

God Remembers Exodus 2:23-25

Scripture Introduction:

This morning we begin a new sermon series entitled “The Exodus: Moses and the People of God.” During our time together we will be examining key passages from the books of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In the New Testament, Paul tells us that the events recorded here happened for us and for our instruction (1 Cor. 10). However, it is not immediately clear how these stories have relevance for our lives. In what way do they instruct us?

Of course, it would be easy to conclude that these stories give us ethical principles to guide our behavior. Similarly, we might think that their usefulness is in that they give us timeless truths about God. However, I think we must reach beyond ethical principles and timeless truths to really understand the story of Israel. It is important that these texts come to us as stories. In this way, they invite our participation. **The stories of the Pentateuch are, in a sense, are symbolic, through which we understand our own lives better. Not only are we learning about the history of the people of God, we find ourselves repeating their story. So, we learn how to be the people of God. Through these stories we are drawn closer to the God who rules over all histories.** After all, the Exodus from Egypt prepares us for the greater Exodus of our sin in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The leadership of Moses prepares us for our greater leader, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the wandering in the wilderness helps us understand why our lives today are lived as a pilgrimage where we wait longingly for the promised land of the New Heavens and Earth.

So, let’s begin the story.

Introduction:

The story is told of....

First-time father Michael Bryson [who] was not about to let his wife’s first real Mother’s Day pass unnoticed. He wrapped up his six-month old son, Jason, plunked him in a baby carrier, and wet to the hospital where Miriam Bryson worked as a nurse. Then in front of patients and coworkers alike Michael surprised Miriam with flowers, candy, and balloons that said, “World’s Greatest Mom.” It was a special moment for all but, after all the laughing and crying and smooching was over, Miriam had to say good-bye. She went back to work, and the two men in her life returned to the car for the trip home.

Going home, of course, was not nearly as much fun as preparing for the surprise. And getting all that “stuff” back into the car wasn’t as easy as getting it out. Michael snorted in preoccupied disgust as he balanced the baby carrier on the roof of the car while tossing the candy in the front seat, arranging the flowers on the floor, and wrestling the balloons out of the wind into the backseat. Finally, he got everything arranged and headed home.

Suddenly the trip became quite odd. Other drivers began to honk at Michael and flash their lights. He could not figure out what was happening until he about fifty-five miles per hour on the highway. That is when he heard a scraping sound move across the top of the car. Then Michael watched in horror through the rearview mirror as the baby carrier—still holding Jason—slid off the roof, bounced on the trunk, dropped to the road, and began to toboggan down the highway behind the car.

The driver in the car behind Michael’s had spotted the baby carrier on the roof and was prepared. He screeched to a halt behind the carrier to shield it from the oncoming traffic. Michael, of course, also braked to a hard stop, ran back to Jason, and discovered the baby carrier had more than fulfilled its design function—the baby was safe! Then as the

waves of fear, guilt and relief hit him, the new father began to sob uncontrollably on the highway.

The tears, however, did not stop a passing policeman from writing Michael a citation, nor a local newspaper from publishing the story. The reporter even interviewed Jason's mother, who thankfully by that time had not been arrested for the manslaughter of her husband. Instead, Miriam demonstrated great restraint and care. With remarkable understanding she said, "This is no unlike Michael; he really is a good father."¹

Wow! That's a scary story. After being relieved that little Jason was okay, don't you want to say to this father, "How in the world could you forget your child on the roof of your car?" Yet, as soon as we begin to condemn him we remember all of the things and occasionally persons we forget. Rather than condemning Michael we are left with simply being thankful that we haven't done that...yet.

FCF: Forgetfulness can have terrible consequences. Aren't you glad God doesn't forget? He doesn't make dumb mistakes. He doesn't leave his children on the roof his moving automobile. He doesn't let us flounder at the hands of our enemies. Or, does He? If we're honest sometimes we really do believe God has forgotten us. Like little Jason, we sometimes think we are bouncing down the interstate wondering what will become of us. We think, "God, do you see this suffering? Have you known this opposition? Do you remember me? Have you seen the tangled web I have woven for myself?" Does God remember? Or, what if he is like us, forgetful?

