

# And a Cry went up to God

12/4/2020

Missionary Renewal Guest Speaker

Exodus 2:23–3:1 (CSB)

<sup>23</sup>After a long time, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned because of their difficult labor, and they cried out, and their cry for help because of the difficult labor ascended to God. <sup>24</sup>God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. <sup>25</sup>and God saw the Israelites, and God knew.

**MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH**

**3** Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

1. After a long time...the king of Egypt died.

A. Immediately, the reader is struck with two ideas that are hard to swallow.

1. First, is the length of time.

a. When the Bible says "a long time" it is a long time.

b. In fact, the captivity was 400-430 years.

c. That's not just a long-time, that is multiple lifetimes and multiple generations.

2. Second, we are confronted by the truth that the slavery and oppression continued even after the death of the Pharaoh who had wanted Moses dead.

Let's talk about these two elements briefly.

B. As pastors and missionaries, time is not on our side.

1. We have too much to do and not enough time to do it in.

2. And we feel the pull between administration and real ministry.

a. Doesn't AGWM know that people are dying and you are having to fill out forms!

b. Doesn't our leadership understand that while I'm having to raise all of this money, that I'm missing the chance to do real ministry!

3. I'm thankful that I'm part of a Fellowship and Movement that honors and expects it's members and leaders to be actively involved in ministry.

a. I'm thankful that we are busy, that we are chomping at the bit to do what God has called us to do.

b. Yet, **we do not often prize the waiting and the abiding.**

c. We struggle with waiting.

d. And if we are waiting and suffering at the same time, that feels like two nails in our coffins.

4. Yet, we also know that God's timing is completely different than ours.

a. In fact, time is a created thing, part of the creation, therefore God is not tied to it like we are.

b. In many ways, all of us find ourselves in a season of waiting. (But that's ok, because God knows what He is doing while we wait).

c. But, I believe there are a few of us here tonight that have been waiting and praying for some specific things for a long time.

d. Maybe you are wondering if God will ever answer or hear those prayers.

e. Let me just say, that I believe God has heard your cries and have observed your tears.

f. It may seem like it has taken forever, but God holds forever in the palm of His hands.

g. Just as God sent His Son in the fullness of time, He knows how to answer the prayers of His people in the fullness and perfection of His timing also!

C. In America, it's tempting to place our hope in leadership and leadership change.

1. We have a tendency to believe that changes in presidents will bring about the change we want (or don't want).

2. Could it have been possible that Israel, at first, rejoiced in the death of this difficult Pharaoh, only to find the successor to be much of the same?

a. Eugene Carpenter, in his commentary on Exodus writes: The would-be executioner of Moses dies, the king of Egypt. But Israel's servitude continues under the new Pharaoh or new dynasty. The central administrator changed, but the government's economic, political, religious, and social policies toward the Hebrews did not change.<sup>1</sup>

b. Could it be that we are often guilty of praying for the wrong kind of deliverance?

c. We seek change, but we seek changes that have no power to radically alter our economic, political, religious or social policies.

d. We pray for change, but our sights are set too short.

e. Our sites are set on temporal change instead of supernatural change

f. We wonder why the faces change, but the problems only increase.

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene Carpenter, [Exodus](#), ed. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick, vol. 1, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 177.

3. Whether you pastor a church, lead a Bible-school, or establish clinics in the far-reaches of the world, the change we desire must go beyond faces, and policies, and regimes.

a. We must seek the miraculous deliverance that only God can bring.

b. We must seek the kind of change that only God can deliver.

c. We must seek God, crying out to Him to bring freedom and deliverance to the people we love.

a. How long must the people of Haiti suffer under poverty, earthquakes, and the demonic strongholds that have strangled that island?

b. How long will animism dominate the islands you love.

c. How much longer will the great churches and cathedrals of Europe be converted to pubs, jungle gyms, and everything but places of worship.

d. How long must we suffer and strive under the tyranny of evil and all the sin that has beset upon our lands.

4. Thankfully, as we see here in the text, our cries are never wasted with God.

## 2. And a cry went up to God...

A. The presence of pain and difficulty was not evidence that God had left them.

1. In fact, God had been working behind the scenes carefully fulfilling His plans and Covenant.

2. The rescuing of Moses from the Nile, deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh, and the life-giving hospitality of Jethro were all aspects of God's divine grace in the moment.

B. However, when we are in pain, it is hard to look past the hurt.

1. Many of you have experiencing Covid.

a. I imagine not-one of you was concerned with your 10-year ministry plan while you were sick.

b. When we have a toothache, we will gladly throw away our carefully prepared budgets to get relief.

c. Pain narrows our focus and reminds us of what is most important.

