

Free Indeed Part 6

A Personal Exodus

I only thought we were done with this series of messages on freedom. Last Sunday night as Yehuda was taking us through Israel's history he made a comment about Moses and the generation of Israelites that died in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. He pointed out that Moses (and God) knew that people with a slave mentality could not conquer and remain free in the land that had been promised to them. The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. Although they were Hebrews and tried to hold to their unique identity, the culture and traditions of Egypt as well as their identity as slaves had shaped their outlook and thinking. Think of our American culture and consider that the Hebrews had lived in Egypt longer than we've been a nation. In spite of all that transpired to get them out of Egypt and into the land of promise, they still had "Egyptian" and "Slave" written all over them. People with slave mentality can't live free in the promised land.

The apostle Paul, referring to Israel's history and the Exodus wrote, **"Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did...These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us..." 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11.**

I want us to consider the Exodus of Israel from slavery in Egypt as an analogy to our having been freed from bondage to sin and the world. God delivered his people then and he has delivered us now. He invites us to live in freedom and there are some things we need to learn about standing in that spiritual freedom. We have to get rid of our own version of Egyptian and slave mentality in order to remain free. First let's look at some things that held the Israelites and us in bondage and slavery. Exodus 1 tells us,

"So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor...They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly." Exodus 1:11-14.

Notice they oppressed them and made their lives bitter. We talked a couple of weeks ago about bitterness. The enemy of our souls wants to enslave us in bitterness. He wants to oppress us, to grind us down so far into despair that we are enslaved without hope.

"That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge

of the people: ‘Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to the lies.’” Exodus 5:6-9.

The lies Pharaoh is referring to is the word of the Lord and the message Moses brought to them. The devil wants to keep us so busy, preoccupied with money and work and “stuff” that we pay no attention to the word of the Lord and his plans for our life. “Just keep ‘em busy with life so they don’t have time for God!”

“The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, ‘When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth, if it is a boy, kill him, but if it is a girl, let her live.’” Exodus 1:16

Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill the male babies at birth. If children are our future then Pharaoh robbed the Israelites of any hope for their future generations. The devil wants to abort your plans and kill your dreams for the future. He wants to rob you of hope.

“I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them and I will redeem you...I will take you as my own people and I will be your God...I will bring you to the land I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.’ Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.” Exodus 6:6-9

The devil wants to discourage us to the extent that like the Israelites, we can’t believe God’s promises any longer. We can’t even listen to the Lord because we are so enslaved, so discouraged, so oppressed. I know some of us can identify with the Israelites. Oppressed, bitter, too busy and too tied to material things to think about God, our dreams and hopes for the future destroyed, too discouraged to even hear God’s word to us.

But God wants us to be free. **“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” Galatians 5:1** God intends for us to live in the freedom Christ has provided for us. Unlike the Israelites that wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, unable to live in the promised land because of their slave mentality, God has made a way for us to live in freedom and not be burdened by a yoke of slavery. **“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17** There is a new life in Christ. The old way of living and thinking as a slave to sin is gone. We are new creations in Christ, living in him, set free!

Okay, I'm free. I've repented of my sins and made Jesus Christ the Savior and Lord of my life. In our Exodus analogy, we have left Egypt and we are on our way to the promised land. I've declared my identity as a Hebrew, but after 430 years of Egyptian slavery – after a life time of slavery to self and sin, how do I get rid of the slave mentality? How do we get rid of the culture of Egypt - the culture of sin so we can live as God's people and not like slaves? How do I live free from the old sins and habits of my past? I'm glad you asked that question. Let me share some principles for living in freedom and not as slaves.

Dare to obey God and His word. That passage we've quoted so often from Galatians 5 says to stand firm. That's what I'm talking about. Dare to obey God, regardless of what he asks, regardless of the cost, regardless of how strange or counter-cultural obedience may seem.

