

Title:           **HARNESSED BY GRACE**

Text:           Exodus 13:1-22

Subject:       *The Exodus*

Date:           Tuesday Evening — January 8, 2008

Tape:           Exodus #61

Readings:     *Larry Criss and Bob Duff*

Introduction:

We should always read the historical books of Holy Scripture as they were intended, to teach us by types and pictures the wonders of redemption and grace in Christ. Without question, every portion of history in the Inspired Volume is an accurate and faithful transcript of what actually happened. They are true and infallible records of past events. Yet, they are not mere records of history. Each is also a prophetic picture, or metaphor, or illustration of God's mighty operations of grace toward, in and upon his chosen.

The Book of Exodus is no exception. This record of God bringing Israel out of Egypt by smiting the firstborn, leading them through the Red Sea, and guiding them through the wilderness into the land of Canaan, written by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, is a picture of our God's gracious, covenant mercy toward all his people. God's elect are the people he separated from the Egyptians by covenant love and by the blood atonement of Christ. And they are the people he separates from the Egyptians by the strong and mighty hand of his omnipotent, saving grace, bringing them out of the house of their bondage and out of the land of their slavery (Exodus 12:40-42).

(Exodus 12:40-42) "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, *was* four hundred and thirty years. (41) And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. (42) *It is* a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this *is* that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations."

- All came out because of a covenant God made with their representative head long before any of them were ever born.
- The all came out of Egypt at once, by one sacrifice, in one night.

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- They all came out gorgeously arrayed, decked with jewels of silver and gold, and fully supplied for their journey.
- They came out a great multitude, millions of them!
- All of Israel came out of Egypt, not one lacking.
- They all came out completely whole. — “*There was not one feeble person in all their tribes*” (Psalm 105:37).
- And they all came out of Egypt by the mighty hand of God.

Tonight, I want us to look at the instructions God gave concerning Israel’s remembrance of this great deliverance throughout their generations. My text will be Exodus 13:1-22. The title of my message is **HARNESSED BY GRACE**. Israel came out of Egypt as a people harnessed by God for a long journey.

I have often told you, as I have again tonight, that everything recorded in the Book of God about the Exodus was intended by our God to be a picture of the deliverance of our souls by Christ. I know you trust me to tell you the truth; but I want you to see this for yourself. You can read it in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11.

(1 Corinthians 10:1-11) “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; (2) And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; (3) And did all eat the same spiritual meat; (4) And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (5) But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. (6) Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. (7) Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. (8) Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. (9) Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. (10) Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. (11) Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

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Now, turn with me to Exodus 13 and hold your Bible open on your lap. Let's go through these 22 verses together and read about a people harnessed by grace. Oh, how I pray that the Lord God might harness you by his grace, bring you out of your bondage, and bring you into the glorious liberty of the children of God in Christ!

**SANCTIFICATION ORDERED**

This chapter begins with a divine command, an order given by God to sanctify all the firstborn, both of man and beast (vv. 1-2).

(Exodus 13:1-2) “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (2) Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: *it is mine.*”

Remember, the instructions here are about keeping the passover in future generations. That Old Testament feast was given to the Jews in anticipation of Christ our Passover who is sacrificed for us. So, in these opening verses, the Lord God gives a command that points directly to our Lord Jesus Christ. The sanctification, the setting apart, of the firstborn is intended to set our minds and hearts upon gospel mercy and grace in Christ Jesus, “*the firstborn among many brethren,*” who was set apart by God the Father as our Redeemer and Savior (John 17:19; Romans 8:29). Because Christ is the Firstborn and we are his, the church of God's elect is called “*the Church of the firstborn*” (Hebrews 12:23).

**UNLEAVENED BREAD**

Next the Lord God gives specific instructions about the feast of unleavened bread. We read about the Jews keeping this feast many times in the Gospel narratives. The Old Testament Passover was the first day of a week-long celebration of deliverance called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It commemorated the passing over of God's judgment and Israel's Exodus out of Egypt, when they had no leavened bread, because they came out without making any provision for themselves. — “*They were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual*” (Exodus 12:39).

(Exodus 13:3) “And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage;

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for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this *place*: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.”

God commanded Israel to “*Remember this day*” because we are all terribly prone to forget the greatest of mercies, the greatest of blessings, and even the most wondrous experiences of his goodness! Yes, you and I are ever in danger of forgetting our spiritual deliverance from Egypt by the Lord Jesus Christ! Therefore our Lord Jesus gave us two ordinances by which to remind us of it, that we might remember him.

- Baptism — Our Confession
- The Lord’s Supper — Our Remembrance

(Exodus 13:4-5) “This day came ye out in the month Abib. (5) And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.”

The whole of Israel’s deliverance was the work of God alone. It was the Lord God who brought them out of Egypt, and the Lord God who brought them into Canaan! So it is with us! Every step in our salvation is of the Lord (Ephesians 2:1-10).

(Exodus 13:6-7) “Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day *shall be* a feast to the LORD. (7) Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.”

These seven days portray the whole, complete, perfect state of grace enjoyed by every sanctified soul. There is not the slightest portion of leaven (human filth) mixed with the work. Not only was Israel forbidden to mix leaven with their offering, none was allowed to remain in the house! There is no place for works in the house of grace!

(Exodus 13:8) “And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, *This is done* because of that *which* the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.”

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When you and I come to the house of God to worship our Redeemer, in every aspect of our service to him, let us be wise and instruct our children in the matter. — “We do this because of that which the Lord God has done for us!”

- The Ordinances
- Our Songs
- Our Gifts
- Our Devotion of Life
- Our Sacrifices
- Our Services

(Exodus 13:9-10) “And it shall be **for a sign** unto thee upon thine hand, and **for a memorial** between thine eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth: for **with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.** (10) Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.”

