

Exodus 021
Obedience not Sacrifice
Exodus 7:1-7
October 26, 2025
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If we could take our Bibles this morning and open them to Exodus 7:1. The title of our message this morning is "To Obey is Better Than Sacrifice."

We are dealing now with Exodus 7:1-7, where the big picture of everything is that God is redeeming a nation, a nation that has been in bondage for over 400 years. God is bringing them out of that bondage.

In Moses' first time out doing the work of God, things do not go well from the human perspective. In Exodus 5, Pharaoh says, "Not only will I not let Israel go, but I will increase her workload." Beginning in Exodus 6:1 all the way through Exodus 7:7, God is encouraging Moses. We are going to get the tail end of that encouragement here in Exodus 7:1-7, which we are going to look at today.

Beginning in Exodus 7:8, the work resumes where there is a power encounter between Pharaoh and Moses. If it were just Pharaoh versus Moses, we know who would, but we are starting to discover it is not Pharaoh versus Moses. It is Pharaoh versus God through Moses. I had a youth pastor that put it this way, "One plus God is a majority." All you have to do is be in the will of God, and what can man do to you?

When that initial power encounter is over in Exodus 7:13, the plagues start, the first of which will be the turning of the Nile River to blood, as we will see. For now we have a description of the prophets, the two people that God is going to use in this endeavor—Moses and Aaron. More words come to them by way of encouragement.

Here is an outline that we are going to follow this morning as we take a look at these first seven verses:

Second Confrontation with Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1-25)

- I. The Prophets (1-7)
 - A. The delegation (1)
 - B. The command (2)
 - C. The result (3-5)
 - D. The obedience (6)
 - E. The ages (7)
- II. The Power (8-13)
- III. The Plagues (14-25)

Notice first of all the delegation. When I say delegation I mean the delegation of authority.

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'See, I make you as a God to Pharaoh'" (Exodus 7:1).

These are verses that really need to be handled correctly, because we have had—probably since the fall of man, but it really became very prominent in the 1980s—the New Age movement, the idea that man and woman, boy or girl, can evolve into deity godhood itself. I have had people try to convince me I am a god. I usually say, "First, you need to talk to my wife about that. She will give you the straight scoop. Secondly, I am the guy that cannot even find my car keys. How in the world could I be God?"

It is interesting how many of the cults, whether you are dealing with Mormonism—they believe you die and become a god and get your own planet—or the New Age movement—where we are evolving into deity, which, of course, is an abject lie. In fact, that is the first lie that entered our cosmos. Did you know that this is what Satan said to Eve in Genesis 3:5?

"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5).

That is actually not the first time this lie came into existence. It was a lie that Satan, then Lucifer, deceived himself with five "I will" statements, found in Isaiah 14:12-15 cataloging what was going through Lucifer's mind when he fell from the heavenlies. He says, "I will ascend to heaven. I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit enthroned on the mount of the assembly. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds. The last one is, "I will make myself like the Most High." Because of that lie, Lucifer lost his position in the heavenlies. Because of that lie, our forebearers fell into sin, bringing to us today all of the terrible consequences of sin in what we would call original sin.

The New Age movement and the kingdom of the cults, love verses like this in Exodus 7:1: *"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'See, I make you as a God to Pharaoh.'" They read into that their theology that we can become gods. They love to hijack John 10:34-36, where Jesus is defending Himself for calling Himself the Son of God.*

"Jesus answered them, 'Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, 'You are gods'?' If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" (John 10:34-36).

He is referring back to Psalm 82:6, where it says:

*"I said, 'You are gods,
And all of you are sons of the Most High'" (Psalm 82:6).*

The kingdom of the cults, the New Age movement, and any type of theology that wants to build this idea that we can bridge the creature-Creator distinction and become gods ourselves, loves these kinds of passages. But God never says that Moses is a God here. God never says in the Bible that we are gods. Are we made in God's image? Yes, but we are not gods.

