



## Exodus (Part 20) – Wisdom and Mission

Matt Chandler – February 19, 2017

---

[Video]

From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. The story of Israel is the story of us today. We are God's people. He draws us out to draw us in. Like the Israelites, we still await the promised land in the midst of our sin and suffering, yet God is with us.

[End of video]

Good morning. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in Exodus, chapter 17. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. I want you to grab that. As always, I want you to see I'm not making any of this up but we're actually just reading from the Word of God that which is the Word of God.

Whenever I get the opportunity to do a wedding, I almost always want to draw people's attention to the reality that there is something bigger going on than just the wedding itself. See, we read in Ephesians, chapter 5, that when a man pursues a woman and they are married, that's a picture of God's pursuit of us in Christ. That's what Ephesians 5 says.

I want to draw their attention to the fact that the flowers, the candles, the white dress, and the flowers on the floor that a kid awkwardly and beautifully and with great cuteness has dropped on the floor... All of that. There is something bigger going on underneath all of that that God is trying to communicate to us and has painted on the canvas of creation his pursuit of his people in the man's pursuit of the woman.

In our chapters today... It's an ambitious desire today to go from chapter 17, verse 8, to chapter 19, verse 2. If you've been at The Village for a while, you're probably starting to think you need to cancel that lunch. You don't. We're going to do this in a good amount of time, but there's something

bigger going on in this story than just the story. It's bigger than the Amalekites, and it's bigger than Jethro, and it's bigger Moses' seven ascents up on to Sinai. It's richer, and it's bigger. I want to try to show that to you.

Before we dive into the text, let me catch you up on where we are in the story. God has delivered the people of Israel out of slavery and out of bondage to the Egyptians (the Egyptians being the greatest superpower the world had known in this point in human history). There had been no one as mighty, no one as wealthy, no one as powerful, both in military might as well as wealth. God destroys Egypt and brings the people of Israel out of slavery, right? *Israel* doesn't rise up and conquer Egypt; *God* conquers Egypt and calls his people out.

Then when they get into the wilderness, they (like us) have a tendency to grumble and complain. God meets their grumbling and complaining with grace and blessing. He puts bread on the ground called manna (sweet-tasting bread), and water flows from rocks as he cares for his people. I thought Trevor Joy did an incredible job last week of preaching and teaching that here at The Village.

Then near the end of that, you start getting into this really strange story where Israel, just camped out in the wilderness, is attacked with an unprovoked attack from the Amalekites. They just attack Israel and seek to destroy them. Now if we go back in our story and we remember that when Moses shows up to Pharaoh and demands Pharaoh let the people of Israel go, Pharaoh asks this question: **"Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice...?"**

God answers that question for him in the form of a series of plagues that reveals the gods Egypt worshiped (some 60 of them) were no gods at all. He, the Lord, was the only God. After each plague or at the pronouncement of each plague, God answers Pharaoh's question. He sends the plague, and he says, "That you may know that I am the Lord. That you may know that I am the Lord. That you may know that I am the Lord."

Then it turns in the last parts of the plagues to, "That the nations may know that I am the Lord." So the judgment on Egypt and the delivery of the people of God, the mercy shown the people of God, are, in a sense, a banner for the world to know that God is the Lord. He is Yahweh. He is the only God who is.

Now that that has happened, that God has displayed his might to the world via the conquering of Egypt and the deliverance of Israel, the world is beginning to respond. The first we see of that

response is the Amalekites who attack (unprovoked) the people of Israel. This is what... Sin makes you stupid. If you have a kid, I apologize. Sin makes you dumb. Here's what I mean by that.

It's been clear that without a man raising a sword, the most powerful nation that has ever existed on earth at this point in human history vanished. Then the Amalekites, this little, bitty tribe out in the desert, was like, "Yeah! I like our chances!" Somebody on that work council should have been like, "Hey, man, I know they don't look like much, but remember that time all the water turned to blood? Do we have a weapon that's going to combat that? Remember the time the firstborn son of everybody died? Are you sure about this?"