2. That is why Exodus 2:23 is unique.

a. It is the first time that the people of God had called out to God as a people.

b. Eugene Carpenter wrote, "This is the first report of an audible response by Israel as she broke her silence under oppression".<sup>2</sup>

c. Eventually, the weight of oppression and pain led Israel to cry out to her Creator.

1. When pain overwhelms us, we all cry out.

2. The biggest question is to whom will we cry?

3. Some cry out and seek relief in drugs or alcohol.

4. Some will cry out and seek relief in illicit relationships.

5. But at our deepest levels, all of Creation was designed to cry out to the one whom created us.

*C. I have to believe that there are people all over the world who are crying out for a God that they don't yet understand or believe in.*

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<sup>2</sup> Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, ed. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick, vol. 1, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 177.

1. Like the people of Athens, who had an altar to an unknown God, there are people all over the world who are crying out for a God they do not yet know and are waiting for you to tell them.

2. For how can they believe unless they hear, and how can they hear unless someone tells them, Romans asks us.

a. I believe that God has heard the cry of the people in Pacific Oceania.

b. I believe that God has heard the cry of the people in Africa.

c. I believe that God has heard the cry of Europe, yearning for someone to set them free.

d. I believe that God still hears the cry of Americans crying out for deliverance.

D. The world you are called to reach may not yet understand the beauty of salvation and deliverance yet.

1. **But God is fluent in the cries of people** and I take solace in knowing that Israel's deliverance was not predicated upon their figuring it out.

a. A passage from my studies stuck out and I wasn't sure where or how to share it.

b. Obscurely in Exodus 20:25, God said:

<sup>25</sup> If you make a stone altar for me, do not build it out of cut stones. If you use your chisel on it, you will defile it.

1. Charles Spurgeon lamented the additional measure of salvation that we often add to the simplicity and ruggedness of the cross.

2. I can't help but wonder if, through our love for systems, organization, fog-machines, and clever marketing, that we are using human hands and human chisels to add our touch to the altar's that we claim we are building for Jesus.

3. What if the answer to the missional question here and around the world was not more of us but more of Jesus.

4. What if God is not calling us to build ministries of cut and dressed stones but ministries that are based upon prayer, worship, and the power of the Holy Spirit!

5. What if, in the coming days, we experience the destruction of so many altars that were incredibly beautiful and useful but were not of God's design!

2. As God sends you all out into the highways and byways, you will encounter situations that you do not fully understand.

3. You don't know how to deliver the people you love.

a. You don't know how to save.

b. So what shall we do?

c. We cry out to God, for God fluently understands the cries of the people He created.

4. There is no people group that you love, that God doesn't love more.

E. **Let us not forget the power of crying out to God!**

1. May the ground of our calling be soaked with the cries of God's people, calling out to God for deliverance, for mercy, for strength and for hope.

2. **Would you pause with me for a moment as we soak this ground with the prayers of desperation.**

3. **And God remembered his covenant...**

A. The covenant of God with Abraham declared that through him and his seed, all nations would be blessed.

1. There was more at stake than God setting this oppressed people free.
2. Their freedom would result in the deliverance of many nations and peoples.
3. God intended for Israel to be a kingdom of priests, representing YHWH God to the world.

B. The background of their deliverance was the pain of slavery.

1. **Their cries became the soundtrack of their redemption.**
2. Oh, when we feel like we have been forgotten, when we feel like we are wasting away in a place far from our calling, we must look up to see that Jesus is still near.

**C. The hardest part of Israel's suffering might have been the realization that it could not have been prevented.**

1. In Genesis 15:13, God told Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved for four hundred years in a land not their own.
2. And then deliverance would come.
3. Many of us are like the friends of Job:
  - a. We have adopted a theology that declares that all harm, pain, and suffering can be prevented if ONLY we do what is right and follow God.
  - b. This sort of theology does terrible damage to us when we experience pain and suffering.

D. But it was out of their groaning that God remembered His covenant with their fathers.

1. It isn't that God forgot.
2. To "remember" means to bring to the front and to deal with.
3. God had been faithful to during the oppression for 400 years, now He would be faithful to bring deliverance.



E. In all of our ministries, there will be moments that we wonder “What could I have done different?”.

1. Yes, sometimes we are led astray by bad decisions and bad motives.
2. For example: God intended for Israel to pass “through” the wilderness not for them to camp there for 40 years.
3. But sometimes, we find ourselves oppressed to no fault of our own.
4. But the good news is that when God leads you into a troubled place, He knows how to lead you out.
5. **When I’m led by God, I’m never a victim of circumstances.**
6. Psalm 23 reminds us that “Though I walk THROUGH the valley of Death, I will fear no evil because the Lord is with me”.