How do we make sense of these passages? God is trying to encourage Moses who, at the end of the last chapter, said, "I am unskilled in speech." What God is doing in Exodus 7:1 is encouraging Moses. He is saying, "Do not worry about it. I am going to work so significantly through you and so powerfully that your greatest opponent, your greatest detractor, the person that is causing you the problems, Pharaoh himself, the leader of the known world, will look at you as if you are God. Moses, I did not suddenly elevate you to God, but Pharaoh himself will think you are some god because of the power that I am going to release through you."

This deals with the faulty pagan perception of Pharaoh, who also was a polytheist and worshiped many gods. God is encouraging Moses that, "You know what Pharaoh is going to do. He is going to elevate you to the Egyptian pantheon because of My powerful work through you, not saying that Moses is God, but Pharaoh will think you are God because of the power that I am going to release in you and through you."

That kind of thing needs to be brought to bear, putting these passages in the right context, when the kingdom of the cults, the New Age movement, etc. hijack these kinds of passages. There is something in the Bible, very clear as early as Genesis 1. I mentioned it a few moments ago. It is called the creature-Creator distinction. God is God and you are not, and neither am I.

God has certain qualities that I will never have. He is omniscient, all knowing. He is omnipresent, He is everywhere at the same time. He is also omnipotent, all powerful. None of those qualities rest with us, although we have a very special status in God's creative creation hierarchy, having been made in His image.

"...and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet" (Exodus 7:1).

It is interesting to me that Moses was really hung up on his speech issues. "I am not the best public speaker. I do not have the gift of gab," is what he is saying.

"Behold, I am unskilled in speech" (Exodus 6:30).

"...for I am unskilled in speech" (Exodus 6:12).

Exodus 4:10 is where he first brought up this insecurity.

"Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent...for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exodus 4:10).

Moses is being told by God, "Do not worry about it. The power that I am going to release through you is going to be so prominent that Pharaoh himself will think you are God or god-like. Even beyond that, do not worry about it. You have a brother named Aaron. Aaron is going to do the speaking for you." This is an arrangement that goes all the way back to Exodus 4:14-16, where God said of this arrangement:

"Moreover, he [Aaron] shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you" (Exodus 4:16).

"Moses, here is how it is going to work. I am going to give you My word. You are going to share that with Aaron. Aaron is the one that is going to speak these words to the people, and Aaron is the one that is going to speak these words to Pharaoh himself. So this hang up that you have with your lack of articulateness is not going to be a problem."

In the theological world we call this condescending. We use it sometimes as a negative. "You are being condescending." We accuse people of that. Really, what it means is "con-", with "descend". God is the great condescender, not in the negative sense, but He comes down to our level and accommodates us where we are lacking.

All the way through the Bible, God is doing this. He is not some God that is erudite and removed. He is the one that actually comes down to our level concerning the nation of Israel. They had a treaty. As you study those treaties, whether it is the royal grant treaty in Genesis 15, or a fancy name called the Suzerain Vassal Treaty of Deuteronomy 28, what you will discover when you study ancient Near Eastern literature is that these were treaties common in that time period. In other words, God took the treaty structure that they were using, and He used it to advance His program. That is how God condescends.

The ultimate condescension of God is the incarnation where God became one of us at the point of the virgin conception. Humanity was added to pre-existent deity and the eternally existent second member of the Godhead, God the Son, was born into our world and walked among us. He became one of us.

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

This is how God relates to man. We can understand God because He is not up in the clouds somewhere. He is one of us. He lived amongst us with all of the limitations of being a human being without sin, because He had no sin nature thanks to the virgin conception. It becomes a great passage here (Exodus 7:1) on the condescension of God.

"All right, Moses, you have some insecurities. You have some hang-ups. Do not worry about it. I have you covered here. Aaron will function under your delegated authority." I

do not know of any system of theology or philosophy that teaches this kind of thing about God. The condescension shall we say, of God.