Apparently, nobody on the work council thinks like that, and there's just kind of affirmation. "We can take them." They ride out to make war against Israel. Now if you have a background in church and maybe you grew up in a Sunday school class with a felt board, you know part of this story. As the Amalekites began to attack Israel, God tells Moses to pull in Joshua. He pulls in Joshua (he is going to be a key figure in this story as it progresses) and says, "Joshua, gather some men. I want you to hold off this attack. I want you to counterattack the Amalekites."

Then Moses goes up on the hill. If you remember that, he raises his hands. Actually, the text says he raises his staff. As long as his hand and his staff were in the air, Israel prevailed. When his arms got tired and began to fall, then the Amalekites would prevail. Aaron and another man held up his arms holding the staff.

Now when I became a Christian and I first heard that story, I heard it within this context: we should be people who pray, we should be perseverant when we pray, and we should put people around us to help us understand and know how to pray. All of that is true, and none of that is in this text. All of that is true. We should be people of prayer. We should gather people around us who help us know how to pray. We should persevere in prayer. All of that is true, but that is not what's happening in this text.

Throughout our study of the book of Exodus, the staff has been representative of the judgment of God on those who hate him, not prayer. When Moses raises the staff and touches the Nile, it turns to blood. When he raises the staff, the locusts come in. When he raises the staff, the frogs come. When he raises the staff, the gnats come.

When he is backed up with the people of God against the Red Sea and the Egyptian armies are coming to destroy them and wipe them off of the face of the earth, it is the raising of the staff that parted the Red Sea, and it is the raising of the staff that made the sea close on the Egyptians and destroyed them forever. The raising of the staff is not about prayer; it's about the judgment of God.

Now let's pick it up. Exodus 17, starting in verse 14. The battle is now over. Israel has won. Then we read this in verse 14: **"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.' And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner..."** Here's what's written on that banner. **"A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."**

Now this phrase, **"A hand upon the throne of the LORD!"** is literally a fist raised against the throne of the Lord. What's happening in this attack of the Amalekites on the people of God is they have seen, as God said they would, the might and power of God to overthrow nations that he is the only God who is. They have decided not only will they not bow to the only God who is, but they will make war against this God.

God then pronounces this judgment upon the Amalekites that he will utterly remove them from the face of the earth. Then what happens from this moment through the time of Queen Esther that's later on in our story is Israel and the Amalekites are at war with one another, and they are almost consistently if not constantly in little skirmishes if not full-on war.

But this war doesn't just go forward; it actually goes backward. When we started the series through Exodus, I tried to explain Exodus as Exodus is book two of five books we call the *Pentateuch*. Right? All five of those books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) all tell one story. It's not five. It's one story.

I said the best way to think about Exodus is like you think about the *Star Wars* films. There are a lot of them, and if you don't know what happened back *here*, you'll be confused about what's happening *here*. Maybe this would help. If you're a *Star Wars* nerd, there is space for you here. I'm glad you're here. When *The Force Awakens* came out and you were all geeked out, everybody who is a *Star Wars* nerd has friends who aren't.

Then you get really geeked out, and you want them to know the beauty that is the *Star Wars* films. You're all geeked up out of your mind, so you're trying to get buy-in from your non-nerd friend about how awesome this is. You took them to see the new film. You paid \$172 to do the thing where you wear glasses, and they're like on your lap performing. You're sitting there, and there all these things that when you see, you're getting geeked out of your mind. Your non-*Star Wars* nerd friend has no clue what's going on.

You're watching. You're like, "Oh my gosh! That was the Star Destroyer." Your friend is like, "Huh?" Then when the doors open, and Han Solo and Chewbacca walk on to the Millennium Falcon, a tear went down your cheek. Your non-*Star Wars* friend was like, "Who's that? It's just like some old guy and a monkey. What is that? Why are you crying? You're so weird."

