

The Gospel of Exodus
Exodus 5:1 – 6:9
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It was 60 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, which granted freedom to America's slaves and it was the same year my father was born.

In that year, just 88 years ago, Robert Sadler, at five years of age, lived in Anderson, South Carolina.

His father was a drunk; his mother died from physical abuse.

A new woman and her two sons moved into the shack with Robert and his sisters and beat them often.

His father began drinking hard again and finally the new wife convinced Robert's father that the children had to go.

Robert writes, "One terrible day our father came into the room where my sisters and I slept and woke us, ordering us to get into the wagon outside..."

Little was said during our ride down the Abberville Road, through Anderson and on south...

Finally my sister Pearl said to Father, "Where are we going?"

He sat almost motionless on the small seat at the front of the wagon... His silence meant, don't ask any more questions.

We grew hungry as the morning wore on, yet we said nothing.

"Finally we left the main road and turned into a long driveway.

We saw a large house, obviously owned by a white man, and we saw several shanties near the back of the property.

Father halted the mule, got out of the wagon and started for the back door.

Soon a white man, as tall as Father, opened the door.

They talked a while and then Father turned and pointed to us.

Father and the white man went inside the back door.

In a few minutes they came out and Father ordered us to get out of the wagon.

Margie and Pearl got down first and helped me down.

We stood in our bare feet on the cold ground staring at the white man.

“Y’say the boy is only five years old?” the man asked.

“Yessuh. Five years old, suh,” my father answered.

“Hmmm...I don’t like ‘em so young.”

“Take ‘em all or take none,” my father said.

The man’s eyes narrowed, then he said, “OK, I’ll take ‘em.”

“Git over there by the house and stand still!” he ordered us roughly.

We did as we were told and when we turned around, Father was in the wagon and turned the way we had come.

Pearl called out, “Father, wait! Don’t leave us! Father didn’t even look back. The wagon disappeared down the road.

Pearl, Maggie and I stood trembling against the side of the house with our feet digging into the cold earth.

My sisters and I had just been sold as slaves.

For the next eleven years Robert Sadler lived in a hell-on-earth not knowing that slavery was illegal and not even knowing that life could be different. (From [The Emancipation of Robert Sadler](#) 23-27)

Slavery is not only about the body; it is also about the soul.

And many more souls are enslaved than bodies.

And the worst enslavement is when the slave doesn’t even know he’s a slave.

Or when the security of slavery seems better than a future of freedom.

Why isn't everybody a Christian?

- If there is a heaven and a hell, who wouldn't want to go to heaven when they die?
- Who wouldn't want peace of mind and heart?
- Who wouldn't want to have assurance of a sovereign God's loving care and protection of them?
- Who wouldn't want to have harmonious and loving relationships with family and friends?
- Who wouldn't want to live a life that matters, that makes a difference, and that has eternal significance?
- If there truly is one supreme God, who wouldn't want to know and love him and be known and loved by him?

Why isn't everybody a Christian?

Because they are enslaved!

They are enslaved by the world's philosophies and systems, enslaved by their own passions, and all of that masterminded by the archenemy of God, Satan himself.

That language may be a little strong for you but it is what the Bible teaches.

1 John 5:19 "The whole world is under the control of the evil one.

1 Peter 5:8 "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

The Bible says of Jesus in Matthew 9:36 "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

They were easy prey for the enemy to subdue and enslave.

When we too come face to face with individuals and the miserable situations of their lives, our hearts ache for them.

I know a young man in his mid-20s who is angry over the divorce of his parents at least 15 years ago.

He is trapped in marijuana use, drifts from job to job, and is in and out of trouble with the law.

It is truly pathetic. Your heart goes out to him when you realize how helpless he seems to be to change, how

enslaved he is to his own wounds, anger and bad choices.

There's a woman I know in her early 40s, abused, divorced, caught in a cycle of relationships that end nowhere.

Not that long ago she linked up with yet another man thinking she would find the peace her heart longs for but never finds.

I know a child so confused by his parents' divorce that he doesn't know what to do except act out in self-destructive ways.

Your heart breaks when you see a child so hurt but so powerless to change anything else that he destroys the only thing he can influence, his own body and future.

I know a woman who lived in a physically abusive relationship for nearly 10 years because, in spite of what she was told and the help she was offered, she had no hope that things could really be different.

She was a slave to her fear.

We pleaded with her to act, but she felt powerless.

I don't overlook the personal responsibility most of these people have for their response to their situations.

But I grieve for them nonetheless when I see the slavery in which they live.

Oh the story we come to today in Exodus is a sad story!

It's a story of life-long slavery, unrelieved misery, of hopes raised and dashed, of retaliatory accusation, of bitterness, and even anger at God.

But it is a story that mercifully includes an offer of grace and a future.

And the end of the story is yet to be told.

READ Exodus 5:1 – 6:9

Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.' "

^{EX 5:2} Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go."

EX 5:3 Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword."

EX 5:4 But the king of Egypt said, "Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!"⁵ Then Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working."

EX 5:6 That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people:⁷ "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw."⁸ But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.'⁹ Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies."

