

THE LORD WILL HEAR YOUR CRY

2 ²³In the course of [that long period of time,] the king of Egypt died. The children of Israel groaned because of their bondage and they cried out, and their cry for help because of their bondage went up to God. ²⁴And God heard their groaning and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵So God looked upon the children of Israel and God was concerned about them.

3 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a flame of fire from within a bush. Moses looked and saw that, although the bush was burning with fire, the bush was not consumed. ³So Moses said, "I will go over and take a look at this strange sight—why the bush is not burnt up." ⁴When Jehovah saw that he had come over to look, God called to him from within the bush, and said, "Moses, Moses." And he said, "Here I am." ⁵Then he said, "Do not come near. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." ⁶Furthermore, he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷Then Jehovah said, "I have certainly seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard them crying out because of their taskmasters. I know their sorrows. ⁸I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. ⁹Now the cry of the children of Israel has reached me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

¹¹But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" ¹²Then he said, "I will certainly be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain." (Ex. 2:23-3:12)

Introduction

Hal and his wife were traveling the winding roads of the Cascade Mountain foothills in the state of Washington. Halfway up a long grade, far from anywhere, in the middle of winter, the car coughed and sputtered; it had run out of gas. Hal managed to pull off to the side of the road and there they sat, stranded, as the falling snow glimmered in the moonlight.

Hal turned off the engine; in the winter cold the heat dissipated rapidly. Hal and his wife shivered, not only from the cold but also from the realization that their situation was desperate. They were in an isolated area, the hour was late, the weather was bad, and the traffic was light.

A car finally appeared far back down the grade. Hal climbed out and stood in the gleam of his headlights. But in his bulky overcoat, waving the flashlight and signaling frantically, his appearance was more than enough to defeat his purpose and scare off any would-be helper. In the course of an hour several widely spaced cars climbed the mountain road, slowed down as they approached the frantically waving man, and then sped on their way.

Hal climbed back into the car and together with his wife glumly contemplated the situation. "We haven't prayed," Hal finally said. He bowed his head over the steering wheel and, above the sound of the wind that whipped the car, he called to the Lord. "Father, You know our problem. You see us now. We ask You to help us."

Before his prayer was finished, the two of them heard the faint sound of a distant engine climbing the grade. Hal turned on the headlights, jumped out of the car, and went into his routine of frantically signaling for help. This time the approaching car slowed down, pulled over and stopped. Hal ran up to it, leaned into the open window, and explained their predicament. The driver got out and opened the trunk of his old vehicle. In the dimming beams of Hal's headlights there could be seen two rows of gas cans. In a matter of moments Hal's gas tank was replenished, they were back on the road, and enjoying the welcome warmth of the car heater. As they drove along Hal and his wife gratefully acknowledged that they had experienced the truth of God's promise: *"Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"* (Isa. 65:24) (POWER, 1/7/90, pp.4-5.)

The people of Israel came to personally experience the same truth when they finally called upon the LORD in the midst of their Egyptian bondage. We may be confident that when He hears our cry, the LORD will respond to His people in covenant faithfulness and mercy.

I. The LORD will Hear Your Cry, Because He is the Faithful God

When Israel cried out to the LORD, *"their cry for help ... went up to God. ²⁴And God heard their groaning and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob"* (Ex. 2:23-24.) In Genesis 15:9-18a there is recorded for us the making of that covenant:

And [Jehovah] said to him, Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat and a three-year-old ram, also a turtle-dove and a young pigeon. ¹⁰Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two, and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ¹¹Then the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹²And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and a horror of great darkness fell upon him. ¹³And he said to Abram, Know for sure that your descendants shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and they shall serve the inhabitants of that land; and that nation shall afflict your descendants for

four hundred years. ¹⁴But also know that I will judge that nation whom they shall serve; and afterward shall they come out with great possessions. ¹⁵But you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶And in the fourth generation your descendants shall come back here again; because the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.

¹⁷When the sun went down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces of the divided animal carcasses. ¹⁸On that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram ... (Gen. 15:9-18a)

By personally passing between the severed parts of the sacrificed animals the LORD was pledging Himself to be the God of Abraham and his descendants: to preserve them, redeem them, and bring them into His promised inheritance.

