

Exodus 12:29-42

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[0 : 00] This morning we're going to be thinking about a victory. We love victories, don't we? Whether they're sports,! Particularly some of us, whether they're in the family home, there's always one of us who can get a little bit overcompetitive.

You know who you are. We love to win. And victories also make for great films, don't they? Whether battle films, superhero films, we love to see the enemy defeated, the hero succeed.

A favourite film of mine is Gladiator. I don't know if you've seen it. Fantastic film. It's about this retired Roman general called Maximus.

And will he succeed? He's been enslaved. He's become a gladiator. And will he succeed against the twisted and useless Roman emperor Commodus?

And the ending is a moving and great victory. I won't give it away, but some of the final lines of this, he was a soldier of Rome. Honor him.

[1 : 00] It's great, isn't it? We love a victory. And today we see a great victory. We see one of the greatest ever in history. And from a human perspective, it is a political victory on, not far off equaling the Goths sacking Rome, but this time it's the Israelites sacking the mighty Egyptians.

And as we said last week, the Israelites have been enslaved by the Egyptians. Pharaoh was king. He was utterly supreme, ruling over this great empire.

And he was a man who defied God. But God will bring his people out. He will rescue them. He employed sanctions, as we saw last week, and he employed the ultimate one.

We see that in verse 29, at the beginning of what was read, that the Lord struck down the firstborn. And if you were here last week, I spoke about that Passover lamb that rescued the people of Israel from being struck down.

How God provided a rescue. But today we're going to think about what happens next. And the first thing I want us to see is this. God's victory is a decisive defeat.

[2 : 17] God's victory is a decisive defeat. Pharaoh, the great king, the king who's hardened himself against God, who's treated God's people so badly, who is so majestic, well, we see here his utter defeat.

It's a rout. It's a whitewashing. It's a complete annihilation of him. And you'll just see it just stacked up. Firstly, we see him in an utter state of panic.

If you notice that in verse 31, he summons Moses and Pharaoh by night. He's in such a hurry to get them out of here. And we see it all the more in what he says.

He goes, up, go, all of you, go. Take everything, be gone. It's get out. Make sure it's all of you. The victory is stark.

God takes all his people. And Pharaoh completely loses his slaves. But notice what he says next. He says, verse 32, take your flocks and your herds.

[3 : 21] Now, previous to this, Pharaoh had been making all the stipulations. He had said, you can go, but leave your flocks and herds. But now he's saying, take everything.

You win. God's victory is a decisive defeat. God takes all his possessions. And Pharaoh loses it. And I don't know if you noticed it, but there's a huge comment in what he says at the end.

What Pharaoh says at the end. He says, and bless me also. That the king of Egypt is asking for a blessing. This is an extraordinary comment.

This is like Stephen Hawking's asking for some help with some physics. This is a moment of utter humiliation for Pharaoh. Pharaoh knows he's in the presence of a far greater power.

He knows he's been surely beaten by a God far greater than he. God's victory is a decisive defeat. God is the one who blesses. And Pharaoh is humiliated.

[4 : 25] And then it keeps going. Then as the people leave, not only do they take their own livestock, if you haven't noticed at verse 35 and 36, they take all the silver and gold and clothing.

They take the wealth of Egypt too. They utterly plunder the Egyptians. God takes all the riches. And Pharaoh is plundered. And not only riches, do you notice in verse 38, it says it's a mixed multitude. Not only Israelites, but Egyptians have left as well. People are flocking out of Egypt, like refugees seeking a better home. God takes people, and Pharaoh's nation is plundered.

God's victory is a decisive defeat. Now before this moment, Pharaoh probably thought he had a bit of a chance. Probably thought actually the result's going to be close.

A bit like a famous football match. Not sure if you're a football fan, but back in 2014, there was a World Cup semi-final that set itself up similarly.

[5 : 29] It was Brazil versus Germany. I don't know if you remember it. And Brazil probably thought, this is going to be a tight one. We've got a chance here. I think we're going to win it.

Do you remember the score? It was 7-1 to Germany. 7-1. It was an utter destruction, a total victory. Brazil had no chance.

Pharaoh thought he had a chance. But God's victory was decisive. Not even a contest. And because it was a decisive defeat, we also see that God's victory is a rich rescue.