That brings me to the last point and phrase:

#### 4. **Meanwhile, Moses was shepherding in Midian.**

A. Exodus 3 reminds us that “**While God was preparing a deliverer in Midian, God observed carefully the plight of his people**”.<sup>3</sup>

1. There were lessons that Moses needed to learn before he could be the deliverer God had created him to be.
2. There was an anger and a hatred that needed the space of Midian to work out.
3. There were lessons regarding family and identity that Moses needed to learn in Midian.
4. There were people skills needed that only sheep could teach Moses.
5. Too often we want to prepare for leadership instead of servanthood.

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<sup>3</sup> Carpenter, Eugene. *Exodus*. Edited by H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick. Evangelical Exegetical Commentary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012. Pg 178

- a. The ministry of the priest of Midian, the marriage and birth of Moses' sons, and the tending of someone else's flocks were all part of God's lessons plans for Moses.
- b. Egypt had taught Moses how to drive men and slaves, Midian taught Moses how to lead sheep.
- c. Egypt had taught Moses the power of Pharaoh. Midian would teach Moses the power of God.
- d. God prepares us for realities that we do not know exist.
- e. And His ways of preparation almost always uses the wilderness.

6. While the people cried out to God under their load, God had a deliverer prepared in the vastness of the Wilderness.

**B. Tonight, as I speak to my co-laborers, God is aware of the tension many of you are living in.**

1. Some of you, this is your first-time going to the field of your calling.

- a. You are chomping at the bit to get over there and to start ministering and affecting change.
- b. Allow me to remind you of these two truths:
  - a. God hears the cry of the people you are called to minister to. They are not forsaken. They are not forgotten.
  - b. **They are being made ready for the Gospel.**
- c. And in the meantime, God is forming you and preparing you to be the agent of deliverance that He desires.
  - 1. Itineration, travel, prayer, phone calls, worship, and discovery are all parts of the process that God uses to prepare us to be the ministers that God has called us to be.

2. All of the wonderings, the jobs, the churches, the frustrations of your previous years have been the grounds that God has used to prepare you for this mission.

3. 2. I remind you that God used 40 years in Midian to prepare Moses and he will use and has used the 12-18 months of itineration to form within you the skills and attitudes you will need for the next 4 years on the field.

2. For those of you who found your world and ministry yanked out and your momentum lost, I want to encourage you by reminding you that God knows what He is doing.

a. Midian experiences are never planned, but are necessary.

b. There are lessons and perspectives that can only be taught in Midian.

d. It is in the waiting, in the middle places, that God does the hidden work which is necessary for the public work.

e. And while all of us "wanna be deliverers" find ourselves tending to our "father in laws' sheep" God still hears the cries of the people that you had to leave behind.

C. The Good News is that the Story isn't over yet.

1. God still has a plan and He is working that plan.

2. And we all have a part to play.

Closing: Missionary, do not give up.

A. Someone has pointed out that "Moses was 40 years in Egypt learning something; he was 40 years in the desert learning to be nothing; and he was 40 years in the wilderness proving God to be everything." Whenever we are tempted to grow impatient with God's

timetable for our lives, we should remember Moses, who spent two years of preparation for every year of ministry.<sup>4</sup>

B. I can't help but sense this week that some of us here are walking through a season of discouragement.

1. It is a season of tears and questions.
2. But God isn't done yet.
3. God hears the cries of your heart and he hears the cries of the people you are called to do.
4. Trust God, for He is faithful.

C. I also sense that some of you are preparing for one thing, but God has something else in mind.

1. Perhaps, ministry will not look or feel like you thought it would.
2. You itinerated with one vision, but God is going to fulfill another.
3. If so, that is ok. You are not the first person that God has ever led into the mission's field.
4. God is the best missionary sender, and He knows how to love you, care for you, and utilize your giftings better than anyone.
5. So trust God, for He is faithful.

D. Lastly, "God knows how to handle chaos".

1. In the beginning, God moved upon the nothingness and the chaos and brought order.
2. Jesus knew how to calm the storm with a word.

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<sup>4</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 71. quoted in commentary by Boice.

3. Peter and Paul knew the power of God to cast out the chaotic demons and to bring a sound-mind and new life to the oppressed.

4. And I dare say, that God knows how to handle the chaos we are living in.

5. Trust God, for He is faithful.

6. For when the Cries of the people go up, God has a way of Coming down.

Prayer.