



EXODUS, PART 21: A Life Possessed

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We are currently in the middle of a political election season, and you, me and the world have heard some of the most ridiculous things come out of these candidates mouth. Yet, despite all of the nonsense being spoken, I have yet to hear either candidate campaign by saying, “If you elect me as president, I promise you I will make way more laws.”

Even the most disillusioned among us realize that no one likes laws. They limit us, sure they protect us, but they also inconvenience us and manage us. And the same type of distaste for our political laws spills over into our theological understanding of God’s laws. We hate the idea that God has given us some sort of code of behavior and we need to obey it. It seems unloving, the enemy of self-expression and speaks of a dark age in the past not the bountiful future of the progressive mind.

But we need to remember, laws made by men are not equal to laws made by God. In 1 Samuel 8 when the people of Israel demand a king, the Lord says to them, “He will make laws and you will not like them.” But they cried for it anyway. The laws we have learned to hate are not laws or emotions that we should bring into our understanding of God, because God is the perfect lawmaker.

He isn’t ruled by special interest groups, he speaks his mind, but he is not a fool, he not only desires for laws to manage and protect, but also to create and construct a new reality for his people. Today we are going to see the prologue of God’s giving of the law in Exodus 19. The remaining chapters in the book of Exodus are going to break down God’s laws, but here we are going to see God preparing the hearts of the people to receive them.

And I want us first to see the motivation behind God’s giving of laws: **Exodus 19:5**.

God’s laws make us to be a treasured possession. We are going to dive more into this, but initially we need to see that this is a far greater reality than any human lawgiver. The heart of all God does is tied to his desire to possess a people for his glory.

What we are going to look at today is how we live as possessed people. If we want to be that treasured, valued possession, how do we live as a people possessed. Today we will see **The glory of God is his ability to possess a people, and the worth of man is in his life possessed**. Pray.

Let’s begin by reading **Exodus 19:1-3**. If you recall way back in Exodus 3, Moses was tending his flock on a mountain called Horeb, also called the mountain of God, when God appeared to him in a burning bush and told him that he was going to rescue his people. And here Moses has returned full circle to Mount Horeb also called Sinai.

Can you imagine the emotions of Moses? Last time he was on this mountain he was argued with God that he could never save the Israelites, and here we see him now standing at the same mountain with the masses of God’s redeemed people.

And God wants to now give a message to his people. We already saw that God’s desire in his lawgiving is to possess his people, and what we are going to do is finish the story of Exodus 19, but we are going to look at in regards to the traits of the people God desires to possess.

Our first point this morning is: **Two traits of a people possessed**. Let’s read the first one in Exodus **19:4-6**. Now God begins by recounting the story of the Exodus, and this is important because God is saying that whatever law may follow, it is not your obedience which saves you. It is your obedience which proves that you already have been saved.

God saved his people first, and then he gave them rules as to how saved people live. The laws of God do not give us life, they preserve and protect our life that God already gave us in our salvation.

And the first trait God says typifies the people he possesses is **obedience**. If you indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant. This is now the third time Israel has been reminded of their need to obey God's voice, and two of those times command to obey came with a promise: **Ex. 15:26, Ex. 19:5**.

So we see these two promises and look at what happens when Moses brings this offer back to the people: **Ex. 19:7-8**.

The people take the deal, without question. Why? Because they realize that there is nothing greater than being the treasured possession of God. Part of this because the word used for treasured possession here, *segulla*, meant possession, but the way it was used was by Kings. Kings would take on mass treasures and possessions, they essentially owned everything in their Kingdom, but it was their custom to take a *segulla*, a prized treasure, a treasure which proved more valuable and brought more worth than everything else. It is the same word Solomon uses here in **Ecc. 2:8**. More precious than gold is the *segulla* of the King. And here the God who owns the whole earth, and everything in it has just said that out of all the people of all the earth, out of all the splendors, mountains, waterfalls, glaciers and wonders, God's chief possession is the people whom he saved, the people who obey him.

To be the treasure on the mantle of God is to find great worth in the position of the one who possess us. Israel knew what it meant to be possessed by the king, so they said that any obedience God demands of us is worth it. For nothing is greater than being possessed by the king.

The laws of God are for the glory of his name and the joy of his people.

Secondly we see this discourse between God and Moses continue and here we see the second attribute of a people possessed: They will be **consecrated**. **Ex. 19:9-15**.

Here we see that God is telling Moses to consecrate the people, which means to set them apart, to make them holy. And part of that process includes the people cleaning themselves.

But again we must see the motivation. Why does God want his people to be clean? **Ex. 19:9,11**.

God wants his people to be clean because God wants to be near his people. God wants to be known by them. He is asking them to be clean and consecrated, and to prepare themselves for him because God is so holy and pure that it is a dangerous thing to come near him in sin and filth.

The author of Hebrews calls God a consuming fire, and it's no fault of fire that it consumes gasoline. God calls his people to be consecrated because he wants to draw near to them without destroying him.