Keep in mind, for the Israelites living in Egypt, the things God told them to do was strange and culturally foreign to them. Look at Exodus 12. This is the institution of the Passover and the night when the firstborn in Egypt would die. Imagine what they are thinking as God gives them these strange instructions: Everyone take a lamb into their home, then everyone kill the lamb at twilight, then put blood on the doorframes of their houses, then roast the lamb over fire, not boiling the meat as they were used to, as the Egyptians did, but roasting it. They were to eat it with their shoes on. This was not how the Egyptians did it. They removed their shoes when they went into the house. They were to eat it with bread not made with yeast.

The point of this is simply they were told a specific way to conduct their affairs in order to be free to leave Egypt behind and start a new life. They were to do this every year. They were to start new traditions, new festivals and feasts. There was much more to come as God gave them the law and instructions about how to live in every detail of their life in the law of Moses. What to wear, what to eat and not eat, when to work and when to rest. Some of it didn't seem logical. The sexual practices of Egypt were open and immoral, nothing was taboo. God gave the Israelites a new sexual standard. The list goes on and on. It was a new way of living, living God's way and not their own. It was foreign to them, but obedience to God and his word was essential to getting rid of the slave mentality of Egypt and to remaining free. They could have said, "This is all just crazy. Why should we do this? This isn't how we did it in Egypt." All of this violated their cultural upbringing. "We've never done it like this before." But God said "Do it my way and live. Do it my way and be free, or do it your way and stay a slave." If we want to

be free and stay free we need to obey!

The Lord has brought us out of slavery to sin and into the freedom of a new life in Christ. Now we have to choose. Will I get rid of the slave mentality of sin and choose to obey God or will I hold on to the lifestyle I learned in Egypt? Will I choose obedience and freedom or will I stay a slave to sin and go my own way?

Hebrews 11, in referring to Moses said, **“He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.” Hebrews 11:25-26**

We’ve been set free and now we have to choose? Will we hold on to the old ways of Egypt and enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time, or will we obey God and his word, knowing that is the way to heaven? I want to be faithful and obedient to the Lord. I’m choosing obedience and freedom and heaven. “That may have been the way we did things in Egypt, but we aren’t in Egypt anymore.” If we choose to leave Egypt’s bondage and stay free we will have to do it God’s way!

Accept God’s lines of differentiation. If you are going to live free, you’ll have to accept the fact there are differences between Israelis and Egyptians and there are differences between followers of Christ and the world. You can’t hope to inhabit the promised land while you are living like a slave in Egypt! You want to serve Jesus and live for him but you want to party like an Egyptian? It doesn’t work that way. God has drawn some lines.

The bible says, **“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?...Come out from them and be separate.” 2 Corinthians 6:14-17.** We used to hear that verse quoted quite often as the basis for a lot of our “holiness” preaching about clothing, entertainment practices, etc. It was simply a way of saying “we aren’t supposed to live like the world.” Guess what? **We aren’t supposed to live like the world. We are supposed to live like Jesus!** It’s almost like we decided to try to blend in with the world, thinking if the church acted more like the world maybe more people would come to Jesus. You know, put a better face on Christianity, make it easier for people to get saved, be less preachy and religious. Maybe we could even take the whole “take up your cross and follow me thing out of it too.”

I don't plan to go back to drawing lines of holiness for people because we usually don't draw them very well. We end up preaching against things that God really doesn't care about and excusing things he does care about. When I was a child they preached against "shootin' pool" and going to movies but I never heard a sermon against racism or the injustice of segregation in America. I don't think God cared if you went to a movie, but he sure did care if you hated your neighbor because of the color of their skin.

However, the fact we didn't draw the lines very well doesn't deny the fact that God has drawn lines of differentiation. God made a distinction between Egyptians and the Hebrews and he has made a distinction between His church and the world. Look at these verses. When the plagues came on Egypt God told Pharaoh, **"But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I the Lord am in this land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people."** Exodus 8:22-23.

