

Calling us Out to Call us in [Oppression– Exodus 1:8-14]

Welcome to a new series in the book of Exodus. The word Exodus, from the Greek, means “going out.” We find, in this second book of the Bible, God’s people in land they don’t belong, living among a people who doesn’t like them, and struggling under the weight and burdens put upon them. We see in Exodus God calling his people out of their bondage and oppression. But the Lord does not simply remove us from our difficulty. Every time he calls us out, he calls us in to know him and be known by him.

So, Exodus begins to speak to us in our situation. James addressed his letter to ‘the twelve tribes scattered among the nations’ (Jas 1:1) and in doing so parallels Exodus, for we – the church of Jesus Christ – are the twelve tribes of God’s people dispersed in the world (Motyer).

Oppression [Exodus 1:8-14]

Gospel Realities

Ex. 1:8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

Joseph’s life reminds us of the enormous gospel impact one man can have on a nation. There arose a pharaoh who did not know Joseph. To be known by the king is a monumental achievement. **We have people in our church who knew Bear Bryant and were known by him.** But greater still is not that Joseph was a local celebrity, to know Joseph = to know his God. Can the same be said of you? Can it be said that to know Josh = to know about his Savior?

The gospel footprint of Joseph was enormous. At the age of 30 he was placed in charge to the extent that “without your consent no man may lift his head or foot in all the land of Egypt.” Joseph was the man who others went to in times of famine. The man who

controlled the store houses of Egypt “so that all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in the lands.”

This is the difference one life changed and lived in Christ can make. Is more than an individual, he is the one in and through whom God has preserved the people alive. (Fretheim) Will you be a Joseph? The name Joseph literally means “to add.” Who are you enriching for the sake of the Gospel? What is your platform? What is your pharaoh?

9 And he said to his people, “**Look**, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than we;

The second gospel reality we find in the passage is that the eyes of the world will always gaze upon the children of God. Pharaoh said look at the children of Israel. They are more and mightier than we!

Why is the world looking, watching, and examining? Because of the difference that Jesus Christ makes in your life. The Christ follower is nothing more than a dead man walking. This is an odd phenomenon. For those who are dead in sin life of freedom is appealing. Dead things will always look to the living for answers!

These looks will not always be of curiosity. Often the gaze of the community upon the children of God are curious, sometimes of conversion, and many times of contempt.

10 come, **let us deal shrewdly** with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and *so* go up out of the land.”

The Idea that God’s chief desire is to make me happy, healthy, and wealthy is not biblical. In fact, this is an alt-truth of the antichrist. The gospel truth is that for the follower of Jesus Christ, oppression is a given and hatred is expected (IF the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first – John 15:18). My happiness is nothing compared to the glory of God!

This is the truth encapsulated in the first chapter of Exodus. The Bible never, however, says that Israel was sent to Egypt as a punishment or that their sinfulness cried out to heaven for

this, or any, requital. The Egyptian experience belongs to a different league. The main reason for their bondage was that Egypt would see that God is in control. Compare this to suffering that is totally logical—by our sinfulness we bring suffering on our own heads. (Motyer).

Are you willing to suffer so that the world sees Jesus working in your life? Oppression is a product of the fall of man and the brokenness we now live in. If you are suffering today know that it might have nothing to do with your personal sin, but might have everything to do with your neighborhood that desperately needs to see Jesus deliver and sustain you daily by His grace.

Why Oppression?

The word oppress means ‘to bring low,’ and ‘to beat down.’

The life of the faithful will always be a threat to the faithless

The life of the faithful will always be a threat to the faithless. The Israelites did nothing to “deserve” the mistreatment at the hands of Pharaoh. They were guilty of multiplying, growing their families, and working to build strong community. The stronger the community of faith the more difficult the oppression in Egypt. The Egyptians plan unfolds in three steps, which increase in oppression and the exploitation of crass power (Childs).

1. Forced labor
2. Command to midwives
3. Murder of infant males

Listen to this truth found in Exodus, the closer to get to Christ, the more you grow in your faith, and produce spiritual fruit, the greater the threat you are to the faithless and the kingdom of darkness. If you are not producing any fruit, if you are still dead in your trespasses, you are no threat! Are you a threat to Satan? Maybe we are not facing persecution because we are ZERO threat to our spiritual enemies. **(Scheduling our live nativity around the SEC championship)** Maybe the faithless can’t see our faith. Are you today growing MORE like Jesus and becoming Mightier in your faith? **See the kingdom of darkness believes if it can bring you low, or beat you down enough you will lose your faith.** An when you lose your faith you are no longer a threat!