Now I'll explain what's happened. You understand and you know the full story in a way your friend who is watching this one moment doesn't, and so they can't appreciate. They can't feel. They can't get a sense of what's happening. Well, this war against the Amalekites goes forward, but it also goes way backward.

If you're in one of our studies of Genesis (either the men's study or the women's study of the book of Genesis) right now, some of this will start to come into focus. The Amalekites go back to a man named Amalek, who is the grandson of Esau. Now the Israelites, if you remember, go back to Jacob, who is Esau's brother. Again, if you know your Bible, these two brothers were at war with one another. Right? They were deceitful. They were conniving.

There was this really kind of bitter, broken past, and I would say that conflict actually at its fundamental root has its hostility rooted in the conflict we see between Cain and Abel, which goes back even farther than that in the conflict we see between God and Satan. I know many of you right now are like, "Oh gosh. Not this. It's 2017. We are far more enlightened than to believe in devils and angels." Yet I think you make a grave error when you intellectualize our faith so that it's no faith at all and that our only enemies are human beings.

C.S. Lewis said there are two great errors when it comes to dark spiritual forces. The first is to give them no credit and the second is to give them too much credit. What ends up happening in this text is we see when God pronounces judgment, he will utterly destroy the Amalekites. When people don't really understand what God is up to, you'll find people who raise their fist at God's throne and

say, "What a narcissistic, genocidal maniac is the God of the Bible." Yet there is something going on underneath all of this.

God's judgment, the raised staff, is not against peace-loving people who are indifferent but rather those who hate him who have ties with Satan and a desire to destroy all God loves, so God makes war. I know we're in a time period where any talk about God making war is offensive to our modern sensibilities, and yet, **"The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name."**

The Bible never apologizes for the violence of God against those who serve demons and Satan and participate in the deconstruction and destruction of God's good, right creation. In fact, we see, when all things are said and done, God will utterly wipe the earth clean of it. The only real issue I have with the war language is the war language makes it sound like, "Oh my gosh! Who is going to win?"

Yet when all things are said and done, the final battle between God and the kingdom of Amalek is the enemies of God gathered in a valley to destroy the people of God. Jesus shows up and says, "I am," and it's over. How non-big is that? I mean, if you paid to watch that movie and you're like, "Here it comes. Here's the 40-minute action sequence," and Jesus just steps and goes, "I am," and the enemies of God are destroyed, you're like, "Oh man. I thought it was going to be bigger than that."

We don't believe in dualism. Are you tracking with me on that? What I mean is we don't believe Satan and his powers and God and his powers are at war and we have no idea who is going to win. If you got in the space, just read the entrance to the book of Job. What we see is the Accuser, Satan, before the throne room of God asking permission to do stuff. That doesn't sound like a really big kind of dualistic threat. God is like, **"Have you considered my servant Job?"**

"I mean, yeah, but you won't let me touch him."

"Yeah, okay. Well, how about this? How about I'll allow you to do these things, but don't do this?"

"Okay."

He is a dog on a leash. He is a dog on a leash, and God will destroy him and destroy all who serve him. The Amalekites. Now we know this as Christians. We read about this in Ephesians 6 when Paul, who hated Jesus Christ and his church, converts to Christianity, becomes one of the greatest

missionaries our faith has ever seen, and is responsible for the writing of much of our New Testament (the Pauline Epistles). He writes this to the church at Ephesus:

**"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore 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."**

Then it gets into what the armor of God is. It's saying our great enemy is not people but demonic spiritual forces and powers that people in their flesh give themselves over to and then, empowered and motivated by this darkness, begin to deconstruct and destroy God's good graces. This is the Amalekites who God has said, "I will utterly wipe off the face of the earth."

