

Sunday 3rd May 2015 AM Three faces of Salvation - Exodus 1v1-2v10

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Purpose: To see three facets or faces of God's SALVATION that we might better appreciate the manner in which God works for our good.

INTRODUCTION

Hatton Garden Raid

You have to say that it was pretty daring raid that saw 72 safety-deposit boxes emptied at the Hatton Garden Security company containing millions of pounds of diamonds and gems.

The various news accounts read like a pretty epic tale:

- a vault packed with cash, diamonds and gems
- a lift shaft which gets abseiled down
- various alarm systems that get rendered inoperative
- and one of the best is when they cut man-sized holes through 2 foot thick reinforced concrete walls
- and nobody is any the wiser until everyone comes back to work after the Easter break

All-told pretty daring stuff - **AND IT IS A STORY THAT ONCE YOU HEARD IT YOU DON'T TEND TO FORGET IT.**

Another epic tale **WHICH YOU HEAR AND CANNOT EASILY FORGET** is one that takes place 1446BC and is recorded for us in the book of Exodus:

- For Jews this story defines their very existence, it was the rescue that made them the people of God.
- For Christians it is the good news of the OT,
God's first great act of Redemption:
 - an epic tale which takes place under the hot desert sands & in the shadow of the Pyramids
 - every scene is a masterpiece and builds to the next:
 - a baby in a basket
 - a burning bush
 - a river of blood
 - an angel of death
 - the crossing of the Red Sea

True, it wasn't the retrieval of multiple millions in precious gems out of a very fortified vault.

But it was, the amazing redemption of multiple millions of slaves who just happened to be God's own gems, taking them out of that **highly fortified, militarized and generally impregnable** country of Egypt.

New series - Exodus - Why?

So as you may have figured out, our new series for the next few months will be here in this second book of the bible, the book of Exodus.

Q. So why study a book like Exodus?

Let me give you **3 somewhat generic reasons**, straight off the bat: (and then I'll give you something a bit more specific):

- **FIRSTLY** - because it is a part of the whole inspired collection of 66 books that we call our Bible.

And because of that we do not actually need any more reason than that.

- **SECONDLY** - because this book is very foundational.

A little bit like the first book Genesis - it is still at a very early stage of the development of things.

The people of God at the end of Genesis are an extended family grouping consisting of no more than 70 people

So, in essence, we are still at the point of laying down the early framework of things - and that is very exciting.

- **THIRDLY** - one of the great selling points for Exodus (that is if you feel you really need some additional reason) is because we have a lot of **epic action and adventure stacked up in this book of Exodus**.

In just the same way that **Genesis is an excellent fund of Hollywood film material**

(and last year [2014] we had the film, simply called "Noah", hitting our screens)

so the book of **Exodus too is another great fund**

(and this year we have seen the arrival of the film "Exodus: Gods and Kings" one more loose adaptation of the story of Moses).

Q. But why, more specifically, study this book of Exodus?

Well the clue is in the book title 'exodus'.

Way back in history, the books of the bible all had names.

For the Jews of the OT period, they had the bible books on rolled up on scrolls and so as a scroll was unrolled a little, you would see the opening few Hebrew words and frequently this is what they used to name a book - and so for EXODUS - it would have been called simply "NAMES".

Exodus 1 verse 1 begins: "These are the names..."

Now you might, therefore, think - "oh, so the book of Numbers must start with 'These are the numbers...!' Hence NUMBERS?"

Well not quite - you see, 250 years before Jesus arrived, one of the Greek rulers over the land of the Nile delta had a big library at Alexandria and he wanted to have a copy of the Jewish scriptures **in the Greek language**.

Now for this large undertaking the Jews co-operated and they provided 70 Jewish scholars who did the translation and that OT version written in Greek and not Hebrew became what is called **THE SEPTUAGINT** (from the Latin '**Septuaginta**') which means '**The Seventy**'

And in this bible version, **the books of the OT were each given a Greek name**, and often **these were named more topically or thematically** - and so **the book of Numbers** comes into our English bibles because they named it "**Arithmoi**" (which we have in English as Arithmetic - i.e all to do with numbers, figures and statistics).

