

Exodus 7-15 "A Series of Remarkable Events"

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- [0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Amen. That song's a beautiful retelling of the story that we're actually looking at in Exodus this morning. It's another story of God's redemption, but it's not just one more story.
- As we look through several of them together this summer, this is the foundational, the prototypical story for God's Old Testament people.
- The story they tell over and over in so many ways about their redeeming God. I remember as a kid memorizing the midnight ride of Paul Revere.
- I'm learning about the Boston Tea Party and the events surrounding that. Hearing about that famous Patrick Henry speech, give me liberty or give me death.
- [1 : 08] And I heard those stories over and over. They're passed down to our kids, right? We learn about them. They're stories that defined and shaped a nation that was built on freedom, right?
- We tell them over and over. We pass them down through the generations. We share them to give our kids heroes to look up to.
- Well, the stories that functioned like that for God's people were those of the Exodus. When they were freed from slavery in Egypt by their hero, Yahweh, their redeeming God.
- Let me pray for us and then we'll enter into this story together. Father, we love these stories. We're thankful for them.
- Even more than that, we love you, God, our Father. The one who cares for us. The one who teaches us by his Spirit.
- [2 : 17] And so we ask that you this morning would show us more of yourself. Not just a story. But show us you, Father. We ask it in Jesus' name.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. I want you to actually experience being a part of this story that many of you have probably heard before. So I want to ask you to do something this morning.
- If you'll close your eyes for just a minute. You won't have to keep them closed the whole sermon unless you enjoy sleeping through my sermons. But as you have your eyes closed, imagine yourself as one of the Israelites in ancient Egypt.
- Whoever you are, a young woman, an older man, a young child, a parent, a grandparent. There you are in Egypt in your sandals and your cloak.
- There's dust all around blowing through the air. It's under your fingernails and all over. Day after day, you wake up to make bricks again under the baking sun.
- [3 : 32] It's almost like making sandcastles for your kids at the beach. But no, it's not like that. Lose that picture. It's very different from that. You're not smiling. You're not free to go inside and cool off.
- Your Egyptian captors are cruel and harsh and you're forced to work even when your body aches. As far as you can remember, it's always been like this.

Day after day, year after year, your parents and your grandparents for generation after generation, they tell the same stories. This is what you've done.

You've heard perhaps about a God, Yahweh. He loves you, has promises for you, you've been told, but they seem like a distant fairy tale.

Perhaps just stories to make you feel better. You've never seen anything remarkable or certainly not miraculous. Just day after day after day, slaving away in the hot Egyptian desert.

[4 : 42] But one day this man shows up claiming to have talked with Yahweh and saying he's going to lead you out of Egypt to God's promised land. And you and the rest of your friends ignore him.

Oh, come on, stop messing with us. Stop teasing us. Exodus 6 says they wouldn't listen to him because the harsh slavery had broken their spirits.

You've lost hope in God. Is that part of the story easier for some of you to picture, perhaps? You can open your eyes if you haven't already.

Some of you are very, very patient with me and you kept your eyes closed that whole time. But keep thinking of yourself through this sermon as that Israelite.

What happens after you laugh him off? Moses leaves and heads over to Pharaoh and the plagues begin, right? This is Exodus 7-10.

[5 : 44] Over the next few weeks, the break from the normalcy of your life is incredible. You experience things you've never seen or imagined before. The powerful Nile River is turned to blood before your eyes.

Frogs, then gnats, then flies, later locusts covering Egypt. Hail like you've never seen before coming hour after hour.

And time after time, you just marvel as Yahweh displays his unrivaled power over creation. And over all the other Egyptian gods you've heard about.

Of course, turning the Nile to blood takes a swipe at Egyptian power. But so does some of the other plagues. Especially the ninth one. Three days of darkness covering the land.

A land supposedly ruled by Ra. The God of the sun. The highest Egyptian god who can do absolutely nothing about the darkness.

