

Title: I Have Remembered My Covenant

Text: Exodus 6.1 – 7.7

Theme: Listening and Obeying

Series: Exodus #8

Prop Stmt. I Already Tried That! (and it didn't work).

Read Text:

You have your “God” and I have my “god.” Who are you to tell me that your God and your way is better than my god and my way? Keep your God to yourself and I will keep my god to myself. Sound familiar? This is not merely a contemporary attitude, this thinking goes back as far as our text does. The world of the OT was divided by regions, countries, and people groups, each of which had their own deities. Their territory was marked by borders and by their gods. So when Moses and Aaron show up in Pharaoh's palace to tell him that the God of Israel has demanded the release of the Israelites from slavery, Pharaoh does not take too kindly to the idea. Keep your God to yourself. I don't even recognize your God as being a God. That is your religion, but not mine. And then in a mockery of the God of the Israelites, Pharaoh takes action against the people of Israel, which is a move against not the God of Israel, but THE GOD. The thinking behind the statements of: “You have your god and I have mine” assumes that we are in a position to pick and choose who or what is God. That is very post-modern. That is a very contemporary view. If I believe in something, then it is true. If I don't believe in something, then neither is it true nor am I accountable to it. Take for example the debate about Intelligent Design. The evidence for creation is overwhelming. But, if I don't believe it, then I do not have to submit to the Creator. If I don't have to submit to the Creator, then I can make my own gods and you can make your own gods and we can all have our own little worlds with our own little gods and our own little rules. You respect me, I'll respect you. As long as we go along with that, then to many it appears that we have a safe, decent, respectable, generous, tolerant and humanitarian religion. But, if God is the true God; if God is the Creator and has given us His Word in which He reveals that He alone is God, then how can we pretend that all other gods and systems are equally valid? We cannot. God is God, whether or not I believe it. God is the LORD, in spite of Pharaoh's denial.

The book of Exodus records “the way out” for Israel from Egypt. But woven throughout this incredible story is the voice of God saying, “I AM the LORD.” Pharaoh sits on a pretend throne. Moses has no power by himself. Israel cannot save themselves. You and I are not in charge of this world, God is. But, what kind of a God is He? This is what we are learning about. When we left off with the end of chapter 5, we were hanging on the edge of a cliff. Would God do what God said He would? Would God come through for his people? Would God rescue these people? Doesn't God care that His servant Moses is being hung out to dry? Doesn't God care about the Israelite families being shredded by Pharaoh's new policy? If you are the LORD, why did you allow all of this to happen?

There is a theme that this book establishes, that in many ways comes to a peak in this text, which I trust God to reveal to you this morning. But I desire you that you see it this morning and experience it this week.

When you step back and look at this section as a whole there are several things that immediately stand out.

- 1) God does a great deal of talking. (v.1, 2, 10, 13, 28, 7.1)

6.1-8; 10; 13; 28; 7.1-5

- 2) There is a family tree in the middle of the story. (vs. 14-25)

Not only that, but initially it seems a bit odd. The book of Exodus begins with a record of the sons of Jacob (identified as Israel). The family tree recorded in chapter 6 starts in a similar way. But instead of mentioning all twelve of the sons of Jacob, only the first three sons are mentioned, and a more extended genealogy is given of the third son that extends even beyond the setting of the present narrative.

- 3) There is no panic on the part of God.

He is moving, but not in a reactionary sort of way as if He has to immediately fix Moses' world. Moses is almost dumbfounded, it seems. After the complete failure of chapter 5, God tells Moses to go back to the people of Israel and assure them that He is going to bring them out Egypt, as if chapter 5 never happened. Not only do the people not pay any attention to Moses, but God, seemingly oblivious to all of this tells Moses that this is now the time to back to Pharaoh and demand the release of the Israelites. Now, I am assuming that the reason why you are here this morning, (at least the vast majority of you) is because you love God and you trust Him. You are committed to extending the fame of Jesus Christ throughout this world through faith-driven and joy-producing obedience. But, even here, I am guessing that you are feeling some of Moses' frustration. The last time Moses went before Pharaoh, it was an unmitigated disaster. Now, Moses is being called upon to do the very same thing.