So for this second book it got the Greek name - "**Exodos**" - breaking this word into its parts this gives you:

- "**ex**" - which means "**out**" (which we have in English as, for example, "Exit")

- AND "**hodos**" - which means "**the way**" (and again we have this word "hodos" coming into English in words like "method" which somewhat literally means "after a way" i.e. following after a particular pathway (or "**synod**" is another one which has the sense of walking and working together along a particular road or way)

So taking our topical Greek book name **EXODUS** - you can now see that it means: "**THE WAY OUT**".

If you want the TOPIC, the THEME of this second bible book, in just a single word - then the word SALVATION is about as good as we are going to get.

This morning

This morning we are going to cover chapters 1 & 2 and I want us to see THREE FACES (or FACETS if you prefer) OF SALVATION:

- #1 - that **SALVATION - Always** has a lot to do with **SLAVERY**
- #2 - that **SALVATION - Usually** has a lot to do with **HARDSHIP**
- #3 - that **SALVATION - More often than not**, has a lot to do with **THE WEAK**

So then #1:

1] SALVATION - Always has a lot to do with SLAVERY

Hope -> Despair

One thing that we should notice, as we turn the page from Genesis chapter 50 to Exodus chapter 1 - is the fact that the situation and the mood quickly changes:

- not only do we have **A FAMILY** changing into **A NATION**
- but we also (perhaps even more significantly), have **A MOOD OF HOPE & ABUNDANCE** changing into one of **DESPAIR and SLAVERY**

And maybe some of us who are a little older will remember seeing that classic Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner film of Moses simply called the Ten Commandments - where Heston as Moses stands before the Pharaoh and utters those immortal lines: "Let my people go!"

And this is what Exodus is - it is an epic tale of RESCUE.

I guess it would be fair to say and actually very important to say that RESCUE / SALVATION **assumes two things**:

- **FIRSTLY** - it assumes that you need **SAVING FROM** something OR someone
- **SECONDLY** - it assumes that you are to be **SAVED OUT OF** or **INTO** something else

And the book of Exodus clearly shows us BOTH things.

Let me deal with the second one first - and I'll simply state the answer just as the book itself gives it to us. No less than 7 times do we come across that classic line "Let my people go" HOWEVER (unlike the Hollywood truncated version) - the Scripture always follows it with the reason why the people are to be let go and it reads "so that they may worship me".

So evidently we are SAVED **TO** WORSHIP - Q. But what are we SAVED OUT OF?

The answer is that of SLAVERY or SERVITUDE.

The real or fresh story line of Exodus begins there in **Verse 8** - let me read a couple of verses starting at that verse:

Exodus 1 verse 8-14 ⁸ "Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. ⁹ "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. ¹⁰ Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country."

¹¹ So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³ and worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with hard labour in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labour the Egyptians used them ruthlessly."

Now that last verse - verse 14 doesn't actually show up the real sense - so let me just read it from a version that will keep the Hebrew original more rigidly even though it loses readability:

(1901 ASV Verse 14) "and they made their lives bitter with hard **SERVICE**, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of **SERVICE** in the field, all their **SERVICE**, wherein they made them **SERVE** with rigour."

At the centre of verse is this word (repeated 4 times) SERVE or SERVICE (In Hebrew 'Avad' עָבַד) at the very core of their existence was servitude, slavery - service.

So in this book of Exodus we are going to see a movement:

- from SLAVERY to WORSHIP
- from the SERVING of man OR that which is man-made TO the WORSHIP of the one true God

Now I would be amiss if I didn't point out that actually where those 7 verses say "Let my people go that they might worship me" - the word for WORSHIP is actually the very same word repeated 4 times in verse 14 - it is the word SERVE.

So - as the ESV has it: **"Let my people go, that they may serve me..."**

So in reality SALVATION is the movement from **"ONE DEGREE OF SERVICE TO ANOTHER"**.

