

A Long Road with a Good End

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

This is actually not going to be the final week of Exodus. There's going to be more. As I was preparing for this week, I just thought, we're not done. We're not done. We've got at least another week or so in the book of Exodus.

So I hope that doesn't disappoint anybody here. And so the person that shouted out the boo, and I know who you are, you should be relieved now. There's going to be at least one more week, at least one more week.

So Exodus chapter 40, we are looking at kind of the end of the book here in Exodus 40, verses 34 through the end of the chapter. And this has just been an awesome journey throughout this book.

[1 : 36] I've loved teaching through the book of Exodus and look forward to what God is going to speak to us about tonight. So if you're able to stand, please do so as we honor the reading of God's word.

Exodus chapter 40, beginning at verse 34, then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle throughout all their journeys.

Whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up.

For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day and fire was in it by night in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

[2 : 37] This is God's word. Let's pray together. Ask that you'd pray for me tonight. So, Lord, we ask you as we once again come to your word to teach us that the spirit of truth would guide us into your truth.

Encourage us tonight. Like, I know there are people in this room that are there in a battle where they want to see a victory. And we know that you are the same God of Exodus, the same God today.

For Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. So, come encourage us tonight, we pray in Jesus' name and God's people said, amen. You can be seated.

They should have stopped her. She was in no condition to continue. They should have taken her from the track and immediately given her medical attention.

But Gabby would not let them. Gabby was determined to finish the race. I'm referring to Gabby Anderson. You may remember Gabby.

[3 : 41] Gabby was one of 50 runners in the 1984 Olympic marathon. And Gabby was no stranger to marathons. She'd won the Swiss championship.

She'd won marathons in Sacramento, California, as well as even some here in Minnesota. But this was the Olympics. And there was nothing more important to her than the Olympics.

So, in 1984 in Los Angeles, California, Gabby made all the headlines. And she made all the headlines not because she won the race.

In fact, Gabby finished 37th. She was 24 minutes behind the winner. But Gabby stole the show because of her determination not to quit.

You see, with about 100 meters left to go in the marathon, Gabby's body started to shut down. She became severely dehydrated. Her legs could hardly even move.

[4 : 44] One of her arms went numb. And her body became all twisted up like a pretzel. Well, most people thought that she was having some kind of a heat stroke.

And when medical personnel tried to interfere with her, Gabby refused because she was determined to finish the race.

And that is exactly what Gabby did. Gabby just kept moving. Zig-zagging across the lines. Finally, she would become just five meters away.

Four meters away. Three meters away. Two meters away. Till finally, she would cross the finish line.

And fall into the arms of her trainers. And the crowd responded with a standing ovation.

[5 : 42] After the race, they asked Gabby that stupid question they always ask every athlete after a game.

What was going through your mind in those final moments? And Gabby said three words. Just keep running.

Just keep running. Faith family, there's a word for that. It's the word perseverance. It's what you do when you feel like there's nothing left in you.

You got nothing left in the tank. And I guarantee you there are people here tonight that feel that way. If you don't feel that way tonight, you've felt that way before. Maybe for you, it was you.

You just didn't think graduation was ever going to happen. But eventually you crossed that finish line. You didn't think the drama was ever going to end.

[6 : 42] It never seemed to stop. But eventually you crossed that finish line. That deadline at work that hovered over you for weeks. But eventually you crossed the finish line.

The sickness that they wouldn't go away for days. But eventually you crossed the finish line. The debt that you thought you'd never be able to pay off.

But eventually you crossed the finish line. In one way or another, all of us know what it's like to feel like Gabby felt that day.

We want to pack it in. We want to close the book. We want to shut the door. We want to forget it all. But the one thing you must do is just keep running.

Anybody ever felt that way before? Anybody just like, amen pastor. Like can I just testify tonight that I know what it's like to have nothing in the tank.

[7 : 42] And the only thing there is to do is just keep running. If you feel that way tonight. Listen, God I believe has sent me here tonight to deliver a message to you. This is a word from God's word.

It is for your heart. It is for your soul. And that word to you. Are you listening faith family? Is no matter how hard the race, you're going to cross the finish line.

No matter how hard the race, you're going to cross the finish line. And that is not some fortune cookie feel good cliché. Which if you know your pastor, you know I hate.

I say that because it is a promise from God's word. Paul says in Philippians chapter 1 verse 6. I am sure.

Say it out loud faith family. I am sure. I am confident. I am convinced. I am positive.