It is a rich rescue. Firstly, it is a rescue of a huge number of people. Do you notice the size? It's a vast group of people. Over 600,000.

That's just the men. It could be up to about 2 million. We're not sure. But even at this lowest estimate, that's the population bigger than the whole of Luxembourg moving out.

[6 : 31] And just think of their experience. A few hundred years before, 66 people turned up. And now look where we are. It is a great nation. It's even got Egyptians joining them.

And it's not only a change of size, but it's a change of fortune. A few chapters later, these guys were facing extreme slavery and persecution. Their children were being murdered.

They were being beaten. They're being worked harder than ever. And here they are, leaving into freedom. Rich beyond their wildest dreams. Laden with silver, gold, fired clothing, huge flocks of sheeps and goats.

This is the ultimate rags to riches. It's a bit like that film, I don't know if you know, Slumdog Millionaire. It's one of the great rags to riches films.

The main guy, Jamal, he grows up in horrendous poverty, living in the slums of Bombay. He's an orphan, has to beg to live.

[7 : 30] And he makes his way slowly. He becomes a chaiwala, a tea boy in a call centre. And it's, will he be rich beyond his wildest dreams with a girl he has loved forever?

Will it be a Slumdog to Millionaire moment? And that is a picture, Slumdog to Millionaire is a picture of what happens to these Israelites. God takes his people from slaves to superstars, from victim to VIP.

God's victory is a rich rescue. And it's so clear, isn't it, that this victory is God's victory. He's the one doing it.

Did you notice, he's the one who brought the judgment in verse 29. He's the one who gives the people favour in verse 36. And for him, all this was just a night of watching.

Do you notice that in verse 42? It was a night of watching by the Lord to bring them out of the land of Egypt. In a sense, this is not like Germany versus Brazil.

[8 : 39] This is more like Germany playing your local Saturday league team. He didn't even break a sweat. It was a decisive defeat and a rich rescue.

Now the victory of God over Egypt, the rescue of his people, is taken by the Bible as a great picture of God's victory and rescue through Jesus Christ. Jesus himself talks about how he's tied up the strong man so he can plunder his belongings.

Just like the defeat of Pharaoh, Jesus said he's tied up the devil. He's tied up the powers of evil in this world and is plundering him, particularly of people. And Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is that great moment of victory.

Paul in Colossians says this, he says, he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him.

How did he disarm all these powers, all the powers of the world? Well, in many ways, but one was by defeating death itself. Death, we know, is a great weapon against people, isn't it?

[9 : 51] We fear it. It ultimately, it rips apart our relationships. It's threatened by tyrants and rulers. And by defeating death, but by taking on sin, as Jesus Christ died, by rising again, showing that death had no power on him, Jesus completely took away death's power.

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, quoting Isaiah, he says, death is swallowed up in victory. The world has no power anymore.

Death is no longer a threat. Although we know death breaks relationships awfully, a Christian can face it confidently. We know there is a resurrection, that there is eternal life.

Christ's victory is a decisive defeat. Through a seemingly small act, 2,000 years ago, on a hillside of a backwater of the Roman Empire, God had utter victory.

And this means his victory is also a rich rescue. He rescues a huge group of people. The Church of Jesus Christ spans thousands of years.

[11 : 12] It spans every tribe, nation and tongue, from China to Brazil, from India to Iran. God is rescuing many, thousands, millions.

And the secular world and other religions just shake their fist that they will not win. Just need to look at a country like Iran.

Right under the Ayatollah's nose, the Church of Jesus Christ grows faster than any other place in the world. And it is a nation given great riches.

God lavishes blessings on his people. In Ephesians 1, Paul outlines many of these riches that Christ has won. I'm not going to read it now, but I will pick out snapshots.

Do go and read it later. Ephesians 1. But in it, Paul says that we have every spiritual blessing. We have been adopted as sons. We have been blessed in Christ.

[12 : 10] We have redemption. We have forgiveness of sins. We've been lavished with grace. We have God's spirit in us. And we wait for an inheritance to come. Right now, the Church of Jesus Christ has incredible spiritual blessings.

Now you may notice many of these blessings are unseen. But even unseen to the Christian, they are very real. To know forgiveness is something many in our world yearn for.

Without it, we know people have regrets, have sorrow, and yet Christians are given it by Jesus Christ. To know we have a loving, heavenly Father being adopted into his family reaches deep into our lives, especially those who don't know parental love, who lack security, company, and yet Christians are given it.