To put that more helpfully we could put it this way:

SALVATION is the movement from "WORDLY SERVITUDE to GODLY SERVICE"

Salvation is all about liberation, it is all about freedom - however, the modern definition of freedom is having nothing and no-one who gets to tell you how your life should be lived or arranged.

But this whole book of Exodus is to subvert this definition of liberty and freedom.

As one person put it (Tim Keller 'Preparing for Salvation'):

"Until you are ravished by, bowed down before, astounded by the beauty & glory of God - you aren't free. Unless you are absolutely centred on Him, you are a slave. Anything you centre your life on which is not God, makes you a slave."

The Exodus plotline (cosmic)

Now just as it is really good, whenever you come to a new book of the Bible, to look at the whole before you look too closely at the individual parts that make it up - so we try to look at the whole forest before we look at individual trees.

So also it is good to try and get to see the what you might call the "Cosmic Plotline" beneath or behind the "Overall Storyline".

Q. Now what do I mean?

Well all throughout the Bible we all know that it boils down to a cosmic scale conflict not merely between good and evil, but between Satan (and his demons) and God.

And behind various of the power players on the stage of human history is the evil one seeking to work out his plans to defeat and destroy the working and plans of God.

If you wanted chapter and verse for that - you don't have to look further than:

Ephesians 6 verse 10-12 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**"

And as we read Exodus, we can't help but noticing who it is that is motivating and moving people like these wicked Pharaoh's of Egypt to hit out against God's people the Israelites.

And the devil's chief aim, is to have us ENSLAVED to him.

Created as servants

You see from the ground up (from your teeth to your toes) you are, BY GOD'S INDELIBLE DESIGN, a SERVANT.

If you serve **anything** OR **anyone** then you are **A SLAVE**. If you serve God - only then are you truly free.

Q. What are you centred on right now?:

- your spouse
- your children
- your career
- your hobby
- how fat your bank account is
- the next wonderful holiday that you are going to have

As Jesus says: "You cannot serve two masters" and "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

So then #1 SALVATION - Always has a lot to do with SLAVERY - #2 then:

2] SALVATION - Usually has a lot to do with HARDSHIP

Two things obvious

There are a couple of things that are pretty obvious and apparent in these 2 opening chapters of Exodus:

- **The FIRST is obvious by its PRESENCE** - and that is the HARDSHIP that comes upon the people of God, the Israelites.
 - Pharaoh starts with HARD LABOUR.
 - When that doesn't do the trick, he tries using a birth control method via the Hebrew midwives.
 - And when that doesn't work, he cracks the whip and goes into wholesale male ethnic genocide by way of killing all the male babies. (This is a clever plan because once a whole male generation is lost then the Israelite women will have to marry Egyptian men and then in one single generation, the whole culture will be absorbed into the Egyptian way of things).
- **The SECOND is obvious by its ABSENCE** - and that is any very great mention of God.

And the obvious question that would have been mounting in the minds and probably being heard from their lips was:

- Q. Where is God when we need him?
- Q. Why does God go in for "radio silence" when we are undergoing terrible hardship?

Our hearts often betray at times of difficulty and they reason in the following way (and maybe you've done this):

We say: "I really can't see what God is doing? I can't see any reason why God hasn't put a stop to my hardship?" Therefore the conclusion is that: "God is not doing anything AND there are no good reasons why my hardship should not be rolled back.

But really the logical fallacy is cut through if we realise that actually what we are saying is that:

- God isn't around BECAUSE I can't see where He is!
- AND that God isn't doing anything about my hardship BECAUSE I can't see what He's doing!

I hope the falseness and really the arrogance of this logic is not lost on us.

So where is God then

Q. So where is God then?

Let's look at Pharaoh's three plans:

PLAN A - Hard Labour

Plan A - is that if we subject them to enough hard labour they will be too tired to procreate and their numbers will steadily plateau and then begin to drop off.

Well nice idea Mr Pharaoh - but what actually happens:

Verse 12 "But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread."

