

Letters From A Fisherman
Week 6
Exodus 8:20-28, 10:3-11, 10:21-29; Psalm 23:1
“Jesus Is Enough”

Introduction

Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

In his writing to the persecuted church, Peter the apostle encouraged the suffering Believers to keep their focus upon the eternal, rather than the temporal with its temptations and trials. Suffering and sacrifice are part of the sanctification process that is necessary in order to conform the Believer into the image of Christ (**1 Peter 1:6**). The goal of every follower of Christ is to leave this world behind us to spend an eternity with Him in glory. Therefore, we are simply passing through this world, following His lead, in order to obtain the glories to be found in the next. In short, we have been set apart, living as exiles in this present world (**1 Peter 1:1**).

So, in order to maintain the proper perspective, we are to **“gird up the loins of our mind”**, as it were, to set our hearts fully on what is to come (**1 Peter 1:13-16**). This world holds no charm over us. We long for a better place, our very own *promised land*, if you will, and therefore, all our energy is directed toward that distant shore, where the trials of this life will be long forgotten. The most destructive thing that we can possibly do as a hindrance to this, our journey of faith, is to try and blend worldly things with spiritual things. To follow Christ is to deny self and surrender our will to His completely (**Luke 9:23**).

Peter, as he reminds the church of its proper and intended focus, uses imagery from the Passover and subsequent Exodus of God’s chosen people, as they were set apart to leave Egypt behind and sojourn into the land of promise. God led His people through the wilderness to a place where they could live in abundance. In the same way, we too are in a wilderness as we journey to that wondrous place, where sin will no longer be present, and God Himself shall wipe away all tears (**Revelation 21:4**).

As we look at this subject from Peter’s (and *The Holy Spirit’s*) perspective, I believe that it would be prudent to revisit the story of The Exodus in order to fully understand the message being conveyed. We need to realize not only what God has required of us, but also to be aware of how the enemy will use everything at his disposal to take us off course as we sojourn through this wicked world. As God was determined to lead His people from their Egyptian bondage and into a journey of freedom, He also intends for us to leave this world behind to follow Christ.

We have already discussed the significance of the Passover Lamb as it pertains to Christ, Who gave His life to deliver us from sin and death. We too have been *“passed over”* from death into life everlasting (**Ephesians 2:1-0**). First we are chosen, then redeemed, and after this we follow. And as Believers, it would be helpful for us to understand the lengths that the enemy will go to in order to dissuade us from the journey, this “exodus” if you will, to which God is calling us. For although he cannot obtain the soul of a genuine Believer, he can in fact render us ineffective in our journey. We would do well to understand the devil’s tactics, or as the Apostle Paul would say:

...so that we may not be taken advantage of by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his schemes.
2 Corinthians 2:11

When we study the story of the exodus, we can see Satan at work in the Pharaoh, who could not bring himself to allow God’s people to leave Egypt. And although his hardened heart eventually led to his own demise, he did all that was in his power to dissuade the Israelites from following after God. He even offered four separate compromises so that he could maintain his control over God’s chosen people. The devil offers those very same compromises to us to keep us from wholeheartedly and single-mindedly following Christ today. Those compromises are as follows: 1. Worship God here in Egypt. 2. Worship God, but don’t go too far. 3. Worship God, but leave your families with me. And 4. Worship God, but leave your wealth in Egypt. Please allow me to explain.

Worship God here in Egypt - Exodus 8:20-26

The Lord said to Moses, "Get up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh when you see him going out to the water. Tell him: This is what the Lord says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. But if you will not let my people go, then I will send swarms of flies against you, your officials, your people, and your houses. The Egyptians' houses will swarm with flies, and so will the land where they live. But on that day I will give special treatment to the land of Goshen, where my people are living: no flies will be there. This way you will know that I, the Lord, am in the land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This sign will take place tomorrow."

And the Lord did this. Thick swarms of flies went into Pharaoh's palace and his officials' houses. Throughout Egypt the land was ruined because of the swarms of flies. Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Go sacrifice to your God within the country."

But Moses said, "It would not be right to do that, because what we will sacrifice to the Lord our God is detestable to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice what the Egyptians detest in front of them, won't they stone us?" **Exodus 8:20-26**

The first compromise that Pharaoh offered to Moses was to let the people worship God in the land of Egypt. He did this because he did not want to lose control over God's people. The best way for us to interpret this passage is to see the Pharaoh as a type of Satan, and Egypt as symbolic of the world. God always calls His people to be separate, to come out from among the world. But for the devil, the next best thing to a people enslaved in their sin, is a chosen people, entangled with the world. The devil loves a worldly church; one that tries to compromise the line between worldliness and godliness. But sadly, this is impossible. As Christ has said, you cannot serve two masters, you will either hate one or love the other (**Matthew 6:24**).

