

God is For His People

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[0 : 00] Quickest background ever to how we got here in Exodus 1. In Genesis 15, God makes a promise to Abraham that he would have many descendants.

After Abraham and Sarah struggled with infertility, Isaac was born to them in Genesis 21. Blessing from God. In Genesis 22, God provided a sacrifice in Isaac's place, both saving Isaac's life and providing a future for the descendants that were to come.

Then God reiterates his promise to make Abraham a father of nations. Jacob is born of Isaac in Genesis 25. He fathers Joseph and his brothers.

Most of us will know the story of Joseph. Joseph's brothers hated Joseph because he was the prized son. And they sell him into slavery. Joseph ends up in Egypt.

He ends up in jail. Then he interprets Pharaoh's dreams. And he's raised to the second point in control of all of Egypt. There's mass famine in the whole region.

[1 : 14] And then Joseph's brothers seek aid from Egypt. They're reunited. And in Genesis 47, Pharaoh allows his brothers and his father and their family to settle in Egypt.

70 Israelites enter Egypt. And 400 years later, where we are today, there is a great nation of them. Today, we will consider four points.

First, God is for his people. First, God is with his people. Third, God is blessing his people.

And finally, God has saved his people. What I want you to come away with this evening is that comforting truth that God is for his people and with his people, us.

Even when powerful forces are out to destroy his people. Let's pray once more before we open up God's word.

[2 : 28] Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you that even in passages where we are confused and we see lots of heartache, that we can still see a redemption plan from you.

We pray that as we approach your word, that your spirit is our guide and our teacher and that our hearts are malleable to your word.

Be with us and we pray that everything we do tonight is for your glory. In Jesus Christ's name, amen. Our first point, God is for us.

The Bible reveals that God is so clearly identifying with his people that an assault on them is an assault on him.

Exodus 29.45 states, God speaking, I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God.

[3 : 33] Or take the account of Saul's conversion in Acts chapter 9. Let's read three verses from that. Acts chapter 9, verses 3 through 5, which says, Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus.

And suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he said, who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Christ, God, man, ruler, who has been raised to the highest point of glory in heaven at the right hand of God.

He, in all his glory, in this instance, is still crying out to Saul. Why are you persecuting me?

Not his people. Me. Him. The Bible tells us that Christ is our head. An attack on the head of an army is also an attack on that army's commander.

[4 : 44] An attack on us is an attack on our head. It's an attack on Christ. So closely does Christ identify with his chosen people.

Then there's the other way, more specific sense, in this passage, Pharaoh chooses to set himself up in direct opposition to God's command, even if he does it unwittingly.

Verse 10 from our passage. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.

So this is in sharp contrast to God's intention to have his own special people. That begins with a promise made to Abraham that I mentioned before, but I will read now from Genesis 17.

Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham.

[5 : 52] For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful and will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

And God said to Abraham, as for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout your generations. But then in our passage in verse 8, tells us that Pharaoh is unaware of Joseph.

Remember that super quick background that we gave? Joseph and his family were Abraham's descendants. So here, Pharaoh, in sheer fear for his own power, that can be like sand sipping through your fingers, sets himself up as the only king, and plots the end of the Israelite nation as a threat.

A nation that Yahweh has created for himself. He was not the first man, and he will not be the last man, who through their naivety thinks themselves above Yahweh.

His ambition, though, is entirely futile. Another narrative from the Bible that comes to mind and is hugely illustrative of the futility of thinking that anyone can be the ruler of Yahweh is that of the account of the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple of Dagon.

[7 : 20] The Ark of the Covenant was God's dwelling place among his people. So just setting the scene before we read the passage, in the mindset of an ancient Near East warfare, when one army had conquered the other, that army had conquered the god of the other army.

So in this case, the Philistines, in their mind, made the grave error of assuming Dagon had crushed Yahweh. So they went about their usual tradition of bringing the idol of the defeated god, in this case, the Ark of the Covenant, into a subservient position in Dagon's temple.

