

Guest Preacher - Mr Robert France

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[0 : 00] almost three and a half thousand years ago, Israel walked out of Egypt, ending some 430 years of forced slavery, forced labor. But of course, they didn't leave alone when they left Egypt, because the Almighty God, their covenant God, went with them. He was behind them, he was before them, and indeed he was around them. And also, of course, were these two pivotal figures who went out with them, Moses and his brother Aaron, his spokesperson. And neither did they leave Egypt empty-handed. And we see that in chapter 12 of this book, in verses 35 and 36, where we read, The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus, they plundered the Egyptians.

As one commentator put it, they collected their 400 odd years of back pay before they walked out of Israel. Now, I'm sure that everyone here today is familiar with the events in Exodus that led up to that Exodus, that momentous occasion there in the Word. But let's refresh our minds for just for a couple of minutes before we begin to. If we look back to chapter 3 of this book, we can read there the incident where the Lord God, the Almighty God, spoke to Moses from the burning bush. And that's a story that each and every one of us are or should be familiar with. And there God told Moses of his plan, his plan for the future. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I've heard their cries because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey. This was God's promise to his people in

Israel, the people of Israel there, as they were held in bondage in Egypt. And a few moments later, to Moses' astonishment, God told him that he was the one who was to carry that out. And initially, we know Moses, he produced all sorts of excuses, but God removed all these excuses one by one, until in the end, Moses had no more excuses left. He had nowhere to turn to, he had nowhere to go, and so he obeyed God. He left no choice but to obey the God of all creation. And I wonder if you and I this morning in here have reached that point that Moses reached, where we have no further excuse. There is nothing to stop us from following and obeying the God of all creation.

Because I can tell you, if you've reached that point, and if you have accepted, or if you do accept the Lord God Almighty as your Savior, and accept him into your heart, just as he used Moses all these years ago, the same God can use you this very day to achieve his ends and his purposes. So, how do you stand before God this morning here in this place?

So, Moses then returned to Egypt. We know that. We see it there. After a 40-year absence. If you remember from the story, Moses had actually killed an Egyptian who was beaten on a Hebrew, and he had to flee for his life. He left for 40 years. He spent his 40 years in the wilderness, and then when God called him, he had to go back into Egypt. And I can imagine that that wouldn't have been easy for Moses, going back into the country he fled from. But in obedience to God, Moses went, and he did as he was called. He returned to Egypt, not in his own strength, but in the strength of Almighty God. God called him, and God was with him, just as when he calls us, he too is with us in every age and in every generation. So, he returned there in the strength of the Lord, and in chapter 5, we read that he confronted Pharaoh, and Moses told him, the God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.

[4 : 52] But Pharaoh, of course, refused, because God had hardened Pharaoh's heart. So, following that, this hardening of his heart and this disobedience to comply with Moses' request led to the ten plagues.

And these plagues were awful, and they inflicted so much damage and harm on the land of Egypt, and yet Pharaoh's hard heart wouldn't yield to God, and he would not let the children of Israel go.

But then the final plague came, the death of the firstborn in Egypt. And what a night that must have been in the land of Egypt, you would have heard the wailing miles away. And Pharaoh himself, as we know, he lost his son. And it broke Pharaoh's heart. And not only his heart, but it broke his will.

And in that moment, he gave in, and he told the children of Israel, as it were, go away. Almost as if it was, get out of my sight. I've had enough of you. And so began their epic journey. We joined the account there in chapter 14, as a portion that we read from the scripture there.

And as we read, we see Moses being given specific instructions and directions from God, which he adhered to. He carried them out to the letter. And these instructions we read there at the beginning of chapter 14, where God said, Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hi-heroth, between Migdal and the sea, in front of Baal-zipphon. You shall encamp it facing by the sea.

[6 : 35] For Pharaoh will say to the people of Israel, They are wandering in the land, and the wilderness has shut them then. Now this may have seen to Moses and to the children of Israel a strange direction for them to take, but Moses obeyed again without question. He did the Lord's bidding, and he led the people to that place that the Lord specified where they should be. He obeyed again without question. And so too should we obey without question. When God calls us to go somewhere or to do something, even although we may feel the way he wants us to go is perilous, we should trust in the Lord. Because as I said a moment ago, when you call the Lord, he goes with you, and he goes before you. Now the reason that the Lord sent these, the children of Israel there to that place, and to what appeared to have been a dead end, was he had formulated a plan. He was setting a trap. And who was to be drawn into that trap?