**REDEEM IT OR KILL IT**

In verses 11-16, the Lord’s instructions about the firstborn are enlarged.

(Exodus 13:11-13) “And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, (12) That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males *shall be* the LORD’S. (13) And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.”

Every unclean thing must either be redeemed or destroyed. With the birth of each and every firstborn, there was a choice to make. — Redeem it or kill it. — Devote it to God or send it to its death. This was a reminder that Pharaoh chose death for the Egypt’s firstborn; but the Lord God chose to redeem Israel!

(Exodus 13:14-16) “And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What *is* this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: (15) And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would

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hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem. (16) And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.”

Every jackass had to be redeemed by a lamb or have its neck broken. That jackass represents you and me. (My apologies to the jackass!)

- The ass is unclean.
- The ass is stubborn.
- The ass is stupid and senseless.

Like that jackass the only thing that keeps our necks from being broken under the wrath of God is the fact that we have been redeemed by the Lamb of God (Titus 2:13-14).

**GOD’S WAY**

(Exodus 13:17) “And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not *through* the way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:”

If you look at a map you will see that the most direct route from Egypt to Canaan was from the northern part of Egypt to the southern part of Canaan. Such a route would take no more than a week, or at the most two. But that route would have led Israel directly in the path of war with the barbaric Philistines, a war they had not yet been prepared to fight.

The Lord God wisely and graciously compelled them to take another route, leading them in “*the right way.*” **God’s way is always “the right way”** (Psalm 107:1-7).

(Psalms 107:1-7) “O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. (2) Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; (3) And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. (4) They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. (5) Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. (6) Then they cried

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unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he delivered them out of their distresses. (7) And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.”

- No other way would have taken them across the Red Sea.
- No other way would have destroyed Pharaoh and the armies of Egypt in the sea, in the process of delivering Israel.
- A shorter route would not have proved the people.

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Now, look at verse 18. Israel was brought out of Egypt as a people harnessed.

(Exodus 13:18) “But God led the people about, *through* the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.”

Certainly Robert Hawker was correct in suggesting that the harnessed state of Israel alluded to the church of God in this world, which is described as an army with banners coming up out of the wilderness (Song of Solomon 6:4; 8:5).

But the margin here reads by “five in a rank.” The word “*harnessed*” is used to speak of soldiers in ranks. But the word here is a passive participle. It speaks of this great multitude being harnessed not by their own hands, but by the hand of God their Deliverer. They were harnessed “five in a rank;” and five is commonly used in Scripture to represent grace (Five Offerings — Five Feasts).

That is exactly what Christ has done for us! In the deliverance and salvation of our souls we are a people harnessed by grace, harnessed by our God and brought out of bondage, harnessed as a band of soldiers, but soldiers who stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, not soldiers who fight the battle!

- Yes, we have a battle to fight. — We must fight the good fight of faith.
- We are at war with the world, the flesh and the devil.
- But the victory was won for us by Christ our Redeemer, who brought us out of the house of bondage and death on that night long

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ago when he destroyed Satan and led captivity captive, as the Captain of our Salvation!

**JOSEPH’S BONES**

(Exodus 13:19) “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.”

By faith Joseph made the sons of Israel swear that they would carry his bones up out of Egypt, promising them that God would preserve them, take care of them and bring them up out of that land (Genesis 50:25-26; Hebrews 11:22). Joseph died when he was 110 years old, was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt. The children of Israel passed that promise down generation after generation. — “When the Lord brings us up out of Egypt, we must take Joseph’s bones out of this place and carry them to the land promised to our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

**CHRIST OUR GUIDE**

(Exodus 13:20-21) “And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. (21) And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:”

This was a standing miracle with Israel for forty years. The Holy Spirit, as we read in 1 Corinthians 10, tells us that this whole affair is to be understood by us with reference to our own experience of grace. Stephen said that Christ was in the church in the wilderness (Acts 7:37-38). Without a doubt, the pillar of cloud and of fire, this Shechinah, is representative of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Angel of the Covenant. It is Christ our King and Savior, the mighty Breaker, who goes before his people (Micah 2:13).

We have this same, abiding miracle. Do we not?

- A Pillar of Cloud by Night
- A Pillar of Fire by Day

It is a voice behind us, or rather within us, saying, “*This is the way*” Isaiah 30:21.

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(Psalms 78:14) “In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.”

(Psalms 121:4-8) “Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. (5) The LORD *is* thy keeper: the LORD *is* thy shade upon thy right hand. (6) The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. (7) The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. (8) The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.”

(Isaiah 4:5) “And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory *shall be* a defence.”

(Matthew 28:20) “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.”

May God give us grace ever to remember with joy his distinguishing mercies by which he manifests his great love to our souls! As we remember his great mercies upon us, let us never feast upon his bounties alone, hiding it from those around us, but proclaim the glad tidings to others. May God the Holy Spirit ever give us wisdom and grace to distinctly remember his precept (v. 8) and teach our children, and our children’s children, how the Lord has brought us out of the bondage of sin and death by his mighty arm and stretched out hand of grace.

Since our great God has been so gracious in bringing us out of Egypt and in bringing us these many years through this wilderness, let us ever rejoice in confident hope and expectation. God who has wrought and is working his great mercy in us and for us will perform it until he brings us home to the Good land he has promised us! Blessed Savior, ever give us to see, that however rough and thorny the way, it is “*the right way*” to the city of habitation. Be thou our “*pillar of cloud*” by day and our “*pillar of fire*” by night, ever going before us in mercy to direct us in the way, and surrounding us with the protection of your grace and your sweet presence from all danger! As you have borne us upon eagles’ wings and brought us

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to yourself in grace, O Gracious Savior, bear us on your wings safely to  
yourself in glory!

Amen.