

Jake was 17 when he took his first drink. The euphoric feeling he experienced was unlike anything else and helped him to forget the pain of his broken home. But now it had been 7 years, and Jake couldn't seem to quit the downward spiral he found himself on.

Sophie had started her job with great enthusiasm. The long hours didn't bother her. But now, after years of working 80+ hours a week, Sophie found that anything and anyone was dispensable as long as her career kept moving forward, but didn't know how to change things.

Being enslaved is something that is common to the human experience. There are certain forms of slavery that are more obvious and evil. But there are different ways to be enslaved. The Bible talks about two ways of being enslaved. One way of being enslaved is being oppressed by someone with more power so that the powerful take advantage of the powerless. Another way to describe slavery is to submit yourself to passions and desires that take control over you.

After God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be so numerous, the Lord told him that his descendants would be afflicted for 400 years (Gen. 15:13). And soon after, Abraham's son Isaac would have Jacob; Jacob would have 12 sons, and due to a global famine, Jacob and his clan of 70 would settle in Egypt.

Now, at the beginning of the book of Exodus, Jacob's family has been fruitful and multiplied, just as God had commanded them. But a Pharaoh arose who did not remember Jacob's son Joseph, the son who had risen to prominent power in Egypt and had saved many from starvation. As Joseph was forgotten, this new Pharaoh oppressed the descendants of Abraham. Fearing that the 2 million+ Hebrews might be a national security threat, Pharaoh ordered all the male infants from the Hebrews to be drowned in the Nile river.

But God raises up a new Adam. A little boy named Moses was hid from the infanticide. Placed in a little ark on the Nile, he was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter, raised in prominence, and then finds himself exiled when he defends a Hebrew slave being mistreated and kills an Egyptian. How will God rescue his people, and how will he keep his promise to Abraham? And how does God's deliverance give us hope that we can be set free today?

Cry out to the Lord – The Prayer for Deliverance (Exodus 3)

At the end of chapter 2 (2:23-25), the oppression of the Hebrew slaves has become so great. Their day-to-day lives were filled with oppression that they cried out to the Lord for help. After 400 years of silence, the cries of the people moved God to act.

Imagine with me hearing stories about your family history from 400 years ago. My grandmother believes that she can trace her family line back to the Mayflower. Reading stories of the pilgrims leaving England, setting sail for a new world, facing hardships,

cold winters, and starvation seems so distant and remote to me, almost unrelatable. In the same way, the Hebrews would have been living on stories of God's work 400 years old.

But now they were slaves. And their cries were heard by God, who remembered his covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And out in the wilderness, Moses has been tending sheep for 40 years, hiding from the death penalty after killing an Egyptian.

As Moses is on Mount Horeb, the mountain of God, he sees a bush on fire. But the bush is not being consumed (3:2). So Moses went to check out what was going. And as he approached, the voice of the Lord spoke, "Don't come near, take your sandals you're your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." Then the Lord revealed himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who had heard the cries of the oppressed Hebrews. And now, he will deliver them and bring them to the land promised to Abraham.

But how can this God deliver? As God calls Moses to go back to Pharaoh and declare the message of God's freedom, Moses learns several things about how this God can deliver.

First, he is the God who remembers his promises. As God reveals himself to Moses, God says two things to remind Moses that he is a promise keeping God. The first thing is that God identifies himself with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (3:6). Second, he reiterates the promise of land that he had made to Abraham (3:8-9).

Second, this God can deliver not just because he remembers his promises, but because he is a self-sufficient, self-existing God. As God reveals himself to Moses, it is in a display of his power in fire that does not consume the bush. God is self-sufficient and self-existing – he doesn't need fuel for his fire to exist. And so his power is great, but his power is never exhausted.

Third, God's name is revealed as the great I AM. God is who he is. He doesn't change based on people's responses, emotions, or sins. He is the same God who has always been.

If you need to be delivered, you need a God who remembers his promise to rescue. You need a God who doesn't get burned out because of your neediness. And you need a God who is consistent.

The way that God can deliver is that he can hear the cry of those who are oppressed by sin and suffering, who cry out for deliverance because God never gets tired of helping those who cry out to him. He isn't exhausted, disappointed, or hesitant to help those who will lean upon his promise.