What follows is a command:

"You shall speak all that I command you" (Exodus 7:2).

Now in our sermon last Sunday, we talked about the "all." What does "all" mean? It means "all." If I was to translate this into Texan, I would say it means, "all y'all." In other words, "I am going to tell you what you are to say to Pharaoh, to Aaron first and then to Pharaoh. Do not hold back anything."

That is our philosophy of ministry here at Sugarland Bible Church when it says, "Preach the word." The Greek is "kerysson ton logon." Preach the word. It means all of the word because the prior chapter says:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Jesus said this, quoting the Book of Deuteronomy:

""Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"" (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3).

This is why Paul said:

"...I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God" (Acts 20:26-27).

We are not the kind of church that does these little eight-week series on things like "How to be your own best friend" or whatever. We spend eight weeks on it, and then we move on to another eight-week series. Many churches function that way. That is not who we are. We are a church that wants to work through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. If you are wondering what is going to be in the sermon, all you have to do is read ahead to the next area that we did not cover. This way, the leadership of the church is really not in control of the topics. God is in control of the topics because you deal with whatever comes up next in the text, whether it is a tough text to absorb or not.

You will notice the "alls" with this particular command. The command is:

"You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land" (Exodus 7:2).

That is your message: take the nation of Israel, which has been in bondage for 400 years, and release them; let them go. Is that not the whole message of the Bible? Is not the whole message of the Bible the journey out of bondage into freedom because of Jesus? What is being explained here in microcosm form is God's message to the human race. "Do you want to be let loose from the bondage that you are in? The bondage of sin, the bondage of fear?"

The Book of Hebrews talks about fear of death holding men and women in bondage (Hebrews 2:15). You come to Christ, and you are released from that fear because absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

The world is scared to die. That is why they are always trying to look younger and look healthier. It is almost like they are trying to escape the inevitable. Diet and exercise are great, but they only postpone the inevitable. We are dying, and you need something in your life that is going to release you from that bondage and fear. That is what the gospel does. It releases you from sin. It releases you from slavery.

One of the greatest scams, that the devil has going—and I fell for this one for years—is that you should not get too close to Jesus because He is going to wreck your life. He is going to make you unhappy. He is going to make you miserable. In fact, Jesus is the One that releases us from bondage.

"And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

It does not say, "I will make you miserable."

"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Did you know that Leviticus 25:10 was written on our Liberty Bell in the United States of America? It says: ""...proclaim a release [liberty or freedom] throughout the land to all its inhabitants"" (Leviticus 25:10). That is what the principles of Christianity do. They release someone fundamentally from anything political, economic, emotional.

Many people are crippled to their emotions—fear, anxiety, doubt, worry, bitterness. The consequences of sin, the eternal consequences of sin—you name it—you come to Jesus Christ on His terms and you are released from that. What you see there in Exodus 7:2 is a microcosm, if you will, of everything that the Bible is about.

Once this command is issued, what is going to be the result? We see three things in Exodus 7:3-5: first, signs; second, the Exodus; third, the glory of God. Notice, first of all, the reference to signs:

"But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 7:3).

You will notice this expression, *"I will harden Pharaoh's heart,"* and you say, "Wow, God is a real meanie. He hardens people's hearts without even giving them a choice in the matter." But you have to look at the entire Book of Exodus to see that that is not true. Here is a quote I have used many times on this from Charles Ryrie:

"Seven times Pharaoh hardened his own heart before God first hardened it, though the prediction that God would do it preceded all."¹

Yes, God announces that He is going to harden Pharaoh's heart, but He gave Pharaoh multiple opportunities to receive truth. Pharaoh would not receive it. Finally, God gave Pharaoh over to what he wanted.

Dr. Ed Hindson, in his commentary on the Book of Exodus, says:

"For the initial five plagues, the text registers Pharaoh as the agent of hardening. Not until the sixth plague does God participate in the confirmation of Pharaoh's own volitional choice."²

It is not just Pharaoh. God hardens people, once they demonstrate a pattern of rejection of Him. It is humanity in general, because God has revealed Himself in creation (Romans 1).