None other than Pharaoh, the king who had resisted him for so much. None other than the Pharaoh who had told him to get out of my sight. God was setting a trap there in the wilderness for that same Pharaoh.

And I would read that the days of mourning in Egypt had now passed, and Sarah's servants came, and they informed Pharaoh, the children of Israel are gone. They fled. They're gone. You know, when Pharaoh told them to go, he perhaps thought that in fact they would do just what they had asked, that they would go out into the wilderness for three days, worship the Lord their God, and then return. But of course, that's not what happened. God's plan was much broader than that. He was going to redeem his people. It was a one-way journey. They were not going to go back. And when Pharaoh told them to go, and in his grief, he probably didn't care what they did. He didn't even give it a thought. But the plan for a three-day journey, he now realized it was wrong. That's not what happened at all. And you know that the children of Israel, in their leaving Egypt, it would have been noticed, it would have been obvious, because we're talking here of a people who were in the range of two million. I reckon there was approximately two million people who walked out of Egypt at that time. And that in itself makes this whole account all the more remarkable. God was dealing with a vast amount of people here, two million, as I said, in excess of two million. And you know, if you took that number of people out of any area, even out of a small country, it's going to be noticed. It's going to leave a huge void. And even more so, if they were your workforce, not to mention your unpaid workforce, that would have had an effect in the economy of Egypt. And the Egyptians now realized that, that they had lost their unpaid workforce, and that the economy may well suffer because of it. And Pharaoh and his officials realized that, and they said, what is this that we've done, that we have let Israel go from saving us?

Matthew Henry well stated when he wrote, the liberty of God's people is a heavy grievance to their enemies. It grieved Pharaoh then that his servants, the Israelites, now had their freedom.

And you know that it grieves the world even to this very day that the Christian enjoys the freedom that is found in Jesus Christ. And they would take it away from you if they could. But of course they can't. They can neither give you that freedom nor take it from you. It is a gift of God through grace.

[10:37] But they would love to disrupt you and to turn you away from the living God. So we must needs be on our guard each and every day because we know the subtlety of the enemy of our souls. So watch and pray.

Watch and pray each and every day. So now Pharaoh and his officials, having realized what they had done and that the children of Israel were gone, they determined to do something about it. They just weren't going to let this pass. And what did they do? They mobilized the army. We read that he mobilized his army and he chose 600 of his finest chariots. And these chariots were manned by two soldiers.

There was a driver and there was an actual soldier, a fighting man in these chariots. And to the children of Israel, indeed to any of the people around Egypt in these days, these chariots would almost have been the equivalent of what we see as a tank in this day. They were unstoppable. So Pharaoh mobilized his army. He chose 600 of his finest chariots, manned with the pick of his soldiers, and also read all the other chariots of Israel as well. So this was a formidable and fearsome army. Who could stand against it?

And as that army marched out of Egypt in pursuit of the children of Israel, you can imagine all the pomp and all the ceremony. And the Egyptians and their pride and vanity would have expected a crushing victory over Israel and a triumphant return with their demoralized enemy. And they would have set them back into slavery as before. But Pharaoh had made one fatal mistake. He had discounted God. He had discounted God. And it wasn't the first time, and it won't be the last time, that people like Pharaoh have discounted God to their peril.

So how do we consider God in here this morning? Do we realize his almighty power? Do we give him his rightful place? Do we acknowledge him as the all-knowing, all-seeing creator, the God who made man in his own image, the God who has such a love for us, his created beings, that when we fell into sin all these years ago, he laid down his life for us, he laid down his life for us in the person of his son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? Do we realize the extent that God has gone to for sinners such as we are?

[13 : 24] Well, Pharaoh didn't. Pharaoh had seen God in Egypt working all these wonders, sending all these plagues, and not for one minute did he bow the knee or bow his head or his heart and accept God. He rejected God.

And that ought to serve us, what we read about here, what happens to Pharaoh, of the peril of rejecting almighty God. He wants to draw near. He wants to help. He wants to use us. So please don't reject God and God's authority and God's claim upon our lives. So here were the children of Israel at Pai HaHereth, probably wondering what on earth was going on. And then someone looked up and there was a vast dust cloud. They noticed this dust cloud in the distance and they realized it was the Egyptian army pursuing them. And we read, they were afraid. And you know, they had every right to be afraid. When you think of the amount of Egyptians and chariots and everything coming after them, seasoned soldiers armed to the teeth, they had a right to be afraid. It made sense for them to be afraid. Because there were in a position there where there was hills all around us and they were down there on the shoreline and they looked and they realized that there was no escape. There was nowhere to go. One side mountains, one side the sea.