In Genesis 26:1-3 the LORD reaffirms His covenant with Isaac:

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the earlier famine that occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech the king of the Philistines. ²Jehovah appeared to him and said, Do not go down into Egypt. Stay in the land where I tell you to live. ³Stay in this land and I will be with you and bless you; because I will give all of this land to you and your descendants—I will confirm the oath I swore to Abraham your father. (Gen. 26:1-3)

Notice that God's reaffirmation of the covenant comes at a time of need and crisis in Isaac's life: his father, Abraham, was dead, there was a famine in the land, and Isaac was turning to the kings of this world for deliverance. Notice, too, the gentleness the LORD displays: He does not rebuke Isaac, He comforts him by reaffirming His covenant. The reaffirming of His covenant was the means of binding Isaac to Him and restraining him from carrying out his chosen course. Isaac was on his way to Egypt, the LORD's command, "*Do not go,*" was reinforced by His reaffirmation of the covenant; consequently, Isaac stayed in Gerar (located in the south of Canaan.)

In Genesis 28:13-15 the Lord reaffirmed His covenant to Jacob:

... Jehovah ... said: "I am Jehovah, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (Gen. 28:13-15)

Whereas the LORD reaffirmed His covenant with Isaac when Isaac had set out on a course of disobedience and distrust, the LORD reaffirmed His covenant with Jacob when Jacob was on a course of obedience—he had set out to seek a believing wife

in a distant land by means of a threatening journey that took him out of the Promised Land of Canaan.

In Exodus 3:7 the LORD identifies the nation of Israel as *“my people”* and assures Moses of His intention to fulfill for them the covenant promise He originally made to Abraham, compare Exodus 3:7-8 with Genesis 15:18-21,

Then Jehovah said, “I have certainly seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard them crying out because of their taskmasters. I know their sorrows. ⁸I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. (Ex. 3:7-8)

... Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, To your descendants have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the Euphrates: ¹⁹the land of the Kenite, and the Kenizzite, and the Kadmonite, ²⁰and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Rephaim, ²¹and the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Girgashite, and the Jebusite. (Gen. 15:18-21)

In Exodus 3:10 the LORD informs Moses that He will send him to Pharaoh so that you may bring *“my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”* When Israel has been delivered out of Egypt by means of the Exodus, and as they stand on the border of the Promised Land of Canaan, Moses testifies: *“Know therefore that Jehovah your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments”* (Deut. 7:9.)

Because He is the faithful God, the LORD will hear your cry, when you face a crisis: *“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will glorify me”* (Psl. 50:15.) He will hear your cry, when you are confronted by temptation: *“No temptation has seduced you except the kind that is experienced by all men. But God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear; on the contrary, along with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it”* (1 Cor.10:13.) He will hear your cry when you are harassed by the evil one: *“... the LORD is faithful, he will establish you and protect you from the evil one”* (2 Thess. 3:3.) The LORD will hear your cry when you wonder if you shall finally reach your heavenly destination: *“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you wholly. May your entire soul, spirit and body be kept blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it”* (1 Thess. 5:23-24.)

II. The LORD will Hear Your Cry, Because He is a Compassionate God

God looked upon the children of Israel and God *“was concerned about them”* (Ex. 2:25.) The LORD not only recognized them as being His people, the people to

whom He had covenantal obligations, He was personally sympathetic and compassionate towards them when He saw their affliction.

The LORD declares to Moses, *"I have certainly seen the affliction of my people"* (Ex. 3:7.) The Hebrew verb (רָאָה) "to see," may also bear the meaning, "to see with concern," or, "to regard." Here is a deep, true, accurate observation of their suffering, an observation that is not cold and distant but warm and empathetic. Proverbs 14:10a testifies, *"The heart knows its own bitterness"*—no one but the man himself has a true knowledge and experience of the depths of his own personal suffering, grief and depression. But Proverbs 15:11 goes on to proclaim, *"Sheol and Abaddon lie exposed before Jehovah, how much more are the hearts of men?"* Although no fellow human being may truly know the depths of your personal suffering, the fact is that the LORD knows. The God before whom even the mysterious place of the dead lies exposed, has full knowledge and understanding of the state and suffering of your heart.