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:18-20).

People act like it is some big obstacle lesson to get to God, when the truth of the matter is that God has disclosed His existence plainly in creation, which could not have come about without a designer. That is simple lingo as far as the Bible is concerned. The problem is not a lack of disclosure. The problem is suppression. Once people take the obvious and they suppress it, God starts to hand people over to what they want to do. He is almost a gentleman in that respect. "You do not want Me in your life? I will remove Myself from your life. In fact, I will actually give you over to what you keep saying you want to do."

That is why, when you keep reading and you get to Romans 1:21, it says, *"Their foolish heart was darkened."* Then it goes on in Romans 1:24 and says, *"God gave them over."*

¹ Charles Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible*, page 96

² Hindson, E. E., & Mitchell, D. R., eds. (2010). *King James Version Bible Commentary for Today: The Most Up-to-Date Commentary on the Time-Honored Text of the King James Version* (p. 86). Thomas Nelson.

Romans 1:26 says, "God gave them over." Romans 1:28 says, "God gave them over." God gave them over when they gave up on Him. Do you see that?

It becomes a frightening thing to hear about God, to have a knowledge of the grace of God, and to just over and over again reject it, reject it, reject it, reject it, reject it. God, finally, at a certain point says, "Do you know what? Have your own way. I will give you what you want." There is much forbearance, patience, and longsuffering before people get to this point.

This is what is happening with Pharaoh. Yet this hardening of Pharaoh, his stubbornness, is a divine opportunity for God to display His signs and wonders, which are coming in the ten plagues, all over the land of Egypt. No rebellious Pharaoh; no plagues designed to push him to finally capitulate to God's plan and program. In other words, Pharaoh's stubbornness is God's opportunity to work.

Let me ask you a question. Do you have stubborn people in your life? People can be very difficult. Sometimes we get very upset with their stubbornness and their recalcitrance and what not, but what you have to understand is that stubbornness gives God an opportunity to work. You start to see God manifesting Himself in amazing ways in the midst of stubborn people and a very stubborn situation.

The greatest redemptive event in human history, called the Exodus, second only to the cross of Jesus Christ, would not have happened without a stubborn, recalcitrant Pharaoh. We have a tendency to think So-and-so is being stubborn, God's will must have been derailed. Yet it is the opposite. Stubbornness, spiritual insensitivity in any realm, gives God an opportunity to work, maybe in ways we had not anticipated.

Man's stubbornness never throws off God's eternal purpose. The result of this is going to be signs displayed all over Egypt. There is a second result, which is the Exodus itself. That is in Exodus 7:4. God told Moses and Aaron ahead of time what was going to happen:

"When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments" (Exodus 7:4).

I am seeing the word "I" at least once. I am seeing the word "My" three times. This is so significant because when God works and does things His way, the only one that can get the credit is God Himself. More on that in just a minute. "I, My, My, My."

"My work amongst you will bring glory only to Myself." In other words, "I put you in an impossible situation that man cannot figure his way out of, so that when you are released, you are going to say to yourself, 'Only God could have pulled this off.'"

"When you get out of Egypt, it is going to be like My host's coming forth. Now, the word "hosts" is interesting. Sometimes that word "hosts" refers to the stars (Genesis 2:1).

Sometimes the word "hosts" refers to angels (1 Kings 22:19). Sometimes the word "hosts" refers to an army. That is the way the word "hosts" is being used here.

When Israel comes out of this, she is going to be like a giant army. Exodus 13:18 describes Israel leaving this Egyptian bondage:

"Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt" (Exodus 13:18).

When they come out of here—and these people have been slaves for 400 years, which is an awfully long time—it is going to be like an army procession, battalions of an army. You have to say to yourself, "That is a God thing. Only God could have pulled this off."

