

# Let My People Go Hold a Feast

Exodus 5:1-12, "Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.' " And Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go." So they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." Then the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get back to your labor." And Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor!" So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying, "You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it. For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words." And the taskmasters of the people and their officers went out and spoke to the people, saying, "Thus says Pharaoh: 'I will not give you straw. Go, get yourselves straw where you can find it; yet none of your work will be reduced.' " So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw."

Let us pray. Our heavenly Father, we thank You for Your word which is a light to our path. I pray that You would help us now as we hear Your word preached that we would have hearts that are eager to listen and learn and apply Your truths. I pray that saints would be sanctified and those who are lost would be saved. We pray oh Lord that You would be glorified by the preaching of Your word. In Jesus' name, amen.

As we go back to Exodus, in Hebrews 1 we considered what the true deliverer was as we consider the shadow deliverer in Exodus, the picture Moses is of the true deliverer. As we go back we are going to start into the delivery and see what the shadow of the true delivery looks like. As we consider how Moses delivers the people out of Egypt and delivers God's people from slavery in Egypt, we should consider how this parallels the delivery Christ provides. Moses provides a delivery in the flesh, provides a delivery from the labor in the flesh, the cruel labor, but Christ provides a much greater delivery. Throughout Exodus we will be reminded over and over again that they were just doing a fleshly delivery, they are just getting out of physical slavery and clearly throughout Exodus and as we go into Leviticus we will see how they need a greater delivery, a spiritual delivery. In this passage we're going to see Pharaoh increasing their labor and the people complain, but God will decrease their labor and what will the people do? They still complain because they don't just need a physical delivery, they need a spiritual delivery. As we go through these passages over the next weeks, and as we consider it, let's just remember that this is a picture of something far more important, far more significant. Not a picture of

delivery from physical slavery, but slavery to sin is what Christ gives. They are delivered to wander around in the desert and we are delivered to actually serve God. They're delivered to escape from the misery of Egypt, we're delivered to escape into the joy of the Lord. Our delivery is on a whole different scale than the delivery Moses gave. As we consider this greater delivery, let's remember this is a shadow of that delivery. I think now in today's church culture that we have this idea that being born again, to be saved, is this really simple process. You hear a message and you raise a hand, you hear a message and you walk up to an altar, but the delivery that God talks about, the picture that He gives of that delivery is a lot more painful, it's a lot more difficult, it takes a lot longer, there is suffering involved, things seem to get worse before they get better. In my experience this is what Biblical salvation looks like, when people come to Christ they don't just hear the word and say, 'I believe'. Frequently things get a lot more difficult for them and they go through a lot of difficulties. God doesn't say that to be saved is to raise your hand, He says it's to be born again. Birth is a difficult process and as we go through, it's easy for us to think of how difficult a process it is for a mother, and it is difficult, I'm not dismissing that at all, but the baby gets squeezed really hard. The baby's skull is deformed, that's the amount of suffering the baby has during the delivery. As we think about being born again we should recognize the pressure that has, the pain that it takes, the difficulty. It's not that you hear the word and you raise your hand and in some cases God does that, but that's not the typical. The typical is the picture that's in this passage, that you go and you hear and you say you want to be delivered and all of a sudden things get to be a lot worse for you. That's far more normal in the process of salvation and the process of justification. So as we go through these next whatever it is, something like nine chapters that God uses to describe the delivery of Israel, let's remember this is a picture of Christian delivery as well.

Verses 1-5, "Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.' " And Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go." So they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." Then the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get back to your labor." And Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor!" It starts with "afterwards" because the context is that this is immediately after Moses and Aaron had gone to the elders of Israel. They went to the elders of Israel and said 'God has looked on the affliction of Israel so He visited me to come to you.' The they see the elders, they see the people, they do the signs God had given them and I don't think they did the sign of pouring out the water and it turning to blood because that's the sign if they don't believe. It only makes sense that they would do the sign of the rod turning into the serpent and the sign of Moses' hand turning leprous and then clean again. So just as God said that they see these signs and they believe that God had truly spoke to Moses and that Moses was sent by God. Just as God said in Exodus 3:18, "Then they will heed your voice; and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our

