

Man's Extremity, God's Opportunity

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Date: 21 February 2021

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[0 : 00] You see there in the title of the sermon, man's extremity, the extreme situation that Moses and the children of Israel found in Egypt, and yet in that extremity, God's opportunity to show his power, to show his mighty hand in this.

We'll see in the four separate points to focus on through our thoughts this morning, God's actions assured, what God says God will fulfill.

So God's announcement of his name, and we'll see why that was so important then, as it is now when we remember who God is, even in the name of God.

God's absolute guarantees. Again, as we mention what God declares, God will deliver. And yet, as we see in the final words of the passage, the anxiety of Moses, even when God assures him of his presence, of his promise, and yet Moses is still uncertain.

Moses is still anxious. And again, we'll bring that to our own application. Man's extremity, God's opportunity. And as I'm sure you know, the dashing of expectations is one of the most heart-rending of situations in anyone's life.

[1 : 23] In the film that was made some years ago, the film Hotel Rwanda, it was a film based on actual events that happened at the time of the Rwandan genocide in 1991.

There were mainly Tutsi refugees, those who were being murdered by the Hutu people. And Tutsi refugees were being holed up in a hotel, the Hotel de Mille Collines.

They were in fear of their lives. And yet, in that hotel, they'd been given assurance of protection. The United Nations had promised that if they left the hotel under UN supervision, that they would be delivered to freedom.

They would go and leave their land of oppression. And they would go to a land that was promised to them. And the people in that hotel, they were put on trucks.

They were sent along the road to the airport. But along that road, they were attacked. Many were injured. And they all had to return to the hotel, broken in heart, broken in spirit.

[2 : 28] Their expectations dashed. The promised land, not realized. Expectations removed.

And for the Israelites there in Egypt. Egypt. These Israelites who'd learned from their elders that Moses and Aaron had brought God's word to them.

The word that had assured the people that they would be released from their oppression. Moses and Aaron had been sent by God to speak, first of all, to the elders of Israel, telling them that they'd met with God.

And that God would deliver them. God would bring them out of Egypt. And then as we noticed last Lord's Day morning, Moses and Aaron speaking to Pharaoh with great courage.

And saying to Pharaoh that God had told them to speak to him to let God's people go. And instead of an immediate release of the children of Israel, Pharaoh declared that he didn't know the God who Moses and Aaron had met with and Moses had met with.

[3 : 38] And instead Moses being told that Pharaoh would not let the people go. And instead the burdens on the Israelites increased. The demands on them on their slavery increased.

The expectations of the people dashed in that immediate context. And Moses asking God why. Why did God ever send him? Why did the Lord take them thus far?

And at that point, no further. And as we've noticed, even last Lord's Day morning, we can refer to again, even for God's people, there are similar experiences when the providences that God gives to us, these providences appear bewildering.

And we're often at a loss to turn to when we're at a loss to understand God's ways with ourselves and with his church. When expectations of great things, well, expectations of God's blessing upon, well, upon ourselves and upon his church, when they don't seem to be realized, certainly not in our timescale and in our way of thinking.

And instead of joy and gladness, there's bewilderment, there's perplexity. There's what we wrongly consider to be an absence of God's love towards us.

[5 : 07] And we can feel like the afflicted man in Psalm 102 when he says, For I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink because of your indignation and anger, for you have taken me up and thrown me down.

But as somebody once wrote, it's in the title of our sermon address this morning, man's extremity is God's opportunity.

And just as the situation there for the Israelites and for Moses and Aaron, just as their situation there was far from hopeless. So for God's people today, you're never without hope, even within and during even the darkest moments of your life.

I mean, for the Israelites there in Egypt, their predicament was the occasion for God to display his power, for God to display his mighty hand of power, and for God to demonstrate that truly he is the faithful Lord of his people.

Man's extremity, yes, was and is God's opportunity. There in Egypt, things had come to a crisis. We might say that things were as bad as they could be.