Trust in the Blood of the Lamb – the Source of Deliverance (Exodus 12)

As Moses returns to Pharaoh's court, the Lord says that he will show Pharaoh his power. And in a sequence of 10 plagues, the Lord demonstrates that he is the Destroyer of gods of Egypt. While Egypt took great pride in her many gods, the God of Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob is even greater. Ra may be the sun god, but the Lord can make the skies dark. Heqet may be the goddess who brings life through the Nile and symbolized by a frog, but the Lord can turn the Nile to a lifeless river and overwhelm the land with frogs. And Osiris may be the god of the afterlife who has power to raise the dead, but the Lord can strike down the firstborn of Egypt.

But the power of the Lord is not seen in his great judgment of Egypt and her powerless gods, but in his mercy. God's judgment will come to the whole land of Egypt. But the Lord had told the Hebrews how they could be saved. They were to take a spotless one year old male lamb without spot or blemish, sacrifice it for a meal of remembrance, and put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintel. By marking the doorway with blood, those who were within the home were saying that they were hiding from God's wrath behind the blood of the lamb.

And that night, the Lord passed through the entire land of Egypt. Wherever there was blood on the doorposts, the angel of death would pass over that house, showing mercy, and sparing the life of the firstborn of that home.

This became the celebration for Israel: the Passover. It was the remembrance of the night that God began his saving work for all who trusted in the blood of the Lamb.

Watch the Lord fight for you – the Power of Deliverance (Exodus 14)

With such force, Pharaoh now expelled the 2+ million Hebrews out to the wilderness. But realizing that he had just lost his cheap labour, Pharaoh lead his army out to recapture them. As they hurriedly went to round up these former slaves, the Hebrews find themselves backed against the edge of the sea. With water on one side and Pharaoh's army on the other, things looked hopeless.

With nothing but death all around them, the Lord spoke to Moses: "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. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent" (14:13-14). And with that, Moses was to lift his staff and the Lord opened the sea by a great wind, allowing the Hebrews to pass through the waters to their salvation, but Pharaoh and his army knowing nothing but the waters of judgment.

See the Glory of Christ (John 1:29, Eph. 6:10ff)

The story of Israel's deliverance isn't just an incredible story that happened in the past. It is the story of how God delivers those who cry out to him.

We are all born into sin and slavery. Some are slaves, addicted to substances. Some are slaves to approval, addicted to proving themselves through hard work, good deeds, or trying to appear cool. Still others are enslaved, trying to find some escape through endless internet surfing to numb their restless mind. In Rom. 6:16, Paul questioned if we realize how enslaved we really are. He asked, "Do you not know that if you present yourselves



THE STORY OF
Everything
LUKE 24:27

to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?”

The way that we are delivered from our enslavement is the same way that the Hebrews were saved. They cried out to the Lord. And when we cry out to the Lord, we find that there is the blood of a pure, spotless lamb that was offered on the cross. And on that cross where Jesus died, the Lamb of God cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). For all who cry out to this Lamb, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29), find that they can hide themselves from the judgment of God and know his deliverance.

Jesus is the same self-sufficient God. He doesn't grow tired or weak of us coming to him with our burdens, our distress, our sorrows. In fact, he invites us to him: “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:28-29).

For when you feel weary and tired, when you feel as though you can't find the liberation you so desperately need, we have a God who fights for us. He gives us his armor. He gives us his sword. And he tells us to stand and watch:

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil...take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm” (Eph. 6:10, 11, 13).

Today, there are people who need to know that there is freedom in Jesus Christ. There are people who are oppressed and enslaved in the sex trade business. International Justice Mission, an international Christian organization that has its Canadian offices here in London, is working to stop the evil of this oppression.

There are Muslim Uyghurs in concentration camps in northwest China producing your products for major companies who need to know of the freedom that comes from those who will stand up to the injustices of the oppressive CCP.

And there are people all around us who are enslaved to approval, substances, entertainment, and mindlessness who need to know that it is for freedom that Christ has come – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So be free in Jesus! And bring his message of freedom to the prisoners of the evil one who enslaves their souls to sin.