[6 : 57] You see firsthand Yahweh's mighty hand and outstretched arm. The plagues themselves are a series of remarkable events that you're going to talk about and tell your children about for generations to come.

For the rest of your life, you're going to remember. And you respond with awe and full of just amazement and humility.

How amazingly powerful and glorious and utterly unique is our God. There's nobody like this. How small and weak must we be compared to Him?

But then there's a final plague that shows you that this powerful God is not just powerful out there somewhere, but He's worthy of your exclusive trust.

I want to suggest as Professor D.A. Carson does that you imagine yourself in a conversation with another Israelite the day before the first Passover.

[8 : 07] You can be the fearful one or the confident one. Either way is fine. The fearful one says, Hey, how are you feeling about tonight? And the friend says, Tonight? What do you mean?

Well, the first one says, I'm pretty anxious. The death of the firstborn, it sounds pretty scary. I mean, there's been some pretty strange stuff around here lately with all the flies and locusts and the hail.

I'm just pretty nervous about this whole angel of death thing. I mean, I love my kids. Well, didn't you kill a lamb?

And put the blood on your doorposts like Yahweh told you to do? Well, yeah, of course I did. But I'm just saying I won't be sleeping much tonight. This Yahweh seems pretty powerful.

And I'm still pretty fearful about how that plays out for me. And your friend says, Well, I've got to tell you, I'm going to sleep well. Yahweh told us what to do. I've done it and I trust Him.

[9 : 13] We've got nothing to worry about. Now fast forward to the next morning after Passover has happened. Let me ask you a question.

Which one of those, you or your friend, which one lost his firstborn son? Neither, right? Neither. Why?

The angel of death passes over every one of those Israelite homes. Why? Because one family had a really strong faith and always trusted God and never wavered?

Because there were no doubts and fears present in that home? No! Why? Because of the blood of the Lamb. Put the blood of the Lamb on the doorway and death will pass right over.

It's the blood of the Lamb. And so you wake up and you're all alive. And you're rejoicing. You're celebrating with your friends and neighbors in the streets. And then you hear something else.

[10 : 14] You're leaving Egypt. All of you peck quickly. You plunder the Egyptians. You walk out of captivity together. Thanks not to your great ingenuity.

Not because of your power. But because of a God you've learned you can trust. He redeems you from a situation you thought you would never escape.

Kids, maybe some of this Passover stuff is a little bit confusing to you. What that means and how that works. And that's okay because it will help you imagine what it would have been like to be a six-year-old or an eight-year-old or a ten-year-old.

That first Passover and all of a sudden instead of waking up in Egypt every day as a slave your life changes overnight. Everything is different and you don't really understand what's going on.

And the fact that you would be confused or wouldn't understand is one of the main reasons why God tells us to keep telling this story. The Passover actually becomes a new first month for God's people.

[11 : 28] This is the beginning of chapter 12 now. Their whole year has changed. In the first month they're going to celebrate what happened. Every year a celebration to remember this special night where they walked out of Egypt.

Why are we doing this each year? You might ask your parents, right? Why do we have this big celebration each year? Exodus 12 at verse 24.

You shall observe this right as a statute for you and for your sons forever. And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you as He has promised, you shall keep this service.

And when your children say to you, what do you mean by this service? What's going on? You shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover. For He passed over the houses of the people of Israel and Egypt when He struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.

Parents would tell their kids, we are free people. No longer slaves in Egypt, not because we were wise, not because we were well organized, not because we had great heroes, but because Yahweh is a redeeming God.

[12 : 42] The hero of our story. Our deliverer. For even in our darkest days, nothing could stop Him. He redeemed us. He showed us that we could trust Him and that we must trust Him alone.

No other God was even close to Him. And not even ourselves. We could never have done what He did. That's what Passover is about, kids.

And something else happens that day. Perhaps as you're hurriedly packing your bags or beginning to walk out of Egypt, all of a sudden Moses stands up front again.