EX 5:10 Then the slave drivers and the foremen went out and said to the people, "This is what Pharaoh says: 'I will not give you any more straw.'¹¹ Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.'"¹² So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw.¹³ The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, "Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw."¹⁴ The Israelite foremen appointed by Pharaoh's slave drivers were beaten and were asked, "Why didn't you meet your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?"

EX 5:15 Then the Israelite foremen went and appealed to Pharaoh: "Why have you treated your servants this way?¹⁶ Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people."

EX 5:17 Pharaoh said, "Lazy, that's what you are--lazy! That is why you keep saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.'¹⁸ Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks."

EX 5:19 The Israelite foremen realized they were in trouble when they were told, "You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day."²⁰ When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them,²¹ and they said, "May the LORD look

upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

EX 5:22 Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? ²³ Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."

EX 6:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."

EX 6:2 God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. ⁴ I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. ⁵ Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.

EX 6:6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: '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 with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. ⁸ And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.' "

EX 6:9 Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage."

May God bless the hearing of his holy word.

Prayer: "Holy Spirit of God, as with all of the Bible, you guided the author of this text, in the very words he would use to retell this event. And you have preserved it these past 3500 years so that you could use it to save us, change us and conform us to the character of Jesus. We invite you to do that work in us today. Amen."

These verses and the chapters that follow describe an epic battle.

- No, it is not on a physical battlefield like Waterloo, Gettysburg or Guadalcanal.
- And it is not fought with guns and bombs.
- It is not even between two great national powers.

This is a different kind of battle.

- The battlefield here is in the hearts of men and women.
- The ammunition is words.
- And it is a battle, as St. Augustine stated it, between the City of Man and the City of God.

Oh, the author leaves no doubt as to who are the antagonists – they are Pharaoh and God.

God had said it was time for his people to be freed from slavery in Egypt and be led to a country of their own.

But Pharaoh said, Exodus 5:2 “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.”

Like Babylon and Rome, in the millennia later, the Pharaoh of Egypt was a manifestation of the worldly philosophies, systems, governments and rulers who set themselves up against the one true God.

This Pharaoh, like Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan or Adolph Hitler, believed they were immune to the will and power of God.

And like the first Adam, like the citizens of earth in Noah’s day, and like every human heart today, there is the desire to steer my own ship.

“Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?” “I will not!”

Oh such rebellion is not usually expressed so strongly today.

Too many say they know God and will serve him, but don’t.

At least Pharaoh had the courage of his convictions.

But even courageous rebellion is still rebellion.

God had said Israel would serve **God**.

Exodus 5:3 Moses and Aaron said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God."

Pharaoh said Israel would serve **him!**

Exodus 5:4 "But the king of Egypt said, "Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!"

The battle-lines are drawn but it is the battlefield that commands my attention today.

Caught between the call of God and the command of Pharaoh are the people of Israel.

How can your heart not go out to these people?

Like the victims of Nazi labor camps or the slaves of the worst of the plantation owners of the antebellum south, these people's lives were miserable.

I rented and watched part of Cecil B. DeMille's "Ten Commandments" this past week.

I was a little disappointed with the depiction of slavery – it seems that nearly every slave was oiled, bronzed and belligerent.

If you want to visualize life for the Israelites, I think the motion pictures, "The Hiding Place" or "Schindler's List," give you a far better representation.

Earlier, I said, slavery is not only about the body; it is also about the soul.

And that many more souls are enslaved, than bodies.

When we think about the situation of the Israelites in Egypt, we can't imagine why they didn't all rise up in rebellion.

That's the worst thing about slavery, when the slave thinks slavery is better than freedom.

When the security of slavery seems better than a future of freedom.

Have you ever heard the phrase, “The deceitfulness of sin”? (Hebrews 3:13)
 I wonder if that is sin’s most powerful dimension?
 It twists our minds to think that bad is good and good bad.

There is an astonishing statement made about the Israelites only shortly later in the book of Exodus.

They had seen the hand of God miraculously deliver them from Egypt. But now the Egyptian army was pursuing them.

Listen to what they say:

Exodus 14:12 “(Moses) didn't we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians...”

- Have they so quickly forgotten the abject misery of their slavery in Egypt?
- Did slavery actually begin to look good to them?

Do you remember when just over two years ago a 15-year-old Elizabeth Smart was abducted?

According to Reuters and the AP News Service, Brian Mitchell and Wanda Barzee were charged with aggravated kidnapping, sexual assault and burglary in the June 5, 2002 abduction.

Elizabeth was found nine months later on March 12, 2003.

Asked why Elizabeth had not tried to escape from the street preacher and his wife held on suspicion of kidnapping her, one authority said; "There was clearly a psychological impact that occurred at some point." She "psychologically" joined her captors.

This is called the “Stockholm syndrome” referring to prisoners taken hostage who then identify with their captors, based on what happened in 1973 during a prolonged Stockholm bank robbery. America's most famous example of the syndrome was heiress Patty Hearst. (Reuters and AP wire services, March 13, 2003),

Why don't people escape their terrible situations?
 Because their souls are enslaved.