Put very simply God makes his plan BACKFIRE!

PLAN B - The midwives

Ok plan B - let's bring in the midwives.

Perhaps you've seen some of that rather popular TV series: "Call the midwives".

You can imagine a couple of midwives on bikes turning up in Pharaoh palace and given very strict instructions about what they are to do from the Pharaoh himself - "scary or what?!"

But much to the Pharaoh disgust - nothing happens!! Birth control plan B - through the official Hebrew channels also badly backfires.

The two women **Shiprah** and **Puah** happen to be two, what you might call "**God fearers**" and they operate a policy of "creative civil disobedience".

Basically they decide that between obedience to God and obedience to Pharaoh - then God had to come first.

- **By way of application** - this should encourage all of us that work in secular environments when we are presented with the same kind of choices. Q. Do we obey God or do we cave in to our overbearing and over-demanding bosses?
- **By way of observation** - notice that the Pharaoh in all of Exodus never gets a name (you see Pharaoh is just a title of office and simply translates as 'Great House') HOWEVER these two women get their names going down in history for all time.

PLAN C - Genocide by way of crocs

Well both of those plans BACKFIRED ROYALLY you might say!

Let's look at his next attempt - and they get ever more severe and ever more desperate.

This time it is GENOCIDE by way of the CROCS. And this is going to turn out to be no more than one great CROCK itself!!

(The story behind the story)

And by the way, do you not see in this a good example of where the story behind the story, or the COSMIC PLOTLINE behind the HISTORIC STORYLINE emerges.

Do you remember another time when we have:

- the birth of a special child
- one who is destined to be a great deliverer
- a tyrannical king
- one who issues an edict to kill all the baby boys

Yes this is the same story that prevails around not just the baby Moses but also the baby Messiah.

No more successful

Q. So is this PLAN C anymore successful?

Well no doubt it has all the trapping of being more successful - babies are now being surrendered to the waters of the Nile.

However, what we see is that it is by way of this terrible edict itself, that God raises up His own deliverer who will be planted at the very heart of the Egyptian system itself and the very family of the Pharaoh himself!

Providence

Q. So what does all this incredible BACKFIRING meant to show us?

Well this is none other than the working of God, it is that which we call by the name PROVIDENCE.

God is the one who sees ahead and orchestrates everything according to his own plans and purposes.

SALVATION then - **Always** has a lot to do with **SLAVERY**

SALVATION - **Usually** has a lot to do with **HARDSHIP** - #3:

3] SALVATION - More often than not, has a lot to do with THE WEAK

Exodus begins with an AND

If you were to look at the very first word of the book of Exodus - you might be surprised to find that it begins with the word AND. ('waw' consecutive)

"AND these are the names of the sons of Israel...".

What this tells us (seeing as I don't point these things out so that you should be fascinated, entertained or made "smart in some way") what this tell us is that we are meant to read Exodus as a CONTINUATION of the book of Genesis.

And one of the things that we meet again and again and again in Genesis is the fact that God delights and even seems to specialize in using the UNLIKELY and the WEAK - so for example (and examples abound):

- God favours Abel (the 2nd born) over Cain
- He favours Isaac and not Ishmael
- Its Jacob and not Esau
- Joseph is chosen as God's channel of deliverance and not Reuben (the firstborn)

When it comes to the matter of bearing significant sons

- God works through the childless and aged Sarah
- it is through the barren Rebekah that we get Isaac
- and it's through the unloved and unlovely Leah - that He gives to bear Judah through whom the Messiah will one day come.

And once again, this God-like pattern is being repeated here in this 2nd book of the Bible, in Exodus.

Q. So where do we see this?

Speaking generally - all the heroes are heroines

Well speaking GENERALLY - notice that all of our HEROES are in fact HEROINES!!!

If you look at the men in these opening two chapters they are either **wicked** (as in Pharaoh) OR "**none too wise**" (as in Moses).

Speaking specifically

Speaking a bit more specifically -let me mention a couple of things:

- **FIRSTLY** perhaps you spot something about our **midwives**.