And when a plague came upon the livestock. **"But the Lord will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die."** Exodus 9:4. When the plague came upon the firstborn of Egypt, the bible tells of God's protection for those who had the blood on their doorposts. **"Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel."** Exodus 11:7

God made a distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites and God has made a distinction between the church and the world. He intends that we live differently so he has drawn some lines of differentiation and we need to respect those lines. We need to surrender our life to God and obey his word. We need to stay on our side of the line!

The crassness and vulgarity of our culture, materialism and greed, violence, hatred, jealousy, lying, sexual immorality of all kinds, gossip, gluttony, coveting of all kinds, racism, sexism, we can go on and on. The point is, God is calling us to accept and respect the lines he has drawn in his word. The world may say there is nothing wrong with it, culture may embrace it, but if God's word says it's sin we have to accept the line he has drawn. There is to be a distinction between God's people and the world. Accept it. Respect it. Don't cross the line.

When the plague of hail fell on Egypt, God warned them. **"Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail**

will fall on every man and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die. Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the Lord hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. But those who ignored the word of the Lord left their slaves and livestock in the field.” Exodus 9:19-21. Verse 26 tells us “The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were.”

You can choose to obey God, accept the lines he has drawn and choose to live in freedom, or you can ignore God, stay on the Egyptian side of things and suffer the consequences. I’m not saying bad things won’t happen if you come to Jesus. I’m telling you there is no place to stay on the Egyptian side. The only place to be free is to obey the Lord.

God may be drawing some lines in your life, telling you to stand in a new place of freedom. There may be some old practices that you don’t feel comfortable embracing any longer. Your friends, even your Christian friends may not understand your decision, but if God is making a distinction, if he is drawing a line, a boundary in your life, obey the Lord! **God is still making a distinction between the church and the world. Where is God drawing the line in your life?** Respecting those lines of distinction is essential to our living in freedom!

Finally, **Reorder your life according to God’s priorities.** If you are going to stay free, standing in freedom, you’ll have to make some changes in priorities. You can’t keep living the way you did in Egypt. You can’t keep living the way you did before you surrendered your life to Christ. You can’t live in freedom with a slave mentality and lifestyle.

Look at his passage in Exodus 12. **“The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ‘This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.’” Exodus 12:2** God redeemed his people, led them out of Egypt and re-ordered their life, even changing their calendar! He made things new. Moving from bondage and living in freedom requires a willingness to let God re-order your life. It is to be the beginning of a new year, a new life, a new way of living and thinking. No longer living and thinking as slaves but living as the redeemed people of God.

We step into that freedom of a new life in Christ and the Lord says, “Let’s re-order some areas in your life so they will be more consistent with your life as a child of God rather than a slave to sin.”

Look how dramatically the lives of the Israelites changed. They left their home of 430

years to become nomads in the wilderness. They had a new leader that regularly talked to the God of the universe. They received a new identity as the people of God. They shifted their priorities from building storage cities for the Pharaoh to obeying the commands of the Lord. They may have had to stop occasionally and remind themselves, "I'm not trying to please an Egyptian master, I'm trying to please the Lord God." New traditions, new daily habits, new disciplines to please and obey the Lord. There was a new rhythm to their life, time for worship, for rest, for focusing on new priorities.

Your priorities may shift as well. You may have to stop and tell yourself, "I'm not a slave to Pharaoh or to sin any longer. I am re-ordering my life according to God's plans and his will for me. **This is the first day of the first month of the first year of a new life in Christ and my walk with him is going to be different!**

Do you want to live free and stay free? Ask the Lord to re-order your life and your priorities in a way that will be most pleasing to Him and best for you. Cultivate a willing heart and a listening ear. Dare to let God redeem and re-order your life, your relationships, your plans, your dreams, the way you walk and talk, the way you dress, the way you act, the way you treat others, the way you use your time. Dare to let God re-order your finances, the way you give, the way you serve. Let God re-order what holiness means in your life. Let God draw the lines of differentiation and distinction in your life and then honor those lines, those boundaries. Stop trying to be like the world and be more like Jesus. The more like Jesus you become, the freer you will be! Obedience is the key to living and remaining free indeed!