Now here's what I know about how Christians read the Bible. In fact, here's how I know how almost everybody reads the Bible. When you read a story like the one we just read or heard about in this battle between Israel and the Amalekites, you almost always read yourself as on the winning team, the hero side. Man, if you have to place yourself in this story, you're right in the mix with Joshua, sword in hand, slaughtering the enemies of God if you're not up there helping Moses hold up the staff. "I have you, Mo. When the story is told, they will sing of my dedication to the kingdom of God."

Yet in reality, the Bible would say all of us are born with a nature that is bent toward the Amalekites and not toward the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul once again would explain it like this in Romans 1. In Romans 1, Paul is going to kind of unpack that we all are born with a disposition, the bent toward, the Amalekites.

Let me walk through it. In Romans 1, Paul says this that all of us have loved creation more than we've loved the Creator. That doesn't sound *too* bad, does it? I mean, we just want God's stuff; we don't want God. Here God creates all we enjoy, all we love, and we don't want him; we just want his stuff.

To make it a bit more visceral, imagine your child comes into your house and goes, "Hey, I've been eyeballing your truck. Will you die already? Look. I'm not really interested in this thing where you're wanting to love me, walk alongside of me, encourage me, shape me, and form me. What I'd really like is for you to leave me alone, maybe die, give me all your stuff, and just leave me alone."

Tell me that's not a fist raised against the throne of God. To put creation over the Creator is to have your fist raised to God.

That's not all he says. He also says we believe the lie over the truth of God. Here's how that plays itself out. Whether you would say it with your mouth or not, most of us live lives that kind of communicate we think we're smarter than God. We just think we know better than he does, and we think as we read the Bible, if God knew anything about us, that verse would have an asterisk by it.

If you turn to the back, it would have our picture, and it would say, "Except for this guy. This person doesn't have to obey this command. This person doesn't have to because, man, after seeing things... You know, I'm going to change my mind on this one, give this guy in particular a mulligan." We just think we're smarter than God.

Then finally, Romans 1 would say we fail to acknowledge him. Few things indict the human soul like the compulsion to pat our own backs when things are good and accuse God when they're not. See, the compulsion in almost every human soul is to give themselves credit and God blame. What that reveals is we have in our guts somewhere this insidious prosperity gospel that has made God far more our servant than our king.

We're cool with God as long as our relationships are going well, we have money in our pocket, we're healthy, and the things we desire are happening. Then praise his name. But if you let any little thing go against that, now all of a sudden God is in the dock. He is to blame. He is *not* good. He is *not* compassionate. He has *not* given me what I deserve.

What I will give you is you have assuredly not been given what you deserve. That posture is raising your fist against the throne of God, and it is foolish. What can you do against the King of Glory? What court do you call? Who do you call to judge him, the Creator of all things? If you've been here for this, this is Yahweh. This is "I Am who I Am" or "I be who I be. I have always been. I will always be. I'm everywhere at once in knowledge of all things in my fullness."

This is the God of the Bible, and we see ourselves with the disposition of the Amalekites. Now then at this point the narrative takes a strange turn. You've just had this battle take place, and you have this pronouncement of judgment over this people group where God said, "I'm going to kill all of them. I will utterly remove them from the face of the earth." Then Moses' father-in-law shows up. It's just a weird part of the story.



If when you read the Bible you see something like that, grow in your curiosity. God is trying to communicate something when you have this random moment in the Scriptures, because nothing is random to God. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, shows up. He is the priest of Midian. He is also a Gentile. Like the Amalekites, he is not of the people of Israel. In fact, he worships other gods, makes sacrifices to other gods on behalf of the Midianites. He is not of the household of faith. He is a Gentile.

He comes, and he begins to hear word of what God had accomplished. Let's pick it back up now in Exodus 18:8 through 12. **"Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the LORD had delivered them. And Jethro..."** What? **"...rejoiced..."** which seems like a weird thing to do if you worship another god.

**"And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. Jethro said, 'Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people.'"**

Now verse 12 is a beautiful picture of salvation. **"And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God."** That little phrase **"...before God"** is "in the presence." In the presence!