Here is a second gospel truth about oppression: from the beginning the world has tried to stamp out the light of Christ.

In Genesis, the goal of the enemy was to get the first man to sin, kicked out of the presence of God and the Garden and to destroy the image of God to dim the light of Jesus. Little did the enemy know that though he would bruise the heel of man, that the Son of Man would crush his head.

In Egypt, the goal of Pharaoh was to burden, smother, and kill the children of God so they would lose their faith, lose their strength, lose their might, decrease in number, and lose their influence and dim the light of the Lord.

In the Cross of Jesus Christ, the sinless son of Adam and perfect son of God died on the cross. From the sixth hour to the ninth darkness filled the land, Jesus cried out “My God my God why have you forsaken me? The veil of the temple was torn, the earth quaked, rocks split and for a brief moment, the light of Christ went dark.

In revelation 11 we find two testimonies of the Lord coming to earth with the power to shut the heavens so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy. When they finish their testimony the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them so that the light of Jesus will grow dim.

For you, the church, the people of God. From the kingdom of darkness’ perspective, the aim of oppression is to dim the light of Jesus Christ in your life. But remember this truth that will give you strength: You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven. Shine bright!

Gospel Responses

In light of the oppression we see in our world, in our lives, in our home, and in our communities how do we respond? More importantly, how does the gospel of Jesus Christ speak truth in the midst of our dark days?

1. The more God’s people are afflicted, the stronger, mightier, and healthy the

community of faith becomes. The world shows its strength by external might. The church of Christ shows its strength by its character. The fastest growing churches in the world are located in Iran, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Somalia. To pray for persecution to end is to pray against the evangelistic growth of the gospel.

2. God is always working (even if you can't see it, he is working in the background). All the Israelites could physically see were the oppressive policies of Pharaoh. He is not even given a name (nor is his successor). The focus is thus placed on him, not simply as a historical figure, but as a symbol for the anticreation forces of death which take on the God of life (Fretheim). God knows your true enemy. And God is working on behalf of His children even when you can't see. Trust Him. Trust that Christ knows what you need more than you do.
3. God always uses the weak. Israel was the smallest, weakest, and most stubborn. Yet God used them. We find that God most often uses [1 Cor. 1:27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.](#)
4. God calls me through bondage into His presence. We find the assurance that, although the days were dark, it was all right, it was all planned and it will all be well (Motyer). God used dark days to build our trust in him, our reliance upon His grace, and a distrust of our own strength. Then, God comforts us in our trials that we may comfort others. The Lord has a way of using difficulty to get our eyes off of our trouble and look to the author and perfect of our faith
5. The Bible does not give easy pat answers to oppression. The biblical account provides us with no pat answers to our questions, but it does provide us with a framework and context within which we can begin to make sense of the days of darkness which have ever been the lot of god's people throughout history (Motyer).
6. **The Gospel = setting the captives free. So we must run to captives because we have the only key.** [The Spirit of the Lord GOD is on Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners; \(Isaiah 61:1\)](#)
 - a. [Breakout Birmingham – we groped around in the dark for several minutes before realizing the key was right in front of us.](#) Followers of Jesus Christ should run into not from oppressive situations. We should run to refuges, to

slavery, to orphans, to widows, to addicts, and those struggling.

- 1. This is the message of the Christian: one prisoner telling the other where to find the key**

My Response

One key question in the book of Exodus therefore is this: who will Israel serve? The root serve is used 97 times in Exodus and can be used for the service of Pharaoh as well as the worship and service of God (Fretheim).

Know This:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. **17** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Respond this:

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Are you walking through dark days? Are you in Egypt? Know that the Lord is working even if you don't see. Trust his strength and his plan for your life. And know he will never leave or forsake you.

Remember that when God's people are oppressed the gospel multiplies

Is your faith a threat to the faithless?

Notes

This section is not only filled with irony, it reveals the symbolic character of the narrative, whatever its historical grounding may be. Pharaoh, Joseph, the Egyptians, Pithom, and Rameses stand for much more than historical realities. This is reinforced by 12:12 and 15:11, which include the Egyptian gods among those to be judged (Fretheim).