Typically, it is believed that midwives, were drawn from those women who did not have children of their own - and that (unlike today) was not some career choice.

So midwives were drawn from those women of low social standing.

Verse 21 confirms this idea: "And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own."

So God saves through women who are of lower status than men AND he saves through women who are of lower social status than most women.

It's a case of the lowest of the low - doesn't that remind you of the Gideon story - who was God's man to deliver Israel in Judges chapter 6 and he is from the smallest tribe, the smallest clan and the smallest family!!!

- **SECONDLY** take a look at Moses' mother (Exodus 6 tells us her name was **Jochebed**, which means "Yahweh's Glory", good name) She is the one in the initiative when it comes to another act of faith-filled passive resistance to Pharaoh's evil decree.

She was told to throw the child into the Nile - so she carefully prepares an ark (and by the way, it is exactly the same word as used in Genesis for Noah's ark - perhaps this was where she drew her idea from).

Perhaps she reasoned to herself - "Well if God can save all of Noah's family from a raging deluge, then surely he can save my son from the dangers of the Nile."

Notice too that she coats her ark just like Noah did his.

- **THIRDLY** notice how God is not averse to bringing in a Gentile outsider to bring to pass His plans - see how Pharaoh's very own daughter risks her own safety and violates her father's strict edict and adopts this Hebrew child as her own.

Isn't it amazing how God delights to bring SALVATION through the agency of the weak, the downcast and the outsider.

Let me conclude:

CONCLUSION

Although SALVATION might sound like a simple word - it is a **deeply textured word** and this morning we have seen **THREE DIFFERENT FACES OF SALVATION:**

- **FIRST - that it ALWAYS has to do with SLAVERY**

Right now Q. Where is your service rendered?
and Q. Is it service OR servitude - service OR slavery?

Q. Where is your life centred? God said again and again - "Let my people go, that they may SERVE ME..."

- **SECOND - Salvation USUALLY has a lot to do with HARDSHIP**

Maybe that's your experience at this time (or perhaps coming in the next 6 months) and you say

Q. Where is God? Q. What is He doing when you really need him?

I can't see Him --> therefore He's not around!!
I don't know what He's up to --> therefore He isn't up to anything!!

AND ALL THE WHILE - God is causing every plan of Satan to signify BACKFIRE and become a source of BLESSING and DELIVERANCE.

- **LASTLY - Salvation MORE OFTEN THAN NOT has a lot to do with the WEAK**

Is it not fantastic that God's speciality is to take those that do not appear to make the grade and use them as his FIRST ORDER AGENTS to bring about His SALVATION.

Annie Johnson Flint

Let me finish with a story of one so weak and yet so used-it concerns a lady by the name of **Annie Johnson Flint** who died in 1932:

“Annie Flint, the author of this hymn, understood something of God’s grace. Her mother died in childbirth, and her father died shortly afterwards from an incurable disease. Before his death, Annie’s father left her and her baby sister with a childless Christian couple, the Flints, who adopted them.

Annie wanted to become a teacher, but in her second year of teaching, she began experiencing the symptoms of arthritis. The disease grew worse until she could hardly walk. Then the death of both adoptive parents left Annie and her sister alone again. Annie went to a sanatorium, but the doctors said there was nothing they could do for her.

She began writing from experience. Her fingers were bent, her joints were swollen, and often she could only write a few lines at a time. But she continued writing, praying that others might be helped through her experience. Her poems were published in magazines across the country. Sometimes the publisher would mention Annie’s physical condition, and readers would donate funds to help her.

Annie learned what the apostle Paul had learned when God told him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”

Because the verses of this hymn are so good, I'll read all four:

1. He giveth more grace as our burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength as our labours increase;
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials He multiplies peace.
2. When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources
Our Father's full giving is only begun.
3. Fear not that thy need shall exceed His provision,
Our God ever yearns His resources to share;
Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing;
The Father both thee and thy load will upbear.
4. His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

Let's prayAMEN