**Rescued: Prepare to be Saved**

Exodus 1-2
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You probably remember, like I do, waking up in March of 2020 and watching the world shut down. It was surreal. And every headline seemed darker than the last—new records of people getting sick, more people dying. Then came the social distancing and loneliness, drive-by funerals where no one even got out of their cars. Add to that the financial upheaval—stock markets crashing, jobs disappearing.

And that wasn’t the end of it. The pressure started hitting closer to home: should churches stay open or should we shut down? Should we wear masks or require vaccine passports? It was a tricky time. And instead of standing together, many Christians were fighting with each other.

And in the midst of that I remember sitting with some leaders here and asking, *What are we supposed to do?* Nothing seemed good on the horizon. Why was God letting this happen? Didn’t He see what it was doing to His church? Why wouldn’t He make a way out? Why did He feel so distant?

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Today we’re launching a new series on the book of Exodus—the story of Moses. And at its core, Exodus is about God introducing Himself as the liberator and saviour of His people. It’s a story of being set free. But it’s not just history—something that happened 3,500 years ago. Exodus defines what salvation means for God, for all time. It’s about freedom in the face of whatever weighs us down or makes us anxious.

And anxiety is everywhere right now. StatsCan reports that one in five Canadians feel significantly stressed most days. Ten percent have a diagnosed anxiety disorder. And the younger you are, the more true this is: only 3% of Boomers have been diagnosed, compared with 20% of Gen Z.[[1]](#footnote-1) We live in anxious times. People need saving.

But “saved” is a weird word. It’s not popular in our culture. It sounds like something shouted by an angry TV preacher. Canadians are fine talking about being “spiritual,” but “saved”? Thats too religious.

But here’s the thing: if we’re going to take the Bible seriously—which is what we try to do here—we can’t avoid words like “saved” or “sin.” Scripture doesn’t offer lightweight substitutes. These are no one-line dictionary definitions. Instead the Bible defines terms like this through story.

So, for example, if you want to know what faith is, you look at the life of Abraham. And you’ll find chapter after chapter of wrestling with God. That’s faith. And similarly, if you want to know what salvation is, you need to look at Moses and Exodus. And that’s what we’re doing this fall.

So grab your Bible and turn to Exodus 1. Today we’re covering chapters 1 and 2. But we aren’t going to read it all. We’ll start in verse 8, jump to verse 15, and read from there. Would you stand with me as we come before God’s word? Hear now the word of the Lord.

[Read Exodus 1:8; 15–2:15]

This is the Word of the Lord. You may be seated.

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So Exodus shows us what salvation looks like. And in our text today we get three big pictures of salvation that the author will keep circling back to and our series is going to be built around. Here’s the first: salvation means being rescued from the misery of serving anything other than God.[[2]](#footnote-2)

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So, let’s set the context. Exodus picks up where Genesis ends. Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers, rises to power in Egypt and saves the whole nation from famine—and, in the process, his own family too. Seventy Israelites moved to Egypt with him. And then time passes – 300 years. And Israel grew. Verse 6 says:

Joseph and all of his brothers died, ending that entire generation. But their descendants, the Israelites, had many children and grandchildren. In fact, they multiplied so greatly that they became extremely powerful and filled the land. (Exodus 1:6–7)

And that’s when a Pharaoh comes to power who doesn’t remember Joseph. All he sees is a nation of foreigners growing inside his borders. And he panics: *What if they join our enemies?* So he comes up with a three-step plan to neutralize them. Step one: enslavement. Verse 11 says:

So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labor…. They made their lives bitter, forcing them to mix mortar and make bricks and do all the work in the fields. They were ruthless in all their demands. (Exodus 1:11–14, NLT)

Now in English it’s hard to see, but there’s a theme here. The words “labor” and “work” and “ruthless” and “demands” are all one word in Hebrew – serve. So Literally, verse 14 says, *“They made their lives bitter with serving in brick and mortar, with every kind of serving. With every kind of serving they made them serve.”*

Now that doesn’t sound great in English, so the translators opted for synonyms, but in the process, we lose the forest for the trees. See the point isn’t just that Israel was enslaved. It’s that they were serving the wrong master. And so Exodus isn’t primarily about escaping slavery—it’s about *switching who you serve.* But this all tends to go over our heads.

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So there’s a famous line in Exodus that gets repeated. God tells Moses to say it. What is it? Shout it out. (He uses it on Pharaoh) “Let my people go.” Right!

Well, actually, “let my people go” is the Hollywood version of the line and was made famous by Charlton Heston and then repeated by The Prince of Egypt. In fact in Exodus, every time this line appears there is a second half to the sentence. Seven times God commands: *“Let My people go, so that they may serve Me”* (KJV), or *“so they may worship Me”* (NIV).

But that second part gets left off and as a result Exodus seems like a bit of a strange book. I mean it starts out great with a whole bunch of drama and plagues, then peeks with the crossing of the Red Sea. And then we end up in chapter after chapter of

instructions for building the tabernacle. And it feels totally anticlimactic. But the point is: true freedom means more than getting out of Egypt. It means being rescued from the misery of serving or worshipping anything other than God.

