

Final Preparations

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[0:00] While you remain standing, let's pray. Father, thank you very much for your great love for us in Jesus. We thank you for giving us the scriptures and we pray today that you would teach us from them.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Earlier on I did forget one other little announcement. It's been a year since Heather and I arrived and we wanted to say thank you for your great welcome of us and your kindness to us in many ways over the year.

And so we've baked you a cake. Well, it's not we, it's the royal we really or something. Heather has baked you a cake. And so afterwards she's going to cut it out there in the Pickering Room for us while I stand at the door.

But please accept it as a gift, as an expression of our, like I said, our thanks to you for the last year. We have really, we've enjoyed being here.

We've been running hard at various times, but we've made it through a year and we're grateful to be here. Friends, I wonder, let me start by just getting to reflect upon dog pounds for a little while.

[1:11] I mean, have you been to those dog pounds and you see, you walk past the cages and you look and you see dogs waiting to see whether kindness or the rod awaits them.

And if you come close, sometimes you'll see dogs whose tails go between their legs. They might flinch. They might involuntarily urinate or simply cower. And they're dogs whose spirits have been broken.

And they're extremely sorrowful sight. If you've seen a dog like that, I love dogs. But dogs whose spirit has been broken like that are a terrible sight. But let me tell you that dogs are not the only ones. Perhaps you've met humans who have a broken spirit as well.

Sometimes, you see, I meet humans who have been brutalised by other humans. Sometimes they've simply been beaten into submission by life's experience. But they show many of the same signs.

That is, their eyes are full of sadness. And life has become for them a colourless, shapeless, hopeless shade of grey. They want to cry, but can't.

[2:12] They want to yell out for help, but they're convinced that there's no one there to help and hear and that no one even cares for them. And mechanically and hopelessly, they wake each day with a feeling of dread.

Another day is to be faced. And that day will be like the day before, they are sure. There will be no escape, no delivery, no rescue, no hope. A broken spirit in a dog is deeply sad.

A broken spirit in a person is terrifying. Such people see no escape, no alternative, and no light at the end of a tunnel.

And that, friends, is the situation that Israel finds itself in Exodus chapter 6. In Exodus 6 verse 9, the writer of Exodus tells us that God's words of encouragement and hope come to a people who can no longer hear.

They are beyond crying out to God. They are beyond listening to God. They are bound in discouragement. They can no longer hear the sound of hope. And they no longer expect deliverance.

[3 : 14] And the situation of slavery and cruel bondage has made them people of broken spirit. With that in mind, I want you to remember back to last week's passage. You see, in chapter 4, we saw Moses, didn't we, make his first real effort with Pharaoh.

We saw him bowl as brass enter into Pharaoh's presence. And we saw him fall flat on his face. We saw hardship increase to the people. We saw the ferocity of Pharaoh in full swing.

And we saw Moses and Aaron being blamed for the situation by their fellow Israelites. What we didn't see in chapter 5 is God. He seemed to be absent.

And so the chapter ended with Moses leveling an accusation against him. He has not delivered. Instead, he has brought increased trouble upon these, his people.

And with that, that accusation is what lies, as David showed us, behind Exodus chapter 6, where God is very absent in Exodus 5, though. He is very present in Exodus 6.

[4 : 17] Let's see what he has to say to us. And I want you to notice that the very first thing is the mention of who is speaking. The words, I am the Lord, or if you want to put it, I am Yahweh, occur in verses 2, 6, 7, 8, 29, 30.

And in verses 2 to 5, we have him telling the people that he is the Lord, the God of the covenant. In verses 6 to 8, we hear him say, I am Yahweh, your God.

I am Yahweh, the God who delivers. And in verse 28 and chapter 7, verse 5, he describes himself as the Lord, the speaking and acting God.

It's a magnificent response to the accusation of Moses. He is saying, I am the God of you. I am the God of Israel. I'm the God of covenant.

I'm the God of my word. I'm the God of all the earth. I'm the God who rescues. I am the God who delivers. The second thing to notice is that the Lord has a goal for his activity.

