

Exodus: The Way Out of Our Past

Welcome/Prayer

Foreword

In this sermon series, “Exodus: The Way Out,” we’re going to journey through the Book of Exodus and discover “the way out” to the abundant and eternal life that only the Lord can provide. As we study the passages related to the sermons, we’ll see again and again a timeless message of God’s provision for His people...including a way out of all places and situations that hold us captive.

Introduction

The title for the Book of Exodus comes from the Greek version of the Old Testament and means “exit” or “departure,” or literally, “the way out.” While Exodus is the story of the Israelites’ escape from slavery and their journey toward the Promised Land, it also serves as a biography for their leader, Moses. As the story unfolds, we discover Moses was a man with a past, someone who could be described as having a lot of skeletons in his closet. Despite his past, Moses believed that God was intimately involved in the lives of His people—in all aspects of their lives—and it was God’s presence that provided Moses with a way out of his past. The same holds true for each of us.

1. What do you know about the book of Exodus?
2. Describe some things you know about Moses.
3. Do you believe it's true that "we all have 'skeletons' in our closet?" If so, what shape do they commonly take?

Preparation

Read the following text related to today’s message:

Acts 7:17-29 (NLT)

¹⁷ “As the time drew near when God would fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. ¹⁸ But then a new king came to the throne of Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. ¹⁹ This king exploited our people and oppressed them, forcing parents to abandon their newborn babies so they would die.

²⁰ “At that time Moses was born—a beautiful child in God’s eyes. His parents cared for him at home for three months. ²¹ When they had to abandon him, Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and raised him as her own son. ²² Moses was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was powerful in both speech and action.

²³ “One day when Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his relatives, the people of Israel. ²⁴ He saw an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite. So Moses came to the man’s defense and avenged him, killing the Egyptian. ²⁵ Moses assumed his fellow Israelites would realize that God had sent him to rescue them, but they didn’t.

²⁶ “The next day he visited them again and saw two men of Israel fighting. He tried to be a peacemaker. ‘Men,’ he said, ‘you are brothers. Why are you fighting each other?’

²⁷ “But the man in the wrong pushed Moses aside. ‘Who made you a ruler and judge over us?’ he asked. ²⁸ ‘Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?’ ²⁹ When Moses heard that, he fled the country and lived as a foreigner in the land of Midian. There his two sons were born.

Break it Down

When we realize that God has always been with us—even when we were unaware of His presence or even when we didn't want Him to be there—then we can be set free from the bondage of regrets, resentment, painful memories, and guilt feelings. By looking at some of the times when God was present in Moses' past...and the benefits the Lord provided him...we'll be able to look at our own past and realize that God was present all along, and that He is showing us a way out.

God gives us a way out of our past...

Unknowingly through His protection (Acts 7:17-20, Exodus 1:15-2:2)

It might seem that Moses was born at one of the worst possible times. The Israelite population had become quite large, so these "foreigners" posed a threat to the Egyptian leader, Pharaoh, who had already oppressed the Israelites and made them slaves. Additionally, Pharaoh directed all of the midwives who were delivering Hebrew children to kill any boys who were born. Moses was one of these boys; yet, God offered His divine protection to Moses, even when Moses was too young to know it. It is the same for Christians—God intervenes and shows us mercy, oftentimes without our knowing it. He gives us life, despite our past, and offers us His divine protection.

1. How did God preserve Moses' life as an infant?
2. When and how has God protected you from your own foolish or sinful choices?
3. Has God ever protected you from the bad decisions and behavior of others? If so, what happened?
4. Describe a time that you just know God was watching over you or one of your loved ones.

Unimaginably through His provision (Acts 7:21-22, Exodus 2:3-10)

After Moses' parents couldn't hide him any longer, they devised a plan that put their faith into action. The extraordinary circumstances that surround Moses' childhood and youth can be explained only by God's provision. The unimaginable details where God was at work are examples of divine providence, and God's every provision made Moses into the man he was to become.

1. What are some of the twists and turns in Moses' childhood that are almost too strange to be true?
2. Looking back over your life, where and how do you now see that God was present even though you couldn't imagine His being there at the time?
3. List some ways that God has provided for you and your family (past or present).

Unforgettably through His preparation (Acts 7:23-29, Exodus 2:11-22)

As we learned in this lesson's scripture, an unforgettable result of Moses' loyalty to the people of Israel led to murder, judgment, and betrayal (vv. 23-29). Fearing for his life and burdened by guilt, Moses fled the country and spent 40 years as a shepherd in a place referred to as "the backside of the desert" (Acts 7:30). As many of us do, Moses probably played the "what if" game...one that seldom ends in a confidence- or mood-booster; it's more likely that Moses saw his past with regret, disappointment and shame. Yet, it was then and there that the Lord called Moses into service to be Israel's deliverer. God used Moses' past for His eternal purposes and to accomplish His divine will. Everything Moses had experienced up until that time in the desert (the first 80 years of his life), served as preparation for what was to come next. So it is for us—we find the way out of our past when we realize that God wants to use all that we've experienced, even those things we want to forget, as preparation for what He's calling us to do next.

1. How did Moses' past experiences prepare him to be used by God as Israel's deliverer?
2. What are some things in your past that you'd like to forget? How might God use those experiences as a way to minister to others?
3. Describe a time you've been helped by someone who had already gone through what you were experiencing and "lived to tell about it."

Conclusion

A motivational speaker, Zig Ziglar, wrote, "It's not where you start—it's where you finish that counts." Moses' life demonstrates the truth contained in that statement. All of us face a choice when it comes to dealing with our past, and ours should be that of Moses—acknowledging that God is just as present with us now as He was throughout our past. Then we will begin to understand the way out of our past, as we recognize His divine protection, provision, and preparation for serving His purpose through our lives.

1. Is there anything in your past that is holding you back? If so, release it to God and ask Him for a new beginning.
2. Prayerfully consider how you can use your past experiences to help others and honor God. Then do it.

Close in Prayer