God.” This happened exactly as God said it would and even though it only mentions that they went to Pharaoh, it’s clear from this verse that the elders of Israel accompanied them. I think even when you read this passage where Pharaoh says to get back to work, I don’t think he is talking to Moses and Aaron. Their work was to deliver the people, he was talking to the elders of Israel. So the elders go up with them I believe and Moses and Aaron are standing before Pharaoh. So they go in boldly and tell Pharaoh. Aaron is an Israelite and has been in Egypt, but Moses hasn’t been in Israel for forty years and even then he was much more an Egyptian than he was an Israelite so they boldly go into Pharaoh. Since they are accompanied by the elders of Israel you can understand why Pharaoh would see them. Even through this passage and the next nine chapters or so, over and over again Pharaoh never raises his hand against Moses. If you have this guy who keeps cursing you with plagues so all your cattle die, wouldn’t you think the first thing you would do is just cut off his head? That seems like the easiest way to solve it, but you never see Moses at any risk in any of these passages. He wants to see Pharaoh so he walks in and sees Pharaoh. Understand that favor of God is upon him, that’s why he can walk in and Pharaoh lets him talk to him and meet with him. In this case he is also accompanied by the elders of Israel so even though these are slaves, numbers still have power, they still have influence. Pharaoh has to deal with it if all the elders of Israel come because if you remember back before Moses was born, the concern of that Pharaoh was if these people continue to number like this, they will outnumber us and be able to take over the country. At that point they kept increasing far more rapidly, so these people aren’t people that Pharaoh can just ignore and say they aren’t a big deal. If all the elders of Israel come before Pharaoh, he has to respond even though they are slaves. What they say to him is, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’ ” If you read Exodus 3:18, it says what they are supposed to say but they don’t actually start there and I think it’s because God has given them further revelation of what they are to say so they quote God’s message to Pharaoh. They start by saying who said the message, the Lord God of Israel, Jehovah. Understand that means the self-existent One, the One who has always been, is, and always will be, the One who is superior to any created thing even the gods of the world, and He is specifically described as being Jehovah, God of Israel, the One who has authority over Israel. That word there translated as ‘God’ is ‘Elohim’ and can be translated ‘gods’ or ‘rulers’. The point is that this is the One who has real authority over Israel so they are going to Israel’s slavemaster and saying, ‘This is the One who actually has authority.’ That’s where they start. The One who is and was and always will be, He is the true owner of Israel, not you Pharaoh. He says ‘Let My people go.’ We’re going to hear this a lot, I think it’s seven times that Moses says this to Pharaoh. Let My people go. These are slaves in Egypt and God is saying, “I own them, they are My people not yours.” Pharaoh sees them as his and God is making it clear they are not his, they are His. God has first claim on all people so He can claim any that He wants as His own. No one has the ability to stop Him from taking them. Pharaoh thinks he does and his nation gets destroyed because of it. Nobody can stop God from choosing who He wants to save, nobody can stop Him from saving them, nobody has the ability to. Pharaoh refuses to accept that and his nation gets destroyed because of it. It’s important that we see it and understand it. God has the right to say anyone is His person. He is the Creator of all, He can do what He wants, He can save who He wants, and those are called the elect of the earth, the ones who He says are My people. As we go forward we will see Israelites that want to stomp in His hand, especially in the

desert when they say to stop doing something. Even in the next couple chapters the Israelites will ask why He is doing this to them and just let them go back to Egypt. The answer is that they can't stop God from redeeming His people either, God will bring the people to Himself who He has chosen to be His people. God takes whoever He decrees as His people and He takes them as His people. In this God isn't ignoring, He could just take them, He doesn't need to go through the process of the ten plagues because He could just take His people, but He doesn't do that. He still shows respect to the earthly authorities that He has set in place so He commands Pharaoh who has authority over them, He commands him to let the people go. That word 'go' there, I think is better translated, 'send them away'. He's not just saying for Pharaoh to step back, God is commanding him to actually send them out and Pharaoh doesn't want to send them out. Send out My people. So God is not ignoring the authority of Pharaoh, He's telling Pharaoh that he has to use His authority in the way God wants him to use his authority. As you look at how Pharaoh describes it and how Moses and Aaron describe it and how God describes it, it's really important for us to remember what God describes it as. He describes it as, "Let My people go that they can hold a feast for Me in the wilderness." He's not taking them and saying they will be His slaves, He's not saying you will do this so I can curse you. He's saying you will do this so I can bless you. His focus is on the blessing. God takes us to be His servant and yes, we bless His name and worship Him and show honor to Him, but He doesn't need all those things. We need to remember whose dependent and who's not, God saves us to bless us so His name is great and so His mercy is declared and His mercy shows how great He is, but He is great without His mercy being declared. He saves us out of kindness to us. It's really easy when we think of salvation as losing things, but that's not how God sees it, He sees it as a call to blessing. He calls us to rejoice, He calls us to peace, He calls us to righteousness, He calls us to these things that are good things. It's really important that we remember that because if we forget that we can't preach the gospel anymore because the gospel is good news, the reason it's called the gospel is because the message is, "I've got blessings for you." That is to preach the gospel. If we preach the law without preaching the gospel we are putting this burden that no one can bear, but if we preach the gospel and say that the law says these are good things to do, then the law becomes a blessing because God wants to bless His people. God does bless His people. The things that God commands us to do are a blessing to His people. Moses and Aaron look at it as, we don't want pestilence and the sword to come upon us. Pharaoh looks at it as they just want to be lazy and God looks at it and says He wants to bless His people. Let's make sure to remember that's the message from God. So that's the focus of what He wants Moses to tell Pharaoh, that they need to go out and feast. You can imagine what Pharaoh's response is going to be. His response is that he wants to maximize the return on the slaves, he wants to get the most out of them that he can. His purpose was not to make them happy, when he says these are my people, he's not saying that so he can bless them. He's saying they are his people so he can get what he wants out of them. So Pharaoh responds with, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go." He is saying who is this Jehovah, the One from whom all things proceeded, who is the One who doesn't change, that is the eternal One not dependent on anything? He is denying that he knows Him, but let's remember what it says in Romans 1:18-19, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has