[5 : 18] And that goal is that Israel comes to know him in a way that they previously had not. In verses 2 to 5, we're told that previously God had made himself known to Israel in some way.

However, they did not quite know the full nature of God. God had not yet revealed himself fully to them. They knew him by name. But they did not know exactly what that name meant.

And now he tells them that something is going to happen that will mean that they now will know him as God, their God. God, their God.

A God who is a deliverer. He will from now on be known as the God of the way out. The God of the Exodus. He will be known as their God who brought them out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

He will be the God who gave them the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and brought them into it. But now I want you to look at verses 11 to 27 and 7, 6 to 7.

[6 : 23] Now, I bet none of you covet reading that reading this morning. It was a tough one, wasn't it, with all of those names? But I want you to notice something here about those references and those names.

Did you notice the references to Israel and Moses and Aaron? How are Moses and Aaron described? Well, the genealogy from verses 11 through to 27 tells us these are guys who've got a pretty good pedigree.

They are from very good stock. They are the stock. They are descended from Jacob and Levi. But the passage tells us a bit more than that. The passage tells us that they are old men now.

Chapter 7, verse 7 tells us that Aaron is 83 years old and Moses is 80 years old. Heather said that as she was coming in this morning and someone was speaking to us, they said, 80 and 83, I bet they didn't have arthritis.

But can you see the point in painting them this age? These men, they are hardly young warriors, are they? They are not ideal candidates for leading a rescue attempt from one of the world's greatest nations.

[7 : 32] More than that, verses 12 and 30 tell us that Moses is a pretty poor speaker. He's hardly the one you'd expect to march into the presence of Pharaoh and get a hearing, let alone be a deliverer.

So these are the old guys. And they are going to rescue, be the agents of deliverance. The second thing I want you to notice about this passage is the incredible repetition of the word I by God.

Can you see it there? Have a look at chapters, at verses 1 to 8 of chapter 6. And just listen and I'll try and pick up some of the I's. I'll read from verse 2. God also spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord.

I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty. I did not make myself known to them. I established my covenant. I have heard the groaning of Israel.

I remembered my covenant. Say to the Israelites, I am the Lord. I will free you. I will redeem you. I will take you. I will be. You shall know that I am the Lord. I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

[8 : 37] I will give this to you for a possession. I am the Lord. Can you hear the references all the way to I, I, I, I? This is a passage which is full of God, isn't it?

And the force is clear. After all, think about where we are now. We have Pharaoh at his greatest. We have the Israelites at their lowest.

We have the old men, Moses and Aaron, at a weak stage of their life in one sense. In other words, we have this ideal situation for Yahweh, the Lord.

For when evil is at its greatest, when his people are at their lowest, when you have the weakest around, when his spokesmen are at their weakest, then Yahweh can be Yahweh.

Yahweh, because Yahweh can be he who is the gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, who maintains love to thousands, forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin.

[9 : 37] He can also be Yahweh, Yahweh, the one who does not leave unpunished. Listen to Hannah. Praise this Yahweh in 1 Samuel 2. Listen to what she says about him because she captures what is going on here.

And I don't want you to look it up. I just want you to listen. This is Hannah's song of praise. She says, No one is holy like the Lord.

There is no one like him. No protector like our God. Stop your boasting. Silence your proud words. For the Lord is a God who knows.

And he judges what people do. The bows of strong warriors are broken. The weak grow strong. The people who once were well fed, well, they now hire themselves out to get food.

But the hungry, well, they're hungry no more. The childless wife has born seven children, but the mother of many is left with none. The Lord kills and restores to life.

[10:44] He sends people to the world of the dead and brings them back again. He makes poor, some poor and others rich. He humbles some and makes others great.

He lifts the poor from the dust and raises the needy from the misery. He makes them companions of princes and puts them in places of honor. The foundations of the earth belong to the Lord.