So, Exodus begins to speak to us in our situation. James addressed his letter to ‘the twelve tribes scattered among the nations’ (Jas 1:1) and in doing so parallels Exodus, for we – the church of Jesus Christ – are the twelve tribes of God’s people dispersed in the world (Motyer).

The Bible never, however, says that Israel was sent to Egypt as a punishment or that their sinfulness cried out to heaven for this, or any, requital. The Egyptian experience belongs to a different league.

Compare this to suffering that is totally logical—by our sinfulness we bring suffering on our own heads. (Motyer).

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The Egyptians plan unfolds in three steps, which increase in oppression and the exploitation of crass power (Childs).

4. Forced labor
5. Command to midwives
6. Murder of infant males

The cause of the change from a position of privilege and prosperity to one of want and oppression is attributed to a new king ‘who did not know Joseph.’ (Childs).

Ex. 1:8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

Into the midst of God’s extraordinary creative activity enters a major effort to

subvert what God has done (Fretheim).

He is not even given a name (nor is his successor). The focus is thus placed on him, not simply as a historical figure, but as a symbol for the anticreation forces of death which take on the God of life (Fretheim).

Joseph

Is more than an individual, he is the one in and through whom God has preserved the people alive. (Fretheim)

Know

Knowing means more than acquaintance or being informed; it bespeaks a relationships of depth in which there is commitment to those who are known and genuine concern regarding their welfare (Fretheim).

He was either wholly ignorant of his own nation's history or (more likely) that he simply chose to act in ignorance of Joseph's wise counsel and how the Egyptians benefited from it (Enns).

⁹ And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than we;

A sign of blessing for Israel is a sign of disaster for Pharaoh (Fretheim).

What the narrator views as a blessing, the new king considers a problem (Fretheim).

¹⁰ come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and *so* go up out of the land."

The new king of Egypt counters God's life-giving work with death-dealing efforts (Fretheim).

The following passages are filled with irony:

1. The king is the first to recognize God's community as a 'people'
2. He confirms the fulfillment of God's promises
3. His concern to act shrewdly shows his folly and his policies will again and again be turned to Israel's advantage
4. Storage cities built out of a concern for life (Gen 41:34) are used as a vehicle of death
5. Strikingly he speaks of the exodus, echoing Joseph himself (Gen. 50:24) (Fretheim).

11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.

12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

The word oppress means 'to bring low,' and 'to beat down.'

The more Israel is oppressed the more it grows.

As often for Israel, it must pass in and through adversity on the way to the fulfillment of promises (Fretheim).

Two Genesis verbs (Gen 1:22 and 30:30) are used to describe their triumphant growth (Cole).

13 So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor.

14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve *was* with rigor.

Rev. 11:3 And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Rev. 11:4 ¶ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

- “and” here it is God and not Christ who commissions his witnesses to prophesy (NICNT)
- No doubt the two witnesses are patterned after Moses and Elijah (2 Kgs 1:11, Exod 7:14-18).
- Background for this prophecy is Zechariah 4
 - Golden lampstand (Israel)
 - Seven lamps (eyes of the Lord)
 - Two olive trees
 - **Zech. 4:6** ¶ So he answered and said to me: “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.
- Rev. 1 the 7 churches = 7 lampstands
 - *Spiritual truth== the power and authority for effective witnessing lie in the Spirit of God*
- **Witnesses**—the whole community of faith whose primary function is to be a prophetic witness
 - Why?
 1. Called 2 lampstands== churches (Rev. 1:20; Zech 4:2-3)
 2. 11:7 “the beast will make war and overcome them. This refers to Daniel 7:21 where ALL ISRAEL is persecuted not an individual
 - a. **Dan. 7:21** ¶ “I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them,
 3. Corporate identity of 11:9-13
 - a. All the world will see them (believers all over the world)
 4. 3.5 years is the same time the “holy city” “woman” and those tabernacling in heaven are to be oppressed” (11:2; 12:6; 13:6)
 5. often in Rev the entire community of believers is identified as the source of testimony (Rev. 6:9; 12:11, 17; 19:10; 20:4)
 6. powers are attributed identical and not divided between individuals (Moses and Elijah did diff things) They are identical prophetic twins!
 - a. Why 2 and not 7? #2 witnesses are required for legal testimony in OT (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6)
 - b. Also only 2 lamp stands among the 7 are not rebuked (Smyrna// Philadelphia)
 7. Both Moses and Elijah anticipated God’s future action on behalf of Israel, with a future prophet to come like Moses (Christ). Note that their sackcloth signals a prophetic call to repentance (Stevens).