When I said there's something bigger going on underneath this story than what we see on the surface, this is what we're seeing. God has said in the judgment of Egypt that the nations would know that he is the Lord. We're seeing it happen. The Amalekites see it, and they respond with violence, raising their fist against the throne of God. "We will not bow. We will not serve. We will not love. We will not come into what you're about."

But here we see Jethro, the Midianite, hear and say, "Surely the other gods are no gods at all." He worships, and he comes into and breaks bread in the presence of God. Now this continues to this day. This continues to this day.

Man, it was just providential that Isaac was here. Again, if you're watching at one of our other campuses, earlier in our service, Isaac Munji from Kenya, Africa, came and led our prayer block. Now here's what I have in common with Isaac: nothing. I have literally nothing in common with Isaac, but I can tell you this. I love him, and I love the work God is doing through him, with him, and in him.

We don't speak the same primary language. Our experiences growing up were wildly different. I'm a military brat; he is not. He has worked among some of the poorest people in the world. I've always lived on base or in the suburbs. Yet he and I are brothers, bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. What we have in common is the thing that transcends all our differences.

In fact, it's one of the things I love about our church. We don't have time to do the poll, but there are PhDs in here, and there are GEDs in here. There are people who grew up in such a religious background that, man, they just have never even used a swear word. The ones they have used, they're ones they created, like "dingfod" or something like that. You know? They're not like *real* ones.

Then there are those of us who not long ago had a very serious drug problem. There are former prostitutes and former legalists. Here we are. I mean, God has made us a people. How crazy! What do we have in common except recipients of the grace of God? He is still doing that. In fact, when we take Communion at the end of our service, we will join with billions of Christians worldwide celebrating that we have been transferred out of the kingdom of the Amalekites and into the kingdom of his beloved Son.

This is what salvation is. If all of us were born with the bent toward raising our fist toward God, the gospel, the good news, of the coming of Jesus Christ is that he has transferred us out of that kingdom and into the kingdom of his beloved Son. The reality is to this day, these two kingdoms are at play: those who raise their fist at the throne and those who raise their hand in praise. There is not another kingdom for you to belong to. There isn't another one. There isn't a third option here. You're a part of one of these two kingdoms.

Then from here, again, I think pay attention to any time a chapter is like strange. Then on top of Jethro, the father-in-law, showing up and then eating bread, breaking bread, in the presence of God, he then turns into this kind of organizational guru for Moses. We know Moses' background. He is just an arrogant, kind of cocky, walk-with-a-swagger kind of guy, and the Lord broke him of that.

But there is still some residue in that. Be encouraged, brother or sister, if you've been growing in the Lord but there's still some residue of your former life silliness.

Jethro watches Moses stand in front of hundreds of thousands of people trying to lead and navigate, and Jethro engages him like a father-in-law would engage a son-in-law. It's what I love about the Bible. It's really honest. Jethro is like, "Hey, Moses. I mean, I see this thing you're doing. I appreciate it. I mean, you're Moses. I don't think it's good. You're going to burn yourself out. You're going to burn all the people out. If I were you (just hypothetically), I would appoint chiefs over a thousand and over a hundred and over fifty and over ten."

Now what God is doing in this moment through Jethro is ordering the nation of Israel to receive the Law of God from Mount Sinai. Then from here, we move to Exodus 19. Let's just look at these first two verses. **"On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain..."**

Now we have now arrived at the place in which the rest of the book of Exodus will play out. The promise is that they'll be led into a land flowing with milk and honey. We're going to get to that, but in this moment if you remember when God first approached Moses, he says, "Go, and tell Pharaoh let my people go that they might come out three days' journey and worship me on this mountain."

It was going to be on this mountain that God began to shape his people. They had known nothing except 400 years of pagan culture. Now God is going to begin to shape them into what it looks like to be the people of God. Moses at Sinai is going to make seven ascents up the mountain and hear from God. Those seven ascents form kind of five themes that will carry us through the rest of the book of Exodus.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. That will come in the weeks to come. What I want to do now is just very quickly highlight three things God does and teaches to shape his people that continue on to this day. Here is the first one.