As the old phrase says, they were between the devil and the deep blue sea. Or in this case, they were between Pharaoh and the deep red sea. And it seemed to them there was no way out.

With verse 10, however, gives us a little hope for them. Because we see that their initial reaction when they saw this vast dust cloud coming was they cried out to the Lord. And what better thing to do when despair or when trouble or when anything else come upon us? What better thing can we do than to cry out to the living God? When we find ourselves in a dangerous place, perhaps, with no easy escape, we too must cry out to God. Because are we not told in Psalm 46 and verse 1, God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble. So should you ever find yourself in trouble, if you ever find yourself in a perilous place, and that could come in many forms, do as the children of Israel there did? Cry out to God. Cry out to God. But you know that this crying out to God for the children of Israel didn't last for long. Because you see immediately in the verse, next verse, that they turned on Moses. They turned on Moses and they cried out, is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die here in the wilderness?

Initially, in their fear, they cried out to the Lord. But now they've turned on Moses. And the words that they uttered to Moses showed their lack of faith and trust in their Almighty God. And remember, they too had experienced all these things in Egypt. They had seen God's mighty hand at work.

[16 : 50] And indeed, when they left Egypt, they had praised Him. And they were just amazed at what was happening. And yet here they were a short time later, first sign of trouble. And what do they do? They doubt God.

And they show a lack of faith and a loss of confidence in God. You would have thought after seeing all these things, they would have trusted wholly and solely in Him. But no, we find them complaining. We find them murmuring against Moses. But of course, in reality, they were also murmuring against God. It went beyond Moses. And surely no reasonable mind could think that Moses had planned to do all this just to lead the children of Israel to their deaths in the wilderness. Moses had neither said nor done anything that would support such an accusation. And yet, it seems they still thought this way. They continued to grumble. We see it there. What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not what they 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 die in the wilderness. So here they were, just out of Egypt a short time, and they already distorted the past. They were thinking that it had been better in Egypt than it really was. It almost is as if they were yearning for the good old days of captivity, hankering back to them. And you know that we too have to be on our guard against that mindset. Child of God, in here today, do you look back and yearn after your pre-conversion days, where you could do what you want, where you could commit a sin and not feel any guilt over it? No. Not one of you would desire to return to the mire and to the clay that we are plucked out of. No one would want to go back to the sinful life that we had. Not for a minute. Not even for a second. So we must soldier on in the strength of the Lord, looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Don't look back. Look ahead in faith. It's good to remember where we came from and what we were, but even better to remember what God has done for us and made us into through faith and his son, Jesus.

So soldier on. And is that not what Moses did here? He didn't argue with the people. He didn't try to convince them that they were better where they were rather than being in Egypt. He didn't waste their time. No. He directed them to God and he instructed them. Fear not. Stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord, which will work for you today.

[19 : 56] Look to God in faith, he was saying. Look to him for your deliverance. And you know, Moses at that moment didn't know what God was going to do. But he did know that God was going to do something. And it was going to be something remarkable. And you know, even as Moses spoke to the children of Israel there, he must have been crying out to God in his heart.

He was speaking to the children of Israel, and yet he was petitioning God in his heart. Because we see there in verse 15, the Lord said to Moses, why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.

It's like the Lord was saying, I hear you, Moses. You know I always hear you. Now follow my commands. And he instructed Moses there, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground.

And the Lord then highlighted his plan to Moses, and we can see that in the next couple of verses. Even then, as that was going to be, there was going to be something else, even then as something else was taking place, there was something remarkable happening.

We read that the pillar of fire guided the people by night, a pillar of cloud guided them by day. And now, in this moment's year, the angel of the Lord had been going before Israel, turned, and he moved, and he went around behind him.

[21 : 29] He was now their rear guard. He had gone from the front to the back. He was her rear guard. And on the rear of the children of Israel, there fell a darkness.

There was a darkness. And so, the army of Egypt were immobilized. But on the other hand, the children of Israel, they had light. The Lord lit up their path.

So God closed the back door. The Egyptians were immobilized, and they couldn't move. Whereas on the other side, the cloud gave light to the children of Israel, so that they were able to see the way of their deliverance open up on them.

And you know what? What a breathtaking sight that must have been. Moses did as the Lord commanded. We read, he stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and he made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

You know, as soon as Moses did the Lord's bidding, the sea began to separate and dry up. The Lord sent an east wind which dried up the seabed, and it created a pathway, more like a motorway, through the center of the sea, along which these fugitives could pass in safety.