Chapter 13, verse 11. Moses says, When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your forefathers, and shall give it to you, you shall set apart to the Lord all that first opens the womb.

All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be Yahweh's. Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you'll not redeem it, you shall break its neck.

[13 : 46] Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And when in time to come your son asks you, what does this mean? You shall say to him, By strength of hand, Yahweh brought us out of Egypt from the house of slavery.

For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, Yahweh killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first opened the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.

It shall be as a mark on your hand, or frontlets between your eyes. For by a strong hand, Yahweh brought us out of Egypt.

He's saying this God who delivered us is worthy not merely of a ceremony in the first month of the year, but my wholehearted devotion every moment of every day.

Here's another thing we're to do, Moses says, with the goal that you'll not forget that this will shape your life. Write it on your hand. Some of you do that with your homework.

[15 : 03] Why do you write yourself reminders on your hand? Because you think, I can't forget that, and it washes off in the shower anyway sometimes. But it's supposed to be right there where you won't forget. Why would you put something right between your eyes?

So that you'll always see it, and always remember, no matter what you're doing and where you are, so it's always there in front of you, right? Here's another thing that's going to do that.

Dedicate the firstborn to Yahweh. Why? Another chance to remember and tell the story of which he is the hero.

I mean, imagine, here you are a few years later, and your family's had some tough financial years, and your cow gives birth, finally, to a calf.

Yes! Finally! We're going to be okay in a little while. We'll be able to eat. We'll have resources. And your father says, hey, you know what we're going to do?

[16 : 04] Let's sacrifice it to the Lord. What? Why? Come on, Dad! Because, daughter, it's even more important than being financially stable to remember, we owe him everything, and we can trust him.

When your firstborn son is born, rather than kill him, sacrifice a lamb to redeem your son.

Why? We need that. Why? Because what's way more valuable than that lamb is being defined as a people wholly devoted to Yahweh in all of life.

Write it on my head, between my eyes, on my hand, on my front door, everywhere I go. I must remember that. My children are his.

My finances are his. My days and my hours are his. Oh, God, don't let me forget who I am. How much I owe to you. May that story shape every moment of every day.

[17 : 19] We're so excited about it. We're so thankful. But the joy of God's deliverance is short-lived for you, isn't it?

Just a few days after walking out of Egypt, you hear something behind you. It's hoofbeats. A lot of them. There's a whole stampede of something coming and you look out across the desert and you see the armies of Egypt and horses and chariots chasing after you and you're stuck between them, a faster, stronger fighting force and the raging waters of the Red Sea on the other side.

Deep down, you knew it was too good to be true, didn't you? Why did you let yourself get your hopes up? I'm so angry and I'm scared. All that can happen now, it's just a question of whether I'm going to drown or be killed with a sword.

Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them and they feared greatly and the people of Israel cried out to the Lord and said to Moses, is it because there are 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? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt? Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians for it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.

[18 : 55] Some deliverer, this Yahweh is, just taunting us, made us think something good was happening and it's just getting worse. Look around. There's no way out.

There's no way Yahweh could deliver us here. And Moses says, now you're right where Yahweh needs you to be to see who He really is.

Keep reading verse 13. Moses said to the people, fear not. Stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord which He will work for you today.

For the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. Yahweh will fight for you and you have only to be silent.

You only thought you had learned to trust Yahweh that Passover night. Sit back, relax, watch how great a deliverer He is.

[20 : 01] He is the redeeming God even when you look around you and you're sure that He's not. He can rescue even when you look at what's going on in your life and say, it can't get any worse.

It could never get better. Nothing can rescue me. There's no hope. You know the story. God parts the Red Sea.

Those Israelites who trusted and never wavered in their faith walk through on dry ground while you and the rest of those who grumbled against God are destroyed under the waves of the Red Sea.

Nope, nope, that wasn't it. That's not how it goes. All of you, all of you walk and feel the dry ground beneath your feet.

every single one of you, most of whom have just grumbled against God. You walk through the Red Sea with the wind blowing and the sea roaring and walls up on either side of you.