1. *Those who God redeems come under his Word.* Here's what we see and what we're going to see as we finish out Exodus at Sinai. We're going to see God is very serious about the Law, and those who he redeemed begin to come under the Law over time. This is so unpopular. When I say it, I almost

always can just kind of brace for the week ahead, but I'm far more nervous about how God views my faithfulness than I am your attendance here. Because we are living in this part of the United States, because we're in the Bible Belt...

In fact, in 1998, *Christianity Today* called us the center of the evangelical world. Because we live in a place where you can come to church once a year and have no relationship with Jesus Christ and still self-define as a Christian, I need to be able to say to you in all gentleness that if you have no desire and no intention to come under the Word of God and follow God in a relationship with Jesus Christ, then you have only revealed that you are not a Christian, regardless of some decision you made in the third grade.

Now here's what I did *not* say. I did *not* say you're perfect or you're completely nailing it, because I know you're not. I know I'm not. We don't. But the desire to come under the Word of God, the ability to look back over our life with Jesus and see the Spirit of God is transforming us and changing us over time, bringing us more and more and more under the Word of God is what it means to be redeemed. We're redeemed, and we start to come under the Word.

If your story (and I'm just saying I have this background here) is your parents when you were in fourth grade were like, "Do you want to come to heaven with us or burn in hell forever?" and you said, "Uh, uhm, heaven with you, Mom," and that's the extent of your relationship with God, so you were baptized back then for fear of hell, no relationship with God, no seriousness about coming under that Word as imperfectly as you will stumble forward, then (God help us) you're not a Christian.

You might be a social conservative. You might have found a place to hang out once a month. You might have developed some sort of checklist by which you can help yourself sleep at night, some sort of moralistic deism. But you're not a Christian. Look. I love you. What do I have to gain in saying that? I have everything to lose and nothing to gain, except maybe your soul before a living God. The first thing we're going to see at Sinai is those who God redeems, he brings under his Word.

2. *The Law is given to the people of God to show the people of God a life pleasing to God.* When God gives the Law, one of the things he is doing... Remember the people of God have come out of slavery in Egypt, over 400 years of slavery. They knew nothing of what it looked like to please God. God gives the Law to help them understand, "This is a life that pleases me."

Then again, this is hard for us. Right? It's hard for all of us, because nobody is good at the Law. Even people who think they're good at the Law are actually really terrible at being obedient to the Law. What they do is they focus on the things they do well and focus on what people don't do well. They elevate themselves via self-righteousness. Nobody likes you, and you don't like yourself, because self-righteous people don't like themselves.

What the Law does is it reveals, "This is a life that pleases God," and yet simultaneously it jams us up, because nobody can perfectly obey it. Nobody can live a life that is fully pleasing to God. Now look right at me. Enter Jesus Christ, second person of the Trinity, to fulfill the Law perfectly. Now, Christian, here's where I want you to be encouraged, because if I just said what I said and you're like, "Oh my gosh! I was so confident until I came today. I knew I should have stayed home. I read this text before I came. I knew he was going to do this," here's how I want to encourage you.

If you're a Christian, Christ has fulfilled the Law, and the Spirit of Christ via the Holy Spirit lives inside of you, sealed inside of you. So when God looks upon you, he sees the fulfillment of the Law in Christ so that you please God even in your stumbling and fumbling. In your imperfect pursuit of coming under the Law, you please him. Now this is hard for us, so let me give a word picture.

The first time you brought your child home, you brought into your home the most selfish, me-oriented human being you had ever been around. All right? They just don't care about your day, has never in the first few years of their life gone, "Oh, you were sleeping? Never mind. Oh, you have a couple of things you need to do? Don't worry about me. You finish what you're doing. When you can get to me, get to me."