Now this pushes against our Canadian idea of freedom. I mean we think freedom means having no master at all. Freedom is self-expression: *I get to define who I am and what I do.* But Exodus says that’s a myth. Everybody serves something. Nobody is their own master. And so freedom isn’t about having no master, it’s about serving the right Master.

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Alright, pause for a second. I want to tell you about a program we are launching this October called Freedom Session. It’s a 21-week deep dive aimed at uncovering the lies that keep us trapped in destructive patterns so we can experience the healing only God can bring. So where did this program come from?

Well, last year six of the leaders here took Freedom Session at another church with the thought of bringing it home. And when I signed up, I told myself, *I don’t really need this—I’m just checking it out so I can teach it*. After all I’m the pastor, so I’m good. But as we dug in, I realized there was a lot of hurt and junk in the trunk of my life that I wasn’t dealing with. I was stuck in patterns of thought and behaviour that were keeping me from living in the freedom God wants. And in Freedom Session I dug these out.

Needless to say I found it incredibly helpful. And so I would say Freedom Session is for everyone. It doesn’t matter where you’re at. If you’re struggling with past hurts from church or faith in general or your marriage isn’t great or you’re dealing with an addiction or some sexual sin, or if you simply aren’t in perfect relationship with God or the people around you – that should be everyone – then Freedom Session is for you. It’s a way to switch what you are serving in life and leave behind the misery that comes from serving anything other than God.

So if you’re interested and brave enough you can access the application by following the QR Code on your chair or by picking up a paper copy at the info booth at the back. That’s Freedom Session. More on that next week.

But “Salvation means switching who you serve” is also the theme we are going to be following in Exodus. See Exodus is about subverting the idea that you can have freedom without having God.

But how does that work? I mean we’re Canadians – right? We aren’t slaves. But here’s the reality, everyone lives for something. You have something that you fill your time with and spend your money on and find your significance in. So you might say, “The reason I matter is because I’ve got money in the bank. Or you could say “I’m a good person because I’m devout in my religion.” Or “Family is what is most important to me.” Or, “If you don’t have your health you don’t have anything.” Everyone is living for something. So what is it for you?

The funny thing is that we often don’t know until it’s taken away. Like if the approval of people is what matters to you then you don’t notice this until you don’t have it. Or if your good looks and healthy body is what brings you life that’s great until you get sick or have an accident. And all of a sudden your life starts falling apart. When you lose the thing that gives you your identity you don’t just lose that, you lose it all.

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So ask yourself “What is it that I need to have in order to be happy?” If I lost this I’d have nothing; life wouldn’t be worth living. Whatever that is, that’s the thing your heart is chained to. And everyone has a master. And we are only happy as long as we’ve got that thing.

Now Exodus is going to make the point that anything we center our life around that isn’t God is an idol. And idols all come crashing down at one point or another. Sooner or later your spouse will let you down no matter how awesome they are. Or sooner or later you won’t get noticed. Sooner or later your own intellect or whit or health will disappoint you. And if you’ve built your life on this you will be shaken. It’s misery serving idols.

And in contrast it’s only when God is the most important thing in your life, and His love is what gives you meaning that you’re actually free. This is the only way you can walk without fear no matter how high the tariffs go or how sick you get or how rocky your relationships are or how unstable your job becomes. And stability no matter what life throws at you is what it means to be free.

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So the first picture of salvation Exodus paints is that you aren’t out of Egypt until Egypt is out of you. Salvation means being rescued from the misery of serving anything other than God. This is where freedom is found.

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Now the second picture of salvation Exodus paints is that God often prepares us for salvation by working behind the scenes and through bad or difficult circumstances.

So I wonder if you noticed in these first two chapters that God hardly shows up at all. Instead the story is a swirl of bad news – one thing after the other. First Pharaoh enslaves the people, but when that doesn’t crush their spirit he secretly appeals to the midwives to kill the baby boys during childbirth. We get a hint of how this was supposed to work in verse 16. Pharaoh tells the midwives:

When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live. (Exodus 1:16).

The word “delivery stool” is tricky but likely refers to a basin of water that women would squat over. So there was also an opportunity for an “accident” here. If the baby was a boy he could be drowned while the girls were let live.[[3]](#footnote-3) And the idea was, “if we get rid of all the boys, then in a generation all the girls will marry Egyptians, and become part of us.”

But the midwives, who get named in verse 15 – Shiphrah and Puah – Pharaoh doesn’t even get named but we’re speaking theirs 3500 years later! They bravely defy the order and make up some excuse about the Israelite women being vigorous in childbirth. Now here’s where I could insert a joke and sleep on the couch – I’m not going to do that. Anyway, Pharaoh is frustrated and so tries again. But this time he leaves the sneaky behind and just commands that every baby boy be thrown into the Nile.