[22 : 45] Moses carried out the Lord's command immediately, and without question. No dithering, no doubting, no what-ifs.

He took God at his word. Moses reckoned God was going to do something amazing, something that to him would be impossible, and yet something that God was able to do.

He took God at his word, and he acted immediately, and that action brought immediate results. Someone once said, many an opportunity is lost, while we deliberate after he has said move.

Many an opportunity is lost, while we deliberate after he has said move. Now, do you and I obey Almighty God, or do we deliberate, and do we question him when we hear his voice speak to us?

And he does speak to us in a variety of ways, through his word both written and spoken. He speaks to us continually. Are we tuned in to God, and do we do as he says?

[24 : 04] Or do we ponder it, and do we consider it, and do we think about it? But you know we've got to be careful that we don't take too long in our deliberations, that we don't take too long in making up our mind to do what God is asking us to do, because the day may well come when we'll be left standing, as it were, on the pier, watching the ship sail off into the distance.

God calls us, and he wants us to act when he calls. So be careful, friends, that we don't dilly-dally and dither when we hear God calling us to do a work for him.

So the way was opened up, and for Israel there at the Red Sea, and they took it. We don't read of any delay or any hesitation. The children of Israel, they would have rushed into the opening, and they would have had fearful looks to the left and to the right, and who wouldn't?

Can you imagine it, just running down the shore into a vast opening in the sea, and there was sea on your right and there was sea on your left, and you were running in there, and you would have had fearful glances up there at that piled-up sea.

But they still went, and they still followed God's path, because behind them was the dreaded army of Pharaoh, but before them was freedom.

[25 : 30] And so to use a modern term, it was a no-brainer. So they ran, and they ran all night. They ran across that opening with a sense of urgency to get away from the Egyptian army.

And then we read, just when the time was right, when the children of Israel were far enough away from Egypt so that the Egyptians couldn't catch them before they reached the other side, God removed the cloud.

He opened the back door, and in rushed the Egyptian army in pursuit. All their chariots, all their soldiers, off they went into the sea, looking ahead to the children of Israel and thinking, well, we're going to get them now.

But you know, they hadn't got far into the sea when the Lord executed the next part of his plan. He clogged up their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily, and then the Egyptians said, let us flee before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.

They had realized that it wasn't just a bunch of runaway slaves with a rebel leader that they were after here. They realized there in the mud and in the mire that there was an almighty power working for the people of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the only living and true God, was fighting for his people.

[27 : 04] All of Egypt had witnessed God's almighty power in these past days. They had had first-hand experience of it, but they chose to do nothing about it.

They just rejected it all and all that God has done. They denied the only living and true God. And now there, in the mire and in the mud, at the bottom of the Red Sea, the Egyptian army paid the ultimate price.

They paid for their neglect. They had seen the signs, they had seen the power, they had seen the might of God, and yet they just discounted it. Moses, Moses, as commanded, once again, stretched out to Saphon, the steel returned to its natural state, and it is recorded for us there in Scripture, not one of them remained.

All the Egyptian army, all these fine soldiers, were lost there that day at the Red Sea. And what an impact that had on the land of Egypt, a superpower from ancient days, was humbled and subdued there by the mighty hand of God.

But what of the children of Israel? Well, we read that Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, and so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

[28 : 35] They trusted in God and also in Moses there on the shores of the Red Sea. Was that to last? Was it to last?

No. Read through that account, and you'll see that very soon, disobedience and sin prevailed. And so the children of Israel spent 40 years wandering Amos, you see, around the desert there and lost people for 40 years.

And you know, there's many someone who wandered the wilderness of this world for many, many years because they refused to listen to and yield to Almighty God.

So we pray that people would come to realize the peril that they are in without Lord Almighty as their God and Savior. The Red Sea account is one of the greatest miracles recorded in the Old Testament.

Some people would argue it is the greatest miracle recorded in the whole of Scripture. But you know, it's not. It's not. There are amazing miracles, far more amazing miracles recorded for us in the pages of the New Testament.

[29 : 53] Just as there is one who is greater than Moses, and Hebrews 3 tells us, Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant to testify to the things that were to be spoken of later.

But Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. Jesus Christ, one greater than Moses, the son who, in obedience to his father's will, come into a sin-sick world to save sinners.

A greater miracle. And how did he achieve that? By taking the burden, by taking the burden of our sin upon himself and suffering God's wrath for each and every one of us.

As the hymn writer wrote so long ago, bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood. sealed my pardon with his blood.

Hallelujah! What a saviour! A greater miracle. And you know, there's more. Because he suffered and he died for us there on Calvary's cruel cross.

