

Shunning the “-Tion”s Redemption

Recently, I took my wife to a movie that I saw previewed while I watched the last episode of *Star Wars*. The movie intrigued me because it was a biographical story about the abolitionist, Harriet Tubman. Araminta “Misty” Ross married a freedman, John Tubman. Tubman tries to get his wife and family free but fails. After Misty escapes, she makes her way to Philadelphia via the Underground Railroad. There, she takes the name Harriet Tubman. Nothing can stop her from freeing as many slaves as possible. She became a force that the plantation owners could not overcome. This was her calling from God to free the slaves. The price of their redemption was her willingness to give up her life to save them. In total, she helped from over 800 slaves before and during the Civil war.

Today, everyone faces the same fate that Harriet Tubman and her family faced. We are all slaves, slaves to sin, just as the people of God were slaves to their Egyptian taskmasters. Whether we verbalize it or not, we all ask the same question at one time or another in our lives.

HOW CAN I BE FREE FROM MY HABITS AND CHARACTER (DRUGS, FOOD, ALCOHOL, LUST, GABBLING, NICOTINE, LANGUAGE, LAZINESS, SEX, PORNOGRAPHY, GREED, POWER, CONTROL, SPENDING, FEAR, THEFT, ANGER, VIOLENCE)?

How can I be free from my enslavement to sin ([Romans 6:1-23](#))? What can I pay, what can I do to be released? Sin demands death as payment ([Romans 6:23](#); cf [Gen 2:15-17](#); [Romans 3:23](#); [5:12](#)). Honestly, there is nothing you can pay, nothing you can do to save yourself from the consequences of sin.

However, what you cannot do, what you cannot pay, God did. God paid for your freedom from the slave holder. What did He do? What did it cost Him? Start in Exodus 3 – 12, but don’t stay there. You’ll miss the rest of the story.

The Story of the Two Firstborns ([Exodus 3 – 12](#); [Numbers 18:15-17](#); [Luke 1:68](#))

How can you have two firstborns? If they are twins, then one twin would be born before the other making him/her the firstborn. But if you have two separate families each having a firstborn, then you can have two firstborns. In the case before us, we have two different families: Pharaoh’s house (Egypt) and God’s house (Israel).

Israel may have thought that God had forgotten them. Having left Canaan in the time of Joseph, 430 ([Exodus 12:40-41](#)) years have passed. Israel is no longer the favored people of Pharaoh. With the death of Joseph a new Pharaoh has arisen that does not know or remember Joseph. Israel has fallen into slavery.

Has God forgotten them? Will He leave them there to suffer? Is He silent concerning His people? On the contrary. He sees the afflictions and sufferings of His people

As iron sharpens iron,
so a person sharpens his friends.
-- Solomon

([Ex 3:7-10, 17](#)). He hears their cries for help and see their outstretched arm. With resolve in His heart and a plan in His mind, He is determined to take the next step forward in preparing a people for His possession. This people group will bring forth the Messiah. They are the “firstborn” of God ([Exodus 4:22-23](#); [Hosea 11:1](#)).

To remove Israel from the slave master’s clutches, God calls Moses to confront Pharaoh and demand that Israel be released from captivity ([5:1 – 12:42](#)). Instead of cooperating with God, Pharaoh hardens his heart and increases the labor of his slaves ([5:5-21](#)). Of course, releasing a nation of people from slavery does not come without a struggle. You do not cast off an addiction without a struggle. You do not demolish the bonds of sin without a fight.

As God has hears the groanings of His people ([6:5-9](#)), He pledges to redeem Israel from Egypt ([6:6](#)). They will be His people and He their God ([6:7](#)). But after Pharaoh increases their labor and makes a miserable life more miserable, the people of Israel refuse ([6:9](#)). Sometimes the message is ignored and a hard heart. We are in a spiritual battle. People do not want to let loose of their addictions and Satan does not want to let loose of them. All of us are involved in a spiritual war, a war for our very lives ([Ephesians 6:10-20](#); [2 Corinthians 10:3-6](#); [1 Timothy 1:18-19](#)).

Repeatedly, through Moses God commands Pharaoh to free His firstborn, Israel. But Pharaoh will not let God’s first-born son go from the bonds of slavery. What does God do to convince Pharaoh to let Israel go?

