

Text: Exod. 6:28 - 7:7

Title: "Why the exodus will work for God"

Time: 5/31/2020 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* tells the story of King Arthur and the knights of the roundtable. The story begins with England divided among rival nobles, each of whom had aspiration to be king of the land. The magician Merlin counsels with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and they decide to ask the Lord for a Christmas miracle that would determine who should be king.

The miracle comes when found in the churchyard is a great square marble stone containing a foot-high anvil on top of it, which has a sword in it. Text encompassed the sword that read, "Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil, is rightwise king born of all England." The Archbishop schedules a great joust of knights at which nobles are invited to take a tug, and none can pull the sword from the stone. It resists them all.

One of the newly knighted barons invited to that event was the young Sir Kay. Likely due to his inexperience, Sir Kay had forgotten his sword at his father's house, and so he asked his little brother Arthur to go back home and fetch it for him. When Arthur arrived home, he found the place empty, for all had gone to see the joust, and he could not locate his brother's sword. So instead, he remembers the sword in the churchyard, travels there, and pulls the sword out of the stone for his brother. The stone and anvil could not resist his pull, and England got her "rightwise king."

In the legend of King Arthur, only one could overcome the hardened resistance of an anvil atop a marble stone. In the

true history of Israel's exodus from Egypt, only One can pull a people experiencing anguish of spirit out of their cruel bondage (6:29, "I am the Lord"). This account describes a hardened resistance, not of a marble stone, but of a stony human heart (7:3). The Lord not only "pulls the sword" by delivering His people, He hardens the stone of resistance prior to doing so. I have titled the message this morning, "Why the exodus will work for God," and I want us to understand from this passage how truly futile it is for God's enemies to resist His tug of deliverance and why.

I. There is no place where God does not rule.

Illustration: Everyone in England in the days of Arthur knew that England needed a king, but none in England recognized that Kay's younger brother had been born to be this king. Arthur's ability to pull the sword out of the stone of resistance came as a great surprise to a needy land.

Application: In the days leading up to God's pulling Israel out of Egypt, none in Egypt understood who really was ruling in that country. All would have assumed it to be Pharaoh, including Pharaoh himself. Certainly, Pharaoh was Egypt's king (6:29), but the account is clear that in Egypt there was a King of this king, a Lord of this lord. His name is *Yahweh*. Notice that He speaks to Moses as the One in charge in the land of Egypt (6:28). One commentator writes in this regard: "This . . . gives emphasis to the fact that Jehovah represented Himself in the very midst of Egypt as the Lord of the country" (Lange, 18). The phrase *in the land of Egypt* is repeated in 7:3. Yahweh would rule in the land so that Egypt would know that He was the Lord (7:5).

The question before a man, no matter his cultural background or national heritage, is never whether the God of

the Bible exists as his Lord or the Lord of his land, but whether or not he knows that the God of the Bible exists as his Lord and the Lord of his land. God is in charge in this passage, and it is not set in Israel. He is in charge in Egypt. There is no place where Yahweh, the God of the Bible, does not rule, and there is no person who is exempt from knowing that He rules and respecting His authority.

Do we understand this morning that we are in a place where God rules? Do we know He is in charge? Remember Pharaoh's words, "Who is Yahweh, to whose voice I should listen to free Israel? I have not known Yahweh, and also Israel shall I not free" (5:2). That was no defense for Pharaoh. It was no excuse for his failing to bow before His sovereign Lord. It will not be a good excuse for us either. Knowing that the God of the Bible is the true God and submitting to His sovereign rule over us is our only hope of not being ruinously deceived. To imagine a place where the God of the Bible is not in charge is to be blindly and dangerously out of sync with reality.

II. Not one of God's messengers can be ignored.

Illustration: Young Arthur reminds us of a young David who was told by his father to bring food to his older brothers' company on the battlefield (1 Samuel 17). David had some words of wisdom about Goliath, the Philistine champion, which none of his older brothers wanted to hear. God demonstrated that day that His messenger cannot be ignored when the Philistine fell dead before him.

Application: In our passage, Moses is called to be God's messenger, but you may remember from a couple of weeks ago that he is not only feeling inept, but also unworthy. That sense of sinful unworthiness, that condemns and

paralyzes the servant of God, is what Moses is expressing with the phrase *uncircumcised lips* in 6:30.

God's answer is a simple one that builds on the truth of the first point, that there is no place where God does not rule. God's answer for Moses's sense of inadequacy and unworthiness is that because God rules in this place, not one of God's messengers can be ignored. The point is not their worthiness. The point is that it is God who has sent them, and God rules. Our passage indicates that God wants His messengers to understand two things in this regard.

1. When we speak as God's messenger, we are to speak what He first has spoken to us (6:28-29, 7:2, 7:6). Adherence to God's Word and obedience to God's commands are the most important duties of the messengers of God. When Moses complains that his lips are uncircumcised, the Lord does not contradict him. No, He responds with the truth that it does not matter what Moses's lips are like, because he will be speaking God's words, not his own. When I preach each Sunday, it is my goal to tell you only what God has said in His Word and why that is important for our lives. Because He is perfect truth and wisdom, when I do so, what I say is true and wise. When I say what He has not said, or skip over what He has said, I am failing in my duty as His messenger. The same is true for every one of us, for we are all His messengers.