We live in a world where so much of the world has found its way into the church that we can hardly tell the two apart. Denominations are ordaining homosexuals as priests. And in the name of so called "tolerance", the very things that used to be considered abominable are now celebrated within many churches. God, however, has not changed His opinions. And everything that His Word declares as sinful will in fact still be sinful upon the day of judgment. The devil wants God's people to abandon God's principles and embrace the wickedness of the world. We often hear it said these days that in order to show the love of Christ, we must accept not just the sinner, but the sin as well. In other words, we must learn to worship our God in the land of Egypt.

Moses' answer to Pharaoh was spot on! To worship God in truth and in Spirit (**John 4:23**) is a detestable thing to the wicked of this world. Oh folks don't mind if you call yourself a Christian, but they will despise you when you actually try and *live* as one! For it's not the title they have a problem with, it's the holiness. When you live according to God's standards you become a light that shines upon the wickedness of others. And this is what we are called to be, lights in a darkened world (**Matthew 5:14-16**)! And those living in darkness will always detest the light. So no, it is not possible for us to worship our God in the land of the Egyptians. We are called and chosen to be *separate*.

Worship God, But Don't Go too Far - Exodus 8:27-28

We must go a distance of three days into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he instructs us."

Pharaoh responded, "I will let you go and sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness, but don't go very far. Make an appeal for me." **Exodus 8:27-28**

Pharaoh's (and *Satan's*) second compromise is akin to the first one. "*Very well, if you insist on separating yourself from the world you can do that, but don't take it too far.*" Oh, how the devil loves this compromise! I mean, its ok to say you love Christ, but don't you dare be a fanatic about it. The world would much prefer us to be "*Christian lite*", which is far less detestable than a sold out Believer. After all, you need to keep all that stuff about your beliefs to yourselves. You don't have to do what the world does, just don't say the quiet part out loud.

We live in a society that would love to silence any mention of God or His Word. We are offensive if we call out the need for repentance. Just this past week a pastor led a prayer in congress that called for America to repent of its sins, and you should have heard all the liberals losing their collective minds! But the truth is, if America doesn't repent, and soon, then there won't be an America left. God, in His holiness, cannot tolerate wickedness, and if He doesn't drop the hammer on this country pretty soon, then He will owe Sodom and Gomorrah and apology! For we are becoming every bit as unholy in our thinking as they were.

Can I speak plainly here? If you are not sold out for Christ, then Christ is not pleased with you. It's just that simple. Not long ago, in this church, we studied Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. He had dispatched Timothy to that city to lead the people back to holiness. They had allowed false teachers to teach both legalism and worldliness within the body. These two things are diametrically opposed to one another, and as a result, the church was about to split in two.

Timothy apparently was able to lead the church back to its former holiness. However, sometime afterwards the church had forgotten that its most important function was to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. So The LORD admonished them:

But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.
Revelation 2:4-5

So, here is the truth of the matter. Jesus does not want your half-hearted following. He wants you to be all in. He wants your complete and total allegiance. And yes, the world will hate you for being passionately in love with Christ. They will ridicule your testimony and your refusal to embrace this world and its ways. They will say that you have gone too far. You will be labeled an intolerant bigot, and a *Jesus freak*. And worst of all, they will accuse of belonging to the "*Far Christian Right*"! But who cares what they think if our minds are truly "*girded for action*", as it were, if we are truly focused upon making every effort to please our LORD (**2 Corinthians 5:9**)? Then only His opinion should really concern us. And this is what He had to say about those who are lukewarm in their faith:

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of My mouth.
Revelation 3:15-16

Satan will plead with you not to take your faith to the extreme, but Christ has commanded you to go with Him all the way! So, in the end, whom do you desire to please? Do not fall for the devil's big compromise. If he cannot have your soul, he will do all that he can to rob you of both your joy and your effective witness. You cannot convince the world that Jesus is the way, if you are not fully committed to going *all the way* with Jesus!

Worship God, But Leave Your Families With Me - Exodus 10:3-11

So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and told him. "This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may worship me. But if you refuse to let my people go, then tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory. They will cover the surface of the land so that no one will be able to see the land. They will eat the remainder left to you that escaped the hail; they will eat every tree you have growing in the fields. They will fill your houses, all your officials' houses, and the houses of all the

Egyptians — something your fathers and grandfathers never saw since the time they occupied the land until today.” Then he turned and left Pharaoh’s presence.

Pharaoh’s officials asked him, “How long must this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, so that they may worship the Lord their God. Don’t you realize yet that Egypt is devastated?”

So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. “Go, worship the Lord your God,” Pharaoh said. “But exactly who will be going?”

Moses replied, “We will go with our young and with our old; we will go with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds because we must hold the Lord’s festival.”