Let's briefly read the account in 1 Samuel 5, verses 1 through 5. It should come up on the screen.

Sorry, you might have to squint. When the Philistines captured the Ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

Then the Philistines took the Ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face down on the ground before the Ark of the Lord.

So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. But then, but when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face down before the Ark of the Lord and the head of Dagon, and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold.

[8 : 52] Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

Yes, maybe an obscure passage, in scripture, but there's a hugely comical element to this story. In verse three in that passage, if we just skip back to it, God causes the idol of Dagon to be prostrate before Yahweh.

And then here's the comical element of that story. The Philistines, the people, have to bend down with their knees and use their hands to pick up their fallen God who rules them and then lift them up and place them back on his place, which he could not do without their help.

Tell me this. It doesn't happen. It doesn't happen. It's ridiculous.

We are people and God is God. We are created. He is creator. All powerful, all knowing, all sufficient. Dagon was not.

[10 : 07] Dagon was as powerful as my kitchen cupboard. What happens next? Verse four. The idol appears to be trying to escape the presence of the only holy God, but it cannot.

The head and arms are severed on the doorway and the trunk again is in a position of subjection towards Yahweh. The point of this story is that gods of wood and stone are jokes.

Only one God is sovereign and in control. He is the great I am and he is Yahweh. In the end, the Philistines realize their error and send the ark back on its way.

But within these verses, it's a clear picture of how we should view God who is superior to any man or any man-made deity.

Have any of you seen the original 2012 Avengers movie? If you've not, you've had 11 years, so I won't give you a spoiler warning.

[11:16] You may remember this sensational scene in the movie. It's the final battle. Every superhero is deployed in defense of the world, fighting against armies of Thanos, led by Loki.

Now remember, both in Norse mythology, Loki is a god, and in the Avengers franchise, Loki is seen as a demigod. In this movie, Hulk smashes Loki into a room in a skyscraper.

Then, Loki stands up and shouts, Enough! You are all beneath me! I am a god, you dumb creature! I will not be bullied by you!

Then, Hulk picks up Loki by his ankle, like you might do a small child, and starts smashing him from one side to the other, over and over and over again, slamming him.

Loki is left out of breath. There's the shape of Loki in the ground, and he's lying there out of breath.

Then Hulk walks away, saying, Puny God.

[12:32] This, this is Dagon. This is Pharaoh. Puny gods in comparison to the almighty Yahweh. Pharaoh.

He has set himself up against God, who is in control. God's in control when his people are being opposed.

He is for his people. His people back in those first days in Egypt, they could take comfort in that. We today can also find comfort in that truth.

The devil, the world, they will oppose us. Christ, our head, he has told us this. Yet, we are assured of the truth, that God, who is always in control of his world, is for us.

God is for his people. Our second point, God is with his people. We'll not get into the depths of a theology on suffering this evening, that can be for another day.

[13:43] Yet, this passage is harrowing, at times disturbing. But, it can make us be confused, it can make us enraged. I heard a sermon recently, from a preacher who said, the question shouldn't be, why suffering?

But, with whom? The reality of our existence, that we live in a fallen world. We've all seen this, we all experience this, day to day. Suffering is all around us.

We see people suffer. We suffer. Then, we have to make a decision. Will we face the trials of the world alone, or with God, who is our refuge, who is our strength, who is our ever-present aid?

Remember, the question isn't, why suffering? But, with whom? God is clearly, with his people. He is among them.

He loves them. His care is shown, in the fact, that he details their history, in verses one through six. Then, Exodus one and two, are the introduction, of a redemptive story.

[14:54] Exodus one, as we've seen, begins with this new Pharaoh, and the hardship, which he imposes, on the people of Israel. And, Exodus two, ends with the Pharaoh's death, and the people crying out to God.

It's on the same page, if you want to look at it, in your pure Bible. Exodus two, from verse 23. The Israelites, groaned in their slavery, and cried out.

And their cry for help, because of their slavery, went up to God. God heard their groaning, and he remembered his covenant, with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

So God looked on the Israelites, and was concerned about them. Remembering the Bible, is written and given to us, in words that we can understand, in human language.