And this is when Moses enters the picture. And at first it looks like good news. He’s a guy who has the potential to make a difference. He survives birth, grows up in Pharaoh’s house, gets all the right education. It looks like he’s going to be the deliverer Israel needs. But just when he’s strong enough to act, he murders a guy, flees the country, and turns his own people against him.

It’s a disaster. And through all of this, God is almost silent. Except for the line about the midwives fearing Him, He seems absent. And this is intentional. The writer wants us to feel what Israel felt: abandoned.

Have you ever felt abandoned by God… if He even exists? Like w*here was God when COVID shut the world down? Where is God in my marriage. Where is He in my sickness or my family crisis? If He’s real why doesn’t He seem to care?*

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Israel must have had those same questions. But here’s what the author shows us: while God felt absent, He was actually working all along. But we only get to see this because hindsight is 20/20. See Exodus 1 and 2 cover 300 years of history. So everyone in that moment was too close to the ground to see what God was up to. But what looked like defeat after defeat was actually God sovereignly working behind the scenes.

So here it is: All Pharaoh’s commands backfire; they accomplish the very opposite of what they were intended to do. Like when the midwives refused to kill the baby boys verse 20 says:

So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. (Exodus 1:20)

Not only does Israel end up increasing but Pharoah’s command inspires acts of bravery and solidarity. And then when he says “chuck the boys in the river” it actually results in Moses’ “river story.” And this leads him straight into Pharaoh’s palace, where he gets the training he needs to become a leader. Even Moses’ failure—killing a man and running away—becomes the setup for him to encounter God in the wilderness. God was in it all. Everything Pharaoh built for harm, God bent for good.

And this is how God works. Romans 8 says He is working all things out—even the painful ones—for His glory and our good. But we rarely see this in real time. Israel certainly didn’t. It’s only in the rear-view mirror that it comes to light if at all. But Exodus argues God is never absent. And this means none of your pain is wasted.

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But it often feels wasted right? I mean I think “*If I can’t understand what God is up to then He must not be up to anything at all.” Right?* But that’s arrogance and not even logically sound. I mean imagine you were an ant farmer – if that exists. And you dug up a colony to move it somewhere safe. The ants would panic and swarm. And imagine an ant saying, “*Unless I understand what he’s doing, I won’t believe he has good intentions—or even exists.* But that would be absurd. An ant couldn’t possibly understand your motivations. And yet we do the same with the God who spoke the universe into existence and lives outside of space and time.

And so Exodus says, when you look back across your life or through history that’s when there’s a chance that you see that God has been at work behind the scenes and is working all things out – even the bad and difficult ones – for the increase of His glory and your good.

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So salvation means being rescued from the misery of serving anything other than God, and God is always working even when it looks like He isn’t even there.

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But if we stopped now this would just be a story about what some people experienced 3500 years ago. But that’s not this story. In fact God has written this story in such a way that it is intimately connected with everything He has been doing from all time and is still up to today.

And so here we get the third picture of salvation which turns out to be most important.

So let me ask you, does this sound familiar? A king decrees that all the male babies should be killed. Yet a Child is born who survives and grows up to save His people. A man is rejected by His own, goes into the wilderness, returns full of God’s Spirit, and leads His people out. He is condemned to die, and it looks like defeat—but through His condemnation, He becomes the Saviour of the world. Sound familiar? It’s not an accident.

In Luke 9, when Jesus is transfigured on the mountain, two men appear with Him— Elijah and Moses. And we’re told:

*“They spoke about His departure, which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.”* (Luke 9:31)

Now again we don’t see it clearly in English, but in Greek the word for “departure” is *exodus.* Moses and Eljah were talking with Jesus about His exodus.

This means Moses and all the liberation he accomplished was just a foreshadow. The exodus Jesus was bringing about through His death and resurrection was the real thing. Jesus was like Moses just better.

So Moses left the palace of Pharaoh to identify with his suffering people, but Jesus left the glory of heaven to identify with us. Moses confronted Pharaoh demanding freedom for God’s people, but Jesus confronted Satan, defeating him to set God’s people free. Moses lifted up the bronze serpent so Israel could be healed, but Jesus was lifted up so the whole world could be healed. Moses risked his life, but Jesus laid His down. And Moses built the tabernacle so God’s presence could dwell among His people, but Jesus is the true tabernacle – God with us.

So Exodus isn’t about learning some principles for how to gain control over what threatens your happiness or is keeping you chained to your addiction; Exodus is actually about shifting the focus of your service away from what has promised you happiness but has left you miserable and towards what will actually deliver – or rather towards Who will actually deliver. The question is will you let Him do it?

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And this fall, as we journey through Exodus, that’s the invitation: to step into the freedom only God can give, and to center your life on Jesus, the greater Moses, our Rescuer and Saviour.

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1. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/12-581-x/2023001/sec8-eng.htm> (Accessed September 5, 2025) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Outline adapted from Tim Keller <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/preparing-for-salvation/> (Accessed September 5, 2025) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Merida, T. “Exalting Jesus in Exodus” (Tennessee, B&H Publishing Group), 2001. Pg 10 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)