

“Freedom for God's glory” (Exodus 33:14)

We have been studying the four-week series of “Freedom from slavery.” We are studying from the book of Exodus. Today is the last week of the series. And the title is “Freedom for God's glory.”

Last time, we studied about the Passover, and we looked at how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, and how they were supposed to walk by faith after that experience, but they actually relied on their work, their performance.

And we learned that God wants to deliver us from grumbling, criticizing, speaking negative words, and complaining. He wants us to be His people freely praising, resting in Him, praying and serving. We can be His people completely in any circumstances, freely rejoicing in the hope of God's glory.

Today we will start from cp.19 and go through the book of Exodus till the end.

1. God gave them a covenant

After the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, they entered the Desert of Sinai.

19:3-6

Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ⁴ 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'

Moses told these Words of the Lord to his people.

19:8

The people all responded together, "We will do everything the Lord has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord.

After that, God gave the Law to his people through Moses. Moses went up on the mountain to hear from the Lord, and went down from there to speak what he heard from the Lord to the people. It is recorded from the latter half of cp.19 to cp.23.

That was the covenant God gave to his people. It wasn't something made by peers as they discuss, negotiate and compromise for one another. This is the covenant in which God, the Redeemer declares "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God" (Exodus 6:7). When they observe it, people can recognize that they are God's redeemed people, they are in God's covenant.

By the way, we will start a new series of studying "Ten Commandments" from September. Please look forward to it.

Moses received the laws and came down from the mountain.

24:3

When Moses went and told the people all the Lord 's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do."

Early the next morning, Moses built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and sacrificed young bulls to the Lord.

24:7-8

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey." ⁸ Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

And Moses went up on the mountain of the Lord, Mt. Sinai again. There the glory of the Lord settled on. The Israelites saw the glory of the Lord. To them, it looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. Moses stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. There he received the ceremonial laws from the Lord. They were about the Tabernacle, the priests, and sacrifices and so on.

2. Moses: a free man

32:1

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

And Aron collected gold from the people and made it into a golden calf. They built an altar in front of the calf and offered sacrifices to it and celebrated.

32:7-8

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. ⁸ They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf.

And God told Moses that He would destroy them.

Moses went down the mountain. Then he started to hear the noise of the people shouting. When Moses approached the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing. His anger burned against them. On that day, about 3,000 of the people died.

The people of Israel committed a great sin before the Lord. They have just heard the Ten Commandments and laws. They just declared that they would do everything the Lord has commanded them to do. But now they made a golden calf, and said, "This is the god who brought us up out of Egypt." And they offered sacrifices to it. They sang and danced and celebrated! God's anger burned against them. And now He is about to destroy them (cf. Ex 32:33-35).

If you were Moses, what would you think?

Remember, what kind of attitude they have had against Moses so far?

15:24

the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"

16:3

The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

17:3

the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

You thought I was doing things like that, right? Ok, let it be as you thought. You grumbled "there is no water", you complained "we wanna eat meat." And you blamed me that I was going to starve you to death in the desert. And you've been calling me totally incompetent. Now manage your own affairs.

I have clearly told you the Ten Commandments. You have heard it clearly too. And you said you would do everything the Lord had commanded. And you made a golden calf, and call it a god who brought you up out of Egypt. And you offered sacrifices to it, you sang, danced and celebrated. No wonder God's anger burned against you! You deserve to be destroyed!

But I am different. God promised me that he would make me into a great nation (Ex 32:10). I will live in God's blessings.

If I were Moses, I would think like that. If you think logically, it's natural to think like that. This is their problem and not mine. This is their sin and not my fault. They deserve to be destroyed because of what they did. And that's God's business. What can I do?

But Moses didn't think like that.

32:30

The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."

He went before the Lord many times. And he interceded for them again and again. He pleads with the Lord, "Please forgive them. Please remember that they are your people. Please go with them as our Lord, as our God.

Why could Moses do that? How come could he think like that?

It was because he was free. He was free from their grumbling, free from their criticism, their negative words, and complaints.

He could serve because he had been set free. He was not bounded by his emotion such as grumbling, criticizing, speaking negative words, and complaining. He could pray to God because he had been set free.

He had been set free. So he could love freely. He could love people who blamed him, who complained against him, who troubled him and who are selfish.

Through him, the love of God, His salvation and His grace were made real among his them. Through him, God's glory was revealed among the people of Israel. Freedom for God's glory.

3. Go with us

In cp.33 Moses asked God, "Let me know Your ways that I may know You" (v.13 NASB). And the answer is very interesting. The Lord said "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (v.14).