To know the hope of eternal life when so many face despair, suicide, and yet Christians are given it. Unseen, but very real.

And the unseen will be clearly seen in the future when Christ returns. There is an inheritance to come, Paul says. When Christ returns, we will inherit all that he has won for us.

[13 : 36] Eternal joy, sorry, eternal life, unspeakable joy. God's victory in Christ is a rich rescue. What a generous God we have.

We are utterly undeserving, and yet God has decided to lavish his blessings on his people. So how do we respond to this God?

This God who's victorious and gracious? Well, this passage presents to us two options, two responses, in a sense, two types of fear.

It shows us one type and leaves us feeling another. Firstly, it shows us the fear of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. It's a fear that results in running away from blessing.

Pharaoh says, up, go, be gone. The people of Egypt are urgent. Get them out of here. They want the riches, the victory of God to be as far away from them as possible.

[14 : 38] They want God at a distance. They want Christians to be at a distance. And perhaps you identify with that. Perhaps you hear about God and actually you just don't want anything to do with it.

You perhaps come here a few times and you just want to keep it at arm's length. A bit like a friend's Rottweiler. A mean looking dog. Nice for you, but keep it at a distance. Okay?

But please, I urge you, notice that Christ's victory is total. This is true as implications for all of us whether we believe it or not.

And in this victory, which side will you be on? The victors or those defeated? Worshipping Jesus Christ on his throne or his enemy under his judgment?

please don't be like Pharaoh who knew his defeat but ran away from blessing. Because there's a second type of fear.

[15:43] It's not shown explicitly in this passage but it's the one the passage leaves us with. Instead of a fear that leads us to running away, it's a fear that leads us to going and serving the Lord.

Lord, this passage should leave us in a wonder and fear of this powerful Lord. It is a colossal victory. No one can mess with him.

In our world no one will beat him. Political rulers, spiritual rulers, they've lost their power. Not even death can defeat God and his purposes. He is truly almighty.

Pharaoh, empires, philosophies, religions will all fade but God is. He is always the same. Mighty, victorious, lavishing grace on his people.

What we see of God here is very helpfully put in a famous quote from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* a book by C.S. Lewis. It's for children but it is very profound.

[16:46] A character called Mr. Beaver is talking to a girl called Susan about Aslan who is in a sense the God's character and Mr. Beaver says this, he says, Aslan is a lion.

The lion, the great lion. Ooh, said Susan. I thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion. Safe, said Mr. Beaver.

Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe but he's good. He's the king I tell you. Our Lord isn't safe but he's victorious and he is good and knowing that leads us towards him.

The Lord is the great and good king who lavishes blessing. The people of Israel were not leaving Egypt to run away. They were heading to Mount Sinai to worship him.

We fear the Lord in a way that means we come to worship him like bees to a honeypot, like flies to a light. As we see God like this, this victorious, this good saviour, then our hearts are drawn to him and we come in reverence and we come in fear.

[18:04] That is the right response. You know, we never waltz up to the Queen Elizabeth would we and go, alright Lizzie, how's tricks and slap her on the back. And nor would we, and should we treat God similarly.

Like a, we shouldn't treat him like a lucky charm that we pray to when we just need help. Or like a mate down the pub. No, he is the great and victorious God.

But we do come to him. We do come to him. His greatness is worthy of our worship. As we see the world's efforts fade.

Fads, they come and go, don't they? Political heroes disappear. Celebrities fade. Technologies get superseded. Jobs finish. Wealth will rot.

Even our family eventually dies and leaves us. But our God does not fade. The only person worthy of our heart's desires, worships and longings is God himself, the Lord.

[19:09] And if God's word has brought that response in you, perhaps this week spend time in praise. Get to church on Sunday.

Pray on your own and recognise all his worth. Speak out of his victory, of his grace. If you've never done that before but you're drawn to this God, then try, do it, just speak knowing he hears you.

When we meet someone really talented, we can't help but tell them how great they are, can we?

Oh, I loved how well you played that music. Oh, you're a great rugby player. It's a natural response.

And how much more with our great God. come to him, our victorious, our gracious God. God's victory in Jesus Christ is a decisive defeat.

It is a rich rescue. Let's pray to him now. Thank you.