shown it to them.” Remember when Pharaoh says this he is lying. Now, he’s lied to himself so he may sincerely believe that he is telling the truth, but understand he’s lying. He knows that there was something before, just like the people who teach evolution that want to pretend the earth sprang up from nothing, they know how ridiculous that is. They know it makes no sense, that it’s contrary to everything nature testifies of, and yet they say it. We shouldn’t think Pharaoh is any different. Pharaoh is saying this, not because he doesn’t know who God is, but because he doesn’t want to know who God is. Pharaoh is saying, ‘Who is this Lord’, and that’s his self-deceit talking that suppresses truth and righteousness. It’s one thing to say, ‘Prove that you’re really coming from God’, but it’s another thing to say you don’t know who God is. Why should I obey Him? Notice the difference between Moses and his response with the burning bush. He pushes back and his response is, ‘Do I really have to do this? Can’t You find someone better?’ His response is never that he doesn’t need to obey, his response is always that he doesn’t want to respond to His voice. Pharaoh’s response is, who does God think He is that He can tell me what to do? This is faith. Moses has weak faith, Moses says he doesn’t want to do what God says. Moses says he’s not being delivered to blessing, but at the same time Moses says he has to obey Him. Pharaoh says, ‘Who are You that I have to obey Your voice?’ Moses sees the sign of the burning bush and accepts that it’s God speaking to him. The elders of Israel see the signs, they see the rod becoming the serpent, they see the hand become leprous, and they believe. Now, they don’t have saving faith, but they believed God sent Moses. Then Pharaoh goes, ‘I don’t even know who this God is and why should I obey Him?’ He considers the most important thing his knowledge of God, that is never the most important thing. God is real whether we believe in Him or not. God is true, God will judge on the judgement day. You can say you don’t believe in the Lord and that judgement day will come, but that will not affect the judgement day, it will still come. Your belief doesn’t affect the reality of God. He says I don’t know the Lord so I don’t have to obey Him. The answer is that you don’t know the Lord, but you still have to obey Him and He will still hold you accountable for not obeying Him. Pharaoh thinks this gets him out of it, but it gets him out of nothing because he has a duty and responsibility to know. God ordered the whole world so that every single person would be without excuse, every single person knows that there is a Lord and they know they have the responsibility to obey them. Be really careful, the same logical fallacy happens all over the place today, where people say they don’t know the God you’re talking about, but that’s irrelevant. It’s important when we evangelize that we don’t give too much credence when they say they don’t know the God we’re talking about. Who cares? He will still judge them and they still need to hear. The reality is when they say they don’t know that God, they don’t know Him in a salvific way, but the world testifies that there is a God, they know the day of judgement is coming. They see the death and destruction around them, they see all the things that are happening because of judgement on sin, they know. When we evangelize don’t let their lack of knowing who God is, their lack of claiming there is a Lord stop evangelism because they know. He is the self-existent One, everyone’s existence is dependent on Him. Whether we think He exists or not doesn’t affect the reality that we are totally dependent on the Living God. Pharaoh claimed that he would not let them go, but he will. It’s important to remember that, he will. He thinks that God doesn’t matter, he thinks God’s will won’t be done, he thinks he can control the world, but the reality is that it doesn’t work that way. God controls the world, God’s decrees stand. Pharaoh can make any decree he wants. He can make a decree that you have to make bricks without straw and all he

will get is junk. His decree doesn't even stand, he doesn't even get real bricks anymore. When God decrees, it will stand, it will end up the way that He says. So Moses and Aaron respond, "So they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us." It's interesting that he switches and they refer to themselves as Hebrews rather than Israelites, especially because Pharaoh just referred to them as Israelites, but I think it's to say that God is broader than just the Israelites. The Hebrews would be a lot of the Arab's, the Ishmaelites, it would be a lot of additional people, a broader set of people. It's not just the Israelites that the Egyptians look down on. They found it an abomination to eat with any Hebrew. They wouldn't eat with the Arab's, that was an abomination in their sight. So Moses and Aaron say this is the God of the Hebrews, this is the God that all the descendants of Abraham have heard about. The Midianites right, we talked about Jethro who certainly appears to be a faithful man, he had heard who Jehovah was. This is the God beyond the Israelites, the God of the Hebrews. They might be reminding Pharaoh that these are people that are an abomination to them anyways, why are they so eager to not let them go? They won't eat with them but God will eat with them. He says to come feast with Him out in the wilderness and they say they won't even sit at the same table with the Hebrews. Remember Joseph had to sit at a separate table. So the other thing is that God met with them. It's likely that they were used to that concept. Even today, all the symbols from Egypt at this time are the symbols of demon worship. There's a reason why they kept them as the symbol of demon worship. These demons that they worshipped, they probably met with them so when Moses and Aaron say they met with the God of the Hebrews, this probably wasn't a foreign concept to them. There's a reason why the magicians were able to turn rods into serpents and it doesn't say they did some magic trick that made a rod appear to be a serpent. It says they turned the rods into serpents. This is because they were associated with supernatural powers. They were worshipping demons and they probably met with the demons is why they were able to turn water into blood. This isn't a magic trick that it says they did. Scripture says they did it, so when they say the God of the Hebrews met with us, that means something to the Egyptians. Then they said, "Please". I think this is important. Pharaoh is in authority, and God has given them commands that don't give them the right to ignore the authority that God has placed over them. They still have to make a petition, they still have to humbly go before Pharaoh and say, "let us go". Even a cruel and unrighteous authority. People say God has commanded me to do this so I don't have to obey the authority because this authority doesn't understand, this authority is saying to do something different than what God would have so I'm going to ignore the authority. That's the opposite of what God does with Pharaoh, that's the opposite of what Paul says to do about Nero. Moses was commanded to go before Pharaoh, this unrighteous authority, this picture of Satan. We shouldn't think we can ignore authority because we don't like them or that we can ignore them because they are doing everything wrong. "Please let us go three days' journey into the desert." A three days' journey is the distance to the mountain where God said they would serve Him. As we hear 'desert' it's important to remember what that word really means. When we hear it we think of sand and cacti, but that's not what this word means. It means it's deserted, there's no one there. That's what it means to be desert. This isn't that there wasn't grass there, it's that it was wilderness, it was a place that hadn't been tamed by man. They were being separated from people is what it's saying, that's the picture of salvation, that's the picture of deliverance, we get separated from the world and Moses is saying we have to go three days into the wilderness and be separated from the world. That's what God