No, no. Just self-absorbed, "Me, me, me. I, I, I. Me, me, me." Here's what I can guarantee you. At 3:00 a.m. with bloodshot eyes holding that child, you didn't think to yourself, "One day I'm going to love this thing, but now... Ugh! When this baby can find its own shoes and put them on, can give itself a shower or bath, can hold a fork and feed itself, and can contribute in some way or at least not detract in a thousand ways, I will love it."

You did not withhold your love from your self-absorbed, narcissistic child. You were crazy in love with him or her, weren't you? You just were. You were crazy. Now you might at 3:00 a.m. with bloodshot eyes cried out, "Jesus, take the wheel," but you didn't ultimately hate the child. You loved the child!

This is a picture of the grace of God extended toward the children of God, adopted sons and daughters of God through the blood of Christ as those via the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that has sealed us with the Holy Spirit so that we are seen by God as those who have fulfilled the Law, even in our imperfect pursuit of that obedience. Then the last thing I want to point out before we consider what these things mean is I want you to notice...

3. *Salvation from slavery preceded the Law.* In our story and throughout the Bible... In fact, this whole thing is honestly a condensed picture of what the entire Bible is about. Now I'm not saying don't read the rest of the Bible; just read this. But you can see all we believe in the Scriptures in these couple of chapters and a half.

Moses doesn't show up to the people stuck in slavery and say, "Here's the thing, guys. Good news. I have just 10 things here. If we can knock out these 10 things, God is going to pull us out of oppression and slavery. He is going to set us free if we can just obey. There are 10! How easy is that, guys?"

Just 10 things, like this one: 'Don't worship gods that aren't gods.' How easy is that? Let's not do that. Here. Let's not lie, and let's not murder. Let's not look at everybody else's stuff but be really glad at what God has given to us. Let's not compare ourselves with others. Let's nail these 10, and God is going to get us out of here." What did Israel do to get out of slavery? I'll answer for you: nothing. They did nothing but grumble and complain as God saved them.

"Oh, what are we doing out here? There's nothing to eat!"

"Except magic bread on the ground."

"What are we going to wash it down with?"

"I don't know. Magic water out of a rock."

Just grace upon grace that salvation precedes the Law. In fact, I would argue you will never understand the Law until you receive the grace of God in Christ. You can't see it. Think of all the objections to Christianity. They're almost all around the Law and a misunderstanding of what the Law is. "Well, you Christians believe *this* and *that* and *this* and *that* and *this* and *that*." They can't

even see what it is, because in the Bible, the Law becomes something beautiful to those who have received the grace of God.

Doesn't King David talk about the Law like it was honey on his lips, that he thought about it through the watches of the night? I don't know what you're thinking about in the middle of the night when you wake up at 2:00 a.m. for no reason. What David was thinking about was the Law, and he liked it. He was like, "Mmm! The Law is so sweet. I love the Law!" Who does that? The Law becomes something really beautiful to those who are under grace because the Law becomes the path of life.

The Law outside of the grace of God feels like death. It feels impossible. It feels like a checklist that for our best efforts we can never fulfill. Enter Jesus Christ. Enter his perfect life. Enter his atoning death and his resurrection revealing that all of our sin has been paid for in full, and the people of God can rejoice. Now here's how I want to end. I thought, "I wonder what it would be like if we could just create a little space for us to actually think about these things?"

See, unfortunately I think if church becomes this kind of exchange of ideas and you kind of hear a little bit and you think this is cool, then the next thing you know, you're going to be sitting at coffee with someone, and you're like, "Do you know what this reminds me of? This reminds me of the Amalekites. I don't know if you know this, but they actually go all the way back to God and Satan. I'm just wondering, is your fist raised to the throne of heaven right now? As you were talking, I thought, 'This guy's fist is all up in the throne of God in heaven.'" That's just not helpful.

If I could just lay this before you, there are two kingdoms. There are two. There are not three. There are not five. There are two kingdoms active right now in the world. One will be utterly destroyed and removed from the world and one will experience ever-increasing joy in the presence of its King. One raises its fist to the throne of God and refuses to bend knee and the other delightfully breaks bread in the presence.