So that text, doesn't mean, that this is the first point, that God remembered that covenant, or the first point, that God was concerned, for the welfare of his people. God was always concerned, about them.

[15:54] He always remembers, his covenant. He had a love for them, which meant, he would not, let them go.

The Heidelberg Catechism, it was written, in the 1500s. It's a beautiful document, that deals pastorally, with issues, that the Christian faces. And after all, there's nothing new, under the sun. Let's look at question 20, for guidance, on this matter. It's up on the screen. Question 28 says, what advantage, is it to us, to know that God, has created, and by his providence, does still, uphold all things?

The answer, that these people, wrote back in the 1500s. That we, may be patient, in adversity, thankful, in prosperity, and that in all things, which may hereafter, befall us, we place our firm, trust, in our faithful God, and Father, that nothing, shall separate us, from his love.

Since all creatures, are so in his hand, that without his will, they cannot so much, as move. Let us, here today, in this room, and online, and anyone future, listening to this, place our firm, trust, in our faithful God.

[17 : 24] We will face, adversity and hardship, let's trust, our faithful God. I'm not saying, that what we face, is the same, as these first, Exodus 1 Israelites.

We're not at risk, of genocide, here in Scotland. But we do suffer. And God, as is our father, cares about us, in every situation, we find ourselves in.

When our child's, behaviour is spiralling, when they reject, the faith, when we, when we lose our jobs, or struggle to even, put food on the table.

If we're lonely, when we're struggling, or just trying to find, energy to balance, our hectic lives. Let us, choose to trust, our God, who is with us, and beside us, in our sufferings.

Psalm 46, be still, and know, that I am God. Years ago, when I was of actual student age, right now, I'm 33, and pretending to be a student, I had a friend, who suffered from ADHD.

[18 : 35] It was so debilitating for him, that even the most basic, of tasks, were difficult. He struggled, to get out of bed, struggled to do, almost anything.

He had to take a break, from his studies. He was depressed, and it was awful, to watch him, go through it. He also had, a real battle, with whether, God was real.

But I remember, he once said to me, I either choose, to disbelieve in God, and go into a dark hole, where I'll never come out, and have no hope.

Or, I choose to believe in God, and hold on to hope. I do not understand this, but without there being, a God in control, life, is pointless.

I had, I had huge admiration, for my friend. He, in the depths, of his despair, in the depths, pits of darkness, reminding me, that God is good.

[19 : 37] God, was very much, alongside my friend. He is very much, alongside, the people, of Israel, and Egypt.

My friend, was the walking, embodiment, of that catechism, placing our first, firm trust, in his, faithful God. We don't even have to look, at just, examples from modern day, about trusting God.

What of Shagrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in Daniel 5? They were almost, in the exact same type, of persecution, as the original, Israelites in Exodus 1. Did they say, why oh God, have you let this, fallen upon us?

Have you abandoned us? No. Let's hear, from their very own mouths, who they had trust in. Daniel 3.16. King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need, to defend ourselves, before you, in this matter.

If we are thrown, into the blazing furnace, the God we serve, is able, to deliver us from it. And he will, deliver us, from your majesty's hand.

[20 : 43] But even if he does not, we want you to know, your majesty, that we will not serve, your gods, or worship, the image of gold, you have set up.

They knew, God was good, and faithful, despite their circumstances. And they trusted him. They put their active, trust, in him. They honored him.

He is worth, trusting friends. God is worth, trusting. God is with us. There will, be a day, when not one more tear is shed.

There will be a day, when not one more tear is shed. But until that time, we can be confident, that God is with us, in our suffering.

God is with his people. Our third point, God is blessing his people. There are two ways, we can clearly see, God blessing his people, in our passage here today.

[21 : 46] First, we recall, that God promised, to make Abraham, a blessing, of father of nations. Seventy descendants, enter Egypt, almost a million, leave with Moses, during the Exodus.

this. Already, God has shown, his steadfast love, and covenant keeping, nature, of blessing, his own children.

