



Living Light: Session 1- Purpose over Popularity
Exodus 2:1-10; Acts 5:27-41; Hebrews 11:24-28
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SERIES INTRODUCTION

The burdens we carry come in all shapes, sizes, and varieties. Many are weighty, but there's one load that proves the heaviest—and it can be traced back to the Garden of Eden. Because Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6), all people have been born with sinful hearts. Holiness and sin cannot coexist. Therefore, in our natural state, none of us are able to fellowship with God. What is worse, we continue to do wrong, and there is nothing that we—as fallen humans—can do to rectify the situation: *This as the heaviest burden of all.*

BUT our God loved us so much that He sent His own Son to live a perfect life on earth. He took our sin and its punishment by dying on the cross in our place. And then He conquered death by rising to life again. His atonement for our wrongs is a gift that is available to anyone who believes. He desires to relieve the burden of sin from our hearts. But when we choose to do it our own way, we live a life that is burdened. We have not been called to a life of burden; we have been invited to live light.

Living Light! - In this series we will see how we can *continue* to live our lives in alignment with the invitation that Jesus has given us walk in the yoke with Him. Jesus continues to call us: “*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*” Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV).

MAIN POINT

Living light is to live in the fear of the Lord rather than the insufferable weight of the fear of man. Living light is living for God's glory rather than being glory thieves.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever served on a disaster relief team? When and where?

Have you ever experienced an emergency situation in which you needed rescuing? What was it like? How did others help you?

Have you ever been the one who helped rescue someone? Describe your experience.

The fear of man, or the desire to be wanted and accepted and needed by other people – *to be popular* – is common to us all. In Hebrews we read about the Old Testament prophet, Moses, who understood the draw of popularity. But Moses gives us a good example.

Moses refused the sinful privileges and popularity of Egypt, including those of being the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Ex. 2:10). Instead he identified with God's people (Ex. 2:11–12) and thus sought God's reward (Heb. 10:35; 11:6). He lived for a greater purpose: Imaging Christ! As Christ truly suffered on behalf of the people of God, so too Moses, who similarly suffered on behalf of the people, is said to bear Christ's reproach. (v.26) Moses serves as a model for Christians to endure the same such reproach for Christ. We can live light in purpose over popularity!

Transition: As Christians we are called to see how living light means that we choose God's ways over our own ways.

UNDERSTANDING

Have a volunteer read Exodus 1:15-17 and 1:22–2:10.

15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, 16 "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." 17 The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live.

22 Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."

The Birth of Moses

2 Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, 2 and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. 3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrusbasket^[a] for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. 4 His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

5 Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. 6 She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

7 Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

8 "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses,^[b]saying, "I drew him out of the water."

What do Pharaoh's and the midwives' choices reveal about them? How did their attitudes about life relate to their belief in and about God?

Verse 21 tells us that the Hebrew midwives feared God. How did their fear compare with Pharaoh's?

Pharaoh feared an uprising from the Hebrew people, and his fear motivated him to take drastic, horrific measures to control the Hebrew population and protect his rule. On the other hand, the Hebrew midwives courageously refused to obey the king's command. They let the boys live. The midwives took a stance against the king's command because they feared God. The verb translated "feared" in this context conveys "reverence, awe, or worship." Rather than following the Pharaoh's edict to kill their newborn son, Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed, went to great lengths to hide him three months. God was at work to save Moses for his future role as the great leader of the Hebrew people (see Ex. 6:20). This future deliverer of the people of Israel was delivered from death as an infant through God's providential care.

Based upon the actions of Moses' mother, sister and the midwives; how did they demonstrate purpose over popularity? What is the difference in civil obedience and disobedience?

Moses' deliverance came in the person of none other than Pharaoh's daughter. The princess named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water." The name Moses sounds like the Hebrew word meaning "draw out." More importantly, the princess unknowingly gave the baby a name that expressed an element of his future. The one delivered out of the water would become the one who delivered others from the danger of water as he later led the Israelites through the Red Sea. God surely works in wonderful and mysterious ways to promote and preserve His will in the lives of individuals and nations. This princess was God's unwitting instrument in bringing about His plan and purpose for the Hebrew people.