Now you belong to one of those two, so I wonder if we created some space just for you to think about, "Where do I really belong in light of some of the things we have said here today?" Listen. I just can't tell you how much my heart feels on fire for those of you who come to church twice a year and, because your parents were Christians, you self-identify a Christian.

You've missed out on all the joy that comes from belonging to him and knowing you belong to him and being transformed by his Spirit's power, and yet you continually self-identify as something

you're not. So you never really will become because you keep identifying as something you're not, but you believe you are. I hope that made sense. I just can't tell you kind of the weight on my heart constantly around here for that.

Christian, I wonder what would happen in regard to your levels of joy and your levels of worship if you just stopped for a second and thought about the fact that a life lived under the Law is pleasing to God and that Christ has fulfilled that for you and now dwells inside of you via the Holy Spirit. Therefore, you are seen as spotless, blameless (this is biblical language), in his sight.

The way I often say this when I haven't already been as heavy as I've been today is if you would ever just kind of get over yourself and just trust that God has done this for you and that you can rest in that and pursue the Lord in light of that and stumble and fail and have him pick you up in light of these things, I just wonder how much more joy you would walk in, how much more freedom you would experience, and how much more gladness in worship would exist in your life.

For you type A people who are always so exhausted, what would it be like to remember that salvation preceded the Law? Your doing has not accomplished anything; Christ's doing has accomplished everything. Now by abiding and breaking bread in his presence, we are transformed from one degree of glory to the next so that even our sanctification and the glorification of being brought under the Word belongs to the activity of the Spirit of God inside of us and not our own efforts and desires.

I know some of us don't like that because we think that gives people a pass to live unrighteous lives and still call themselves Christians. I'm saying to you that anyone who says (and this is Paul in Romans 6:1), "Let me sin all the more so grace may abound" has simply revealed they're no Christian at all. Again, to be redeemed is to over time begin to come under the Law. Where that has not happened, I would be anxious and look for evidences of God's grace.

If you looked at the last year, if you looked at the last two years, if you looked at the last three years of your life, where can you go, "No, no, no. God has been at work in me. Look. Look! God has moved me in these things. I can see I hate my sin. I can see I desire to follow the Lord. I can see these little baby steps I'm taking and God is in, so let those objective evidences of grace be for me a gladness that shows I am rooted in him, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and I am his"?



But if you look back and you see nothing, brother, sister, don't enter a rest that isn't yours to enter. There is something bigger going on in this text than we see on the surface, namely that God is bringing the nations to himself, forming a new people, all of whom were born with a bent toward shaking their fist at the throne of God but have now been made new, sealed with the Holy Spirit, pleasing to God, and being transformed by breaking bread in the presence. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for our time together. I thank you that salvation precedes the Law. We don't clean ourselves up before we come, but rather you save us where we are. I thank you that you call us into a life that pleases you, and you bring us under your Word. As the psalmist says it, you have made known to us the path of life, and you fill us with joy in your presence.

I pray right now for those who wrestle and struggle with assurance. I pray even in this moment, Spirit of God, you would begin to recall to their minds and hearts those areas in which you have worked, you have grown, Father, that you would remind them of your presence and power in their lives.

In the same way, I want to pray for those who would call themselves Christians and not wrestle with assurance, and yet there would be no fruit, no evidences of grace, no desire to follow you. They would be cut to the quick at some of these things that have been said, and that that cutting might allow them to see with great clarity in such a way that they might be transferred out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of your beloved Son.

For our friends who are here today who are not Christians who aren't quite sure what to do with all of this, I just pray a special grace, Father, for them, that you might provide just a little bit more clarity as you move them toward an understanding of you. Maybe even today would be the day, and in a very real way things would become clear, and they would be willing to lay their *yes* down and trust in you, the King of Glory. In all things, help us. We need you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.