He said to them, “The Lord would have to be with you if I would ever let you and your families go! Look out — you’re heading for trouble. No, go — just able-bodied men — worship the Lord, since that’s what you want.” And they were driven from Pharaoh’s presence. **Exodus 10:3-11**

If the devil cannot have you, then he’ll settle for your families. Pharaoh knew full well that if he could hold the men’s families hostage, then they would never be able to become fully devoted to God. I often hear people say the dumbest things, like: “We don’t want to force our beliefs upon our children, we would prefer that they make up their own minds.” What??! Make no mistake! What they are really saying is, “**We don’t really care enough about our kids to see to it that they don’t spend an eternity in hell.**” I cannot even comprehend the absurdity of this mindset. I not only want my kids to be Believers; I want them to see Christ *in me!*

As Fathers, it is our responsibility to be the priests within our own homes. Men, you will stand and give an account before God for just how influential you were upon your children’s faith. So do not take this charge lightly. We need to be proactive in keeping our kids separate from this world and immersed in God’s Word. As *The Bible* clearly teaches:

Start a youth out on his way; even when he grows old he will not depart from it. **Proverbs 22:6**

Dad’s you need to be actively involved in your children’s journey of faith. You need to teach them the way, and then lead them in that way. You need to be in charge of what they learn, watch, listen to and who they run with. And yes, sometimes they may not like that, but you have been entrusted as their parents, not their best friends. So do not leave your family behind in the land of Egypt. Make sure that they are brought along for the journey, kicking and screaming if necessary!

Worship God, But Leave Your Wealth In Egypt - Exodus 10:21-29

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, and there will be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt.” So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness throughout the land of Egypt for three days. One person could not see another, and for three days they did not move from where they were. Yet all the Israelites had light where they lived.

Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, “Go, worship the Lord. Even your families may go with you; only your flocks and herds must stay behind.”

Moses responded, “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings to prepare for the Lord our God. Even our livestock must go with us; not a hoof will be left behind because we will take some of them to worship the Lord our God. We will not know what we will use to worship the Lord until we get there.”

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was unwilling to let them go.

Pharaoh said to him, "Leave me! Make sure you never see my face again, for on the day you see my face, you will die."

"As you have said," Moses replied, "I will never see your face again."

Exodus 10:21-29

Pharaoh's last desperate attempt to keep his hold on God's people, before the Passover destroyed his resolve, was to attempt to get the Israelites to leave their riches behind in Egypt. Satan loves it when God's people selfishly put their personal resources in this world, rather than investing in the kingdom. People get so wrapped up in their quest for material things that there is often nothing left over to store up treasure in heaven. To do ministry... takes resources.

I once heard a story about a hundred dollar bill, a fifty dollar bill, and a one dollar bill having a conversation. The hundred began the dialog by telling all the exotic places that he had been. He had traveled the world and stayed in the finest hotels, been called upon to pay for lavish meals in the fanciest restaurants, and had seen indescribable luxuries.

The fifty dollar bill had similar tales of grand, adventurous vacations in many of the world's finest locales. After hearing their stories, the one dollar bill hung his head in shame. "I don't have any stories like that," he said. "I've spent most of my life in various church offering plates!" Its sad, but true, unfortunately, that the most important thing in this world, the furtherance of the gospel of Christ, is often woefully underfunded. Satan hates it when God's people invest their resources in the kingdom of heaven.

I am reminded here of the children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai. When Moses failed to come off the mountain, in what they considered to be a timely fashion, the people fashioned for themselves a golden calf to worship. What many people do not understand is that the symbol of a bull was used to represent Baal, a false god of fortune. So, when the rebellious Israelites fashioned this golden calf, their hope was that by worshipping it, they would be healthy, wealthy, and successful in all their endeavors. It is a mindset that is still sought after today. For is it any wonder that the symbol of Wall Street is a great bronze bull, reminding us of the endless pursuit of material wealth?!

So these are the temptations Satan uses to take our focus off of following Christ into the promised land, as he lures us back to the charms of the Egyptians. His overall strategy is simple. He wants to convince you that Christ is somehow insufficient. That He, in and of Himself, simply isn't enough to satisfy. When the devil uses this strategy on you, I would refer you to the **23rd Psalm**, specifically to its opening line.

The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

Psalms 23:1

Truth be told, this verse in the original Hebrew has only four words. They are as follows: **YHVH** (the covenant name of God), **Roi** (shepherd), **lo** (not), **ehsar** (want). So the exact English translation should actually read **"God, shepherd, not want."** Now, I know what your thinking, "Pastor, I'm a Believer, and I want stuff all the time!" But the word *ehsar* actually means to be *lacking*. So the message of the Psalm is simple, "When God is your Shepherd, you will lack for nothing." He is sufficient to meet your every need. Simply put, Jesus is more than enough! The devil may try and convince you that Christ is *insufficient*, but God's Word assures us that He is *all-sufficient*. And if you have ever fully put your trust in Him, you can testify that God is telling the truth.

So, take a few moments to evaluate your journey this morning. Where is Christ leading you? Is the devil trying to convince you that Christ is somehow inadequate, that you need to keep your interest in Egypt, because it would be folly to surrender yourself completely to the pursuit of Christ? Or do you truly believe that Jesus is more than enough to satisfy your every need? When you fully understand just who your Shepherd *is*, then you will have no trouble trusting Him with *all that you are*. You will learn to be content with only Jesus, for Jesus is all you need! **But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. (Matthew 6:33).** Take Christ at His Word, for He is, and shall always be... enough.

Truth!!!