

Bible Class Notes - Lesson 47 Slavery in Egypt

The Birth of Moses

Teaching Notes

A time of darkness

We begin this series picking up the account of the Israelites, who after many twists and turns have been residing in Egypt for a great length of time now. Decades have passed since Joseph had lived and reigned as “Prime Minister” of the land; and the freedoms / comforts that the Israelites once knew had solemnly come to an end.

A new Pharaoh has come into power, one who had not known of Joseph or his legacy. In fact as far as Pharaoh was concerned, the people of Israel were a nuisance to him and to Egypt. Desiring to maintain power and control he brings into force measures of oppression that leave the Israelites in a dire condition, abused and afflicted.

Bondage upon the people

The Israelites had grown in number and the new Pharaoh began to be worried that they would use this to their advantage to revolt against the Egyptians. This was no small threat for Pharaoh and so as we read in the text he “set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens.” This move into slavery was supposed to essentially break the spirits and energy of the people; robbing them of the time and capacity to continue growing in number.

As slaves, the Israelites had no freedom whatsoever and such was the state of all who would be born to them as well.

2

They were whipped and beaten, forced to work in the scorching sun and heat with no let up in the intensity of the workload.

It was a time of hardship and depression. To themselves, there was no way to escape the tyranny of the taskmasters. This is a stark contrast from how things used to be, but at this point in time, the Israelites were now fully under the control of the Egyptians and their Pharaoh.

This is a very dismal circumstance to consider, but one thing that we should take note of right from the start is the relation between the Israelites and humanity as a whole. There is a type of slavery that the whole of mankind has been under the power of since the fall of man. Slavery to sin. Much like the Israelites who had taskmasters set over them, there is a real sense in which our sins have power over us.

At one point the Israelites may have thought of the Egyptians as a people who had care and attention towards them, but as time revealed they would only take advantage of the Israelites, leaving them in a situation worse than they could have ever imagined. The same thing happens with sin. Whatever the sin may be, often presenting itself as in the best interest of the individual; to only later on bring said person down into misery and pain.

No other choice

The Israelites were unable to do anything about their situation. As each day came they went along with the new normal, hopelessly following along with all they were told to do. If they even showed any glimpse of resistance or complaint, they were whipped all the more. They were utterly broken and left powerless at the hands of their taskmasters.

Whatever the order was they had no other choice but to obey. If the taskmasters demanded more work output, the Israelites had to produce it. Pharaoh and his men had their demands and would see to it that they were met by any means.

Again we can take from this a picture of what happens in the lives of all people, especially as we get older. Sins that at one time may have presented themselves to “only” be at a certain level of severity begin to increase and grow in their demand over us. Even if the individual feels that they would like to have certain changes take place in their lives, sin continues to maintain a tight grip upon the person; leaving them with no other choice but to continue on with the enforcement that it brings. Sadly we see clear examples of this in those who at first may have only dabbled in alcohol / drugs, only to be compelled into a deeper and harder addiction later on down the line.

Sin is no easy taskmaster, and it has no regard for age or gender. In the same way that children born to the Israelites were automatically forced into slavery; all of us from birth are born into the bondage of sin.

A sad life

For the Israelites, it was a hard life... a sad life. They would have missed the freedom that they were once accustomed to; and for the very young, born and engrossed into slavery, it is a hard thought to consider that they wouldn't have even known what freedom was; in order to miss it in the first place. Bondage was the only way the Israelite people had come to know and the boundaries of their life experience was set in stone for them by their oppressors.

Once again we can draw parallels from this point as we see that in the life of the unbeliever, sin has robbed them from what it truly means to be free. Under the dictatorship and control of sin, the individual is left to only experience limited aspects of life. Only the mundane things, things that have no true depth or meaning. Cut off from spiritual things and most of all true communion with God; the unbeliever is unable to live life to its full expression, in the way that God had intended for us to.