commands us today, that's what spiritual deliverance looks like just like what physical deliverance looked like at the time of Joseph. This is what spiritual deliverance looks like. When we die with Christ we go three days' journey into the wilderness, that's why I think it's three days. It's the same picture that we join in Christ's death and His resurrection. This is going in the wilderness. This is the physical picture God has put into place so we can picture the spiritual reality of being joined with Christ. Joined with Christ when He goes into the desert and is separated from the people of the world. "And sacrifice to the Lord our God". So notice how God says He wants His people to feast in the wilderness and Moses and Aaron say "and sacrifice to the Lord our God", which God told them to say, but the focus is different. The focus is the rejoicing in what God said to say to Pharaoh and what they say to Pharaoh here is that we have to go kill animals. Yeah, the first step of feasting is to kill animals, but the sacrifice is about slaughter, this is about the killing of animals. God's focus was on the celebration and Moses and Aaron, when they speak, their focus is on the killing, that things have to die. Again, this is the picture of what salvation looks like because the first person, when they first come to Christ, they don't understand like Paul says. It's the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. What they understand is, it's the slaughter that leads us to repentance, being called to the judgement day, it's the fear of the Lord, it's the negative that calls us but as we mature in the faith we shouldn't be saying we've been saved from the eternal wrath of God, we should be saying we were saved to the blessing of the Lord, aren't God's ways the best ways? Aren't they the way to joy and peace? Sure, we're all like Moses when we first are delivered, where we say we realize the wrath of God is upon me and what a great blessing it is that that wrath is put aside, but your faith shouldn't stay there. Your faith should move towards saying it is the goodness of God that calls us to repentance. He is calling us to good things, He is calling us to blessing not cursing. Moses continues and they add, "Lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." This is what justification looks like, we're scared of the pestilence and the sword. We're not looking for great blessing and life, we're looking to avoid eternal damnation. Even though God says, "I'm calling you to feast in the wilderness", they're saying they don't want the wrath of God on them. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and that's what Moses is expressing here. They are afraid God will judge them for not going and worshipping as they were commanded. God never said, He said He is going to judge Pharaoh because Pharaoh won't let them go. He doesn't say that He is going to judge Moses or Aaron or that pestilence and sword is going to come upon Israel. He says it will come upon Pharaoh and the destruction will come that He will judge Pharaoh and with a mighty hand He will cause Pharaoh to send the people out. Yet, Moses and Aaron still fear God so their answer is, "Let us go lest pestilence and war come upon us." Next week when I'm in Nigeria, I will probably talk about this a lot because it's one of the most basic things, pestilence and war does not come because of the people who are doing the war, it comes because of judgement upon them. Moses and Aaron understood this. He's saying, if we stand against God He will send us pestilence and war. Over in Nigeria that say all the time that the Muslims are attacking them because they are so righteous. That's not what Moses and Aaron say and let's make sure we're not saying that either. Let's make sure we say the reason pestilence, famine, and war come upon a people is because of God's judgement upon that people. When Assyria destroys the northern kingdom, God says they are just the sword. They think they are coming in for themselves, but they are just the sword, He wanted to punish Israel so He used them and He is going to destroy them because they think they are more than the