In our story, the Israelites' situation becomes worse rather than better.

Pharaoh gives orders that makes their lives even harder.

They are commanded to continue to fill the same quota of brick-making as before but now they must also gather some of the materials themselves.

This doesn't affect only a few of the Israelites but apparently all.

They spread out all over Egypt looking for the straw they need to make as many bricks as before.

The Hebrew foremen are beaten when the people fail to produce.

When the foremen finally worked up sufficient courage to confront the Pharaoh with the injustice of their situation, hear what they say:

Exodus 5:15-16 "Why have you treated **your servants** this way? ¹⁶ **Your servants** are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' **Your servants** are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people."

Whose servants are they? Pharaoh's servants?

They have already capitulated.

They had their hopes raised that they would get out of slavery quickly and when Moses was initially rebuffed and things got worse, they threw in the towel.

They were more than ready to have things go back to the miserable existence they had known for so long.

And then Pharaoh further enslaves them by using a technique common among oppressors; he says the oppressed are at fault.

Exodus 5:17 "Lazy, that's what you are--lazy!"

Their souls are so enslaved that they leave Pharaoh and seeing Moses, they blame him.

Exodus 5:21 “May the LORD look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

And Moses leaves them and goes to the Lord and blames him.

Exodus 5:22-23 “O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? ²³ Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.”

God had come to the Israelites and told them he would deliver them. Apparently they had some hope that might happen because we are told that when they first heard that news, they bowed down and worshipped God.

But they didn't really trust God because at the first sign of opposition, they folded.

They were willing to return to their miserable existence, they trusted more in the Pharaoh than in God, pleading with Pharaoh to help them rather than praying to God
 And they turned against God's man, Moses, accusing him, not Pharaoh, of making things worse.

Later in the text we to see this statement:

Exodus 6:9 “They did not listen to (Moses) because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.”

They'd been enslaved so long they couldn't believe it could be better.

Some of you here today are living in miserable conditions.

I'm not referring to a lousy job or a mean-spirited family member;

I'm talking about the turmoil in your soul;

I'm talking about the slavery to passions of fear, anger, greed, bitterness that keep you from God.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Some cannot receive Christ because they are so full of anguish, and are so crushed in spirit that they cannot find strength enough of mind to entertain a hope that by any possibility salvation can come to them. It is to **their** sad case that I

desire to speak... for I have felt the same. I do remember when I could not believe even Jesus himself by reason of (my) anguish and (hopelessness); and, therefore, as one who has worn the chains, I speak to those who are still in chains. I know the clanking of those fetters, and what it is to feel the damp of the stone walls, and to fear that there is no coming out of prison, and to be so despairing that even when the Emancipator turned the great key in the lock, and set the door wide open, yet still my heart had made for itself a more horrible cage, and I could not believe in the possibility of liberty, and therefore I sat bound in a dungeon of my own creation. Ah! There is no Bastille (prison) so awful as that which is built by despair, and kept under the custody of a crushed spirit. Many are the desponding ones whose eyes fail so that they cannot look up..." Spurgeon June 3, 1888

Yes, there are those openly rebellious people who say as Pharaoh did, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" "I will not..."

But there are also people who by the sin of others and their own sin are so enslaved that they need an Emancipator, a deliverer.

If Jesus looked into your soul today and saw the burden you carry what would he say to you?

- If he saw the **anger** toward a parent or a spouse that weighs you down,
- If he saw the **isolation** in which you live, withdrawn from family members that continually hurt you,
- If he saw the **fear** you labor under at work or at home,
- If he saw the **bitterness** that erupts too often in the words to your ears or from your mouth,
- If he saw the **weariness** that leads you to take an extra sleeping pill or too many drinks just to numb the hopelessness,
- If he saw the **jealousy or envy** that burns in your mind toward another in your family, at work, or among your friends,
- If he saw the **emptiness** that leaves a hole in your heart,
If he looked into your soul and saw one or a combination of hurt, fear, bitterness, hopelessness, jealousy, or emptiness, what would he say?

“You miserable faithless sinner, I told you I would save you from your bondage to all of that and as soon as things got worse, you bailed out. Forget you!

No! That is not what he says!

The Bible says in John 3:17 “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

Don't misunderstand; God doesn't think we are just victims.

He knows we deserve the circumstances we live in.

God doesn't come to save us because we deserve to be saved but because he is a compassionate God.

Listen to what God has already said about his feelings for the Israelites:

Exodus 3:7-8 “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them...”

That's the compassion of God, which is now expressed in the grace of God.

Listen to the Gospel of Exodus in 6:6-8

“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 with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. ⁸ And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.' ”

Hear his heart: I am! Therefore I will!

I am the I am – Yahweh – The eternal, omnipotent, gracious God.

I will bring you out.

I will free you.

I will redeem you.

I will take you as my own.
I will be your God.
I will bring you to the place I promised.
I will give it to you.
I am the Lord.

Hear the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

God didn't cast the faithless Israelites aside; he offered his mercy and grace yet again.

And he grounded his promise in his person – God has spoken.

Will you trust him?
Will you follow him?