Here what the Lord is saying is, Hey Moses, take this way so that you will know me. You trust me that I'll go with you wherever you go. I'll be with you whatever circumstance you are in. And you trust me that I'm your Lord, God Almighty, who delivered you from the power of Egypt. I'm the One who performed many powerful miracles over their gods. You trust me that I'll lead you to the right direction and protect you from any danger. I'm the One who made the way by dividing the Red Sea and killed all Pharaoh's army. You trust me that I will take care of you in any circumstances. I'm the One who gave you water and food in the desert. When you trust me totally, submit everything to me, obey my every single word, you will find rest. Now you know who I am, I'm your Lord, God Almighty. I'm your hope, I'm your strength, I'm your refuge, I'm your Rock, I'm your future. I'm your God and you are mine. You are good because you are mine.

34:8-9

Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped. ⁹ "O Lord, if I have found favor in your eyes," he said, "then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance."

Moses is begging God. Please take us as your people.

It is not us who choose God and make Him our Lord. But it is the Lord who choose us and redeemed us and receive us as His people.

34:10

Then the Lord said: "I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you.

God gives them a covenant again. It tells that the people will see His mighty works, and God will show His glory among the people.

The Law shows how people are supposed to live as God's people. The very fact that people live as the Law instructs is the evidence of God's mighty work. They are the people who are set free by God and living in the power of God. People on the earth will be amazed by it. God's glory will be shown among people who live like that.

God delivered them from slavery and gave them the covenant and made them His people. This new nation reveals the character of God. This new community is the "house" where God dwells, manifests his glory, filled with his glory. Freedom for God's glory.

4. His glory was among his people

From the latter half of cp.35, we see that the people started to act, moved by the Spirit of God. Those who were willing brought to the Lord the materials to build the Tabernacle as freewill offerings.

God gave certain people special wisdom and skills. They were used by God to build the sanctuary. No matter what good materials they have, if they are not joined together, they are just a pile of materials, there will be no Tabernacle. They made everything according to the Lord's instructions. They joined every parts together according to the Word of God. And Moses anointed the tabernacle, all its utensils, and priests with the anointing oil and consecrated them to the Lord.

And the final chapter, cp.40 records how this work was completed. Every one of them was made exactly as the Lord had commanded.

40:34-38

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; ³⁷ but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out, until the day it lifted. ³⁸ So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.

People of Israel built the Tabernacle by God's Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit. When the Tabernacle was completed, God's glory appeared among them. After they had been set free from slavery, the people of Israel built the Tabernacle. God's presence was there. God's glory appeared among the people.

This is the end of the book of Exodus. But it's not the end of the story. It's the new beginning of God' people.

People of Israel were originally the family of a ruler of Egypt. But they had become slaves. And God brought them out, delivered them and made them the people shining with His glory, because they are His people and He is their God. And they were sent to the world as the example of God's redemption. All peoples on earth would be blessed through them. Freedom for His glory.

Ephesians 2:21-22

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

No matter what good materials they have, if they are not joined together, they are just a pile of materials, there will be no Tabernacle. In the same way, no matter how much we are enjoying to get along with one another, if we just gather together, it is just a gathering of people.

Each one of us is like a living stone, to be built into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:4). When we are joined together as the Word of God shows, and welcome His Spirit, we will become His dwelling place. Glory to God in his church! (Eph

3:31). It is not because of its program, nor system. But it is because of the Word of God and His Spirit.

God wants to show His glory among His people. He wants to do His mighty works among and through His people. God wants to be so close to us that we can feel Him and touch Him. That is why God builds His church. Church is the house of God for His glory (1 Tim 3:15). That is why God speaks His Word. Jesus has died on the cross. The Holy Spirit has come.

For His glory, God set us free. Because if we are slaves of sin, slaves of the world, slaves of money, or slaves of whatever, we can't love God wholeheartedly. We can't love others.

He wants us to be His people, freely praising, resting in Him, praying and serving. We can be His people completely in any circumstances freely rejoicing in the hope of God's glory. Freedom for God's glory.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Eph 3:20-21).

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection

- 1) Moses spoke to the people about Ten commandments, and they answered that they would do everything the Lord had commanded. Moses went up on the mountain of the Lord again. When he came down, he found the people had made a golden calf, and said it was the god who brought them up out of Egypt, and they offered sacrifice to it, danced and celebrated. If you were Moses, how would you feel? What would you think?
- 2) All the materials to build the Tabernacle were brought by those who are willing to offer them. Do you see the tabernacle there? What is the difference between the life with a pile of materials and the life with the tabernacle? When was the glory of God revealed? (See 40:34) And what attitude did they have in their works? (See 39:32, 42)

- 3) Moses asked God, "Let me know Your ways that I may know You" (33:13 NASB). And the Lord said "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (33:14). Meditate on this dialog. What thought comes up in your mind? What do you miss in your life? What do you need today?

- 4) Keep the word of the Lord "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest (33:14)" in your mind. And remember it from time to time through this week. How does it affect you?