

## Divine Purpose Exodus 5:1-10:29

### I. People Who Worship the Lord. Ex. 5:1-3

What is worship? Worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and overpowering love in the presence of that most ancient Mystery, that Majesty which philosophers call the First Cause, but which we call Our Father Which Are in Heaven.

A.W. Tozer, quoted in D.J. Fant, A.W. Tozer, Christian Publications, 1964, p. 90.

To worship God is to recognize his worth or worthiness; to look God-ward, and to acknowledge in all appropriate ways the value of what we see. The Bible calls this activity "glorifying God" or "giving glory to God," and views it as the ultimate end, and from one point of view, the whole duty of man (Ps. 29:2; 96:6; 1 Cor. 10:31).

Scripture views the glorifying of God as a sixfold activity: praising God for all that he is and all his achievements; thanking him for his gifts and his goodness to us; asking him to meet our own and others' needs; offering him our gifts, our service, and ourselves; learning of him from his word, read and preached, and obeying his voice; telling others of his worth, both by public confession and testimony to what he has done for us. Thus we might say that the basic formulas of worship are these: "Lord, you are wonderful"; "Thank you, Lord"; "Please Lord"; "Take this, Lord"; "Yes, Lord"; "Listen everybody!"

This then is worship in its largest sense: petition as well as praise, preaching as well as prayer, hearing as well as speaking, actions as well as words, obeying as well as offering, loving people as well as loving God. However, the primary acts of worship are those which focus on God directly -- and we must not imagine that work for God in the world is a substitute for direct fellowship with him in praise and prayer and devotion.

James Packer, Your Father Loves You, Harold Shaw Publishers, July 1986, P. 15.

1. Moses asks Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go to the wilderness to worship.

a. To appreciate how audacious Moses' request was, we must understand the power and authority the Pharaoh's claimed for themselves. Each Pharaoh was the child of the sun; he was a friend to the greatest gods of Egypt and sat with them in their own temples to receive worship alongside them. Pharaoh was anything but a public servant; the entire public lived to serve the Pharaoh. His power and authority were supreme; there was no constitution or law or legislature higher or even remotely equal to him.

i. An inscription by a Pharaoh on an ancient Egyptian temple gives us the idea: "I am that which was, and is, and shall be, and no man has lifted my veil." The Pharaoh was more than a man; he thought himself to be a god, and the Egyptians agreed.

b. After Moses had the remarkable encounter at the burning bush, and after he saw God turn the hearts of the leaders of Israel towards him, Moses now has to confront the real enemy: Pharaoh.

i. What strange feelings must have been in Moses that day! He once walked those same palaces as a prince, and might have one day sat on the same throne the present Pharaoh did - yet, *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward*. Moses knew both man's power and God's power, and he knew in God he was more powerful than Pharaoh was.

c. **Who is the Lord?** Pharaoh did not have the right heart, but he did ask the right question. Moses asked *Who am I?* (Exodus 3:11); the relevant question isn't who Moses is, or who Pharaoh is, but who God is.

d. It seems strange to many that Moses would only ask for a three-day weekend; after all, he knew what God wanted to do. Was Moses being deceptive in only asking for three days?

i. No; God's purpose in having Moses ask first for three days off for the nation to worship in the wilderness was so that Pharaoh's heart could be tested; God is giving Pharaoh the chance to agree to something small, and to have his heart softened, before the big request comes.

## II. People Who Belong to the Lord. Ex. 6:6-8

It was very bold of Moses and Aaron to march straight into Pharaoh's place of rule and plead for the Israelites' release for a festival of worship. Except that's not exactly how it happened. Go back and read Exodus 4:27-31. Note Aaron told the elders of Israel everything God had instructed - already acting as God's chosen spokesperson. Moses then performed the signs for the people. As in 4:1-9, he likely turned water to blood, changed his staff into a snake and back again, and then infected his hand with leprosy and healed it again. All of these signs took place right before the elders' eyes. What was their response? They bowed down and worshipped the Lord God who had heard their cries and was about to free them. They believed! Interestingly Pharaoh would himself see these same signs and many more. What was his response? He hardened his heart and rejected the Lord God.

Nothing much has changed today. We can tell the same gospel to two people. One will rejoice in the God who has come to save him; the other will harden his heart and turn from the Lord. Jesus performed many signs and wonders in Galilee to multitudes of people. What was their response? Some believed He was Messiah, and bowed their hearts in obedience to Him. Others rejected Him, wanting the healings and miracles but not the gift of salvation. The power of the gospel is not in flash and style, and it's not in the words of an eloquent speaker. The gospel's power comes from the power of God, Himself, who quickens the heart and gives the ability to respond in faith.

Over hundreds of years God would continually prove Himself the Israelites' Deliverer. In their rebellion and idolatry, God would hand His people over to Syria and Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah, who watched as Jerusalem fell and the Temple burned, wrote a letter to his countrymen in Babylon proclaiming God had a plan for them, to prosper them and not to harm them, to give them a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11). He told them He would be their God, that he would write His law on their hearts in a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). God fulfilled this promise in the coming of His Son, once again to redeem them from the slavery of sin.

## III. People Who Bear Witness of the Lord. Ex. 7:1-5

George Sweeting, in his book *The No-Guilt Guide for Witnessing*, tells of a man by the name of John Currier who in 1949 was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison. Later he was transferred and paroled to work on a farm near Nashville, Tennessee.

In 1968, Currier's sentence was terminated, and a letter bearing the good news was sent to him. But John never saw the letter, nor was he told anything about it. Life on that farm was hard and without promise for the future. Yet John kept doing what he was told even after the farmer for whom he worked had died.

Ten years went by. Then a state parole officer learned about Currier's plight, found him, and told him that his sentence had been terminated. He was a free man.

Sweeting concluded that story by asking, "Would it matter to you if someone sent you an important message -- the most important in your life -- and year after year the urgent message was never delivered?"

We who have heard the good news and experienced freedom through Christ are responsible to proclaim it to others still enslaved by sin. Are we doing all we can to make sure that people get the message?

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