So God wants to visit his people, and he gives them two commands: obey and be consecrated. And now we will see what happens when this meeting is set up: **Exodus 19:16-25**.

So this is not what Moses or the people probably expected. They say they will obey, Moses consecrates them, the people wash their clothes, they wait for the trumpet, and then God comes down and they see his vast power. They see fire, and thunder and lightening. And instead of inviting the people up to meet him, God instructs Moses to make sure no one comes near him, even though Moses had already warned the people not to approach the mountain.

Now here is the thing: Moses wonders why people would want to go see God because 1. He is terrifying, and 2. He has commanded people not to. Yet God knows that men will still desire to climb his mountain. Whether through the promise of God's great blessing of possession, or by the prospect of God's wrath, men will be interested in God like an oddity at a circus.

And God is making it clear here: whether you are struck by the hope of something more, or by the weight of something more powerful, you cannot come to God on your own terms. You must come to the mountain on God's terms.

And even though God gave the terms, the result wasn't good enough. Moses, though he was alone able to climb the mountain, Moses couldn't consecrate these people enough. These people though captivated by the power and promise of God, were not faithful or holy enough.

The reality was though they stood at the foot of the mountain, there was an impassible void separating them from their God. They might hear him, and obey him, but they could never come to him.

And just as Moses ministry is tied to the Mountain of Sinai, so too is another man's ministry tied to a mountain. It is from a mountain where Jesus calls his disciples. It is on the side of a mountain where Jesus gives us the new law. It is atop a mountain where Jesus is transfigured into a radiant glory. It was from the Mount of Olives that Jesus ascended, and back on the Mount of Olives that Jesus will return.

God called the people and Moses to the mountain in order to show them that though they might have been brought out of Egypt, though they might be the recipients of the law, they were still unable to be fully possessed because they needed a greater cleansing than that of Moses.

Without a mediator who fostered obedience and brought a true washing, there would be no access to God.

This is the second point today: **Jesus, the true possessor of God.** What Moses foreshadowed Jesus accomplished.

You see we too desire to be treasured, to be possessed, to be accepted. But we are just a modernized portrait of Israel, numb to the reality that we need someone greater to bring that to us.

You see we turn to sex, money, comfort, family and position to find our value. We try to possess everything not realizing that the key to happiness isn't possessing something, but in being possessed by something.

To be possessed by God is to possess everything. To be treasured by God is to find all your needs met in the salvation that he has accomplished.

Where Moses failed to make the people clean, Christ came to do one better: **Eph. 5:25-27**. Moses couldn't cleanse us of our sin, we couldn't wash it out of our garments. But Jesus came to offer himself as the bleach to our stained souls.

He took our dirt and he died for it on the cross. Where the Israelites saw the terror of God on the mountain, we must see the terror of God on the cross. For it is on the cross that an innocent man died to bridge the unbridgeable gap between our fallenness and God's perfection. But it is also where the mercy of God is seen cleansing and purifying us through Jesus' sacrifice.

Through this process Jesus presented us to himself. For those who respond in faith to Christ Jesus, we have been made the treasured possession of God himself. What God wanted from his people in Exodus 5 was to make them a nation of priests and a holy people. Look at what Christ accomplished in **1 Peter 2:9**. Jesus has done this.

But here is the problem. Because Jesus has consecrated us, because he has paid for our offenses, because he has bridge the gap, brought us out of our own Exodus, we often feel that obedience to God's commands are often optional.

Though the Old Testament law we are going to look at has been fulfilled by Jesus, we still see Jesus giving us commands in the New Testament. Commands to love one another, commands to flee sin, commands to participate in the church's mission, to pursue holiness.

And I know I often say: I can be lax here because I'm already saved. I don't really have to kill my lust because I know Jesus died for it. I don't need to control my anger because Jesus paid for it.

These commands though are as optional as breathing. No one is forcing you to do it. And yet you do it because you want life.

Brothers and sisters, in Exodus 19 God wanted to show himself to his people so that they might listen to Moses, and in Christ Jesus God has shown himself to us so that we might obey him and live.

The commands of scripture, the law of God, is not for the spiritual elitists, or legalistic Larry's. The commands to love Christ, to flee sin, to pursue holiness, to take up and read are the elemental necessities for a life possessed.

To know the joy of God's favor is to live in the manner for which he saved you.

For the unbeliever in here, you might be interested in God, you might want true joy, or you might have a nagging sense that you might not be perfect. But God has made his path clear, there is no access to the promise, no relief from the wrath unless through Jesus Christ his son.

For the believer in here, God has saved you so that you might obey and have life abundantly. Where does this obedience show up in church? Where are you committed to loving others as Christ loved us? Where are you consciously attempting to kill pride and sin? Where are you taking up the means which God has given us to know and love him? To not do these things is to neglect the greatest joy and intimacy we could ever have.

For it is through our obedience that we live as one who is possessed. Do not be burdened by the cost of Christ, but be enlivened by the promise of it. For through our obedience we will be nation of priests making known the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light.