sword. Make sure when we have pestilence, famine, and war, that we look towards our own sin. There's been a lot of sickness in the church, we should be asking ourselves if it's just the sickness of the culture that's affecting us or if it's sin that we have. It's not like diseases come because God's not sovereign, diseases come because God is sovereign. "Then the king of Egypt said to them." It's interesting that the language changes from Pharaoh to the king of Egypt. The emphasis here is that this is the one who has authority over him, but it also indicates he has real obligations. He's the one who is reigning over Egypt and considering how this will affect Egypt, the Pharaoh at least eighty some years ago was saying that if they let these people go it would destroy their country. They've gotten more powerful, they've gotten more numerous compared to the Egyptians. So the king of Egypt, Pharaoh, has real responsibility to ask how this will affect his nation. This response is not inherently rebellion, it's his job as the king of Egypt to say, 'How will this affect everything going on around me?' This is the scope of his responsibility. "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get back to your labor." He first starts to address Moses and Aaron, accusing them of distracting the people from what they should be doing. If you say God didn't send him, this is a very valid thing to say. If you're Pharaoh and granted, you deceive yourself in your own unrighteousness, but you say no one sent you, then the reasonable thing to say as the king of Egypt is to say to stop bothering the people because you are distracting them from their work. As an authority, that is a valid thing to do. How many parents in this room have said that when a sibling goes and bothers someone else who is actually trying to do what they're supposed to do and you say, 'Stop bothering them from their work, they have things to do.' This is a valid thing for authorities to do and that's what Pharaoh says to Moses and Aaron because he doesn't recognize there is a higher authority than him. The reason that this statement is not because it's inherently unjust, it's that it's ignoring the authority that is above Pharaoh because Pharaoh is trying to get them to stop doing what the higher authority told them to do. Pharaoh is the one who's actually taking them away from their work. Again, it seems here that Pharaoh was talking to Moses and Aaron and that the elders of Israel were with him, so now he is making a much broader statement. He's speaking to the elders of Israel and asking why they are listening to these two, get back to work, you don't have the right to listen to them. I don't see him commanding Moses and Aaron, it's more like he is treating them like ambassadors from a different country. They are ambassadors from God so he's not trying to force them to go back to their labor. But those people who are under his authority, he is commanding them to get back to work. Then I think he speaks to Moses and Aaron again, "And Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor!" The king of Egypt is counting the cost, what would the cost be if I let the people go? They are a great number and they're a larger percentage than they were before Moses was born. He's saying this will have great consequences in my nation if you cause them to lose labor. To lose their labor, even for a short time, even for them to travel three days and feast before the Lord and travel back, this will have a real impact on the economy. Now, God's going to have a far greater impact on the economy when He sends the ten plagues, but again, if Pharaoh truly has convinced himself there is no Lord that can command him, what he is saying is not unreasonable. He is someone who is ruling a people. It is a real contrast between what Pharaoh is like and what God is like. Pharaoh is saying he is desperate for the labor of these people, if I lose the labor of these people, this will cause me serious problems. Like God said in Psalm 50:12, "If I were hungry, I would not tell

you; For the world is Mine, and all its fullness.” God doesn’t want us to be His people so He can see how much labor He can get out of us, He can do it all without us. It’s the picture of the three year old with his father, that three year old thinks he is being so helpful but he doesn’t really help, the father can do it faster without him. That’s how we should always look at our service towards God. Yes, God takes delight in it. It’s fun to do things with a three year old, but it doesn’t mean that three year old is actually helping. What it does mean is that the father is taking delight in something else. God delights in us as His people, not because the labor we produce. He delights in us as His people when we feast before Him in the wilderness, not because of how we do this labor or how we do this or that, God doesn’t need our help. Pharaoh is a very different taskmaster than God. Pharaoh’s being a slave owner was so he could see how much work he could get out of his slaves, God being a slave owner says He wants to see how much He can bless His slaves. As you go to Deuteronomy when it talks about sending out a slave, the point is have you been a blessing to your slaves as opposed to being a slave master like Pharaoh who is just trying to see how much labor he can receive.

Verses 6-9, “So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying, “You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it. For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words.”” After Moses and Aaron told him the message from God, Pharaoh wastes no time. If you reject God then the Sabbath day appears that you are just lazy, that you are sitting around doing nothing productive because it’s not that they don’t understand the resting in God, it becomes idleness. So this is what Pharaoh looks at and says these people are idle, they think they have time to go three days in the wilderness to feast before God, they obviously have time to get more work done. So “Pharaoh commanded”. He’s a threat to Egypt, but he sees an opportunity. There’s additional labor capacity that he’s not using that he can exploit. Again, he responds in a reasonable way if you say you have no authority over you, if you say these people are for your blessing. They want to go eat in the wilderness and are willing to walk for three days, obviously they have strength and they have time so we can get more out of them. So he talks and commands “the taskmasters of the people and their officers.” When he commands the taskmasters, I think this is referring to Egyptians that were given the responsibilities. The word there ‘taskmaster’ is almost like a tax collector. They’re the ones making sure that the number of bricks that the Israelites produced are the number that they are expected to produce. When Pharaoh says they need to return the same number of bricks, the taskmasters are the Egyptians that are counting the bricks and saying they got the bricks out of them that they were supposed to. The officers, I think if you look later in the chapter it seems clear that the officers are Israelites. These are the Israelites that are organizing the labor of Israel to make sure they make the bricks. Pharaoh talks to both of them, both the Egyptians that are over this and the Israelites that are over the production of bricks. He is “Saying, “You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before.” He saw this additional labor capacity so he says, ‘What can I do to reduce my costs, to reduce the work that we have to do?’ If the task masters were giving the people straw they would have to buy that straw from someplace, it