[8 : 38] Of what? That the one that began the good work in me. Will bring it to. Say it. Completion. At the day of Jesus Christ. You will cross that finish line. God will complete the work that he began in you.

And it's promises like that that allowed the apostle Paul to say of his life what we can say of our life. You know those famous words.

I have fought the good fight. I have, say it with me, finished the race. I've kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.

Which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that day. Now notice what Paul says next. Listen. Not only me.

[9 : 38] I'm not just talking about me. But also, say it with me. To all who have loved his appearing. Paul is saying this confidence of finishing the race.

This confidence of crossing the finish line. Is not just true of me. It is true of every believer. It is true of everyone who has put their faith in Jesus Christ.

I hope that encourages you tonight. And there are some of you I know here tonight. That you are here specifically for this word from God. Faith family, if I have learned anything in studying the Bible.

And if I have learned anything in living life. It is this. Life is a long, hard road. With a good end.

Life is a long, hard road. With a good end. And that's the book of Exodus.

[10 : 41] That is exactly how the book of Exodus ends. Look at Exodus chapter 40 and verse 34. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting.

And the glory of the Lord filled. That is it comes down. And it fills the tabernacle. This verse is what many scholars believe to be the high point of the book of Exodus.

Now can you believe that? The high point of the book. There's been a lot of high points of the book of Exodus. But most scholars say that this is the high point. This is the good end.

And the reason why it's so significant. Is because God is coming down into the midst of his people. God is dwelling with his people.

You remember what the cloud is. Right? This cloud that comes down and covers the tent of meeting. It's the very presence of God. Right? This is God's presence coming to dwell with his people.

[11 : 48] But up until Exodus chapter 40. This cloud has been at a distance. This cloud has not drawn near like this. In fact, do you remember back in Exodus chapter 19 in verse 9?

It says, And the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.

When Moses told the words of the people. One morning on the third day, there was thunder and lightning and a thick cloud. So there's the cloud on the mountain. A very loud trumpet blast.

So all the people in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God. And they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. So this cloud represents the glory of God.

But it's up on top of the mountain. This cloud isn't coming down prior to Exodus 40 and dwelling with the people of God. So I want you to see that throughout the book of Exodus, this cloud is hovering above them.

[12 : 54] But listen, in Exodus 40, the cloud comes down and fills the tabernacle. It's now resting with the people of God.

Can you imagine the sweet assurance this must have been for the people of Israel to see? That after their idolatry of Exodus 32, that they see the presence of God come and dwell among them.

That His presence has not left them. He is still with them. The covenant they made has been restored. Oh, what an encouragement this would have been for the people of God.

This is the ending of the book of Exodus. Let's pray. Can you imagine if we just ended right there? Right? There's more to this, right? The ending of the book of Exodus is God coming down to dwell in the midst of His people.

Now my question for you is, does that sound familiar? Does that ring a bell to any of you? And listen, I am well aware that there is more that will take place beyond the book of Exodus before they get to the promised land.

[14 : 03] I get that. But this is actually a picture here of what is true of the entire Christian life. Because notice the same imagery in Revelation 21.

Revelation 21 verse 1. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, doing what?

Coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

It's the same thing that's happening in Exodus 40. Exodus 40 is a picture of Revelation 21 when God's glory comes down and dwells with His people, and He is our God, and He will be with them as their God, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more.

Neither there shall be mourning or crying or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. You will cross the finish line.

[15 : 15] You will cross the finish line. The one that started this work in you will complete it. In other words, Exodus, the book of Exodus, is a long, hard road.

It took perseverance over the last over a year to stay with me, right? To stay in a series for this long, but that's kind of in some way a picture of what the book of Exodus is about.

It's a long, hard road with a good, good end. It's a long, hard road with a good, good end. That's because life, life is a long, hard road with a good, good end.

Now that we've focused on the good end of Exodus 40, I want us to step back for the next hour and think about the long, hard road. And you need to put your theological seatbelt on because we're about to go fast, okay?

I'm going to go faster than Paul Allen calls a race, okay? If that's even possible. So I want to go back through, now that we see that Exodus is a good, good end, what about the long, hard road?

[16 : 27] Because the text talks about all their journeys. And I want us to think tonight on all the journeys of the nation of Israel that brought them to this point that ends with the glory of God coming down into the tabernacle.

We would do well to remember that the story of Exodus does not open with a cloud of glory, does it? Oh, no, no, no. This book does not open with a cloud of glory. This book opens with a cloud of gloom.

Go back to chapter 1 and verse 8. There arose a new king over Egypt who didn't know Joseph. And he said to the people, Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty.