[6 : 31] The Israelites had reached rock bottom. Pharaoh was at the height of his power, the height of his pride. Israel in the depth of our misery. Man's extremity.

But in that extremity, it was God's time to appear and God to show that he was and is truly mighty in power.

And so I pray that as we continue through this passage, that you'll take encouragement there in the life of Moses and the experience of the Israelites, especially when at times your life doesn't seem to be working out in the way that you consider is best in your circumstances.

And I pray that as you see in this passage, that you'll have that hope that every single believer has in the God who is our fortress, the God who does care, the God who does protect his people, the God who cannot and will not loosen his people from his love.

And yes, that you'll see that truly your extremity, these times of death and despair are truly God's opportunities to show you his love and his power, that love and power to raise the desperate, to bring hope to the hopeless.

[7 : 57] And just as Isaiah prophetically spoke of the Lord Jesus, the work of Jesus, when in Isaiah 61 we read these words of, to those who mourn in Zion, to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit.

As we go through this passage, that you'll be encouraged in God's affirmation of his love for you, of his faithfulness towards you.

And as we see again here how God identifies himself to show that he truly is the faithful one. That he never abandons you.

He's committed to you. And as he promises, so he fulfills. Even as we'll see even the promises that he makes to Moses, the sevenfold promises that God makes.

And in God's time, he'll fulfill. So what do we see then in the passage? As we said, as we notice, God's actions assured.

[9 : 06] As we see in verse 1. But the Lord said to Moses, now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand, and that would suggest God's hand, with a strong hand he will send them out.

And with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land. Of course, God's power is about to be revealed in the ten plagues that God would send in Egypt that would ultimately bring Pharaoh to let the people go, let the Israelites go.

But before that display of power was to happen, Moses had to be calmed in his perplexity. And God's announcing to Moses, God announces that God will act, and God will act with a strong hand.

That hand that's so strong that resistance is futile. Because no power of man supersedes the mighty power of God.

And that speaking of God's mighty hand, that imagery, that metaphor of your life, it speaks of God's power to save, God's power to deliver, God's power to protect and to show forth his justice and his judgment.

[10 : 28] You know, when we think in human terms, think of strong hands. Strong hands speak of strength. They speak of commitment. And yes, they speak of love.

If you walk with a little child, and your hand is holding that little child, yes, the child's hand is in your hand. But whose hand is the stronger?

It's your hand. That hand that grips the child with the strength of love for his, for her protection, for her safety, for her security.

And how much more than the strong hand of God giving you his protection and security and love. And the mighty hand of God would be demonstrated in leading the children of Israel out of Egypt.

That mighty hand of power, that hand of love, that hand that continues to rest upon the Lord's people, even today. That hand that has freed you from sin's dominion and keeps you strong and keeps you within the love of God.

[11 : 38] And there, as Moses was informed of that mighty hand, the mighty hand of God, that hand that would drive out the Israelites from Egypt. Well, as Moses was informed of the mighty hand of God, he was informed of the mighty name of God, that name that assured him that God's word would be fulfilled in all faithfulness.

Because God would show his faithfulness to his people in love, in covenant love, as we see in verses 2 to 5, where we read there of God's announcing his name.

God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord. You see, Moses had to be assured that it was the God of faithfulness, the God who'd sworn that he'd deliver his people, that he'd bring his people into the promised land.

Moses had to be assured that this is the God who's spoken to Moses and spoken of his power to save. If you go back earlier in Genesis, the book of Genesis, you read there of God's word to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the word of God that revealed who God is as God Almighty.

El Shaddai. God strong and powerful. But God had yet to display his character as Lord, the God of faithfulness, the covenant God of Israel, the God who fulfills his covenant faithfulness to his people.

[13 : 17] That was yet to happen in the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had heard God speak to them of that promise to bring their succeeding generations into the land of promise.

That was still to happen and would happen in the exodus from Egypt. But there's God announcing his name to Moses. I am the Lord. The name that we know of as Yahweh.