I've got good news. No matter where we are in our lives today. No matter the opposition, the suffering or the pain resultant from the consequences of our own failure, God is no forgetful God. Our God remembers. But how do the first two chapters of Exodus teach us this?

Background to our story: The first two chapters of Exodus introduce us to a radical turn of events for the nation of Israel—God's favored people. Under Joseph (Gen. 37-50) they had enjoyed special status in Egypt, but now those privileges have been removed (Ex. 1:8). After more than 400 years (1 Kings 6:1; Acts 7:6), they are a slave people—helpless and oppressed. Nevertheless, there is hope for Israel because God remembers his covenant promises (Ex. 2:24) and sets his motion a plan for the deliverance of his people. In the same way, **we can have hope in our affliction because our God remembers us.**

His remembrance makes sure our hope!

1) Because God is faithful to all he has promised (23-25)

But what is the exact nature of his remembrance. More specifically, verse 24 teaches us that God remembers "his Covenant." **The covenant to which our passage refers is that bond of love and life that God forged with the fathers of the nation of Israel—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.** In other words, what God remembers is the relationships he had forged with the fathers of this nation. His remembrance means that he is recalling the promise he had made, pledging that he will make good on it. **He will be faithful to all he has promised.**

This remembrance is critical if we pay attention to what has happened to the people of Israel.

a) God is faithful no matter our situation (1:8-14)

If you remember from Genesis 12 and 15, God's promise to Abraham included making the sons of Abraham numerous, giving him the land of Canaan and using the nation of

¹ Bryan Chapell tells this story in his book Holiness by Grace, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001, pp. 91-92. In a footnote he informs the reader that he originally heard this story told as true at a national meeting of the Fellowship of Evangelical Seminary Presidents in 1996.

Israel to bless the nations of the world. Originally, God had led Jacob's family to Egypt to protect them from famine, but now the leaders of Egypt threaten the security of the nation by enslaving the people.

The question that our passage raises is will God be faithful to the people of Israel now that they are an enslaved people? Is God faithful to the weak? This question goes to the heart of how God's relationship to Israel. Are they God's special people because they were numerous, wealthy, successful or powerful. Absolutely not. In fact, they were none of these things. It is one thing for God to stick with his people when they seemed to possess so much potential. However, now there seems to be no hope.

Application: Our passage teaches us that God never gives up on his people no matter our situation. That doesn't mean he spares us from suffering. It means that there is no situation which means God has forgotten about us. **Our God is faithful to keep his promise no matter what situation.**

- i. Situations caused by oppressive opposition
- ii. Situations caused by a broken world
- iii. Situations caused by our sinful failure—past or present failure

b) God is faithful no matter how much time has passed (1 Kgs. 6:1; Acts 7:6)

There is one more critical piece of information we must consider. It is not just that the people of Israel are oppressed. It is that almost 400 years have passed since they left the land of Canaan. For the Hebrews, God's promise is only a distant memory. **Will God be faithful after all this time?**

Again, God's remembrance means that God never makes an idle promise. There is no statute of limitations on the promises God makes. They are sure and so they can be counted on by us, no matter how long it takes for him to make good on them.

Application: This is an important truth for God's people because we often wonder whether God remains faithful when our prayers and longings are not quickly answered. Just because God is not in a hurry doesn't mean that God has forgotten. His faithfulness can be counted on no matter how long we have to wait!

2) God will use his power to overcome every obstacle (2:23-25)

There is something else that I want you to notice about God's remembrance of his covenant. Our passage tells not only that God remembered, but that he heard, saw and knew. In other words, God is involved. **The book of Exodus is not about a God who made promises and tries to make good on those promises. Rather, it is about a God who has the power to overcome every obstacle in the way of fulfilling his promise.** God never forgets and nothing can stop him.