Circumstantially and therefore emotionally, this chapter is about as low as they come. The people of Israel are being exasperated by the Pharaoh and Moses it seems is being exasperated by God. So, here in a very deep and dark valley, where Moses is all alone, God sits him down to teach him a couple of things. And what does God teach Moses? He answers the two question/objections that Pharaoh raised: Who is the LORD? Why should I obey Him? He answers the first question authoritatively in v.2. I am the LORD.

1. I am the LORD. (6.1-3)

In verse 3, God goes on to explain that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew God as El Shaddai. They knew God as the strong and powerful God. What God is saying to Moses is that, (v.3 paraphrase) – “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but only partially –

in the capacity of El Shaddai. But who I am fully, which is what my name Yahweh captures, I did not make myself known to them. This is made known first only now, to you, the Exodus generation, who will witness my mighty saving power.”¹

Moses, you are learning something about me, that no one else has known up until now. I have built this stage (circumstantially) in order to reveal myself more fully. I have established this scenario so that my glory and authority will be set on display. I am guessing that Moses did not fully appreciate all that God was telling Him at the time. Moses had laid a challenge before God – What on earth are you doing up in heaven? I am in a mess!

A. As LORD, He is not obligated to justify His actions.

God did not directly answer Moses’ questions. God said (v.1), “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh.” As far as Moses was concerned, it was not soon enough. But I suspect that God knew something that Moses did not fully appreciate. The people of Israel, up until now were probably a little too comfortable in Egypt. I say that based on the fact that later on, after they left Egypt, whenever things became difficult for them, what did they do? They complained about why they ever had to leave Egypt! They longed for some of the creature comforts that they had back there.

Alright, I have a question for you. How many of you believe that life with Christ in eternity is radically better than life as you experience it right now? Now, let’s say that God did an usual thing and for the next 10 minutes, He offered a painless, instant death and immediate transport to heaven. All you have to do, is get up and go out the door. What would you do? Some of you would go, I know you would. You are so tired of this world, and the difficulties that you have endured have taught you that your real treasure is not found here. The deep rivers you have crossed have given you great affection for life with Christ, you are ready. You have family there. You have dear friends there. But others of you, while intellectually you believe that life with Christ is better, would hesitate. You wanted to get your driver’s license first. You wanted to graduate, get married, have a child. You were just about to land a new job, get into a new relationship or something else. All of these things may be good, but they are not best. So, God uses pressure to help us set our affections on Him. We know that we are called to seek first the kingdom of God, but we usually don’t. We usually give our affections to seeking our own kingdoms, so God, pries our fingers loose from it. The very pressures that we seek to avoid, are usually the very things that reveal our idols and our weaknesses. Pressure is a good grace from God.

Besides, God never promised to keep you from temporary disillusionment. We are part of the people of God. We are in the company of people who have faced the same crisis.

- Job
- David
- Elijah

¹ Peter Enns, The NIV Application Commentary, p. 174.

- Habakkuk
- Jeremiah
- John the Baptist

You have no where else to go.

B. As LORD, He knows exactly what He is doing.

“Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.” God simply assures Moses that the plan has not changed. The immediate problems are temporary and God knew about them all along. Fact is, the immediate problems only make the coming changes all that more stunning.

C. As LORD, His promises are enough.

The truth is, not only are his promises enough, but they are all that we have. What else could Moses do? What else can we do? You can try to create a bombproof world in which you are protected from all calamity, but it will never work. One of our family members worked for a company for over 20 years and built up a pension plan with them. Not long before retirement, the company was sold, and the pension funds were raided. The promises of the old company were rendered obsolete by the new owners. How many times have we heard of that happening? We do not like to think about it, but some of you are banking your future on the viability of the company for which you work. But General Motors is not the I AM that I AM. Chrysler and Ford are not I AM that I AM. This is hard for us. We have insurance for just about everything so that we think we are insulated and protected from calamity. But what happens when the insurance company goes broke? What happens when your bank goes broke? What happens when the Federal Reserve goes broke? There is only one I AM who I AM. All other ground is sinking sand. His promises are enough.