What are some events that you have seen God accomplish His purpose through the least likely of people or events? Why do we remember these things? How do they impact our lives?

Transition: Following the narrative of Moses' birth and adoption, the action of the Exodus is where we see Moses leading the people to their redemption. From the description of the events, it is clear that Moses identified strongly with the people being oppressed by the Egyptians. Let's now turn to a time where God used what the world saw as the least likely to take a bold step of faith for Christ.

Sermon Notes

Have a volunteer read Acts 5:27-41.

²⁷The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

29 Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings! 30 The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. 31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

33 When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. 34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. 35 Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. 36 Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. 37 After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. 38 Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. 39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”

40 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

What does the Sanhedrin accuse the apostles of in verse 28?

What assertions in Peter’s response would arouse their fury (vv. 29-32)?

What stands out to you about Peter’s response to the accusations he faced? What is the application for us in ministry today?

Peter’s words are powerful here for our understanding of how to live light in that he sought not the popularity of the people but the purpose that he had to share Jesus, even accepting the consequences of that statement.

Flogging sometimes resulted in death. Why do you think the disciples considered it worthy rejoicing that they suffered in Jesus’ name?

Transition: It’s no small wonder Peter picked up a “suffering for Jesus” theme in his epistles (see 1 Pet. 4:13; 2:18-21; 3:8-17). They had beaten Jesus, and now they had beaten His disciples who praised God that they could suffer for the name of Jesus. God will allow nothing to stand in the way of the proclamation of His gospel and the expansion of His church. For our final verses, let’s see the ultimate impact that it should make in our lives when we see people choosing their purpose over popularity.

Have a volunteer read Hebrews 11:1,23-40.

1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.^[a]

32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning;^[b] they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Put verse 1 in your own words.

There is an expression that says, “Feed your faith and starve your fears.” How did Moses and Rahab live this out? What other experiences from verses 32-37 stand out to you as examples of this?

What does it mean to you that not all these people of faith met with “success”? What does this tell you about the life of faith? Do you find this encouraging or discouraging? Why?

The hardships these Old Testament individuals faced teach us that faith expresses itself in obedience, courage, and endurance. Also, having faith does not guarantee a carefree life. Enduring pain requires more faith than escaping pain. As believers, we often experience circumstances in which it's hard to truly believe God's goodness, but we can face these difficult situations with trust in God, who is good and is present to help us. We're reminded that God often saves us through the fire, not from the fire (v. 34; Daniel 3). God doesn't promise to take away our suffering and affliction; He promises to help us endure it and draw us closer to Him through the process.

What is the good news for us in these verses? How does that truth impact your faith?

Throughout the chapter, the author provided examples of people in the Old Testament who exercised faith. He focused most heavily on Abraham and Moses. To complete the list with a crescendo, he recounted an inspiring litany of the fruit of faith displayed in the virtuous life, faithful death, and anticipated resurrection of numerous Old Testament heroes. However, although their faith was approved, they did not receive what God had promised. The purpose of this delay was to ensure that they would not be perfected apart from Jesus Christ. It's ultimately through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that we know for certain God is good and with us.

As the body of Christ, it is our responsibility to help one another through seasons of doubt. Just as Jesus draws us near to strengthen us in our doubt (John 20:24-29; Matt. 14:25-31; Jer. 1:4-10), we can also draw others near to strengthen them in theirs. Stronger believers need to show concern for weaker ones whose faith is wavering. Sometimes you might be the one strengthening others, sometimes you might be the one who needs to be strengthened. This is the beauty of Christ's body; we live in faith together.

Sermon Notes

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is one situation where you need to “feed your faith and starve your fears”?

Name at least one way you have been blessed by believing without seeing.

Who is someone who needs you to show mercy as they right now struggle with doubts? What is challenging about that? What is one way you can do it?

Share how today's discussion has encouraged you to live less for the popularity of the world and for the purpose of God. What needs to change in your life for this desire to remain?

PRAYER

Thank God for His mercy that strengthens your faith through seasons of doubt. Invite Him to show you how you can live in faith this week in such a way that you strengthen others, too.