That name that tells of God and his faithfulness. God is faithful. And that faithfulness was going to be seen very, very soon in God delivering his people from oppression, the oppression of Egypt.

And the name of the Lord, the name of Yahweh there, well, it's been revealed to Moses because Israel had reached that new stage in our history. God was so moving in the history of his people, the history of redemption, that God's people would know the name of God as Lord.

They would know the character of who their Lord is. God who is faithful in redeeming his people from captivity. And so the people of Israel there will now know the full meaning of that name.

[14 : 38] The name of the Lord. The Lord who's faithful to all his promises. And you see that in verses 3 and 4 when God tells Moses of his remembering his covenant.

His covenant that he made with his people. And he'll act on that promise, that commitment to deliver his people. This is our Lord and God.

The Lord who delivered his people from Egypt is the same Lord who delivers his people today from the captivity of sin and the power of Satan.

See, God isn't static. God isn't idle. God moves in history. And God acts for his people and acts for your good and for God's glory.

Why? Because God is our Redeemer. And he's sure that power of redemption. Even in the Lord Jesus and Jesus coming from heaven to earth for us.

[15 : 43] And Jesus dying on the cross for us. Because God is ever faithful. The faithfulness of God, as we said, seen supremely in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the new covenant in Christ's blood.

Your salvation guaranteed. Because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. And the Lord's people gathered together the new Israel of God.

Redeemed by the covenant love of God in Christ. God's promises regarding your salvation. His promises are assured. They're guaranteed because God is the faithful one.

God's promises are sure and confirmed in Jesus. Because God is the promise-making and promise-keeping God. And as Lord, as the faithful Lord, the Lord who keeps his promises.

Well, as we see in the first instance here in Exodus 6, God makes seven promises to Moses. Promises that would be fulfilled in God's perfect time.

[16 : 56] See the seven promises from verse 6 to 8. I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will deliver you from slavery. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm of great acts of judgment.

I will take you to be my people. I will be your God. I will bring you into the land that I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession.

I am the Lord. Seven times notice. Seven times God declares, I will. Seven times God says that he will be the cause of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt.

Moses isn't the reason. Aaron isn't the reason. Pharaoh isn't the reason, or the Israelites themselves, the reason for the Israelites' departure from Egypt.

It's God. Yes, Moses and Aaron were the human means, the human agents to deliver God's work to Pharaoh. And yes, it would be Pharaoh's order that would eventually lead the Israelites to leave Egypt.

[18 : 07] But the cause, the ultimate reason why that great exodus will happen is because God is Lord.

Because God is the covenant Lord of his people. Because God is faithful to his promises. Because it's by God's authority, by God's word, by God's initiative, that all things come to pass because God is Lord.

And I pray that's a great encouragement to you who are his this morning. To remember that God is sovereign in your life.

And God is sovereign in the life of all, the lives of all who are his. Think of your conversion. Your conversion was the result of the sovereign will of God.

That will that can't be altered. It was by God's gifted faith to you. Faith that you exercised to believe on God's initiative.

[19 : 11] It was by grace you're saved and not by anything that you did to merit your salvation. It was God's grace. God's grace towards you.

That lifted you from that mighty pit and set you in the rock that's Christ. Christ. And even in life's journey, at times when it appears that the Lord's hand is against you, well, still trust.

Still believe. Still believe that God's promises for you and to you still hold true. Just as God has promised. Never will I leave you.

Never will I forsake you. And just as Jesus promised his disciples, surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age. You see, these promises speak of the Lord's utter reliability.

They speak of his absolute will to keep you, to preserve you, to watch over you. And I pray then that as we're reminded this morning of the Lord who is faithful towards his people, that these are timely words of encouragement and assurance, especially when you are perplexed and bewildered, will return to the I wills of God's promises towards you.