This thought, though, is doubled down, in our passage, in verse 12. But the more, they were oppressed, the more, they multiplied. And the more, they spread abroad. And the Egyptians, were in dread, of the people of Israel.

Hardship hits. And yet, God, is still blessing, his people, throughout, their ordeal. The passage, that we read, earlier in our service, Paul, in Romans 8.

No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through him, who loved us. For I am convinced, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor demons, neither present, nor future, nor any

powers, neither height, nor depth, nor anything else, in all creation, will be able, to separate us, from the love of God, that is in Christ, Jesus our Lord.

[23 : 04] Will Pharaoh, be the power, that will separate Yahweh, from his people? Absolutely not. Never. The other way, that we see God's blessing, comes in verse 20.

So God dealt well, dealt well, with the midwives, and the people, multiplied, and grew, very strong. And because, the midwives, feared God, he gave them families.

So God blesses, the midwives, with families. We know that children, are a blessing, do we not? They bring us joy, they bring us hope.

Psalms 127, behold, children are a heritage, from the Lord, the fruit of a womb, a reward. Children, are a heritage, a blessing, a reward, blessing.

However, a quick sidebar, there may be, people here, who that verse, itself, is hard to hear. Those that, struggle with singleness, or couples that, struggle with, infertility.

[24 : 08] Hear this, God, does not love you, any less, because you are not, currently, blessed, in this way. As we've already, considered, God is with us, in the pain of singleness, or in infertility.

But we, as humans, can often, reverse engineer scripture, and come out, with completely, false conclusions. God blessed the midwives, with children, I have no child, therefore, I am not blessed, by God.

This, cannot be, any further, from the truth. Your value, your worth, is not defined, by what is written, on a marriage certificate, or what is written, on a birth certificate.

The blessings, that you, truly share, in the gospel, are so much greater, than the blessing, of children. You are loved, you are adopted, you are his, treasured, possession.

God, did bless, the midwives, for their faithfulness, to him, with families. That is a blessing, it is a great blessing. It is a great blessing. That is not the only blessing, we receive, in our Christian walk.

[25 : 22] Is it not, though, amazing, the mode of deliverance, that God uses, in this passage? The midwives, a couple of midwives, thwarting, the most, powerful man, in the world, in that age and time.

It reminds me, of the picture, that is burned, into my memory, of the man, with two shopping bags, in Temenan Square, who is standing, and in front of him, is a row, of four tanks. Like protesting, the violence, that has gone on, the days previous.

Or Rosa Parks, the African American, woman, who refused, to change her seat, on a bus, because, she was black. Standing up, against racism, in 1950s America.

A pivotal moment, in the civil rights movement. Like these two examples, standing up for justice, and goodness, God blessed, the midwives, for their willingness, to be counted, in this scenario.

God has always been, in control. He remains, in control, right now. And he will always, be in control. Ephesians 1.

[26 : 30] Blessed be the God, and Father, of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Now remember, Paul's speaking to the church, so he is speaking, to you. Who has blessed, us, in Christ, with every, spiritual blessing, in the heavenly places.

If you are, in Christ, you are so, richly blessed, friends. So, richly blessed. God blesses his people, making them, a great nation.

He blesses the midwives, with families, because of their, individual faithfulness. He is still, blessing us, today. God is, blessing his people. Our final point, God has, saved his people.

The main theme, of the book of Exodus, is redemption. God, through his servant, Moses, brought his people, out of bondage, and led them, towards the promised land.

But before this, we might be confused, at why, the Israelites, endured this experience. We've been saying, throughout the service, but is God in control? Genesis 15, verse 14, this is God, speaking to Abraham, who he promised, makes that promise to.

[27 : 43] Know for certain, that your offspring, will be sojourners, in a land not theirs, and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted, for 400 years.

But I, will bring judgment, on the nation, that they serve. And afterwards, they shall, come out, with great possessions.

God knew, this would happen. It was foreseen. He blessed his people, through it though. The Israelites, did leave the land, with great possessions, from their Egyptian oppressors.

