and ask Him to help us love more faithfully. Christ gave Himself to purify a people eager for good works (Titus 2:14), and His grace continues to change how we see and care for those around us.

**To Ponder:**

4. God rescued Israel before giving them His commands. How does Titus 2:11–14 help us understand why receiving God’s grace should change the way we live?
5. Being a holy people means more than just avoiding sin. According to Ephesians 2:10, why should doing good be a priority for believers? What might keep you from taking that responsibility seriously?