And on them he has built the world. He protects the lives of his faithful people. But the wicked disappear in darkness. Man does not triumph by his own strength.

The Lord's enemies will be destroyed. He will thunder against them from heaven. And the Lord will judge the whole world. I wonder if you can hear what this is saying. God is being crystal clear in this passage.

He's saying, The situation Israel finds itself in. It's made for me. These situations are where I can be Yahweh.

[11:45] The God who delivers. The God who rescues. And with that in mind, I want you to take a brief look with me at chapter 6 verse 28 through to chapter 7 verse 5. Do you remember here in chapter 6 verse 7?

Do you remember how God said, Look, my goal is that Israel come to know me as the deliverer. Well, God has another goal as well that he speaks about in these last verses. His other goal is that the Egyptians come to know him as God.

Do you remember last week? Pharaoh said, And who is Yahweh? I don't know who he is. And basically I don't care. Well, at the end of this activity, he won't be saying that any longer.

For at the end of God's activity, he and all Egypt will know who Yahweh is. And the means for them coming to know will be exactly the same as Israel coming to know.

They will come to know by God stretching out his hand against Egypt and bringing the Israelites up. Listen to chapter 7 verse 5. The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I raise my hand against them and bring the Israelites out of their country.

[12:50] Now, friends, I've just skimmed this passage just to try and give you a glimpse of it. There's heaps of material here. But my aim has been just to get at the center of this passage. And I hope you've grasped what's going on.

You see, in this passage, we meet the Lord. And we meet him in the sort of situation he just loves. It is the sort of situation where he can be seen for who he is.

And who is he? Well, this Yahweh, this Lord, is the God who made the earth. He is the one who made humans to live in dependence upon him.

He is the one who wants human existence to be filled with himself rather than ourself. And so when God finds a situation where people have nowhere to go but to him, he is in his element.

This is where he wants to be. When he finds a situation where people are arrogantly shaking their fist against his rule over his world, are dominating and oppressing the helpless, he is in his element.

[13:54] He is Yahweh. You see, the God of the helpless. He is Yahweh, the one who loves to give rescue to those broken in spirit. He is Yahweh who loves giving the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit.

He loves comforting those who mourn. He loves causing the meek, as Jesus said, to inherit the earth. He cannot help revealing himself to the pure in heart.

He loves rescuing such people from those who persecute them. He is Yahweh, Yahweh, the God of grace and mercy. And this, friends, is the God we know so well from the New Testament, isn't it?

I want you to open your Bibles at Ephesians chapter 2 with me. So please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 2. And we're just going to read verses 1 to 10 from Ephesians 2.

And I want you to see and hear this God and his disposition. You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient.

[15:09] All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of the flesh and senses. And we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

So that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not of your own doing. It is the gift of God, not as the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Now friends, did you, I wonder if you noticed the similarity, did you spot the similarity between Exodus chapter 6 and Ephesians chapter 2?

[16:17] Did you notice that Ephesians 2 talks about a situation where there is a powerful enemy of God? Did you notice it's a passage where we are weak and unable to save ourselves?

Did you notice that it's also a passage full of God? Did you hear the but God in the middle of it? You see, what we see happen when God saves us in Jesus Christ is exactly what we see in Exodus.

The God who acted in Exodus is the God who will inevitably save the world. For the world and us were in bondage because of sin and the devil. We were in a hopeless, helpless situation.

Such situations are tailor-made for God. And so he sent his son into the world to do yet another Exodus. To defeat the enemies of God and to rescue the helpless.

But I don't want to finish on this note today, friends. Instead, I want you to come with me back to Exodus chapter 7. Sorry, you've lost your pages there now, haven't you? But you can find it again.

[17:21] Exodus chapter 7, verse 1. And so have I because I've just lost the marker. But fortunately, I've got it here as well.

So, friends, Exodus chapter 7, verse 1. The Lord said, I'm going to make you like God to the king. And your brother Aaron will speak to him as your prophet.

Now, the original language actually says it a bit stronger than that. It says, see, I have made you God to Pharaoh. Now, you can understand what God's saying, can't you?

