

EXODUS

THE GOD WHO RESCUES

SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 2:23-25

To understand more about how God responds to His people when they cry out to Him.

A Concluding Note

Exodus 2:23-25 could be thought of as an almost concluding note to a larger story. While only three verses in length, these three verses conclude an important couple of details concerning the story that has been unfolded thus far beginning with Exodus 1:1. We were given the backstory of the families of Jacob that came into Egypt (1:1-7). We learned about the cruelty of this new pharaoh who “did not know Joseph” (1:8). We learned about the oppression of the Hebrew people in Egypt and how they continued to multiply regardless (1:9-14). We learned about the many ways in which the Pharaoh sought to prevent the Hebrews from multiplying, concluding with a mandate to all Egyptians to kill any male born Hebrew babies (1:15-22). We saw the birth of Moses, the shrewdness of his sister Miriam, the willingness of Pharaoh’s daughter to take in Moses as her own son, and the providence and sovereignty of God throughout the whole ordeal (2:1-10). And we learned about how Moses came to leave Egypt, how we arrived in Midian, and how he married the daughter of the priest of Midian named Jethro (2:11-22). Now, the final three verses tie up some loose ends before we are thrust back into the next major narrative concerning Moses, his call from God, and his return to Egypt to confront pharaoh to let the people of God go.

The State of Things in Egypt (v.23)

While only a single verse, verse 23 cues us into three important details that set the stage for the coming events beginning in chapter 3. Below is a break down of each of them.

MANY DAYS PASSED AND THE PHARAOH DIED

Verse 23 opens with: “During those many days the king of Egypt died.” Moses’ trip to Midian and his subsequent experiences took time. The story begins with him intervening between the daughters of the priests of Midian and the shepherds, and while this story only took place during a single day, it merely sets up the following events while he is in Midian which take a far longer time to unfold. After all, one does not decide to stay with a family in a foreign place, marry one of the women there, and have a baby in one week. Likely years had passed during this time. Verse 23 reminds us that things were happening in Egypt, too, lest we get too wrapped up in what was going on in Midian. During these years, the Pharaoh who sought the life of Moses died and was no longer a threat. This will set up Moses to go back to Egypt unafraid of them recognizing him and seeking to put him to death (4:19).

THE PEOPLE OF GOD WERE STILL OPPRESSED

While the cruel Pharaoh died, the new one apparently did not have a change in heart towards the foreign Hebrew people because “the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help.” While it may have come as joyful news that the wicked king of Egypt was gone, the joy must have been short-lived. They continued to suffer and groan under the oppression of the Egyptian authorities.

THE PEOPLE BEGAN TO CRY OUT TO GOD

This suffering ultimately led them to make their requests known to God, for “their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God (see also Phil. 4:6-7). Suffering can either drive a person to hopelessness or dependence on Him in whom there is hope.

God and Suffering (vs.24-25)

Verses 24 and 25 deal with how God responds to the suffering of His people. There are four verbs, two of which form a couplet of sorts. Below is a breakdown of three big ideas in these two verses.

HE HEARD

The first thing to note is that not only did the people cry out to God, but that God actually heard them! God is a God who hears the cries of His people. God says in Jeremiah 33:3, “Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.” Proverbs 15:29 says, “He hears the prayer of the righteous.” John writes in 1 John 5:14, “And this is the confidence that we have towards him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.” Peter similarly writes, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer” (1 Pet. 3:12a). All throughout Scripture God reveals that He is a God who hears the cries of His people. This is a reality that is often parroted in Christian circles but rarely believed, evidenced by the lack of prayer in churches today. If God really hears us, why do we not cry out more?

HE REMEMBERED

On what basis does God listen and respond to His people? The basis of His own faithfulness: “God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Ex. 2:24a). God is a God who makes covenants with His people and keeps those promises made (Deut. 7:9). He covenants with Noah (Gen. 6:18) and then reaffirms this covenant and promises to never again flood the earth (Gen. 9:11). He will eventually in this book of Exodus establish a covenant through Moses with the people of God that is contingent upon their obedience (Ex. 19:4-6; 20:2). He establishes a covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17, and while neither passage explicitly calls it a covenant, several other texts do (2 Sam. 23:5; 2 Chr. 7:18; Ps. 89:3; Jer. 33:21). All of these covenants eventually will find fulfillment in the New Covenant promised by God in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and ratified by the blood of Jesus (Lk. 22:20).