In the New Testament, Jesus's Great Commission to His churches is clear on this matter. We are to "make disciples of all the nations . . . teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). We need to fill the witness of our mouth and the discipleship relationships God has assigned to us with the testimony of the Word of God, and the example of a life filled with obedience to His commands.

2. When we speak as God's messengers, we speak sanctioned by divine authority (7:1). Moses, the sinner, would be God to Pharaoh, and Aaron, the sinner, would be God's prophet to Pharaoh. It was not primarily important for Moses and Aaron to understand how to make a good sale, or how to win friends and influence people in Egypt. What was important was their reverence for the truth that they were representing holy God before this unbeliever. What Pharaoh would see and know of Yahweh, he would have to get from the message and lives of Moses and Aaron.

God still uses His messengers in the same way today. Jesus promised this about our mission to a lost world: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. 10:40). The apostle Paul understood that he was God's ambassador before those who received his gospel message. He said, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Do we think of ourselves as God's representatives in Egypt? Do we realize that when people see us, they are getting the only picture they will ever have of who the true God is and what His prophet is like?

Illustration: I am reading a book that is intensely critical of modern-day, pop-culture, consumer-oriented, seeker-sensitive Christianity. What is remarkable about the book is that it was not written as a lament of a traditional fundamentalist Christian, but rather it is the work of a liberal New York journalist who describes himself as a humanist Jew. He does not believe in God, but he also does not make that the center of his worldview, so he declines the label *atheist*. The book is cynical and at times unfair, but it underscores the truth that the often sincere efforts to make our message more attractive and entertaining to the lost world can give that world a tragically wrong picture of who our

Lord is, which is very damaging to their spiritual welfare. A key take-away for me from the book is that the true church of Jesus Christ needs to be less worried about salesmanship and more conscious of divine authority when it comes to how we represent our God before a world of unbelievers.

Once again, we need look no further than the churches' Great Commission for this truth in the New Testament. Jesus begins, "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," and then He says, "Go ye, therefore." When we go, are we mindful of not offending that authority or more afraid of offending someone else?

III. There is no human heart immune to God's touch (7:3).

Illustration: We are hopefully on the tail end of dealing with months of pandemic precautions in our nation in a severely disruptive way. The directives we have received involving shutdowns, distancing, and stay-at-home orders have addressed biological and chemical aspects of human health while ignoring the importance of the human heart. We need to understand that each of these measures have made human hearts less healthy, the part of us that is not chemistry and biology.

Shortly after the stay-at-home order, our governor issued Emergency Order #21, "Establishment of the COVID-19 Emergency Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Relief Fund," and #22, "Authorization of Emergency Funding for Child Protection Services." The first order explained that NH police had "reported an uptick in domestic violence calls during the month of March" and that "victims of domestic and sexual violence are at greater risk of violence, and face significantly increased barriers to accessing help when required to stay in their homes."

Rick Cornell, the Vice President for Community Relations at The Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester, explained to a local newspaper that “the pandemic has created the need for services among a lot of people who never sought them before. The death of a relative, job loss, income loss, stress, and depression and anxiety all build as they are locked home, in some cases with their children” [<https://www.ledgertranscript.com/Mental-health-care-a-team-effort-in-New-Hampshire-during-coronavirus-pandemic-34164096>; accessed 5/8/2020].

Application: The Bible is clear that the most important part of a human is the human heart. In Deut. 2:30, the heart is also called a man’s spirit. It is the non-physical us. God says in our passage, emphatically so, that He would harden Pharaoh’s heart. That is a prediction of God’s judgment on Pharaoh, just like the signs and wonders that are also predicted. God can soften a heart, and God can harden a heart. He softens those who will listen to His word, and He hardens those who will not. But no heart is immune. What shall He do with your heart and mine? Will there be a softening or hardening? There is no human heart immune to His touch.

IV. There is no child of God ever left in Egypt (7:4-5).

Application: Here the Lord speaks of “My hand,” “My hosts,” and “My people” (7:4). He will bring them out because they belong unfailingly to Him. He refers to His people repeatedly as “the sons of Israel” (7:2, 7:4, 7:5). They are sons of the one whose name was changed from Jacob to Israel because his life was change from a deceptive supplanter to the one who prevailed in his honest struggle with man and God. The Hebrew slaves of Egypt were viewed as the sons of Israel by Yahweh. Not one would be left behind.

Conclusion: Thomas Malory's book on King Arthur is about the morality and chivalry of medieval knighthood. Malory was himself a knight. But in spite of his exalted position and lofty theme, Malory wrote his book largely to pass the time he was serving in jail for a series of violent crimes he had committed. His life was a great contrast to the morality and chivalry he wrote about.

When we read a story like King Arthur and the sword in the stone, we all like to imagine ourselves as Arthur. What we do not realize is that in our resistance against God's rule and message, we have been much more like the anvil and the stone. It is my prayer today that God would soften our hearts as we heed His word, that none here would ever be hardened by Him because they refused to listen. Are you ready to stop resisting? Are you ready to let Him pull you out of Egypt and into the glorious kingdom of His dear Son? Is your heart softened or hardened by His Word?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching