

Our Need for Provision

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. –Hebrews 11:8

As we continue to prepare for our journey in Exodus, let's look at some parallels that surface as we are going through our studies. The most obvious parallel, which is that our life is the journey. In our physical state as babies, we are born in trust: we must trust our parents or guardians to provide for us because we have no other choice. As we grow up, we experience breaks in our trust: we live in a fallen world and often the sinful nature of those around us, as well as our own, causes us to lose trust in the world around us, so we learn to hurt, fear, hate, lie, steal, etc., and we carry this baggage with us wherever we go. As adults, we either continue to fill our hearts with the darkness in this world or let go of the brokenness and cling to the ones that can help us carry our heavy burdens. Finally, we must learn to rest whether it is compulsory or voluntary.

As believers in Jesus Christ, our journey begins when we give our life to Christ. As baby Christians, we must learn to trust God and lean on Him. As we grow up in the faith, we experience breaks in our trust for various reasons and must learn to overcome those trials to strengthen our faith. As mature Christians, we learn to cling to God and fill our hearts with His word so that we can walk in the Spirit and He carries our burdens. Finally, we enter His rest as He gives us the peace that surpasses all understanding to continue in the faith no matter where we are in our life journey.

Romans 5:1-5 tells us:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Sometimes, even as believers in Christ, we lose sight of our purpose for this journey because we take our eyes off God and focus on the wrong things. We no longer see the forest for the trees and don't understand where our victory lies. In the Parable of the Sower and Seed in Luke 8, Jesus warns us that the seed "that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity."

This is where we are at the beginning of Exodus. The journey for the people of Israel has brought them to Egypt where they have lived for about 430 years.

Now these *are* the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; ³ Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; ⁴ Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. ⁵ All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt *already*). ⁶ And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation. ⁷ But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them (Exodus 1-7).

The Lord had blessed them, and they had grown exceedingly mighty in Egypt, but this was not the intended end of the journey. The Lord's purpose was not for them to settle and conquer Egypt. This was not the Lord's promise to them. They got wrapped up in the cares of their present world and forgot what the Lord had promised them. So, the Lord reminded them of their need for provision.

However, their journey began long before Egypt. The "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11:8-22 tells us where this journey began:

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

¹¹ By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. ¹²

Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

The journey for the Israelites began in faith with so many of their forefathers trusting God. They experienced many trials and tribulations but clung to the promises of God. But now, the people of Israel had become comfortable in Egypt and might have lost sight of Abraham’s covenant with the Lord. In Genesis 17:4-8 the Lord says, ⁴“As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. ⁸Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

They and the new Pharaoh had forgotten that the Lord saved them from many years of famine through Joseph’s life journey.

⁸Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹And he said to his people, “Look, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than

we; ¹⁰ come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and *so* go up out of the land.” ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. ¹³ So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. ¹⁴ And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve *was* with rigor.

Although Joseph had remained faithful to the Lord through many difficult trials and the Lord had raised him to prominence, the people of God were now in bondage. What was once a blessing was becoming a curse under the new Pharaoh. It was not that the people had lost favor in the sight of the Lord, but it was time for them to wake up and see their need for a savior.

During our journey, sometimes as believers we get wrapped up in the things of this world, and we lose sight of our need for a savior. It can be anything: our job, our marriage, our children, our health, our education, our politics, our hobbies. There are so many things that can draw us away from the promises of God, so we need to reflect regularly on where we are in our walk with the Lord. Is there anything in our lives that is drowning out His voice?

At one point, for me it was my job. As a district facilitator, I was responsible for the English curriculum for all middle schoolers which was about 150 teachers and 11,000 students. I was responsible for building curriculum, training teachers, managing the online textbooks, training the campus curriculum coaches, and visiting campuses to support the teacher Professional Learning Communities. I’m not complaining. It was a big job, but I was happy to do it. But then, COVID hit and a job that was barely manageable, became unmanageable. We were working until midnight that first week that schools were shut down. We had to work through our Spring Break, Christmas Break, and most breaks in between. We were working online all day, and then catching up in the evening. When we went back, we had to move to a new building, and work with weekly changes to our calendars, and new state requirements for students who failed the test. On top of that, I was visiting campuses, and teachers and staff were pouring out because

they were also miserable. As if it wasn't enough, there was a change in leadership, and we were getting new bosses every day.

It was a daily struggle to keep God first in my life. Little by little, I felt like I was losing sight of the Lord and needed to get back to Him. I was hurting, and didn't have an outlet because I was surrounded by unbelievers at work. Finally, the Lord closed all the doors for me to stay and provided an exit for me through retirement.

Although I was hurting, I needed to see my own need for provision so that I could get out of the circumstance that was keeping me from my relationship with the Lord. For the Israelites, it was a promise that had yet to be fulfilled. For me, it was a promise that has yet to be fulfilled. There are still many things that I must do before the Lord takes me home. We cannot get wrapped up with the cares of this world if we are to continue to walk with the Lord. We need to keep Him first and be obedient to His calling. Let us not forget what Christ has suffered for us on the cross so that we may have freedom from sin and death. Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

But don't get me wrong, reprioritizing God and the things of God doesn't always mean walking away because often we are in situations that we cannot or should not leave. Sometimes it means letting go of past hurts and changing our attitudes. Remember, the Israelites were in Egypt for over 400 years before the Exodus because the Lord was preparing them to enter the Promised Land, and He was still preparing the Promised Land for them to enter. Our life journey is a long one. We don't need to carry extra baggage that the Lord never intended us to carry. We can lay those things upon Jesus and let Him do the heavy lifting. Our intended purpose as believers in Jesus Christ is not to live comfortable, worry free lives. Nor is it to rise to prominence to be rich and famous for Jesus. Our intended purpose is to be lights for Him in this dark and fallen world until His return, wherever we are and in whatever we do because our

exodus awaits us at the end of this age and until then, we must be about our heavenly Father's business.

²³ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

Colossians 3:23-24