doesn't just appear from nowhere. Pharaoh figured they could reduce expense by saying they could just gather it themselves. "Let them go and gather straw for themselves." The problem with that is that's not how the world works. There's not just straw laying around, straw is a byproduct of producing grain. So when he says just gather straw, there's no straw to gather, it doesn't work that way. "And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before." So now you have additional work, but the work you were doing before to make sure that wasn't reduced, keep the same number of bricks and just have more work that they need to do to produce it. He just assumes that increasing taxes will get him more revenue. How many times do we see this in the world? Governments think you can just keep increasing taxes and it won't affect anything else, but it obviously has all kinds of other affects. He's very clear, "You shall not reduce it." I think the reason that he repeats and says to not reduce it, is because taskmasters and the officers would have the temptation to reduce it. They would have the Israelites coming and saying they can't do this, there's no way we can produce all these things that you want us to produce, there's no way we can keep doing the same bricks and gathering straw at the same time so Pharaoh warns them ahead of time, don't be sympathetic towards them. Make sure that they keep it, make sure that they produce the same quota that they had before because they're going to tell you they don't have the time, but the answer is that they are idle. They think they have spare time and it's proven because they think they have time to go out into the wilderness to worship God, that they can do this three day walk and three day walk back. They clearly have time. So when they tell you and they come to you saying they can't meet the quota, the answer is yes they can. It's worthwhile comparing this to what God does. What Pharaoh says is he can maximize the return. When God enters into the Promised Land He doesn't say there's a quota they have to produce. As the people He redeemed as His slaves who He has purchased, this is what you have to produce. He doesn't say that, He just says to give 10%, give a tithe. There's no quota, there's a percent of the labor. It can be 23% if you include the tithe for the celebrations and the tithe for the poor, but He's not saying there is a quota because He doesn't need what we produce. He says here is a percentage because He owns us, He has the right to us. So He says He wants 10% of our labor to go to the work of God. He wants 10% of our labor to go to feasting before Him in the wilderness. He says every three years you are to set aside 10% because you need to care for the poor. He never says here's how much you need to produce, He says He has a claim on us and as that claim, you produce as much as you want but I get a tenth of it, I get these tithes. Think how much better of a master God is than Pharaoh. God does own us, but He's not driving us to produce because in the end if He was hungry would He ask us? So Pharaoh continues, "For they are idle; therefore they cry out." Pharaoh saw it not as them fulfilling an obligation to God, but that the feast in the wilderness would be enjoyable, that their worship of God would be pleasing to them so it must be bad, their motives must be unrighteous. They must have time on their hands and they must have idleness. "Saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.'" They want to worship God so Pharaoh calls it idleness. We shouldn't think that's any different than the world now, the world thinks to gather Wednesday night, to gather Sunday, to gather as God's people and to worship Him is worthless and a waste of time, that it's idleness. It's not idleness, it is what we're called to, it is what eternity is filled with. The world will always see it as idle, will always see it as insignificant or a waste of time. Without faith, prayer is a waste of time. Without faith, studying the Word of God is a waste of time. We should make sure we are thinking of worship the way that God thinks of it,

the worship through prayer, the worship through the studying of the Scriptures. That's not idleness, that's what God wants us to be doing because it increases our worship of Him. We're supposed to desire the Word like the baby desires his mother's milk. That's what our attitude is supposed to be, not that this is idleness but that this is life. That's how we're supposed to look at it, the opposite of idleness, this is life, this is how I live. This is not idleness, this is to be our first priority, seeking God. Jesus Christ came to gather together those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. Worship is the opposite of idleness. "Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words." Pharaoh wanted them to have less time to consider the things that were being said by Moses because if you are doing physical labor you don't have time to gather together and discuss being set free. He accused Moses and Aaron of speaking false words without any proof, without even asking if there was anyway that they could prove God sent them. Moses and Aaron had done the signs to prove God has visited them when they went to the elders, but Pharaoh doesn't ask about that, he just says, 'Who if this God?' Then he says, without any proof, that they were lying. The world, he believed, was how he wanted it to be, but Pharaoh doesn't have the ability to do that, only God does.

Verses 10-12, "And the taskmasters of the people and their officers went out and spoke to the people, saying, "Thus says Pharaoh: 'I will not give you straw. Go, get yourselves straw where you can find it; yet none of your work will be reduced.' " So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw." They went and talked to the people. Just like Moses and Aaron and the elders go in and say what the Lord told them to say to him, the taskmasters and the officers say what Pharaoh told them to say. They're both pointing to the authority for their words and if you believe that the earthly authority is the end then you have to obey Pharaoh. Pharaoh said if he could decree it, then people have to obey it, but Pharaoh decrees things that don't come to pass. He decrees things and says he will never let these people go, but he lets them go. When God says what He is going to do, the world conforms to God, the world does not conform to Pharaoh and this is always true. There are so many people that think they can make the world conform to them, but the world always conforms to God and His will and we need to accept that and believe that because there will be plenty of people who tell us it will turn out this way, but to walk by faith is to believe that it will turn out the way that God decrees not the way they believe it will. They're not even looking to themselves, they're saying that Pharaoh told them to do this. "I will not give you straw." No one can blame them or come to them and say, 'You're stealing the straw' because they are saying Pharaoh said you're not getting straw, we don't have straw to give you. The normal human response is not to blame the authority, but to blame the middle party. In Nigeria this was a big deal when I was over there and there were people insisting that we were sending money over for them and Zingak was stealing it. I had to go to them and say, 'I didn't give him any straw, he doesn't have it', and they're saying, 'Obviously you want to give us all this money', and the answer is, 'No we don't!' So this is the normal response, you blame the messenger instead of blaming the person who sent the messenger. So they are trying to mitigate that by saying, Pharaoh said you're not getting straw, you can come to us all you want but I don't have straw to give you. "Go, get yourselves straw where you can find it; yet none of your work will be reduced." It's important to note the taskmasters and officers don't say, 'Just gather up straw'.

