

Godly and Delivered

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Reading Exodus

We're in Ex 18 just before Sinai and Ten Commandments in 19 & 20. Some commentators have observed this chapter is out of order. With all the mention of God's statutes and laws and Moses presiding over legal cases, they say it must have happened after the giving of the Law. If that's the case, then the first half family reunion would also have happened afterwards. I disagree. The author of Exodus deliberately arranges the entire book, *only sometimes to reflect chronology but always to teach theology*. So while the Bible is historical, it is not a history book. It doesn't do history like modern historians, with exacting measurements. It rounds off numbers. If I give you my history—I'm 46—am I being truthful, yes, but I am not being precise. If I were to be precise, I would tell you I am 46 years, 9 months, 14 days old. But you would never call me a liar for saying I'm 46. Similarly, there may have been 11 springs and 68 palm trees in chapter 15, and the genealogy in chapter 6 skips entire families and generations. *But it's deliberate*. 12 and 70 are symbolic numbers of perfection emphasizing God's perfect provision in scarcity. The genealogy narrows down the family line to demonstrate Moses and Aaron priestly pedigree. So, if you come to the Bible with presuppositions of precision, genealogical science, modern historiography, you miss the point. You'll judge the Bible for being something it isn't instead of reading it for what it is. What is it? The Bible isn't poetry, history, culture, theology, though it contains all of that; the Bible is *divine revelation*. Thus says the Lord all over it. Either it is or isn't. *Its aim is to reveal the acts and being of God through history, redemptive history*. It's how Jesus read the Bible, *beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself* (redeemer Lk 24:27). Our question is *what* does Exodus 18 reveal? How is it *redemptive*? *Why* does it appear out of order? Let's see.

Delivered People

Lately, we've learned a lot about Israel but little about Moses. This chapter picks up some loose narrative threads about his life. His wife and sons have been staying with his Midianite father-in-law, Jethro. Jethro hears about YHWH's miraculous defeat of Egypt. News like that would have traveled fast in an oral culture: caravaneers, messengers, water

cooler talk at well. Jethro hears Moses has reached Mt. Sinai so he sets out to meet him with Zipporah, Gershom, and Eliezer. Now, you may wonder why Moses left his family behind? Was he so focused on his career that he pushed family to the side? He would have been well aware of a standing hostility between his in-laws, the Midianites, and the Egyptians. His mission wasn't exactly amenable to Pharaoh: freeing his massive slave labor force would bring down his wrath. Then there's the sobering encounter his family had with God on the way to Egypt, reminding Moses *of the weightiness of his call*. With all these threats Moses sends his family back to Jethro for safe keeping. Now they rendezvous with at Sinai, and when Moses goes out to meet him, he bows down and kisses Jethro (my FIL would hit me). But in ancient cultures a sign of respect and affection. As we'll see, it's in your best interest to honor and seek the wisdom of our elders. This week I picked up my daughter from camp. Dad, I want an older woman to disciple me. Wisdom. The story quickly zeroes in *on Jethro and Moses' interaction, not because Moses didn't enjoy being reunited with his family, but because their exchange is meant to reveal something about God*. In verses 8-9 Moses recounts the dramatic tale of his life since leaving Midian, the plagues and false promises of Pharaoh, the hope and fear of an exodus, *all the hardship that had come his way, and how the LORD had delivered them* (8). He doesn't just give the high points; he shares his low points too. When some people suffer they throw out a, God's sovereign!, as if to buffer the heart. Not Moses. He gets real about the hardship, but he doesn't wallow in it. He rejoices in God's rescue, but doesn't act like it was easy. Depending on who you are it can be tempting to make too much of your *struggles* or too little of God's *deliverance*. Moses commits neither folly; in fact, his *authentic* witness to God's deliverance in difficulty brings his father-in-law to faith! *And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods* (8-11). Authentic witness to deliverance. *The word deliver is repeated five times* in this chapter. Moses even names his second son, Eliezer, which means *The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh* (4). What is this story trying to reveal? The power of giving give witness to a delivering God. Deliverance from what? Just this week two Christian friends died from covid. From the powers of evil.

It's why Jethro responds in faith, "*Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods.*"

What about us? The apostle Paul, [Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age](#) (Gal 1:3). The exodus deliverance was a *foreshadowing* of Christ's deliverance from this present evil age. Those who put faith in Jesus are rescued out of this present evil age and will enter a future age of never-ending life. All oppression, sickness, isolation, despair, death will be no more. *Jesus gave himself to secure it.* What about now? *It's not a deliverance for just a future age; it delivers grace and peace in this present age.* How so? When I heard my ten year old daughter got COVID, and she was ten hours away, and I realized I wouldn't be able to hug her after being away at camp for two weeks, I got emotional. But, I thought to myself, If I can trust God with my soul, I can trust him with my sufferings. If God gave up his only Son to deliver you, you can trust him with your daughter, son, future. Church if you can trust Jesus with your soul, you can trust him with your sufferings. This reality brings a sustaining grace, a comforting peace, that is so powerful that, if we give authentic witness to it (good and bad), it draw people, fathers-in-law to say, [Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods.](#) What story will you tell the anxious around you? This story is here to tell us of power of giving witness to a delivering God But why place this story here, before the Ten Commandments? Because we need grace before works, Gospel before Law, deliverance before commandments. It's here so God's people would know their relationship with him is based, not on *performance but on deliverance.* So if you've already caved into peaceless anxiety and fear, there is grace for that. And now you have a witness to the delivering God. Tell someone so they can say, *Now I know the LORD is greater than all gods.*

Godly People

Now the second half of the chapter? Chapter 18 acts like a hinge, pointing us back to God's delivering grace and forward to his holy Law, [Now, the next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening](#) (13). Observing this, the newly converted sage Jethro sees flaws in Moses' leadership. But instead of skewering him, he asks Moses a question, [Why do you sit alone?](#) A penetrating question for leaders who tend to isolate and not ask for help. For all of us. Why do you sit alone? Moses answers

by saying, essentially, because God put me in charge. And he did. But spiritual answer is not always at odds with practical solutions. If you feel alone, join a CG. If you want friendship invite someone to coffee. So Jethro says, What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone (17-18). Notice his compassion along with the critique. He's not there to one up his son-in-law. He knows how hard leadership is and this is not sustainable. It will crush him like a heavy weight. He needs to redistribute the load by selecting other leaders to oversee the civil cases, while Moses judges the religious and weightier cases. His counsel is pragmatic *and* wise: Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens (). Don't look for yes men, even gifted men. Look for *godly* men. Men who *able* (=strong), *fear God*, and *hate a bribe*. That's who you want leading. Why? They are **strong**; means they have backbone; are willing to say the hard things. To lead the family when it feels like climbing up hill. It's used of women and men, Ruth and Boaz. People of conviction. They **fear God**; means they are strong but not enamored with their strength. They are enamored with God. They have authority but are under authority. Judge but can be judged. Humble. And this fear of God leads to **not easily bribed, trustworthiness**. Today's leaders are bribed by position and money, but more sinister the intangibles of likes, popularity, acceptance. And because of that, because leaders fear losing position and approval, they won't say the hard things. But these men *hate* bribes. They can't be bought They detest the idea that the truth, and integrity, is for sale. They know, in their bones *the Lord is greater than all other gods*. Social approval can't hold a candle to his deliverance, his acceptance. Therefore, they can be trusted. Are you this kind of leader? Are you this kind of person. Our world, our church, our city, needs *more strong, Godfearing, trustworthy* men and women. How? By slowing down to give authentic witness to the delivering God, Lord over the powers, the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.