

DELIVERANCE
Exodus 14: 10-31

Many people throughout history have been captured, or imprisoned or even crucified in a time of great anguish. In her book *A Stolen Life*, Jaycee Dugard tells the dreadful account of her life; kidnapped in June of 1992 in Meyers, California at age 11 as she was walking to her school bus stop, she stayed missing for 18 years, 18 YEARS—until 2009 when the kidnapper made a foolish trip into another California town with Jaycee and two other girls were discovered; the other girls—hold on here—were children the *kidnapper had fathered with young Jaycee*. His actions were abhorrent; the young girl’s life was indeed stolen, but she has since written two books trying to describe and heal from those years. She was most relieved when she was delivered from the hands of her captor. He was sentenced to 431 years in prison or until he dies. Years earlier in 1960, a Jewish man Elie Wiesel, wrote a haunting work called *The Night Trilogy*. It referenced his time imprisoned in the German death camp, Auschwitz. He wrote: “Because Auschwitz symbolizes the culmination of violence, hatred, and death, it is our duty to fight violence, hatred, and death.” [*THE NIGHT TRILOGY*, Elie Wiesel. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972, p. 4] The treatments to those in that camp were the epitome of brutality. In our own day, we would be wise to guard against human torturers; the rise of violence, hatred, and death spews from demented members of the human race. People who have sought to snuff out human lives or human spirits are the henchmen of the devil. In Laura Hillenbrand’s book *Unbroken: a World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption*, Louis Zamperini’s story is shared in unflinching detail, first as he was delivered from captivity, and then as he was delivered from the hatred that tried to devour his soul. Similarly, *The Railway Man* was a film based on a book describing Eric Lomax’s treatment in a Japanese POW camp. His torture was described in detail. Finally in the true account, Lomax and his comrades were delivered from the torturing hands

by the British Army. But how does he deal with his severe post traumatic stress disorder? That is the redemptive part of *The Railway Man*. Two other examples of deliverance: the Apostle Paul was imprisoned for simply preaching the gospel. For that he was beaten, stoned, arrested and imprisoned—three times. One time in Acts 16, Paul and his companion Silas were brought before the authorities because Paul cast a demon out of a soothsayer. They were brought before the magistrate, and against Roman law, they were beaten and thrown into prison without a trial. The Lord delivered them with an earthquake, causing the chains to break and the prison door to fly open! God had, once again, delivered his people! I say “once again” because in the Torah—the first five books of the Bible—we find a life changing event that is the hinge of Jewish history, like the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is the hinge of Christian history! Jewish sources teach that God’s people were in Egypt for more than 400 years. America is just 246 years old! 400 years of slavery? What must that have been like? Over time, people worked, lived, died, and had babies. There was not always cruelty like in prison camps, but nor was there true freedom. The Hebrews were praying people to a singular God. They also were long suffering. Their people prayed and prayed, and according to the book of Exodus, God heard the cry and called on a specially selected baby—no, not Jesus—this was baby Moses, born in Egypt, nursed by his own Hebrew mother! As he grew, he became aware of the hardships his people had at the hands of the Egyptians. Finally, God acted, sending plagues as warnings, and then caused a powerful event to occur, caused the angel of death to pass-over the houses of the faithful. Finally, God delivered the Hebrew people, and did it in a grand fashion!

In the great early days of Hollywood films, no one could create a climactic scene like Cecil B. DeMille. On the silver screen in the film THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, pharaoh, the Egyptian army the Israelites, Moses, God, the

angel, the pillar of fire and the cloud are vividly depicted. Dr. Cynthia Campbell, when she was President of McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, had these insightful comments about Exodus 14: 10-31:

At the center of the story is the three-way relationship among the Israelites, Moses, and God.... [But]what situation is life in slavery better than life-threatening freedom?...One way to understand this might be from the experience of working with persons in abusive relationships from whom it is often very difficult ever to imagine another way to live. On being congratulated for the hundreds of people she “conducted” to freedom on the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman is supposed to have said, “I could have brought ten thousand more if they’d only known they were slaves.”

Others recently freed from a prison of some kind might also desire the predictability of captivity. That happened with God’ people too, So Moses—and God—had grumbling people on their hands! They wanted the predictability of the old life. But God and Moses continued the plan: their escape was near! It was time for Cecil B. DeMille to direct the spectacular action. Whether it was truly dramatic or not, *it was the deliverance for which God’s people had prayed*. God dramatically delivered them from their lives of slavery; later, the Gospels record that God delivered our Lord Jesus from death by crucifixion to a life by resurrection! And others in life who have lived to tell the story of their own captivity often have grumbling mixed with gratitude. The main thing, that I taught the boys and girls today, is that Moses and his sister Miriam *paused to thank God for their deliverance! They made a joyful noise to the Lord!* From what might you have been delivered? And how do we thank our deliverer? To put it another way: how do we thank our Savior? Deliverance from addiction, or a poor marriage, or from a kidnapper is a reason to rejoice.

Here is one final story about a common man. He had served in the Navy and got a Business Administration degree from the University of Oklahoma. He was employed with an oil company in Texas and worked his way up the ladder. He

thought it was a ladder of success; instead it was a secular dead end and a spiritual deliverance. Listen to Keith Miller's story from his book *A Taste of New Wine*:

I used to walk down the streets, I remember, and suddenly would break out in a cold sweat. I thought I might be losing my mind. One day it was so bad that I got in my company car and took off on a field trip alone. As I was driving through the tall pine woods country of East Texas, I suddenly pulled up beside the road and stopped. I remember sitting there in complete despair. I had always been an optimistic person and had always had the feeling there was "one more bounce in the ball." After a good night's sleep, one could always start again tomorrow. But now there was no tomorrow in my situation. I was like a man on a great gray treadmill going no place in a world that was made up of black, black cloud all around me. As I sat there, I began to weep like a little boy, which I suddenly realized I was inside. I looked up toward the sky. There was nothing I wanted to do with my life. And I said, "God, if there's anything you want in this stinking soul, take it." That was almost ten years ago. But something came into my life that day that never left. There wasn't any ringing of bells or flashing of lights or visions; but it was a deep intuitive realization of what it is God wants from a [person] which I had never known before. And the peace that came with this understanding was not an experience in and of itself, but was rather a cessation of the conflict of a lifetime.

Keith Miller realized that when God delivers us from whatever prison in which we are existing, God wants our will and God wants our thanks! After the exodus-there was thanks and praise! After the resurrection of Jesus- glorious musical praise! And after you have been delivered from any darkness, don't forget the praise! Thanks be to God for offering us the keys to our prisons.

Let us pray: O Deliverer God: open the doors in our lives that are keeping us from freedom and from joy. Lead us out of our prisons and part the waters that seem otherwise to overwhelm us. Then we lift up our name with thanksgiving!

Hallelujah! Amen!

Jeffrey A. Sumner

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