

Journey to Freedom.

PART IV

Introduction

A few weeks ago we began this series that we're exploring here on Sunday mornings and evenings and in our Life Groups during the week.

We've called this series "Journey to Freedom" and we're making our way through the book of Exodus in the Old Testament.

This morning we're going to continue together with Part IV in our *Journey to Freedom*:

One of the amazing things about the Bible is how God works through ordinary individuals to reveal His character and nature to us. We had five points in the message last week – this week we'll go to the other extreme: I'd like to bring just one main theme out this morning!

What we're then going to do is go and apply this theme practically – more on that later though...

Scripture – Exodus 2:11-22

^{NIV} **Exodus 2:11** One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. ¹² Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

¹³ The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?" ¹⁴ The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known."

¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well. ¹⁶ Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock. ¹⁸ When the girls returned to Reuel their father, he asked them, "Why have you returned so early today?" ¹⁹ They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock." ²⁰ "And where is he?" he asked his daughters. "Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat."

²¹ Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. ²² Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, "I have become an alien in a foreign land."

Overview

I've mentioned several times throughout this series that the book of Exodus reveals some amazing things about God's nature to us. One of the major themes is that of saving and bringing freedom and wholeness. God's faithfulness to His people is another theme. God's supremacy and power is another. God's desire for us to connect with Him is another.

In Moses, we see God demonstrating another remarkable aspect of God's nature.

There are three incidents in this passage that reveal this:

- (i) Moses sees an Egyptian unjustly beating a Hebrew slave and intervenes
- (ii) Moses sees two Hebrews fighting with one clearly in the wrong and intervenes
- (iii) Moses sees some male shepherds bullying the daughters of Midian and intervenes

Do we see a pattern here?

Moses seems almost obsessed with fighting injustice. We can see and will continue to see as we journey through Exodus that Moses spends a lot of time and energy dealing with injustice – either trying to bring justice, or trying to remedy the consequences of unjust behaviour by others and by defending others and himself against injustice.

One of the key attributes of God is Justice.

Not only is God just in all He desires and does, but He commands that we act justly to one another and go even further than this in that we are to ensure that the rights of others are protected and that others, especially the weak and disadvantaged, are given justice.

Our theme this morning is addressing injustice.

We're going to define what exactly we mean by 'justice'. We're going to look at the ways in which God demonstrates justice. And we're going to conclude with what God commands us to do by way of ensuring justice.

What is Justice ?

When we consider the meaning of the word 'justice' we usually mean being fair, ensuring everyone is treated equally, everyone is measured by the same standards, everyone's rights are upheld. In Catholic terms Justice is one of the four cardinal virtues and it means the moderation between selfishness and selflessness we people are treated fairly themselves and treat others fairly also.

In legal terms justice is a state of affairs in which conduct or action is both fair and right, given the circumstances. In law, it is about the obligation to ensure that all persons are treated fairly. Justice is sought by asking for compensation for wrongs committed against them; the idea is that the punishment fits the crime so that the balance of "good" or "virtue" over "wrong" or "evil" has been corrected.

In the Old Testament there are two main ideas associated with justice – there is an element of judgement and the other element is righteousness.

In Exodus the main expression of justice is God as a righteous God, and also a faithful God. God is just and therefore keeps His promises to His people. God is just and delivers His people. God is just and, as we shall see in weeks to come, provides a way for people to be blameless before Him – to receive justice and be acquitted.

Justice is a core characteristic of God which is essential to our understanding why things like the temple rituals were important and why Jesus' death is necessary.

Justice is about righting wrongs. Our God is a God who rights wrongs.

How Does God Demonstrate Justice?

We're going to be looking at this in weeks to come, so I don't want to go into too much detail on this next point. But one of the most significant ways in which God demonstrates justice is in the way He makes a way for us to be at peace with Him.

God, who is perfect and cannot tolerate sin demonstrates in incredible beauty and detail how we, who consistently mess up and fall short of His perfection, can be in a relationship with Him.

We would consider that justice would be punishing an offender for what they've done wrong. There's not a lot of argument that crime needs to be punished; that there need to be consequences or compensation made where the law has been broken.

For God to be just, for justice to be enacted, when we mess up there must be a consequence because we've broken God's perfect law. But the incredible thing with God is that He demonstrates justice in that He simultaneously enforces judgement while at the same time demonstrates another aspect of His character which is mercy.

We're not going to get into this today, but suffice to say the classic analogy of a judge pronouncing someone guilty then going and personally paying the fine is a perfect illustration of what God does for us.

Justice demands that there be a penalty – and God judges fairly – but He also makes available to us His offer to pay the price on our behalf as a demonstration of His love and desire for us to move towards freedom and wholeness.

That's all I'm going to say on this for now, because the real focus of this message is on God's nature as the righter of wrongs and on our response as His people who are called to reflect and demonstrate His nature to the world.

Moses seems to be obsessed with fighting injustice, and so is God.

^{NIV} **Isaiah 58:6** "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?"

^{NIV} **Isaiah 9:7** Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

^{KJV} **Zechariah 9:9** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

God's nature and His actions are concerned with the plight of those unjustly treated.

Our Response to Injustice

This leads us to our main focus.

Moses actively demonstrated the passion God has for fighting injustice. Ok, so he kinda messed up with the whole murder deal – and Penny touched on that the other week when she picked out that Moses tried to deliver people in his own strength and things didn't really work out. It wasn't until he began working with the vision God gave Him and in reliance in God's strength and power that he was able to be a positive influence in bringing justice to God's people.

Where does this leave us? What does God expect from us in regards to fighting injustice?

^{NAS} **Genesis 18:19** "For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

I love this; Abraham was to obey God by *doing* righteousness and justice. It's an active and deliberate thing.

^{NLT} **Isaiah 1:17** Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.

^{NIV} **Matthew 5:48** Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

^{NAS} **Romans 2:13** for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

^{NIV} **Micah 6:8** He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

All of these things are very much active. What does God expect of us in this context? God expects and commands us to actively fight injustice. When we do so we're not only effecting positive change in the world, we're helping spread the influence of God's Kingdom in this world and we are demonstrating to those around us what our God is like.

Fighting injustice shows people a wonderful aspect of God's character. By actively fighting injustice we give people a glimpse of God in us and working through us.

Conclusion & Application

Most of you will have heard about the recent conflict and carry on here in the college. Now, there are always so many factors involved and it's not our place to try and lay blame or take sides.

One thing is clear though, a number of injustices have occurred. The rights and safety of students have been violated and the media coverage has been vindictive and biased and so the leadership of the school have been subjected to injustices.

As a church, we understand that God calls us to respect and pray for and support those in authority and we accept this awesome responsibility. We've learnt today that one of our other responsibilities is to fight injustice.

So, what I thought we would do to close is to unite as God's people and do some fighting today. We're going to break into groups of 4-6 people, or there-about, and head out around the school to pray for the leadership, the teachers, the students, the community – and to ask God to restore justice in this place.

^{NLT} **Psalm 103:6** The LORD gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly.

This morning let's not try to lay blame, let's not comment where we are not qualified, let's not complain, let's not pretend there's nothing wrong. Church, this morning let us rise up together knowing what we are about to do is the will of God and let us make a stand for this school and fight injustice through prayer.

Throughout the week let's continue to pray for this school and all associated with it.

Let's make a commitment to uphold our leaders here.

Let's make a pledge to speak positively and prophetically to invite God's anointing over this place.

Church, will you stand with me as we pray.

[Pray]

I'd like to invite my Dad to come and explain how we're going to do this...