God organizes things and works in such a way that when He does work, He gets the glory. That is why He puts His people in impossible circumstances. I hope that encourages you today, because you might be in an impossible circumstance. You might be in a circumstance that you cannot figure your way out of. You have tried this and it has not worked. You tried that and it has not worked.

God is saying, "I put you there on purpose because I am going to get you out of this circumstance, but it is not going to be your brilliance, or your scheming, or your intelligence, or your manipulation, or your resources, or your connections, or your resume that is going to get the glory. I alone am going to get the glory."

This takes us to the third result, which is God's glory (Exodus 7:5):

"The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst" (Exodus 7:5).

There is the repetition of "I" at least twice and "My" at least once. "When I am finished doing what I am going to do in this event called the Exodus—the second greatest event in the history of the world other than the cross of Jesus Christ—I am going to get full credit." God's purposes in history are to glorify Himself.

Did you know that you are sitting in what is called a dispensational church? That is a big, scary word. Most people do not know what that means, but it has a very simple meaning. It is a system of theology that embodies three essential fundamental concepts. The first is a consistent use of a plain, normal, or literal grammatical historical method of interpretation. Translation: We take the Bible literally from Genesis to Revelation, except when there is an obvious allegory or figure of speech or something like that in play. Other than that, we take the Bible plainly.

Once you are committed to this way of interpretation, a theology will start to develop out of it, not read into it, but develop out of it, which reveals a clear distinction from the

Church and Israel. Israel and the Church are separate programs of God. God has one plan for the Church and another plan for the nation of Israel.

He is coming back for the nation of Israel at the end of the Tribulation Period, for example. He is coming back for the Church in the Rapture before the Tribulation Period even starts. Why do we think this? Wishful thinking? No, but I sure am more comfortable in that system than some other one that tells me I am going to eyeball it one day with the Antichrist. "Comfort one another with these words. You are going into the wrath of God. Comfort one another with these words." Why do I believe this? I believe this because it is obvious. It is true because I have made a decision to take the whole Bible literally whenever possible.

The third part is as follows, and a lot of people miss this: God's overall purpose is to glorify Himself. God's purposes in human history are doxological, which means glory. It is a Greek word for "glory." God's ultimate purpose for the ages is to glorify Himself.

Scripture is not human-centered, as though salvation were the principal point, but God-centered because His glory is at the center. The glory of God is the primary principle that unifies the different dispensations, the program of salvation being just one means by which God glorifies Himself. Each successive revelation of God's plan for the ages, as well as His dealing with the elect and the non-elect, angels and the nations, all manifest His glory.



God's purpose in history is not to save people. Did you know that? Now He does want to save people, but when someone gets saved, who gets the glory? God does. You can even take God's saving purpose and subsume it under His doxological purpose. That is why the angels rejoice when someone gets saved, because God is glorified. Everything God does is to glorify Himself and as a being with perfect character and nature, He

does not abuse His position. He has every right to do this. It is His universe. He is perfect. He is holy. He is God.

Whether you are looking at God's work in creation or God's work in redemption, the purpose of it points to His glory—Creation of the world, creation of the nations, creation of Israel, creation of the church. What are all of these set up to do? Glorify God. Then you move into redemption—redemption of creation, judgment of the nations, restoration of Israel, Rapture of the church. These all glorify God.

If you want to discover what your life is supposed to be and what you are supposed to be about and what you are supposed to do, it is pretty simple. You just deposit yourself before the Lord with an open heart and you say, "Do you know what, Lord? I do not know what You want to do with my life, but whatever You want to do, glorify Yourself through me."

You do not come to the Lord and say, "Lord, I want to be famous. Lord, I want to be popular. Lord, I want to be rich." What you do is, "Do you know what, Lord? I do not know how You are going to do it or what You are going to use, but I want You to use my life in such a way that You get the glory." When you start praying like that, oh my goodness, watch things start to happen in your life, because you are cooperating with God's overarching purpose in human history, which is to glorify Himself.