In Exodus 2:24, however, the covenant referenced is one to Abraham. God had previously made a covenant beginning with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-16; 17:4-8), and this covenant extended to his son Isaac (Gen. 22:15-19) and to his grandson Jacob (Gen. 28:10-17), and it was on the basis of this covenant that He would once again, generations later, come to the aid of His people. God is faithful and He cannot act against what He has already said He would do. That means in some sense God is acting according to the Abrahamic covenant. This makes a lot of sense when you consider that the Abrahamic covenant promises land, and the chief objective of the Exodus story is to see the people of God come out of Egypt and back into the promised land. Why is it called the promised land? It was land promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:7). And in the original promise, the land was never intended to be given to Abraham, but to his offspring. Exodus, then, is a continuation of the Abrahamic promise.

HE TOOK NOTICE

The last two verbs are found in verse 25: “God saw the people of Israel - and God knew.” The NASB translates this verse: God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.” The idea here is that they became the object of his immediate attention. God is sovereign and all-knowing (1 Jn. 3:20; Ps. 147:5), so it isn't that God was somehow unaware of what was happening prior to them praying for help. It's a literary

device to indicate that God was actively engaged now in the way that they were being treated. The divine timing was now; the Lord was about to act once again. How he acts is described in the next chapter with his call of Moses.

What About Now?

One minor takeaway is the importance of timing in God's sovereign plans. God could have at any moment called Moses away from Midian and back to Egypt to begin His work, even with Pharaoh alive. God is powerful enough to protect anyone from anyone, Moses included. However, he allows time to progress. Many days pass. Pharaoh dies. A new administration begins. All of this is intentional as it sets the stage for Moses to return with less immediate concern for the loss of his life. The major takeaway, of course, is the simple and yet profound reality that God hears the prayers of his people. In 1 Kings 8:27-51, while Solomon is dedicating the newly built Temple in all of its glory, he prays over and over again: "Hear in heaven and forgive the sin of your people" (vs.30, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49). Solomon recognized that God would not simply be contained in the Temple because even all of creation was too small to contain Him (1 Kg. 8:27). However, he also recognized that regardless of whether God dwelled in the Temple or in the highest parts of heaven, He could hear the prayers of His people. This is true still today. God hears you when you pray.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Exodus 2:23. How much time had passed since Moses traveled to Midian and married Zipporah and had a son named Gershon?

2. Read Exodus 2:23. Who died during this time? Why is this significant (See also: Ex. 4:19)?

Day Two

1. Read Exodus 2:23. What was the current state of the people of Israel under the new administration? Did the new king continue to oppress the people?

2. Read Exodus 2:23. What did the people do in response to their oppression?

Day Three

1. Read Exodus 2:24. How did God respond? What specifically did He hear?

2. Read Exodus 2:24. What did God remember? Why is this significant?
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Day Four

1. Read Exodus 2:24. How does this moment in Exodus tie specifically to the Abrahamic covenant? (Hint: See above notes)
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2. Read Exodus 2:25. What does this verse indicate about how God would now deal with His people?
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Week 5 Discussion: The Lord Hears

One of the simplest and yet most profound realities of the Christian faith is that God hears our prayers. The Creator of all things, the Maker of the universe bends His ear towards you when you pray to Him. Not enough can be said of how remarkable this is, and yet prayer is often relegated to a mere secondary issue in the life of the Christian. Talk as a group about how if this is true, that God hears His people, it should motivate us to pray more fervently and frequently.

1. Icebreaker: Do you *really* believe God hears you when you pray?
2. What is your relationship with prayer like? Do you struggle to do it? Is it burdensome? Do you enjoy it? Share with the group your thoughts about prayer.
3. What is the most meaningful prayer someone has prayed over you?
4. Are there things you struggle to share with God, perhaps because you are ashamed or embarrassed?
5. What is the most significant prayer you've ever prayed?
6. What steps do you need to take to begin praying more fervently and frequently?

Takeaways:

1. A lot of time passes while Moses is living in Midian.
2. The Pharaoh dies and a new Pharaoh takes over and is equally oppressive to the people of Israel.
3. The people cry out to God in their despair.
4. God hears them, remembers His covenant, and begins to take notice of their situation.