

Journey to Freedom

PART 5 - CRYING OUT TO GOD



Welcome to Part 5 of our *Journey to Freedom* study series of the Book of Exodus in the Old Testament!

This week we're looking at an interesting pattern in the way in which God interacts with us concerning the fulfilment of His promises and in regards to prayer.



Read: Exodus 2:23-25

The Israelites had been forced into slavery by the Egyptians;



**What was the Israelite's response to this? (Verse 23) Where did they turn for help?
Why did they do this?
What does this reveal about their belief and faith?**

There are three significant developments in this passage for us regarding the way in which we understand the nature and process of God and how we fit into His plans.

The first thing we can see is that the Israelites chose to put their faith and hope and trust in God. They did this, firstly, by recognising that He was the only One they could turn to, and secondly, by actually transferring this belief into faith through doing something about it and crying out to God.



What's the difference between a 'belief' and an active faith?

NIV Exodus 2:23 *During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.*



There are three elements to their response:

- i) they "groaned"
- ii) they "cried out"
- iii) they "[cried] for help"

GROANED

This word, "groaned" is translated as "sighed" in some Bibles. "Gasp" is another way in which it could be translated. It is a painfully intense word and is the same word used in Ezekiel to describe the pain of having broken arms.

NIV Ezekiel 30:24 *I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put my sword in his hand, but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him like a mortally wounded man.*



**Does 'groaning' usually change a situation?
In this context, is it something passive or something active?**

Many of us have been in a place where we're groaning or sighing; where things are painful and horrible – the situation unbearable. The thing is, often times this is as far as we get.

It doesn't seem as if it is a natural response for some of us to go beyond here and we develop a 'grin and bear it' attitude. Nothing is going to change unless something further is done; unless there is another expression which invites change.

CRIED OUT

The Israelites groaned, for sure, but the situation was such that they also "cried out."

In a sense, groaning is passive, but crying out is active. The phrase could mean to complain or to shout out or even to call out a rally cry. It's an expression implying that they came together in unity to call out in response to the situation.



***What makes “crying out” different to “groaning”?
Which is more likely to bring change in a situation?***

Crying out is an active response intended both to bring attention to the cause and also to see the situation changed. Even this, though, is something I’m sure many of us have done; crying out to God protesting about a situation or circumstance. Brought to a point where the pain or frustration or madness of a situation has left us no other course but to cry out to God.

CRY FOR HELP

Crying out doesn’t necessarily change the situation. We can see that the Israelite’s cry to God was deliberate and directed and specific.



What kind of cry did the Israelites make to God?

It wasn’t just a cry; it was a cry for help. We can groan and complain and even cry out to God. But there is a distinction that must be made between crying out of frustration of angst and crying out for help. Crying out to God for help actually reveals something about our beliefs and our faith?



What things does crying to God for help reveal about our beliefs and faith?

Crying out to God means that we believe there’s a God and that He is mighty to save. Crying out for help means that we have faith that He can and wants to and will help. It says that we believe God will help.

GOD’S RESPONSE



Read: Exodus 2:24-25

What FOUR things does God do?

The verbs “heard” and “remembered” form the first part of this stanza and in Hebrew are used in the context of active response. To ‘hear’ means to respond to what was heard. To ‘remember’ means to act on the basis of what was remembered. When we’re talking about God, of course, God never forgot His promise, what this describes is actually something which is initiated from the Israelites rather than from God. When God ‘hears’ and ‘remembers’ it means He responds, He acts, He moves.

Likewise, we read that God “looked” on the Israelites and was “concerned” about them. Some Bibles say that God “took notice” of them. This reveals another amazing thing about God – He wasn’t ignorant of the plight of His people, He was intimately acquainted with their situation and was moved by their plight.

CATALYST FOR RESPONSE

As we draw to close let’s backtrack for a moment and examine the reason God acted.

NIV Exodus 2:24A *God heard their groaning*



Why did God act?

God moved, He acted because the Israelites cried out; because they reached out to God for help He responded. We see a consistent pattern in Scripture of God acting in response to the cries or prayers of people.



Read: 1 Chronicles 5:20; Nehemiah 9:27; Matthew 14:30-31; Matthew 6:6-8

Jesus goes on to teach His disciples the way to pray and approach God through the Lord’s Prayer. On the one hand He says that God already knows what we want or need before we ask, and then immediately following this Jesus teaches us how to pray, how to ask God for what we need. The catalyst for God to act and to respond is for us to cry out to Him in prayer.

God responds to our cries for help – it doesn’t have to be a major situation, God is interested and desires to be involved in every facet of our lives. Crying out to Him invites His intervention, it invites Him to demonstrate His character in whatever we’re facing, it demonstrated faith that we believe in the promises He has made us and we’re going to hang onto them.

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