It becomes a barometer. Should I have this conversation or not? Does it glorify God? Should I involve myself in this activity or not? Does it bring glory to God? It is pretty simple. You start making decisions not based on a rule book, but rather, "Is this really going to glorify God or not?" That is why you exist.

I do not really think you could be fulfilled or content living outside of your purpose. What is your purpose? It is to glorify God. He glorifies Himself differently through different believers, and that is between you and the Lord, but that is what it is all about.

It is what the End Times are about in Ezekiel 36:22. It is a great passage about the regathering of the Jewish nation in the last days.

"It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name" (Ezekiel 36:22).

"I am not doing this because of you, Israel. I am doing this for My glory. In fact, there is a terrible war coming." It is the Gog-Magog invasion, where the nations that surround Israel will invade Israel, and Israel will not have a friend in the world, and the only one that they can depend upon is God. The Mossad is not going to help them. The United States is not going to help them. We do not even know where the United States went when this happens.

I would like to think that the Rapture of the church decimated our country. Talk about a brain drain. All the Christians leaving leaders of industry, politics, and academia

disappear in the Rapture. Maybe that is why the United States is not mentioned in Bible prophecy.

Whatever your theory is, do not miss the main point. This is an invasion that is insurmountable where Israel does not have a friend in the world, which is a great place to be, because when you do not have a friend in the world, you are going to reach out to the Friend who says, "I stick closer than a brother."

*"A man of too many friends comes to ruin,
But there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).*

You can read this for yourself. It is in your Bible in Ezekiel 38 and 39. By the time it is all done, man gets no credit. Israel gets no credit. God gets all the credit. In fact, the very last verse in those chapters says,

"Then they will know that I am the Lord their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer" (Ezekiel 39:28).

Praise the Lord. The glory of God, the doxological purpose of God.

Through this we have three things being accomplished: signs, the Exodus, and divine glory. What follows is a command. Look at verse Exodus 7:6:

"So Moses and Aaron did it; as the Lord commanded them, thus they did" (Exodus 7:6).

Smart guys. God is not interested in their qualifications. What qualifications do you really need if one plus God is a majority? He is interested in their obedience. Obedience. What does God want from me at the end of the day? He wants my obedience.

Do you remember the Gospel of John, revolving around the seven miracles that Jesus performed when He was here upon the earth 2,000 years ago? Do you remember the very first miracle that He performed? It is the change of water into wine at Cana of Galilee.

Do you remember when they were at this wedding—which shows you that Jesus is pro-marriage—He is hanging out at a wedding, and they start to run out of wine and nobody knows what to do. His own mother, Mary, even says, "Why don't You display Yourself? Why don't You show Yourself?" He says, "You do not even know what you are talking about. My hour is not yet." Do you remember that whole scene?

Mary, His mother, makes a statement. She says, in the midst of all of it, not understanding how this whole issue is going to get fixed:

"His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you, do it'" (John 2:5).

"I do not know how it is going to get fixed," she says. "I do not know how it is going to get resolved, but I know this much, whatever He tells you to do, do it." They did, and you know how that story ended. That is how, according to John's gospel, Christ launched His public ministry through the turning of water to wine at Cana of Galilee, at a wedding with His own mother saying, "Whatever He tells you to do, do it."

Our basic problem is that a lot of times we do not want to obey God. Do you remember King Saul? God told Saul to do something, and he did it, kind of. He did it, sort of. He covered up his half-obedience with sacrifices and being religious.

A lot of us are like that. God says, "Do something." We do it, but we do it a little bit. "God, you grade on a curve, right? I am 25% in. I am 50% in. I am 75% in." We feel bad that we did not do it 100%, so we get religious to make up the gap. Maybe I will pray a little more. Maybe I will go to church this week. Maybe I will give some money. Maybe I will do this and that.