What God is saying to Moses is, you are going to function like God in relation to Pharaoh. You will be in the position of God in so far as Pharaoh is concerned.

Now, Pharaoh may never see me. He may never hear me directly speaking to him. But he will see you. He will see Moses. And through Moses, Pharaoh will be confronted with God.

[18:17] Through Moses, he will hear God speak. He will watch God act. And though the original language used here is strong, the idea being conveyed is as old as creation itself.

You see, when God created humans in Genesis 1, he made Adam and Eve in his image. That is, he made them as his representatives in the world.

They were made to rule under his rule over his world. They were made to be, as it were, God to the world. Exercising God's rule as God himself would exercise it.

Now, of course, they stuffed it up, didn't they? We know that. Adam and Eve, they got it terribly wrong. Failed to fulfil their charter. They did not rule under God's rule. They chose to rule on their own.

Nevertheless, the principle has been there since the beginning. Various people in the Old Testament are understood to act as God toward the world in which they live. Now, we Christians know that Jesus was God actually and also in function.

- [19:18] Not only was he truly God, he truly lived as God's representative. He functioned as God in the world. He was true human in the sense that Adam and Eve were never. He functioned as God in relation to the world.

Adam and Moses are therefore prototypes of Christ. They looked forward to Christ. However, there's another principle that comes to the fore here, isn't there?

You see, after all, as God's people, we too function as God toward the world. Oh, it's a very little G in the God, by the way. But we do function in one sense.

God has placed us in the world as his representatives. We do represent the big G God. But in many ways, you see, the world will never see God in the same sense.

Well, many people may never see God in that sense. They may never hear God actually speak to them. They may not hear an audible voice. But friends, they will see us.

- [20:15] And through us, the people we live and work with will be confronted with God if we're doing our task in God's world.

Through us, they will hear God speak. They will watch God act. You see, in many ways, it is true to say that for some people, we may be the only God that many people in our world will ever see.

No, I don't mean that we're God. We're not actually God. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nevertheless, we will often find ourselves in the position of God in relation to the world.

Through us, God will speak to this world. Through us, God will act in the world. And through us, God will judge the world. And through us, God will exercise mercy upon his world.

Now, friends, that's a sober truth, isn't it? If we are God's people, we therefore have an enormous responsibility. We are to be as God to our friends in the workplace, in the factory floor, at our community groups.

- [21:24] We are to be God, as it were, to the boss that we work for. We are to be God to the world outside of Christ. We are part and parcel of the process God has of bringing the world back to himself.

We are part of God's process in bringing the word of God to the world and the acts of God to the world. We reflect God's image in the world that has been corrupted by sin.

You see, if people know that they are believers in Jesus, that they represent Jesus. Sorry, if people outside know that we are believers in Jesus, that we represent Jesus.

We may be, in one sense, the only God that they get to see and hear. They may not actually see the real God. They may not hear the real God speak.

They may never hear his actual word, tangible words to them. But they can see all of those things through us, his people. You see, they do see and hear us.

- [22:31] And so we are to act and speak so that God's power and love and word are known and seen. We are to speak and act in such a way that they know that there is another way.

A God-fearing way. A God-filled way. We, like Moses, are in some sense of the word, God to the world. So that the world might know that there is a Yahweh, the Lord, the God who rescues.

And he has done so through his son, Jesus Christ. We are to be this to our world, friends, in the same way that Moses was to be to Pharaoh. That's a sobering truth, isn't it?

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that we are your children, your little ones, and that we represent you in the world.

In some ways, Father, we find this a terrifying prospect. Yet, Father, we thank you that you have chosen us to speak to your world, to bear your word to your world, to live godly lives among the people of this world.

[23 : 50] That, Father, they might come to know you and respond rightly to you. Please help us, Father, to be good spokespeople for you and to demonstrate to your world what it is to live in relationship with you.

And, Father, we pray that through this you might speak to your world. We pray this in Jesus' name.