Where Does Freedom Come From?

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Exodus 3:7-12

7 Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in
Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know
their sufferings, 8and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians,
and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing
with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the
Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9The cry of the
Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress
them. 10So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites,
out of Egypt.' 11But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh,
and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' 12He said, 'I will be with you; and this
shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the
people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.'

1. Independence Day

In two days, we will celebrate Independence Day. In many ways, the celebration has already begun. The Fourth of July is a federal holiday commemorating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence 241 years ago on July 4, 1776. The Continental Congress declared that the thirteen American colonies regarded themselves as a new nation, the United States of America, and were no longer part of the British Empire. By declaring independence, the new nation let the world know the USA was free from the British government. Independence Day is a celebration of liberty and freedom from government tyranny under British rule. So, as we celebrate Independence Day, we give thanks for the freedom and liberties fought by the first generation of Americans.

In the Declaration of Independence, liberty and freedom are clearly identified in the statement, *"all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*." Early political leaders believed that liberty was one of our unalienable rights endowed by God.

2. Exodus Story

Today's scripture talks about the freedom of the Israelites from Egyptian rule. Israel's freedom was obtained not by simply declaring its independence, but rather by God's plan. Even before the Israelites became slaves in Egypt,

God foretold to Abram that the Israelites would be slaves and would later be delivered by God. In Genesis 15:13, God says to Abram, **"***your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years;* [14]*but I will bring judgement on the nation that they serve, and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions***."**

The deliverance story in the Book of Exodus is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abram made in Genesis. Exodus 2:23-25 tells us what happened between the people of Israel and God before God's deliverance. **"***After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God.* [24]*God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* [25]*God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them***."** The Israelites cried out to the Lord for years and God recalled His promise with their forefathers and kept His promise. In the same way, the Bible reminds us that the freedom we enjoy today is also from the Lord.

3. Freedom Comes from the Lord

Today's sermon title is "Where Does Freedom Come From?" Quite often we forget the people who work behind the scenes to support our freedom. We may tend to take this for granted. We are indebted to our forefathers including Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin for the freedom they helped provide to the USA. However, we also need to remember that God actually played a key role in establishing our freedom in this country.

Exodus 3:7 says, "*Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,* [8]*and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey*." If we read this passage carefully, we notice that God had a very intimate understanding about what was happening to the Israelites. God saw, heard, knew, delivered, and brought the Israelites out of slavery and into freedom. But as much as Exodus is a reminder to God' people about what he did for the Israelites, when we read Exodus we are reminded that God continues to operate in the same way for each of us as we go through life. God not only sees and hears everything, but God actively works in our lives and takes us from the depths of slavery and despair into a new life of freedom. And when God is going to

bring His people out of slavery, the Lord uses His messenger to give them freedom.

4. Korean History

Many of you may have seen that the South Korean president Moon Jae-In recently visited President Trump in Washington, D.C. Before the meeting, President Moon met with veterans of the Korean War and shared about his relationship with Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford, the former Marine commandant. Dunford's father, then 20-year-old Joseph F. Dunford Sr., fought in the battle against the Chinese around the Chosin Reservoir in what is now North Korea. Moon's parents were among the 100,000 or so refugees who were evacuated from North Korea to the south as the Marines fought their way to the sea at Heungnam. President Moon's parents escaped onboard the Meredith Victory, a US Merchant Marine ship. This cargo freighter evacuated over 14,000 Korean refugees fleeing the invading Communist Chinese.

On December 21, 1950, Captain Leonard LaRue decided to offload nearly all his cargo so that he could evacuate as many of the terrified refugees in North Korea as possible. But what many people don't know is that the ship was originally designed to carry only 12 passengers and 47 officers and crew. By taking the 14,000 plus refugees to safety, the ship would earn the name "The Ship of Miracles." There were many other ships that helped evacuate the refugees fleeing from the North, but no ship carried close to as many as the one voyage of the Meredith Victory in all of history. A movie was made out of this historic rescue in Korea, and Christine and I watched the movie two years ago. In this rescue mission, the U.S. Marine Corps acted like Moses, bringing the Korean refugees freedom. I believe that God used the U.S. Marine and Captain LaRue to save many Korean lives. And without this intervention, South Korea would not have the president that it has today.

5. Freedom is Not Free

We've often heard the saying, "freedom is not free." The idiom is engraved into one wall at the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The saying expresses gratitude for the service of members of the military, implicitly stating that the freedom enjoyed by many citizens are possible through the risks and sacrifices made by those in the military. We know that there is nothing free in the world. If something is free, this is often because someone else has paid the price so that others can enjoy this

freedom. In many cases, we take this freedom for granted. But we know and are reminded today that true freedom comes at a sacrifice.

Romans 8:1-2 says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death***."** Paul reminds us in Romans 6:23 that "*the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*." We are aware that we are all sinners before God. And for all of us who have experienced the consequences of sin, we know that sin will ultimately lead us to death. But God has given us a free gift, which is everlasting life in Jesus Christ.

6. Conclusion

The Bible constantly reminds us that God created human beings in His image, and He keeps caring for them. According to Exodus 3:7, God observed the misery of His people. He heard their cry. God knows their sufferings. So, God sent Moses to set them free. And the Lord sent Jesus for all human beings. Because of Jesus Christ, we are delivered from sin and death and are brought into a new freedom.

7. Application

There are so many people in this world who need physical, mental, and spiritual freedom. Many people are waiting for freedom from poverty, sorrow, loneliness, stress, alcohol and drug addiction, obsession and imprisonment. God is looking for someone like Moses who will go and help God's people to be released from all kinds of slavery. Paul says in Galatians 5:13, *"My friends, you were chosen to be free. So, don't use your freedom as an excuse to do anything you want. Use it as an opportunity to serve each other with love"* (CEV).

God keeps reminding you and me that we are the body of Christ. We are called to be God's hands and feet. We could say as Moses did. "*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?*" Then God might say, "*I will be with you*." What does that mean? There is nothing that we need to worry about or be afraid of. Everything will be possible. As we celebrate Independence Day, we give thanks to God for giving us freedom. And I pray that God uses you and me to help those who are waiting for hope through us.