And as predicted, it was hard. But it turned out, for the good, of those, who loved Yahweh. Even though, circumstances may look like, they could never, lead to salvation, that they can.

Even though, even those, in as dark circumstances, as the Israelites experienced, who seem so far, from salvation, they can, realize, salvation, through Christ, and through Christ alone.

[28 : 51] God looks upon, those held captive, by sin, and by death. And he works, a plan for deliverance. And he works, a plan, for redemption.

The most sinful, Pharaoh, to the most, honorable, citizen, has the same, opportunity, to be saved, by Jesus. The most, powerful president, has the same, opportunity, as the man, on our street corner, with a cup, to be saved, by Christ.

How, does Jesus, bring salvation, to the powerful ruler, the honorable citizen, the street side beggar? We spent time, reflecting on the disparity, between God, and Pharaoh, and rightly so. Because God is God, and Pharaoh is just, a created human being. But Jesus Christ, is God. Yet he chose, to lower himself, to become, form of a man, and suffer, for us.

Jesus wasn't at all, what the first century, Jews expected. They expected, a savior king, in the form of David, a warrior, who would be, a mighty, military commander.

[30 : 02] They were hoping, for the greatest, social, spiritual, and military coup, that the world, had ever seen. Not, the suffering servant, Jesus, which they got.

Even Peter, who spent years, with Jesus, rejected the notion, that he could be, the suffering servant. Suffering is in this world, because of sin, because of the fall.

How can Christ, sympathize with us, and our suffering? Because he suffered, beyond comparison. He emptied himself, for those that would, later say, crucify him.

He mourned loss. He was physically, exalted, to the extremes. He sweated blood, with anxiety, of what was to come. He died on the cross.

All of these things, within themselves, are beyond comparison, of what we can imagine. But even greater, than all of these, even greater, than all of these, he bore, the separation, from God, for us.

[31 : 03] My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? It cost Christ, so much. He suffered, so much, for us, for you.

Christ died for us, and won victory, over death. He wasn't just raised, on the cross, he was raised again, raised from the dead, and sits at the right hand, of God. And the reality, of the situation, is he will be coming back.

When he does, will you be among those, who are raised with him, in that last day, of glory? How do you ask? For God, so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever, believes in him, should not perish, but have eternal life.

For God, did not send, his son, into the world, to condemn the world, but in order, that the world, may be saved, through him. Now listen, whoever, believes in him, is not condemned.

Whoever, believes in him, is not condemned. But whoever, does not believe, listen, is condemned, already, because he has not, believed in the name, of the only, son of God.

[32 : 19] Believe in Jesus, and in Jesus Christ alone. Truly, believe in your heart, that he is God. Truly, believe in your heart, that he has died, for your sins.

Truly, believe in your heart, that he has been raised, from death. Do not, condemn yourself, friends. Believe, in the name, of the only, son of God.

So friends, who is in control, in Exodus 1? Pharaoh, or Yahweh? Yahweh is. Who's in control, of your life, and your circumstances?

Remember the catechism, since all creatures, are so in his hand, that without his will, they cannot so much, as move. God is in control today.

He's in control, here in Partick. He's in control, with us, as we disperse, to our different regions, of Glasgow, or beyond. We are so, in his hand. Take comfort.

[33 : 22] We are in, God's hand. God is with us. God is for us, in hardship. God continues, to bless us, eternally. And God, does, save, his people.

Be one of those, that is joined, in that past tense, that God has, saved you. God is for us. Let's pray to our God and King. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you, for your word.

That it brings truth, and it brings light, and it brings hope. That it tells us, of a Christ, who suffered, for us. Who lived, a perfect life, that we couldn't live.

And because of his death, if we believe in him, that we get, to share, in his righteousness. That that righteousness, is applied to us, and we can be friends, of God.

We can be adopted. We can be loved. We can be, in glory forever, praising, and worshipping you. We pray, all this, in Jesus Christ's name.

[34 : 32] Amen. Amen.