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

And so they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. The more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied, the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel, so they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves.

[17 : 40] This whole book started in darkness. These people endured 430 years of slavery, oppression, hardship, hopelessness, made to carry heavy burden after heavy burden, the whole time wondering, God, where are you?

And what about the promise you gave to Abraham? Are you going to do anything? I can't see light anywhere. Notice it on the screen, Faith Family.

Before Israel would experience the joy of God's presence, Exodus 40, they would experience the appearance of God's absence. They are going to have to endure times of darkness, some difficult years, and yet through it all, Israel persevered.

And not just times of darkness, but times of disappointment. You remember how God raised Moses up to then go to Israel and deliver good news, Exodus 4, verse 30.

Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses. He did the signs and the sight of the people. And the people believed, and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel, that He'd seen their affliction, all these years of slavery, they bowed their heads and worshipped.

[19 : 05] Oh, happy days. Relief is coming. I mean, redemption is just around the corner. Everybody's dancing. And then, Moses goes to Pharaoh.

And life does not get easier. Life gets harder. And their burden is increased, to which Israel says to Moses, chapter 5, verse 20.

They met Moses and Aaron who were waiting for them. And they came out from Pharaoh and they said to them, The Lord look on you and judge because you've made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants.

And they put a sword in their hand to kill us. What was all that like? We're going to be redeemed and we're going to be rescued. There's no cloud of glory.

What we see is disappointment and unmet expectations. We thought we were going to be delivered, but life has only gotten harder. And yet, through it all, Israel persevered.

[20 : 09] And not only times of darkness and times of disappointment, but then there were times of demonic warfare. Do you remember what we talked about months ago? About what the plagues of Egypt were all about?

Chapter 7 and verse 10. Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did as the Lord commanded. Aaron cast down the staff before Pharaoh and his servants and it became a serpent.

And then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers. And they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff and they became serpents.

And you can remember this. Aaron's staff swallowed up the other staffs. And what was this a picture of? What was about to come? Chapter 12 and verse 12.

I will pass through the land of Egypt that night. I will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and on all the, say it, gods of Egypt.

[21 : 08] Egypt. We talked about how each plague was a judgment that was on a specific Egyptian god. Israel, listen, went through the tribulation.

Sorry, preacher people. They went through the tribulation and God protected them by His providential care. But they didn't see a cloud of glory. Do you know what Israel saw?

They saw wars and battles and nations raging like birth pains before a new creation.

And through it all, Israel persevered. And then they went through times of defeat. Oh, it wasn't long after their rescue from Egypt that they would find themselves standing on the shore of the sea only to have the greatest military in the ancient Near East charging after them.

And on that shoreline, they don't see a cloud of glory. What they see is a cloud of certain defeat. Chapter 14, verse 10. And Pharaoh drew near and the people of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them and they feared greatly.

[22 : 27] And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord and they said to Moses, Is it because there's no graves in Egypt that you've taken us away to die in the wilderness?

What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? In other words, there's no way out. There's no way to get through this.

This is it. We're done. This is where it ends. And they had no idea. They couldn't possibly even imagine what was about to happen next when God made a way.

When God delivered them from what looked like would be defeat and no doubt trembling every step, Israel persevered.

And then there were times of disorder. Life on the other side of the sea was not kittens and rainbows. In fact, it would look as though God had no idea what He was doing.

[23 : 34] You ever felt that way? God, where are you taking me? Where in the world are we going? Look at chapter 13, in verse 17. When Pharaoh let the people go, God didn't lead them by the way of the land of Philistines.

Although it was near, God said, lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt. God took them the long way.

This is taking forever. God, what are you doing? When are we going to get there? How much longer? How much longer? How much longer? And through it all, Israel persevered.

And then there were times of desperation. Are you still with me? Say yes. I can't tell if you're engaged or glossed over, but I'm going with engaged. Times of desperation. That is, when Israel had nothing to eat.

They weren't just running low on caviar and sushi, which would not be the best choice of food in the desert. But they had no bread. They were starving. Look at chapter 16, in verse 2.

[24 : 36] And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The people of Israel said to them, what that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat and ate meat pots and ate bread that was full?

For you have brought us out into the wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Like, we got no jobs. We got no food. Our pets' heads are falling off.

Last Dumb and Dumber reference, I promise. They're literally saying, God, give us this day our daily bread. And what does God do? Pop-tarts from heaven.

Manna from heaven. And what does Israel do? She perseveres. She just keeps running. And then there's times of dread.