They say, 'Where you can find it, get straw.' The reality is that it's not just laying around, it's produced, it takes real work. You grow grain and the top of the grain is the head of the grain that has the grain on it and there are stalks underneath it. You shock the stocks by tying them up into a bundle so that they are up off the ground to dry. The stalks dry too then when you're ready to thresh the grain because the grain is now dried out and can be preserved, you take the head off and you thresh that and the rest of it, these stalks, become straw. If you're not growing grain you don't get straw and the people who grew grain, the straw is an important by-product. People slept in straw beds for a long time because it's an important by-product. You feed the animals straw. This is the fodder, this is what you feed so if you have these farmer's who are selling straw to Pharaoh to make bricks, there is straw. As soon as Pharaoh says he's not buying straw anymore, there's no more straw. It's not like you can just go out and pick up straw, it has to be produced. So they don't have straw, they can't find straw so he says to go find it where you can, but none of your work will be reduced. So now they are supposed to gather something they cannot find "so the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw." They have to look everywhere because by the way, unless you put it up straw doesn't become straw. If you have a stalk that falls over on the ground it becomes rotten. You have to lift it up which requires labor. They're not told to produce straw, they are told to find straw so they scatter all throughout the land. They don't gather straw, they gather stubble. When you cut that grain off at the bottom so that it stands up, there's a little piece that's left at the bottom because you don't want to ruin your tools by digging them into the dirt, that's the stubble. That you can find because people don't gather that up. Where you did have long pieces that actually give integrity to the brick, which is the point of putting straw in the brick, now you have short pieces that don't do anything. That word 'stubble' might also be the chaff. When you thresh grain you knock the shell off the outside of the kernels so these are the tiny little pieces. They give no stability to the clay, they don't produce bricks that are worthwhile. Pharaoh says he is going to increase the productivity of the people and he gets bricks without straw, he gets bricks made with stubble, which don't have nearly the strength as bricks made with straw. The purpose of adding straw has been greatly reduced. Pharaoh thought he was going to get something by burdening these people, but instead he gets junk versus getting something useful like he was getting before.

#### Applications:

1. Those who are in leadership roles, which is most of the adults in this room, even if all you're leading are small children, you have a leadership role and you should ask yourself if you are a leader like Pharaoh or a leader like God. A lot of parents are going to say they are trying to work to be a blessing to their children, but there are a lot of parents who don't. They don't want their children to behave properly, what they want their children to do is when they are seen, for people to say they must be a really good parent. That's being like Pharaoh. The question is, do you want to be a blessing to your children, do you want to teach your children self-control or do you want them to not be an embarrassment to you? Pharaoh versus God. God's point is to bless those who are His people. That is what we are supposed to be like and the truth is the kind of leader you are will be reflected in all that you lead. That's why in Galatians 4:1, "Now I say that

the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all." The good leader, the righteous one will be a blessing to his slave just like he is a blessing to his child. The bad leader will be a curse to his leader just like he is a curse to his slave. Which kind of taskmaster are you? Are you like Pharaoh or God? What is the goal of your having people serve you? Is it to build you up or build them up? A good master has children and slaves to be a blessing to them. Is that what kind of leader you are?

2. Authorities have a real responsibility to think things through. By commanding them to gather their own straw, which wouldn't exist, you end up with stubble and bricks that are a lot less useful. Out of anger or fear or some other emotions, Pharaoh changed what the Israelites had to do, he charged them to do more labor but harmed himself in the process. It was all knowable, but leaders have a responsibility to think things through. He thought he would get more from them but in the end he got less from them. Leaders have a responsibility to be careful about what they do and to be thoughtful and to think through what the effects are.
3. When you hear the commandments of God, how do you respond? Do you believe them and obey or do you say, 'Who does God think He is to command me?' Nobody in this room would verbally say that, so I'm not saying that you come and verbally say that. We're commanded to do a lot of things and what is your actual response to those things? We're all well-trained enough that we wouldn't say, 'Who is God that He can command us?', but if He commands you and you ignore His commands you are like Pharaoh, you are saying who is God that He can command us. Do you trust that what God says is really best, that what God commands is to be a blessing to His people or do you think God is a master like Pharaoh? Most the reasons we don't do what God commands us is actually an insult to God because we are saying God said to do this, but it really isn't good for us. No, God commands us to do it because it is a blessing to us, He calls us to blessing. He doesn't call us to curse us, He calls us to bless us and when we look at His commandments and say we're not going to do that, we say God is like Pharaoh. God is not like Pharaoh. We just had a prayer week to remind us how much that we treat God like Pharaoh. We don't pray like we should pray. God says to pray without ceasing, to be thankful in all things and it's very easy for us to forget these things, but when we forget the things we're saying God called us to bad things and that He's like Pharaoh. We have prayer week to remind us to reset, to say remember what God calls you to is a good thing. He calls us to prayer. Remember it's a good thing. It's easy to believe we're like Christ, whatever God commands, that we go and do. We should ask ourselves when we treat God like Pharaoh, where we say He's just giving us a command because He wants something from us. Instead of, He's giving this command because He wants to bless us if we are His children. We should examine our lives and see if we're like Pharaoh in that we seek after our own kingdom instead of seeking God's kingdom. That's why he wouldn't let them go, because he was seeking his own kingdom. Whose kingdom are you seeking?
4. How do you treat unrighteous authorities? We talked a lot about this in 1 Peter, that even if you have an unjust authority, you have the responsibility to honor that authority

because they were appointed by God. If God is commanding you to do something, that doesn't mean you can just ignore the authorities that God has put into place. Instead Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh. Pharaoh is a type of Satan, but yet Moses still had to go to Pharaoh. Make sure we remember just how important God looks at how He has ordered the world.