[20 : 35] Even as we're reminded in other parts of the Old Testament of the promises of God, through the I will of God. Even Isaiah 42 verse 2, for example, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, and they will not overwhelm you.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. And yet, how often, how often do we still doubt God's assurance in his fulfilling all his promises towards us?

How often do you still lack that assurance of his ever-abiding presence with you? Many of us have sung all through the years, God is a refuge in our strength, a very present help in trouble.

And yet, how often when we sing these words, are we truly engaging in the word and the spirit of that promise, that God is our refuge and our strength? Do you still hesitate to believe these words?

Even when you're going through particularly difficult circumstances, even when you take your eyes off God, just as the Israelites had taken their eyes away from God, even as Moses himself, had looked in circumstances rather than in the promised word of God.

[22 : 05] As we see finally, in man's anxiety. Because even after Moses had gone back to the Israelite elders, these elders that he'd met with at first, when he told them of the promise that God had given to him for them, the reaction that Moses received from the elders of Israel was negative.

We read there in verse 9, they did not listen to Moses because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. And in the original words there for broken spirit, the words are something like they were short of breath.

It was the idea of being impatient. Moses had shown so much patience with the Israelite leaders. Moses was harassed by them, but he was still patient with them.

But the Israelite leaders, they showed no patience. Their reaction was, well, Moses isn't telling us what we want to hear.

Moses, well, he's not delivered the first time. And he's not going to deliver again. The harsh slavery proving to them that the word that Moses gave to them was of no effect.

[23 : 23] So they won't listen to his message. Even though that message that Moses received from God was given with that sevenfold promise.

What we're seeing here, surely, is the stubbornness and the hard-heartedness, even in God's people, when God's word is given to us and we stumble.

You know, you can just picture there the Israelite reaction to Moses, the short temper there that made even Moses doubt God's plan.

You see that in verse 12, after God had told him to go to Pharaoh to tell him to let the Israelites leave Egypt. Moses, what does Moses reply?

Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me? For I am of uncircumcised lips. What's Moses doing here?

[24 : 23] He's going back to his old excuse. He's a man who finds it difficult to express himself. And so he comes back to God with that objection that, you know, the mission has to be doomed because I'm so weak in delivering your word.

And he speaks of having uncircumcised lips. In other words, meaning that, Lord, I'm not really prepared for this work of service that you've given me. And he's saying, Lord, if I faltered and not been able to persuade the Israelites, how on earth am I going to persuade Pharaoh?

Pharaoh's already rejected the first words that I gave to him. But you see, Moses had fallen to that trap of focusing in on his own weaknesses rather than trusting that the outcome of the mission that God had given him, the outcome depended on God's strength and God's word and not in man's perceived weakness.

It would be God's power rather than Moses' ability that would lead to the exodus from Egypt. And God has given each one of you work to do for God.

And that work's going to involve faith. And it's going to involve your perseverance. And yes, the work that God gives to you will so often appear daunting and with hurdles to be traversed, mountains to be moved.

[26 : 02] But you're to be that mountain mover in God's strength. He is with you. Just as the Apostle Paul declared, I can do all things through him. who strengthens me.

And so with these words of assurance, go forward in faith. Go forward in faith in him who gives the increase. And yes, go forward in strength of God the Lord and look to him.

And yes, plead for his for his strengthening grace. Plead that God will give the increase. and serve him. And serve him with all your heart and soul and mind and the strength that God gives to you for your good, for the good of others, and above all, for the glory of God's name, the name that is the Lord.

Amen. Let us pray. our heavenly Father, as we rest in you, we rest in your power, your strength.

We can do nothing in and of ourselves, that we can do all things through you who strengthen us. Lord, give that encouragement to even to those who are doubting, those who are weak in mind, those who are struggling, even with the providences that you give to them.

[27 : 26] May they truly know that their extremity is your opportunity to show forth your power, your love, your grace. Hear us, Lord, as we commit all these things to you now.

We pray, Lord, these things in Jesus' name. Amen.