Times that Israel is simply afraid to come to God. They live in this spiritual dread. Chapter 20, verse 18. Now when the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountains smoking, the people were afraid and they trembled and they stood far off.

[25 : 49] I can't draw near to God. I can't come close to God. Do you remember when they specifically said, Moses, you go talk to God and then you just tell us what He said. We don't want to come close.

We are afraid. And Israel kept running. She persevered.

And finally, through times of feeling deserted, times when she felt like that the leaders had forgotten them, that they had taken them out in the middle of nowhere and left them for dead.

Chapter 32, verse 1. And the people saw that Moses was delayed to come down from the mountain. They gathered themselves together to Aaron and said, Hey, make us gods who will go before us because this Moses, like the one that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we don't even know what's become of him.

He has left us. We don't know where he is. We knew we should not have trusted him. And through it all, Israel persevered.

[26 : 53] Are you listening to me, Faith Family? Throughout the journey, there were many times they saw no cloud of glory. Most of the time, it was a cloud of confusion.

And my guess is at some point through that narrative that I just went through, and some of you might say, why didn't you just give us that version instead of the whole year of sermons, right?

My guess is you resonated with one of them going through times of darkness. When you feel like you've been abandoned by God.

Going through times of disappointment when God doesn't meet your expectations. Going through spiritual warfare when you feel like you are under attack every single day.

Times it looks like you're going to be defeated and there's no way out of this situation. Times when life is in disorder and you have no idea if you're ever even going to get there.

[27 : 54] Times of despair when you are desperate and hungry and starving for something. Times of dread when you're even afraid to come to God. When your relationship with God is that that you do not feel like you can draw near.

Or times of deserted when it feels like everybody that loved you has abandoned you. Listen to me, Faith Family. This is the wilderness of life.

This is the wilderness of life. This is not a story that just happened hundreds of years ago. This is the story we're living now.

It's a long, hard road. And don't misunderstand me. I am not ignoring or denying all the experiences of God's provision and grace and the beautiful things that God has done along the way.

Oh my, there has been a burning bush and there have been the plagues and God parting the sea and the manna from heaven. I'm not in any way ignoring all of the signs of God's providential care.

[29 : 01] What I am saying is that there are times when the people of God feel like being at home in the presence of God is a dream. They're never going to get there.

It's never going to happen. And what Exodus 40, I believe, teaches us in light of the entirety of the book is this.

And this is sweet comfort. Life is a long, hard road with a good, good end.

Life is a long, hard road with a good, good end. And you will, faith family, by God's grace, cross that finish line.

I hope that encourages you. There may be three people here tonight that needed that. And this word is for you. And the question that I ask now is, what is it that allows the people of God to persevere?

[30 : 06] Why is it that we can take great comfort and confidence in knowing that we will get to the end? Let me connect some dots as we have done throughout the book of Exodus. I want to connect some dots here in Exodus 40 and show you why I can stand up here tonight, listen, with the authority of God's word, speaking into your heart the truth that you will cross the finish line.

here's why I can confidently say that. First, here's the question. Where did the cloud of Exodus 40, when did it first show up? What was that about?

Go back to Exodus 13 and 21 and notice what happens. Okay? Now don't lose me here. This is important. Verse 21 says, The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud.

So there it is. There's the cloud. And the cloud led them. Huh. The cloud led them along the way.

And by night in a pillar of fire and gave them light and they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night it did not depart from before the people.

[31 : 22] So what we see here is that God's presence is hovering above Israel as they journey through the wilderness. As they go through this thing called life. Israel got where they were supposed to get Exodus 40 by the presence of God guiding and directing them.

Is everybody with me on that? Say yes. Okay. Well then what's the difference between the cloud in Exodus 40 and Exodus 13? In Exodus 13 the presence of God is hovering above them leading them and guiding them where they're supposed to go but what's the difference between that and the cloud in Exodus 40?

We'll look at Exodus 40 34 again. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it and the glory of the Lord filled filled filled say filled filled the tabernacle.

Huh? So God's presence comes listen God's presence comes and it fills the tabernacle. So the cloud that is the presence of God led them through the wilderness and in chapter 40 fills them or fills the tabernacle.

What language does that sound familiar to? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit which guides us and when we come to the New Testament dwells in us.

[33 : 08] Oh somebody say preach preacher the glory of God the presence of God that comes in and fills the tabernacle is a foreshadowing of God's Spirit coming to fill us.

The glory of God the presence of God is going to come down and dwell not in a tabernacle but in your heart. In our life.