2. I Keep My Covenant. (6.4-5)

Who is the LORD that I should obey Him? I AM the LORD, God says. Why should I obey Him? We obey because God keeps his covenant. In verses 4-5, God takes Moses back to the covenant that He established with Abraham. What is a covenant?

A covenant is a solemn and sacred commitment that is sworn to being upheld even at the payment of one’s life. This is why when covenants are established they are usually done so with a ceremony that involves the shedding of blood. Men have sealed covenants with their blood. God made an oath to Abraham in Genesis 17. This was the occasion of the marking of every male descendent from Abraham. The shedding of blood was a sign of the covenant that God established. In that covenant God promised the descendants of Abraham the land of Canaan. He has come to keep that promise. This time when they return, they will not be aliens in the land, it will be their land. Also, I have heard the groaning of my people and I have remembered my covenant. So, to Moses and to us, when through fiery trials that test our souls, when circumstances do not yet give us relief

and we are tempted to question everything, remember that God keeps His covenant. I AM the LORD, who keeps His covenant. Therefore,

3. **Obey!** (6.6-7.7)

The rest of this section is basically characterized by God's commands to Moses and Aaron, and God's call to the people of Israel and God's command to Pharaoh to obey.

Moses – obey God and deliver this message to the people of Israel. (v.6) He does so, probably reluctantly. It is a message that includes 7 “I will’s.” (pic)

- 1 – I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians
- 2 – I will free you from being slaves
- 3 – I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment
- 4 – I will take you as my own people
- 5 – I will be your God
- 6 – I will bring you to the land
- 7 – I will give it to you as a possession

Moses delivers the message, but no one listens. The weight of their oppression sits so heavy upon them, that their spirits are broken. There is no life in them. Their hope is gone, they are crushed.

Your circumstances can blind you from seeing the grace of God and can deafen you from hearing the Word of God. Verses 6-8 are full of wonderful promises that in the deep forest of depression the trees of their oppression blocked the light of God's promises. How many of you sit here and listen with a hard heart and listen in order to find fault with the message (and perhaps the messenger) because your circumstances do not meet your expectations or demands? The promises of God are rich and sweet must be taken to be enjoyed. He is God and He remembers His covenant. It may seem dangerous and risky and threatening to believe Him and obey, especially in the desert or deep in the forest. But these are the very things that God uses to build into our lives a foundation for faithfulness. Later on God reminds them of these bitter and hopeless days and says, did I not bring you through? He always does that for His children.

Moses was not a popular preacher that day. No extra hits on his website to download that crowd-pleasing sermon! But God is not done. Moses is given another command. Moses, “go tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country.” Didn't we already go through this? Look, if the Israelites won't listen to me, what makes you think Pharaoh will? The answer, we find in 7.3 is that he won't. He won't listen to you, but that is the point. Pharaoh's rebellion is all part of the plan. You don't direct the play, you play your part.

Persevering faith is choosing to trust the promises of God when your God-ordained circumstances appear to be the enemies of your soul and the thieves of your joy.

The section ends with Moses and Aaron obeying the command of God and returning to Pharaoh. Aaron is 83 and Moses is 80 and these 2 old men are going before this mighty, mighty king to demand the release of about 2 million slaves. It is laughable if it weren't so pathetic. It won't be long, before the laughter stops. The sound you hear in the distance is God, getting up and coming down.

What does this have to do with you?

Are you too comfortable in Egypt? Have you chained yourself to the crumbling kingdom of this world and failed to see the grace of God in the pressures of life that are designed to loosen your grip on this earth's shallow and fleeting pleasures?

What does this have to do with Christ?

Time does not permit me to exploit the Christ-likeness of Moses (and Aaron) in this text; a theme I will take up in the next sermon from this. But in preparation for our observing of communion, I certainly want to go back and draw your attention to the covenant that God has made. The first covenant with Abraham pointed to the new covenant that God made through Christ. **“Jesus said, this is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matt. 26.28).** God, on the basis of the death of His Son, made a solemn oath to His people, that your sins He will not remember any more. You are his, He will keep you, He will sustain you, He will conform you, He will direct you, and when your part in His plan has been fulfilled on this earth, He will take you home.