[21 : 09] Can you imagine that, walking through there? The miracle of God's provision and maybe what's equally remarkable to you is that you're walking through it.

You doubted Him yesterday. You yelled at Him. You gave up on Him. And you still find yourself safe in Him, cared for by Him.

And it's your enemies who are crushed by the waves returning over them. You're really safe now. So, put yourself there.

What happens when your foot hits the ground on the other side of the Red Sea? What do you do? You sing, of course. You're pent up anxiety and fear and just overwhelmingly bursts out in passionate worship to Yahweh.

That's what happens. Exodus 15, Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord saying, I will sing to the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and His rider He has thrown into the sea.

[22 : 24] The Lord is my strength and my song and He has become my salvation. This is my God and I will praise Him. My Father's God and I will exalt Him. Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power.

Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy. Who is like You? Yahweh among the gods. Who is like You? Majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders.

You have led in Your steadfast love the people whom You have redeemed. You have guided them by Your strength to Your holy abode. The Lord will reign forever and ever.

What a song. What an event like that or a story shapes who You are. You sing about it.

Did you know that Happy Birthday is the most commonly sung song probably in your whole life? You'll sing it more than anything else. But did you know what number two is?

[23 : 30] Anybody got any ideas? Think. Number two, most commonly sung song, there are different studies, there's some debate, but many studies show that for many Americans, number two, is the Star Spangled Banner.

Francis Scott Key's song, of course, tells the story of a key battle for freedom. This song's written 200 years ago, right? It's a battle he witnessed in 1814 from a ship in Baltimore Harbor where by the dawn's early light he saw a flag waving over Fort McHenry and he felt confident and proud that America would continue to be the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And that song, 200 years after that, has so defined and shaped the identity of a nation that we sing it a lot, don't we? We can't even have a swim meet or a baseball game without it.

God gives a hymn book to his Old Testament people that has 150 songs in it. You'd be shocked at how many of them sing about the events of the Exodus.

They're easy to find if you want to just search for them this afternoon, but you could start with Psalm 66, 76, 77, 78, 106, 136, many others all singing about God's redeeming work in the deliverance from Egypt.

[25 : 03] This is the song that defines God's people. They are blood-covered, precious children of the uniquely powerful, redeeming God who is always working for their good no matter how dire things appear.

Is that the story that defines and shapes your life? Revelation tells us that singing of our redeeming God is not merely an Old Testament thing, but something that God's people will do forever.

Look at this chapter 15, verse 3. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God, the Almighty.

Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations. Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

They will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. It's the same song. Because God's redemption of His people does one day have an event that surpasses all the remarkable events of the Exodus.

[26 : 20] Yahweh, God the Father, sends Jesus, His Son, to die as the Passover Lamb. 1 Corinthians 5.

His firstborn Son dies so that we and our children may live and worship Him. In other words, the story that gives us our identity, that shapes our lives, that we sing about, that we tell our children about over and over, that we give our lives to is the story of Jesus.

The story where He's the hero, where He shows Himself worthy of our trust, our wholehearted devotion, our passionate worship. The story where that same redeeming God rescues us and fills us with awe and humility.

Can you feel yourself in that story a little bit more this morning as you feel your feet after years of painful servitude touching that soil of freedom on the other side of the Red Sea?

Can you sing verse 2 of that song? The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation.

[27 : 42] This is my God and I will praise Him. My Father's God, I will exalt Him. Do you come here weekly and before Him daily to sing that in your heart?

You realize that's what we do as we worship? To proclaim to ourselves, to our children and to the world that our primary identity is as blood-covered, yes, even blood-bought and therefore precious children of the redeeming God?

Do you realize that what we're doing is we're declaring to our hearts that the redeeming God is actually still working for our good no matter what it looks like around us and what we're walking through on that particular day or week?

Even when we're sure He's stopped, even when we've given up hope that He still is working for us, our deliverance may not be as dramatic or as visibly apparent as the Red Sea.