Do you remember what God said through the prophet Samuel to Saul? He said, behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. In fact, there is a famous Keith Green song about this. I knew I was going to teach on this, and I went and listened to it a bunch of times this morning. It is a very convicting song about halfway obedience and what God wants. At the end of the day, He wants us to obey. He wants us to do what He has told us to do.

I realize that in your mind you are saying to yourself, "God has revealed a lot of things in the Bible. I am on overload. What part of it do you want me to obey?" That is easy because the Holy Spirit, even as I am speaking, will surface something in your mind, something that you are holding out on, that you know God wants you to do. It could be anything.

God says, "Do it. Do not do it halfway. Do not do it 50%. Do not do it 75%. Do exactly what I have called you to do." Everyone within the sound of my voice, myself included, knows things instinctively that we are supposed to do. We have not done it because we do not want to do it, not understanding that it is obedience that is the pathway to blessing.

If there was no exhortation from Mary in John 2:5, and if people had not followed that exhortation, from a human perspective the whole first miracle at Cana of Galilee in this wedding would not have happened. We think obedience is really going to mess up our lives, when in reality Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

You will be more fulfilled—your most content, your most purposeful, your most impactful self—living under the obedience of God, than you will going out and doing our own

thing, as we have a tendency to do. I love what Moses and Aaron did. They just went out and did it. No excuses. No sob story. No, here is a list of why I cannot just do it.

The interesting thing about God is that whatever He orders, He pays for. He is not sitting down to lunch with somebody and the bill comes, and the person that took you out to lunch, suddenly cannot find their credit card or, "I bought lunch, you leave the tip," kind of thing. I went to lunch with someone this week, and he was outstanding, meaning that he paid for the whole thing.

We have this idea that, "God, if you are calling me to do something, I do not really have the power to pull it off. I do not have the resources to pull it off. I do not have the finances to pull it off. I do not have the energy to pull it off. I do not have the intelligence to pull it off. I do not have the reputation to pull it off." Moses and Aaron had the same hang up, but what God orders, He pays for. If God has called you to do something, whatever you need will be there, as you exercise your volition and submit to the authority of God.

This paragraph closes with the ages of Moses and Aaron. You see that there in Exodus 7:7, which says:

"Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh" (Exodus 7:7).

Why do I need to know that? It is showing us that these were real people. This is not VeggieTales. This is not "Jack and the Beanstalk." These were real people. They are historical people that went through the exact same life process, aging process, that we all go through. That is why these little details are thrown into our account.

Remember the genealogy that we studied a week or two ago? We got to Exodus 6:16 and it talks about Levi, one of the sons of Jacob, who became one of the progenitors of one of the Twelve Tribes. Moses owes his heritage to the Levites. It says this in Exodus 6:16:

"...and the length of Levi's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years" (Exodus 6:16).

I read that and I say, "Why do I need to know that?" God is saying, "I want you to know that because I want you to understand that these are real people. This is a history lesson here." This should encourage us, because if God can use people like this to do His work with all of their hangups and problems and insecurities, you know what? I can apply for the job because God does not use perfect people. Other than His Son there are no perfect people.

It is like the late Walter Martin used to say, "God uses crooked sticks to draw straight lines." What a great statement that is. "God uses crooked sticks to draw straight lines," which means I can put my resume in, because I have the same problems and issues

anybody else has. I qualify as the crooked stick. God says, "I could use your life to expand My purposes."

Another reason the ages of Moses and Aaron are given here is to show that these guys are in their 80s. Moses is 80 and his brother Aaron is 83. It is showing how long it took God to get these guys to the point of usability.

Moses' life, as we have talked about, is divided into three parts. It is a pretty easy life to study when you recognize he lived 120 years, and his life, as the Scripture lays it out, is in three 40-year increments. Moses was sitting on top of the world at age 40. He had the best education and naturalistic training a human being in that time period could have had.