No help, no hope

The Israelites had no resources to defend themselves. They were stripped of everything; money, possessions and any resemblance of a weapon. Utterly defenceless to the advances of the Egyptians, they could only hope that they would be spared another day. Any thoughts of escape were trampled by the reality of their bondage.

This is how Satan operates in the lives of those who are not saved. He weakens the sinner, weighing them down with many vices that have such a grip on the individual that they have no strength of their own to free themselves. Any attempt to ‘turn over a new leaf’ is soon met with failure, as the enemy of our souls launches onslaughts of pitfalls and temptations. When someone begins to take any attention toward spiritual things, Satan will shoot fiery darts of doubt into their minds, leaving them in a binding state of unbelief.

Martin Luther, the famous reformer, knew of this experience personally in the early years of his life as he battled with what it really means to be free and right with God. He tried everything within his power to put his life on “the straight and narrow”, to free himself from the power of sin over himself, but to no avail. There is no doctor, psychiatrist or spiritual leader that can free a person from their sin.

No mind for themselves

The slaves under the power of the Egyptians were broken and distraught. Ordered around from the onset of the waking hour; they had no ability to think for themselves. Broken spirited and distraught, they had become totally reliant upon the taskmasters above them. This is the state that we come to when under the power of sin. We become so accustomed to our sin that we can't even imagine life without it.

To the unbeliever, the concept of not having particular sins in their lives is not a welcome one. The natural man loves his sin and has lived with it for so long that he has a real dependence upon it. Selfishness, sinful pleasures and pride; all so prevalent in the sinner's life that they even embrace such things as "just how I am". Many people for the love of their sin have stayed away from church and even reading the Bible; for they do not want to hear any message relating to repentance and a turning away from sin.

It is a sad thing for a person who even in the face of death, still will not leave their sins. It is so much of a way of life that they would refuse to live any other way. They would rather remain in sin and all of the uncleanness that comes with it than to be washed and cleansed from them.

The wages of sin

In spite of all the oppression that was enforced upon the Israelites, Pharaoh was still unsatisfied with the extent of the impact that it had upon them. They were still great in number and he sought to put a stop to their growth. So he made an order to the midwives that every new born male child should be put to death. This was a great evil and the people of Israel who were already so downtrodden experienced debilitating grief. Mothers who were supposed to be full of the joy of expecting a new born baby were instead filled with dread; the reality dawning on them that if this baby is male he would be instantly killed.

Sin weighs down upon the individual with a burden so heavy that it is enough to bring them down to the grave. This is the scheme of Satan, he wants people to remain in the slavery of sin all of their lives with the end result of them receiving death; and that lost eternity in hell which is also referred to as "the second death".

God intervenes

The circumstance had become more than the Israelites could bear and there was only One pertaining the power necessary to bring it all to an end... the Lord God. The Lord saw the anguish of His people and had compassion upon them.

We would assume that the way in which the mighty force of the Egyptians would be brought down would be by some great invasion or war, but no, the Lord chose another way. He selected from the people one who was amongst the most vulnerable group of them all; a baby boy. Small baby Moses was protected by God. His mother placed him into a small ark (basket) made from bulrushes and placed it in the reeds by the riverbank of the Nile. God saw that no harm would come to the young baby Moses, who was soon found by the daughter of Pharaoh and treated as one of the royal family; preserved to be the one who in time would stand against Pharaoh and secure the freedom of the Israelites.

It is only the Lord who can bring about the circumstances necessary to help those in need. This is how the Lord acts in the lives of those He saves. Becoming a Christian is as if the individual had been locked up in a prison for years; unable to experience any type of freedom or peace. Thoughts of liberation weakened and hopes of release dampened by the reality of the chains binding them where they are. Then all of a sudden a Rescuer bursts into the cell; with the means to cut the chains and shackles off from the repentant sinner. That Rescuer is the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is able to set us free from the slavery and consequences of sin. Have you come to know this freedom in Christ? Have you known the experience of overcoming the demands of sin and its dominion? This freedom is given freely to us because it was paid for dearly by the blood of our Saviour. Turn to Him in repentance and faith, even today, and you too shall be saved.