Rev. 11:5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.

Rev. 11:6 These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

- Here harm shows that God will most certainly keep his people safe from physical harm until their witness has been completed (NICNT)
- This shows that God protects his prophetic community
 - Souls of the witnesses cannot be harmed they are spiritually invincible
 - Security of the Believer!!
- Words of a prophet can be like fire
 - **Jer. 5:14** ¶ Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts: “Because you speak this word, Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, And this people wood, And it shall devour them.
- Power is mirrored after Elijah and Moses in the OT
 - God gives power to his community
 - God gives heavenly spiritual intervention
- Elijah called down fire but now fire comes from the words of God’s people (2 Kings 1:10) and Moses turned water to blood (Exod 7:20)

Rev. 11:7 ¶ When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

- “Finish their testimony”
 - shows that what follows in 11:7-13 will occur at the end of history
 - the church will have completed its role of bearing witness to Christ throughout the world

- The church will appear defeated
- Also confirms once the ministry of the church is fulfilled they will no longer be protected.
- This happens immediately before the return of Christ
- See Daniel 7:21-25
 - They world thinks they have prevailed against the Church
 - But Christ rains supreme!
- THE beast—the definite article shows that this is the same beast as in Daniel
 - The beasts spirit has stood behind earthly leaders throughout history
- “rising from the abyss” refers to the final onslaught directed towards the saints
- “attack/make war” supports the interpretation of the witnesses as a large group rather than two individuals (NICNT).

Rev. 11:8 And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

- Symbolic that the church will appear dead to the world
 - The church will appear silenced near the end!
 - There will be a remnant of God’s people but wickedness will be so great!
- “will lie” from the eastern perspective, to be left unburied was an act of great indignity
- “great city” Babylon refers to the ungodly in the bible
 - “Sodom and Egypt” spiritually are like Babylon. They are ungodly!
 - Sodom= wickedness
 - Egypt= persecution and violence but never associated with Sodom in the Bible
 - Jerusalem? Most likely not
- Mostl likely Rome which throughout Revelation symbolizes the power of persecution and dark forces.

- “spiritually” shows that the city is symbolic
- “where” when used in Rev. always refers to something symbolic (12:6, 14; 14:4; 2:13; 20:10)
- “where the lord was crucified”
 - shows the state of the world
 - also that Jerusalem had become like the spiritual state of Babylon

Illustrations

The theme of this chapter is encapsulated in the old hymn “I will sing the wondrous story.”

Application

Israel is not to parade its past suffering in order to occasion pity or guilt from others. The recalling of oppression is to lead to an identification with those who suffer (Fretheim).

One key question in the book of Exodus therefore is this: who will Israel serve? The root serve is used 97 times in Exodus and can be used for the service of Pharaoh as well as the worship and service of God (Fretheim).

God is a God of the oppressed; God enters into their difficult, suffering situations to set things right. God is a God who is concerned to move people from slavery to freedom. (Fretheim).

In the meantime, they had no certificate of immunity to pain and hardship. With first the death of Joseph and then the accession of a king who neither knew Joseph’s special status nor recognized any obligations to his descendants, they were exposed to the full blast of worldly opposition (Motyer).

God’s people are never alone (Enns).

Gospel Realities

Joseph's life reminds me of the gospel impact one man can have on a nation

To know Joseph = to know his God

Does to know Josh = to know his God?

The eyes of the world will always gaze upon the children of God

Why?

Because of the difference in Christ (Dead things will always look to life)

These looks will be of curiosity, conversion, or contempt

Oppression

The life of the faithful will always be a threat to the faithless

From the beginning the world has tried to stamp out the light of Christ (Exodus- Christ-Rev. 11)

The Idea that God's chief desire is to make me happy, healthy, and wealthy is not biblical. In fact, this is an alt-truth of the antichrist.

Gospel Responses

1. More affliction = multiplication
2. God is always working (even if you cant 'see' it, he is working in the background)
3. God always uses the weak
4. God calls me through bondage into his presence
5. The gospel = setting captives free. So we must run to captives because we have the only key.