However, he was not even close to being ready to be used, because Moses is the guy that took matters into his own hands. He saw the Egyptian abusing the Hebrew and he murdered the Egyptian. He had blood on his hands. He was used to doing things in his own strength and in his own power, which is exactly what we are like in our natural selves.

The worst thing you can do in Christian ministry is try to do the work of God through human strength, because the arm of the flesh only extends so far. I have a type A get it done mentality type of personality. When I was in seminary they should have given me the obsessive compulsive award. I got it all in on time and then some. I have a bunch of A minuses in my transcript to prove it. But what is that at the end of the day? It is a bunch of human energy, and the arm of the flesh only goes so far.

What if God has called you to part the Red sea? What if God has called you to lead 1.5 million people in the wilderness? Moses at age 40 was ready to go. God said, "No, you are not."

That takes you into the middle section of Moses' life, where he was reduced to almost nothing. I call it his BD degree—his backside of the desert degree. He was just a common shepherd looking after the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro. No one knew his name, no accolades, no applause. He was learning how to be obedient to God and how to shepherd, because, "Mose, you are going to get a bigger stage. You just do not know it yet." The Bible says that if you are faithful with something little, He can trust you with something big (Luke 16:10).

That takes place from age 40 to age 80. Finally, as we have studied, God appears to Moses at the burning bush and He says, "Get going. You are ready now." Moses is so reduced to nothing that he says, "Who am I that Pharaoh would ever listen to me? I do not even speak well." That was not what he was saying at age 40, but at age 80 he was ready to go.

I got this from Coach Bobby Knight of Indiana University basketball—not that I am endorsing everything the man ever said or did. He had a saying and it went like this:

"Most people have a will to win. Almost any competitor has a will to win. Very few have the will to prepare to win."

We all want to be used by God, but are you willing to walk through the preparation process? Most people are not interested in that. Yet the preparation process is necessary for the final 40 years of Moses' life, which is his most productive time period. That is where it all happens—the Exodus, the Law, the wilderness wanderings, the offering of the Pentateuch—that is age 80 to age 120. He would not have had that if he had not gone through the desert experience of age 40 to age 80.

Even Jesus had to walk through this—Jesus, who was perfect. I love in Luke's gospel how the age of Christ is given. It says in Luke 2:42:

"And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast" (Luke 2:42).

He was twelve years old. Then in Luke 3:23, it says:

"When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23).

I say, "Stop. Hold the phone. What happened between age 12 and age 30?" God says, "Those are the silent years." That is where even the Son of God Himself, who was without a sin nature had to be prepared.

What was happening during the silent years? It says in Luke 2:52, which is between those two ages:

"And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2:52).

That is referring to intellectual growth. He was not God; He was the God-Man. The human aspect of Him had to go through the development that we go through. Jesus kept increasing in wisdom, that is intellectual knowledge, in stature, that is bodily growth, and in favor with God, that is spiritual growth, in favor with men, that social growth.

This is the preparation that the incarnate Son of God experienced in between age 12 and age 30, before He was launched into public ministry. Moses and Aaron took 40 years. All that to say, if you are in some kind of desert situation and it seems like there is no way out of it, just monotony. Rejoice in that position because that means God has something big around the corner that you cannot see, and that you are really not ready for. We need to cooperate with God in those valley times to be used by Him in those fruitful times.

Let us pray. Father, we are grateful for Your truth. Grateful for Your Word. Grateful for the life of Moses. We ask, Lord, if there is anyone here that does not know You

personally, that today would be the day of salvation for them, that they would simply place their trust in what You accomplished 2,000 years ago. As they place their trust into the finished transaction of Jesus Christ, they might be ushered into the marvelous promises of God—a newborn child of God.

I pray, Lord, that many, many people within the sound of my voice would be placing their personal faith in Jesus for salvation. If anyone happens to be here that is confused on this subject, they might seek me out afterwards where greater clarity can be supplied if needed. We will be careful to give You all the praise and the glory. We ask these things in Jesus' name. God's people said, Amen.