Israel would learn that too. But this side of the Red Sea and the cross of Calvary, there should be no more denying that our Almighty God is caring for us and working for our good.

[29 : 03] There should be instead singing of it, rejoicing in it, trusting it no matter what, shaping our entire lives around it. There are a lot of other stories out there competing to define and shape our identities, aren't there?

Is this one the story that you're living? That you are shaping your life every day around, not just Sunday? Is it the story of God as hero, not the one where you are or you're trying to be, but also not the one where hope is lost because there seems to be no way out?

Have His heroic deeds led you consistently into humility and trust and devotion and worship? And then is this the story you're telling?

Telling to your neighbors and the nations? Yes! But perhaps particularly today, telling to our children. Do they know that when you could do nothing to rescue yourself from your bondage to death, God sent His Son and gave you life?

Do they know that you're no hero compared to God and you're not just okay with them knowing that, but you're passionate about them seeing Him as the one worthy of their trust?

[30 : 34] We've got VBS this week. Why burn a week of your summer? Really? There's so few of them anymore. Why burn a week of your summer?

Perhaps because you believe that the most important thing you could be doing is telling that story to the next generation. I agree. I'll be here enjoying it.

But if that's true, then that should impact every week of every year and every moment of every day.

We ought to tell that story to our children at home daily. because they hear those competing stories more often than we do. We ought to bring them with us to corporate worship where they sing and hear of that story faithfully.

We ought to pray for and serve in their Sunday school classes and their nurseries where we tell them that story eagerly. kids, will y'all come back down here to the steps one more time for just a minute?

[31 : 53] I want to talk with you one more time. Thanks for coming back. I want y'all to listen really closely for me, okay?

I want to tell you something really important. Do you remember when you sat up here earlier and I had you look out there and see a picture of how much God loves you? Do you remember that when they all stood up and you saw that picture?

I want you to know there's another picture of how much God loves you that you can see from right here. I need somebody to help me out though. Hey, Jason, will you grab that bread right there in front of you?

Will you bring that to me? Jenna, will you get the cup and bring it over here to me? Thanks, Jason. I'm going to tell you about what these are now.

Now, some of you already eat this with us when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. And some of you are still just learning what it means and so you're not going to eat with us when we celebrate.

[32 : 59] And that's okay too, okay? But for all of you, what's really important is for you to know what this means, okay? When we do this, we do this because it means that God loves you so much.

This tells us the story again of how much Jesus loves you, that he loved you so much that he would die for you.

because we're sinners, right? We don't always love and obey God, do we? And we were supposed to die because of that.

Did you know that? That's what was supposed to happen to us. But you know how much Jesus loves you? Jesus loves you so much that he died instead.

He took this bread and a cup with drink in it and he sat with his disciples and you know what he said to them? He took the bread and he broke it like this and he gave it to his disciples so that they could eat it with him.

[34 : 05] But you know what he said? He said, this bread, it's a picture for you of my body which is gonna be broken instead of yours. And he said, every time you eat this, I want you to remember that.

Hold this for me. Hold one, Joe. And then Jesus took this cup and he said, this cup is a picture, my blood, the promise for you and my blood that when you trust me and my death for you, you will live with me forever.

Just like the Israelites when they put the blood of the lamb on the door and they didn't die, they lived. When you put my blood on your heart, your sins will be forgiven and you will live forever with God.

Kids, this is the story that tells you that you are always valuable, that you're precious to God, that he loves you so much that Jesus would even come and die for you.

Isn't that amazing? That's what this means. Let's pray together. Jesus, thank you so much. Thank you for giving us not just a story, but a true story of a God who actually loves us and who actually came and died for us.

[35 : 39] thank you for giving us and who loves us. Thank you for giving us and who loves us beyond what we can imagine, that we can trust you and be with you forever. Father, would you use this bread and this juice to teach us something much more important that we would never forget how much you love us.

in Jesus' name, amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.