[31 : 10] But you know, it didn't end there. If it did, we would have no hope. Our faith would be futile. Had Jesus Christ not risen from the grave, he would have been no different to any other.

who went down to the grave. But Jesus Christ, praise the Lord, he rose from the dead in resurrection power. And you do not remember that a couple of years ago.

The risen Lord Jesus Christ, he triumphed over death and the grave. The greatest miracle. The greatest miracle.

And so the believer can say, as the hymn writer wrote again, because he lives, I can face tomorrow. And we can face tomorrow, each and every one of us, knowing that if we believe and trust in Jesus, he will never leave us nor forsake us.

What a God we have. And what a plan he had. A plan designed for our salvation. salvation. And do you know that all these miracles took up past, the miracle of the Red Sea, all the miracles that Jesus carried out, but you know we're still living in a day of miracles.

[32 : 21] Take a look around you, even here this morning in this service, and there are miracles of God's grace all around. Those who have been redeemed through his precious blood.

So we have to go out and we have to tell others of that redeeming love that Jesus has for each and every sinner on the face of this creation.

All these years ago, at God's command, Moses led the children of Israel out of bondage and oppression in Egypt. A one-off, momentous occasion.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, through his death and resurrection, a one-off, never-to-be-repeated sacrifice, continues, and will always continue, to lead people out from the bondage of sin.

People held in bondage by the enemy of our souls, Satan himself. Jesus Christ is able and he longs to lead us out from bondage to sin.

[33 : 33] You know, the exodus from Egypt, although a real historical event, prefigures the saving work of Christ for his people. What God did through Moses was to provide physical salvation from physical slavery.

And so Israel eventually inherited the promised land. What God does through Jesus Christ is to provide spiritual salvation from spiritual slavery.

And so the Christian, through faith in that same Jesus, inherits the kingdom of God. What a promise. What a blessing.

John 8 and 36 tells us, if the sin sets you free, you will be free indeed. You will experience a freedom like no other freedom through faith in Jesus Christ.

So in closing, I ask you in here this morning, are you kingdom bound? Are you still considering it? Are you still swithering it?

[34 : 47] Are you still debating it in your mind? Well, if so, I would encourage you, don't dilly-dally. Don't hang about.

Because remember, what I said a little while ago, many an opportunity is lost while we deliberate after he has said, move.

Amen. And may the Lord bless to us these few thoughts for his own holy and inspired word. So we're now going to sing in closing from the Psalm 103, and we'll sing from verse 13 to 17.

And you'll find that on page 370, page 370, from verse 13 down to verse 17. Such pity as a father hath and to his children dear, like pity shows the Lord to such as worship him in fear.

And down to 17, but unto them that do him fear, God's mercy never ends, and to their children's children still his righteousness extends. We'll sing these verses from Psalm 103 to God's praise, verse 14 to 17.

[36 : 01] It's 13 to 17, sorry. Such pity as a father hath hath to his children dear, like pity shows the Lord to such as worship and fear.

For he remembers we are dust, and he our frame well knows.

Thrill on his days are like the grass, as far in filthy grows.

For over it the wind of paths and it away is gone.

And of the place where once it was it shall no more be known.

[37 : 42] But unto them, unto him fear, God's mercy never ends.

Unto their children's will his righteousness will his righteousness extends.

Lord living God will he thank you and bless you for these few moments to spend together this morning in your presence and around your word.

And we pray eternal God that you would speak to us from that word, that you would direct our paths in the way everlasting. And help us, Lord, if there's any here who as yet haven't stood up for Jesus.

We pray that you would speak to them and encourage them and help them, Lord, along that way. And, O Lord, for those of us who have, help us, Lord, to be bold in our witness, to be willing to share the good news of the gospel with those around us who are still in darkness.

[38 : 53] So, our Heavenly Father, we do ask you to accept our thanks for your presence here today. And we pray as this day continues to unfold, that you'd bless your people. And, Lord, as they gather again in the evening in this place, Lord, to worship and praise your name, we pray for Reverend Gordon Matheson as he holds his service.

And, Lord, as he speaks later to the young people there in the fellowship. And we pray many will come along, Lord, and that they would indeed be encouraged by what they hear. So, Lord, in heaven, we just pray once again that your name has been glorified, not just in this place, but throughout our nation and wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ is declared today.

So, Lord, part us now with your blessing. Grant each one of us safe passage to our homes and keep us safe, Lord, until we meet again or until Jesus comes or calls. In his name we pray.

Amen.