- God turns water to blood ([7:14-25](#)).
- God brings frogs on the land ([8:1-15](#)).
- God brings gnats into the land ([8:16-19](#)).
- God bring flies into the land ([8:20-32](#)).
- God causes the Egyptian livestock to die ([9:1-7](#)).
- God causes boils to spring up on men and animals ([9:8-12](#)).
- God causes hail to destroy the crops ([9:13-35](#)).
- God causes the locusts to destroy what remains ([10:1-20](#)).
- God causes great darkness across the land of Egypt ([10:21-29](#)).
- God kills the first-born among the Egyptians and their animals ([12:29-36](#)) in order to get Pharaoh let God’s firstborn go from slavery ([11:1 – 12:42](#)).

God paid for the release of Israel from slavery. Because of Pharaoh’s stubborn behavior, his firstborn children and animals were sacrificed to force Pharaoh to set God’s firstborn free. Not only did Pharaoh pay a sacrifice, but God commanded Israel to sacrifice a one-year old male lamb, a lamb without blemish, a lamb without deformity, a perfect specimen. God commanded the Israelites to apply the blood of that lamb to the two door posts and lintel of their house as a sign that they belonged to God. That night God’s death angel passed over the homes covered by the blood of the lamb leaving everyone inside unharmed ([12:28-40](#)).

My friend, Norma, seriously took my challenge to read the Bible in a year. Being an octogenarian and a long time Christian, she admitted that she had never read the entire

Bible. Just this past Monday she approached me. As she began to read Exodus, she saw God as an angry vengeful God. But as she finished reading about the deliverance of Israel, she realized that God would go to any length to redeem His people. He loved His firstborn so much that He would let nothing stand in the way to save Israel. In the same way, He loves us so much that He lets nothing stand in the way of saving us.

Even though God redeemed and rescued Israel, He was not finished with Israel. In [Deuteronomy 5:15](#); [15:15](#); [16:12](#); [24:18](#), and [22](#), God commands Israel to remember what they used to be, slaves to the Egyptians. Remembrance carries with it a proper response. To help Israel remember that God paid the ransom to deliver them from slavery, God institutes the Passover sacrifice and feast ([Exodus 12:1-20](#), [43-51](#)). In this memorial feast, the unleavened bread reminds them of the haste that God brought them out of Egypt. The bitter herbs remind them of the bitterness of slavery. The lamb reminds them of the sacrifice demanded of the Egyptians that caused Pharaoh to let them go. The lamb also looked forward to the sacrifice that God would someday pay for their sins. The cup of wine reminded them of the blood of the lamb.

With the release of Israel through God's outstretched arm, God claims the firstborn of Israel as His, both of man and beast. The firstborn of an Israelite family belonged to God. Later, God would explain how the family might redeem that firstborn child. According to [Numbers 18:15-17](#), the family could redeem the child by paying five shekels to the tabernacle or temple. However, the Israelites were to offer as a sacrifice to God of the firstborn of a cow, sheep or goat. They could redeem the firstborn of an unclean animal.

The Finishing Touch

An interesting parallel occurs in [Luke 2:21](#). On the 8th day following Jesus' birth, he is circumcised. However, there is no record of Jesus' family being redeeming Him after one month from His birth. Jesus became God sacrifice for us ([John 3:16](#); [Hebrews 7:27](#); [9:26](#); [10:12](#)).

To release us from the consequences and power of sin and the judgment of death, God the Father paid the price of redemption with His only Son, His life for your life. When we are united with Christ, we are united with Him in the likeness of His death, burial and resurrection ([Romans 6:3-11](#)). Jesus becomes our sacrifice for sin, our redemption price releasing us from the consequences and power of sin and the judgment of death. ([Isaiah 53:7-11](#); [John 1:29](#); [Mark 10:45](#); [1 Corinthians 5:7](#); [15:3-4](#); [Hebrews 10:12](#); [1 Peter 1:17-21](#)).

Just as Israel was called to remember that they were slaves to the Egyptians, God calls us to remember that we were slaves to sin, its consequences and its power ([Ephesians 5:11-12](#)). The most poignant time to remember that Christ bought us from death is the time we spend around His Table. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me" ([1 Corinthians 11:24-26](#)). Remember the sacrifice Jesus paid to redeem us. Now, we belong to Him.