5. Make sure in evangelism you balance. I'm not sure balance is the right word, it's really to join them together. The fear of the Lord, the fear of the judgement to come and God calling us to joy and peace. These are both true and they both need to be expressed. You can't just have one without the other. The reality is that most people come to repentance because of fear of the Lord. That's what's required, fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. If we don't preach the fear of the Lord, people won't know who God is. On the other hand you need to preach that God calls us to enter in His joy. It's the gospel and it can't just be fearing God, it has to be a gospel that this is good news, this is a blessing and not just the blessing of escaping but the blessing of eternal life with God. It's the goodness and kindness of God that leads us to repentance. When we evangelize we need to make sure that we keep both of those on the table. Fearing God and understanding that He is calling us to a blessing, that is the path to salvation.
6. Pharaoh was right in that Moses came to give the people rest. Rest is a significant aspect of salvation. It's pictured by the weekly Sabbath day and Moses delivered them to physical rest. They're working in Egypt and then they wander out and now they get up in the morning and they pick up their food, their manna for the day and they are done. No more making bricks without straw, now it's easy. It doesn't mean that they have rest because they don't have belief and true rest is a spiritual rest. True rest is righteousness, peace, and joy and only Christ can give that, Moses can't. Moses can give rest from the physical labor, but make sure you have spiritual rest because the delivery that Christ gives is spiritual rest. The delivery that Moses gave was just physical rest. We rest from our labors to make ourselves acceptable to God. That's the rest that only the perfect Deliverer could give.
7. God is a far better master than Pharaoh. This is something that we need to keep telling ourselves. This should be what drives us to read Scripture. God is the Master who is telling us what is good for us, what blessings are. The commands He gave us are not commands to be burdensome to us but to bless us. Having Pharaoh as your master is the picture of having the world, flesh, and devil as your master. It seems like there will be blessings, but the taxes are always increasing. It seems like there will be blessings, but the reality is that the world, the flesh, and the devil will always be demanding more and more and more. This is why there are drunkards, this is why there are drug addicts, this is why there are workaholics. It doesn't matter the context or what area of your life you are enmeshed in the sin, the sin will just demand more and more and more. That's what Pharaoh is like, that's the picture of what Pharaoh does. You try to escape and it will demand more. That is what the picture of Satan and the flesh is. Slavery to the world might produce good things for the world but it will never produce good things for you, it will just increase the taxes. That's not what God does, God calls us to blessing. Turn to God as your master because He does call us to do things, but He calls us to do things

that are good for us not because He needs the work, not because He needs the result. He doesn't need bricks, He calls us to them because it's a blessing for us to do them.

8. Remember salvation usually results in more pain. The process before there's relief, there's more pain. That's what we're seeing with Moses and what we will see repeatedly as He delivers the Israelites and it's important for us to remember. It's not that you hear the word and are converted, it's that you hear the word of God and you start to see sin in your life so you are miserable and you try to escape the sin and you see the futility of escaping and you wonder why someone even told you there was a God. The process is painful and there are a lot of unbelieving children in this room and don't lie to them how painful the process is because the process of salvation is painful. It's the picture of a second birth, that baby gets squeezed by every one of those contractions that the mother has. This is the picture of being born again, it's not this easy thing. As we go through here, as the plagues come upon Israel just like they come upon Egypt, understand that's what salvation usually looks like. Salvation is not this easy thing. The world, the flesh and devil all want to work against our salvation and against our justification. As the love of the world disappears in Christ, our lust of the flesh dies in Christ, Satan stops being our father and all of them resist it. It's a hard process, but what a blessing it is in the end. What a relief there is at the end. We shouldn't lie to anyone about how difficult salvation is, God gave the picture of being born again for a reason. It's a difficult process to be saved and God does it so we value it more. If it's just raising your hand or walking an aisle you don't see how much you were forgiven so you don't have so much respect and love for the One who forgave you. God wants us to honor Him and to see what He saved us from so often He makes it difficult to be saved so we have a better view of our slavery to sin so we can have more appreciation for having been redeemed.

Let's pray. Oh Lord God we do thank You for this passage. We do thank You that You give us this picture and that You gave this picture to these people so long ago that had so little revelation, maybe no Word of God written at all and yet You put this picture before them that You are a God who redeems. Lord we thank You for the greater knowledge we have and with it we pray that we are more faithful with the greater understanding that we have, that we are more faithful to do You will in all things. Lord, grow us so we walk in purity for Your name's sake. Amen.