This is a foreshadowing of this. Ephesians 1 In Him you also when you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation and believed in Him you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is what?

Oh man the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of His glory.

How do you know you're going to get to the finish line? How do you know you're going to get the inheritance? Because you have a guarantee. And what is that guarantee? It's the presence of God coming down in you.

[34 : 15] How? Through the Holy Spirit. Acts chapter 2 verse 38 Peter says repent and believe every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive what?

The gift of the Holy Spirit. That is when we put our faith in Christ we receive the Spirit of God. That is what happens in Exodus 40 happens in us.

Do you see that? What happens in Exodus 40 happens in us. The presence of God comes and dwells. Now here's the question what does the Spirit enable us to do?

Romans 5 Romans 5 verse 3 not only that but we rejoice in this wilderness wilderness we rejoice in this wilderness why do we rejoice in this wilderness because we know that this wilderness what I'm replacing here for the word suffering knowing that this wilderness produces endurance and endurance character and character hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts you're kidding me through the Holy Spirit how do we endure we endure because God has poured into our hearts his very spirit because

Exodus 40 has happened to you that's why I know you're going to make it you're going to get there that you're going through the wilderness of life and it's a long hard road but it's going to be a good good end why the spirit guarantees it and yeah you can clap there's like three of you like I kind of want to clap or whatever don't clap for me clap for the truth of God's word that that ought to encourage listen there are some of you here tonight you relate to these journeys you know what it's like to go through these times of suffering and I want as we see the end here I want to encourage you to just keep running as the spirit leads you and fills you and gets you to the end well how do we receive the spirit

[37 : 05] I close with this I really am almost done how do we receive the spirit let me show you one more interesting thing of the text and we'll wrap it up does verse 35 seem odd to you look at chapter 40 verse 35 we'll close with this Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle is anybody scratching your head like how is the guy who's had the most access of anybody in Exodus nobody's had more access to God than Moses and yet when the glory of God comes down and fills the same reason why he couldn't see all of God on the mountain do you remember when God said I'm going to pass by but you can only see the backside I can't show you like the full glory because you wouldn't be able to handle it would crush you like a bug likely the glory of the Lord has so filled the tabernacle that it is a lethal dose of glory is still a sinner

Moses this great mediator who has done so much to mediate between God and the people of God he too is still in need of salvation in fact faith family when chapter 40 ends Exodus it's actually not the end of the story the end of Exodus listen flows right into verse one of Leviticus Leviticus one one the Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting saying speak to the people of Israel and say to them when any one of you brings an offering to the Lord you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock if his offering is a burnt!

offering from the herd he shall offer a male without blemish don't worry we're not starting a series on Leviticus okay we're good with Exodus okay but I want to show you the connection the connection of Exodus 40 Moses can't enter why because even Moses is a sinner no one can come before God without a sacrifice Leviticus spells out the conditions for sinners to approach a holy God and those conditions are a perfect sacrifice and that male without blemish that allows Moses and everybody in this room to actually enter in is the Lord Jesus Christ he is the one that allows us to enter in in fact it's faith in

Jesus that allows us to thereby receive the spirit of God that will guide us and fill us through the wilderness Exodus shows us something very true about life and it's this it's a long hard road with a good end faith family listen this life is a wilderness it is a wilderness but it ends with the glory of God dwelling with the people of God and that's not just Israel's story that's our story as the old hymn says through many dangers toils and snares I have already come it's grace that's brought me safe thus far and it's grace that will lead me home if you have trusted

Jesus Christ as your savior and his finished work on the cross you have been given something greater than the glory in a tabernacle you have been given his very spirit in your heart and that's why I can confidently say I promise you faith family I promise you you will cross that finish line and when you do you're going to fall into the arms of your savior and all God's people said amen let's pray let's pray Lord there have been so many lessons we've learned throughout the book of Exodus and and I trust by your your guidance and your leading we're not done but tonight's lesson is one we must take away from this book because it's easy to think that these are just a bunch of stories that happened hundreds of years ago that have no relevance to us and yet

[42 : 23] Lord what Exodus! teaches! us is a lesson about life that it is a wilderness and there are times of darkness and despair and discouragement and feeling completely desperate but your spirit is with us your spirit will guide us your spirit will fill us and your spirit will lead us home you will finish the work you started and I pray tonight if there is anyone here tonight that's feeling discouraged in the journey lost in the wilderness that they would fix their eyes on your glory seen most clearly and beautifully in the person of Jesus Christ and find hope as an anchor of their soul and

I ask it in Jesus name and God's people said Amen