

## Out of the House of Bondage

Hebrews 2:15; Exodus 20:1

Sunday, March 3, 2024 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- *Intro. The anxiety I felt after a few months in Ohio. The Spirit-if you stay long enough, then you've come to the place where you will die.*

Many years ago, I moved to Ohio and lived there for a number of years. After about four years, roughly around 2023, I experience this strange sense of anxiety that I could not identify. After some time thinking and praying about it, I concluded that my anxiety was my fear of death. If I stayed in Ohio long enough, then I had come to the place where I would die. This past week I was reminded of that when I thought about the verse in Exodus in which God said that He was the God who delivered the children of Israel out of the House of Bondage. I thought, how can we relate to that? How can we ever really imagine what it is like to be a slave in a land where everyone like you is a slave and your ancestors have been slaves for generations? Do we have anything in common with that?

Set the stage

- *Exodus-four centuries of slavery in Egypt*

Exodus contains the very dramatic story of God using Moses and Aaron to deliver the nation of Israel from 4 centuries of slavery in Egypt. Both Exodus and Deuteronomy contain the Ten Commands upon which all commands in Scripture rest, the difference is that the passage in Deuteronomy mentions deliverance from slavery twice (Exodus 20:1; Deuteronomy 5:6, 15). Here's where I think we find a point of connection between our current life and the trials from which the children of Israel endured.

- *Hebrews-the fear of death*

I think the connection to us is made in the main verse for today's message, Hebrews 2:14-15: "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." So here we see that Christ entered humanity to deliver us from the bondage due to fear of death. We don't understand 400+ years of slavery in Egypt, but the fear of dying and death is universal. Everybody faces it. There is the fear of death as the cessation of physical life, there is the fear of death that involves disappointment and decay in our lives, there is the eternal death of permanent separation from Christ, which is the essence of hell. Jesus came to destroy the devil and release us from all of that.

- *Release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

"Release" is a combination of the prefix "off" and the word "to change." To release is to change you into someone different. When Christ promises to release you from the bondage that the fear of death brings He promises to make you into a different person in the process. Some values that were once precious will become of little use, and others values will take their place. Such is the work of the Holy Spirit within people.

- Application

*Lay claim to the promise of release when you pray. Vow to die to self when you pray.*

"In his farewell address to the United States Congress following his recall, General Douglass MacArthur quoted these lines, which have been made all the more immortal because of his dramatic use of the: 'Old soldiers never die; they just fade away.' Whereas that may hold true for earthly soldiers, it is not true of soldiers of the cross. There is no 'fading away' for those who have faithfully serve the Captain of their salvation. Rather, a far more fitting epitaph for them would be the words of Paul as he anticipated his departure from this life."\*

2 Timothy 4:6-8 "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto

all them also that love his appearing.” With this in mind, then pray this way this week. Lay claim to the promise of release this week. Acknowledge the Holy Spirit’s right to make you into a different person as part of that release. Vow to die to self when you pray. I remember meeting a woman in her nineties while working at Iowa River Hospice. She had been a widow for the past decade and active in her church for most of her life. She spoke openly of her impending death and did so without fear, referring to it as her “homegoing.” She was a person released from bondage and I aspire to be like that. You do the same.

- Conclusion

Moses led the people out of 400+ years of slavery in Egypt, which led me to wonder how we could possibly understand what that was like. But Hebrews notes another type of slavery that is universal, the fear of death. Death in all its forms. But Jesus came to deliver us from the bondage that the fear of death brings. This week let’s make a point to pray accordingly and lay claim to that promise and to vow a death to self that comes with that deliverance coming to pass in our lives.

\* p.414 Zondervan 2023 Pastor’s Annual by T.T. Crabtree. Grand Rapids, Michigan

- Children's Sermon: Jesus Cleans the Temple (John 2:13-22)

Mops, brooms, and window cleaner...what do we use these things for? (Pause.) We use them when we clean houses. Do you ever help your parents clean your house? (Pause.)

Let’s see how good you are at pretending to clean. When I hold up the broom, stand up and pretend to be sweeping the floor. (Demonstrate the motion.) When I hold up the paper towels and window spray, pretend to spray and scrub a window. (Demonstrate the motion.) When I hold up the mop, stay seated and pretend to use a mop in circles to clean the floor. (Demonstrate the motion.)

Hold up each item several times, sometimes repeating the same item twice in a row. Play until kids get tired.

How do you know it's time to clean house? Here are some signs that will let you know.

It’s time to clean house when your feet stick to the floor when you walk through the kitchen.

It’s time to clean house when your mother can't find you when she comes into your room to wake you up in the morning.

It’s time to clean house when the kids in the neighborhood use their fingers to write "wash me" in the dirt on your windows.

It’s time to clean house when there are more dishes in the kitchen sink than there are in the cabinets.

It’s time to clean house when you have enough dust bunnies under your bed to start a bunny farm.

I think you get the idea! Today we’re going to learn about a time Jesus did some house cleaning. It was time for the annual Passover celebration, so Jesus traveled to Jerusalem. When He went to the temple, He couldn't believe what He saw. People were selling cattle, sheep, and doves to be used as sacrifices in the temple. Some men were even charging people to change their money so they could pay their temple taxes. It looked more like a flea market than a place to worship God.

Jesus was so angry that He made a whip from rope, and drove the cattle, sheep, and those who were selling them out of the temple. He also turned over the money changers’ tables. To the ones who were selling the doves, He said, "Get out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!." Jesus did some serious house cleaning that day!

As we think about Jesus cleansing the temple, we can also be reminded that there is some other cleaning that needs to be done. The Bible tells us that we are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in us (1 Corinthians. 3:16). This season of Lent is a good time for us to think about how our hearts might need cleansing.

God, help us to remember that we are Your temple and that Your Spirit lives in us. Help us to keep our lives clean and useful for service to You. In Jesus' name, amen.