However, God's power is not immediately identified in our passage. What chapters 1 and 2 is that God's power is working "behind the scenes" guiding everything to bring about the deliverance of his people. But just because his name is not used until 1:20, it doesn't mean that he is not the chief actor in our passage. Here we see God using his power to overcome every obstacle.

a) Pharaoh's opposition (1:14-2:10)

Of course, the first obstacle is Pharaoh himself. Pharaoh fears the great number of the people of God and so he reacts in two ways:

- i. Enslaves the Hebrews for his building projects

- ii. Commits infanticide by ordering the death of every first born male

God shows his power not only by preserving God's people through thy shrewd behavior of the Hebrew midwives, but by miraculously raising up a deliverer of God's people—Moses. We know the story. Moses is protected. However, when he can be protected no longer he placed in a special basket, which is noticed by the daughter of Pharaoh himself. According to God's perfect plan, Moses is protected from the very one who seeks to destroy him. This protection turns into strategic provision. Moses is brought up in the house of Pharaoh. As the one who will eventually lead God's people out of bondage, Moses will be well acquainted with all of the ways of Egypt.

b) Moses' inadequacy

Not only do we see God's power in how Moses is raised up to oppose Pharaoh, we also see it in that Moses will inadequately do it on his own. Yes, Moses will be the deliverer of God's people, but he is no superhero. His role is more of a mediator who the vehicle for God's power to be displayed. He doesn't have that power on his own. The passage speaks of God's power by showing us that left to himself Moses is powerless.

- i. **To overthrow Pharaoh (2:11-12; 15)**

- ii. **To lead the Hebrews (2:13-14)**

Moses is God's sovereign deliverer, but his power will be found in the power of God not his own resources. Left to himself, Moses is inadequate. That inadequacy will be vital to Moses' leadership because it will keep him dependent on a power outside of himself.

Illustration: Recently, Tara asked Lucy to go into our garage and get a garbage bag for putting away some trash. She came back with a garbage bag, but it had one problem. There was a gigantic hole in it. Tara asked her, "Lucy, do you think you can find a garbage bag without a big hole in it?" Lucy's response was golden, "No mommy; I can only find the trash bags with the big holes!"

Application: Isn't that how we feel sometimes? This is how the people of Israel felt—left to make bricks without adequate straw. This is how Moses felt—rejected by Pharaoh and by his own people. He was inadequate on all counts. No matter how powerful we think we are, it seems like we are pulling out more and more "holey" trash bags.

Nevertheless, no matter how powerless we think we are, God promises to overcome every obstacle in our path. No; that does not mean that every obstacle will be removed the way we think it ought to. But we can trust God is at work behind the scenes exerting his powerful will to bring about the deliverance we need. So, our passage invites us to look to our God.

Christ-centered focus: Stretching our passage to its fulfillment, we immediately see parallels to Jesus Christ; don't we? Like Moses, Jesus will be our deliverer who will bring a greater deliverance.

Conclusion:

Let me see if I can wrap this up. In a few months we will elect the next President of the United States. At least, two things happen in every election year—one is our obsession with exactly who will be our next president and the other is the current president's obsession with how he will be remembered. Our hope is based upon what promises the candidates make. The hope of an incumbent President is based on whether or not he has actually made good on promises already made.

Many of us live our lives just the final months of a president. We live for someone to remember us. We measure our success by how long our memory will survive us based upon our accomplishments, influence, fame, insight, fame, etc. Therefore, what pushes us *now* is the knowledge that someone *later* will remember what we have done. **Our hope is rooted in the promises we have made and the power we have exerted.**

The lesson of Exodus 2:23-25 is exactly opposite of this. God is no bumbling, forgetful God. Rather, **our hope is rooted in the promises God has made and in the power he exerts. Rather than looking to ourselves, we are to look out the God who remembers us, not because of our achievements, but because of his grace.**