

Lesson 3 – “Preparing for a Victorious Journey” Part Three Trading Our Stuff for His

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

We have come to the third part of the preparation for our journey. As we know, this study allows us to compare our journey in this life to that of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt to freedom in the land of Canaan. It’s an opportunity for us to do some self-reflection and ask ourselves if we are living the spirit-filled life God calls us to. Is our walk with the Lord unhindered? Do we continue to strive for that personal relationship with Him? In part one of our introduction, we talked about the wonders of God, Who is our great provider, and we discussed the benefits of praying all the names of God. In part two, we learned about the need for God’s provision and how He knows exactly what we need at every point in our lives, and how we need to trust Him for that. Today, in part three, we’ll focus on what we DO NOT need and how dragging along unneeded baggage can hold us back (symbolically) from the things of the Lord.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” In the case of the Israelites and their journey to the promised land, it didn’t really have to be this way. Many biblical scholars say that they could have arrived at their destination in about 11 days if God had shown them the direct route. Instead, He caused them to wander in the desert for 40 years. Why? God was not about to allow them to reach Canaan in the state they were in. They had left Egypt, but they had brought a lot of unhealthy and unneeded baggage with them ... a lot of extra weight! They had been in bondage in Egypt for so long that it was all they knew. They did not know how to live a life of freedom, and so they sometimes fell back on their worldly dependencies. Even though they hated being oppressed and prayed for a deliverer, they had become dependent on what was familiar to them. In Exodus 16:3, we read the first account of the people complaining to Moses, as soon as they began experiencing lack of food. (They had already complained about lack of water in Chapter 15.) *“Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”* How quickly they forgot how badly they had been mistreated in Egypt. They had already witnessed firsthand the power of God; yet, they still could not trust Him to supply everything they needed. They did not know how to trade their sufferings and laments and complaints for His joy. They had left Egypt in the physical sense, but they were still carrying around those weights.

We, too, can be held captive by things that we know are not pleasing to the Lord: addictive habits, greed, fear, jealousy, an unforgiving heart ... the list could go on and on. We are not really so different. These are all things that can be seen as weights; they bog us down along our journey, and many times they hinder us by becoming stumbling blocks.

When we think about the story of the Exodus, we might think, “How could those Israelites have been so stubborn or *“stiff necked”*, as they were referred to by God in Exodus 32:9. After having seen, firsthand, the plagues that God had brought upon the Egyptians, after experiencing the first Passover, after He parted the Red Sea for them to escape, after seeing all of this, they still murmured, they still complained, and they still doubted. This is where we have to stop and self-examine ourselves: are we any better today? God has done great things for us, too. And yet, if we’re honest, aren’t we at times guilty of some of the attitudes of the Israelites?

In Exodus, Chapter 12, we are given the account of the first Passover. It was the last plague that God was to inflict upon Egypt in order to secure the Israelites’ freedom. It was the last plague, and it was the most tragic. God told Moses that all the firstborn children in the land of Egypt would die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the lowest servant, even the firstborn of the animals. To protect the Israelites, God instructed that each household was to sacrifice a perfect lamb, and put some of the blood on the lintel of the door

and on the two doorposts. Then God said, *“And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.”* (Exodus 12:13)



When we see this picture of the blood on the doorpost and how it represented protection for the Israelites, we cannot help but be reminded of the blood of our perfect lamb, Jesus Christ. When we accept Him as our Lord and Savior, we acknowledge that He purchased us and redeemed us with the blood He shed on the cross.



It wasn't on a doorpost this time, but on a cross! 1 Peter 1:17-19: *“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* Just as the blood of the lamb protected the Israelites on that first Passover, the blood of Jesus protects us from the just punishment we deserve as sinners. God looks at us and sees the blood of His perfect son offered up for our redemption!

Because of their sinful nature, the Israelites at times lost the sense of the presence of God during their wilderness experience. They were unable to trade their dependencies, fears and doubts for His promises. We need to guard our hearts and minds to ensure that we do not fall into this same trap. How do we do this? The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 13:14: *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”* The inference here is that we are to put Him on as we would clothing, and this clothing represents all of His attributes ... love, peace, truth, righteousness, just to name a few. Another way Paul taught in Ephesians is to, *“Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* (Ephesians 6:11). In this way, we can distinguish ourselves as true believers.

Nehemiah 8:10 says that, *“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”* It is clear that this was not a principle that the Israelites practiced, but we can today. With joy, we can “trade our stuff for His.” Jesus implores us in Matthew 11:28-29, *“Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* This is why we can have joy ... joy in the promises of God!

Let's conclude this study by going back to the Names of God that we talked about in the first lesson. This is one that was not on the list, but we should add it. It is “El Simchah Giyli”, which means, “God is my exceeding joy!” Let's not wander in the desert not knowing where we're bound. Let's lay down our burdens and trade our stuff for His. Let's live a joyful life in the goodness of the Lord and shine His light in this dark world!

“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy.” Psalm 16:11