Exodus 3:7 literally reads, *"I have certainly seen (or, regarded) the affliction of my people ... because (יָדָע) I know their sorrows."* The LORD informs Moses, *"I know their sorrows."* In the Old Testament the Hebrew verb "to know" not only means intellectual knowledge or awareness, it may also bear the meaning, "to have a personal acquaintance" with someone or something—to have a personal experience with that person or thing. By way of example, Genesis 4:1 literally reads, Adam *"knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to a son;"* thus the intimacy of the marriage relationship is described as a "knowing" of one's spouse. Referring to our Lord Jesus Christ, Hebrews 4:15 assures us that *"we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin."* Our Lord Jesus has a personal and empathetic acquaintance with every situation or condition we encounter in our lives.

When we are tempted to say, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen," the Lord Jesus replies, "I know,... I've been there Myself." Jesus assures us, "I know the agony of trial and temptation," according to Hebrews 2:18, *"Because he himself has suffered by being tempted, he is able to aid those who are tempted."* Jesus assures us, "I know the pain of rejection," speaking of Jesus the Messiah, Isaiah 53:3 declares, *"He was despised and rejected by men; he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we did not hold him in esteem."* Jesus assures us, "I know what it's like to feel alienation," as Mark 15:33-34 informs us, *"When the sixth hour of the day arrived, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' (which, being interpreted, means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?')."*

The LORD furthermore declares to Moses, *"I have come down to deliver them"* (Ex. 3:8.) It is a comfort to learn that the LORD our God **sees** our affliction. It is even

more comforting to realize that He **knows** our sorrow. But it is the greatest blessing to know that He is able and willing to deliver us: *"I have come down to deliver them."* Moses saw the burden of Israel: *"Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to see his brothers and he observed their hard labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of Moses' brothers"* (Ex. 2:11.) Moses sought to come to their rescue: *"He looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no one else present, he killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand"* (Ex. 2:12.) But Moses could not deliver them, he wound up fleeing into the wilderness of Midian alone: *"Moses fled from Pharaoh's presence and went to live in the land of Midian"* (Ex.2:15.) In contrast to Moses, the LORD says, *"I have come down to deliver them."* As the Book of Hebrews testifies, *"he (Christ Jesus) is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him"* (Heb. 7:25.)

The LORD will hear your cry, because He is a compassionate God:

... we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Heb. 4:15-16)

III. The LORD will Hear Your Cry, When You Call upon Him

Israel's cry referred to in Exodus 2:23 was not simply a crying out in the night, a desperate crying out to the stars and the wind. On the contrary, it was an earnest and conscious calling upon the LORD their God; note the report given in Numbers 20:16 and 1 Samuel 12:8,

... when we cried out to Jehovah, he heard our cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. (Num.20:16)

After Jacob entered Egypt, they cried to Jehovah for help, and Jehovah sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your forefathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place. (1 Sam. 12:8)

Note, too, that it was Israel's cry unto the LORD that set in motion the events of divine deliverance that follow: *"I have heard them crying out ... ⁸I have come down to deliver them"* (Ex. 3:7-8.) In Psalm 50:15 the LORD declares: *"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will glorify me."* This is a divine invitation that only can be made by the living God who is able and willing to come to our rescue. By way of contrast, note 1 Kings 18:26, a passage that describes the pagan worshipers of Baal futilely calling upon their god: *"they called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, 'O Baal, answer us!' they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered"* (1 Kgs. 18:26.) At the same time, Psalm 50:15 is also a divine commandment that the LORD must issue to His

people when we are reluctant to look to Him for divine help and deliverance. Due to guilt, or unbelief, or spiritual neglect, or self-confidence, we often times fail to call upon the LORD in our time of need. (Recall from the Introduction the example of Hal and his wife, who neglected to call upon the LORD as their first resort of deliverance.)

The LORD will hear your cry, when you call upon Him.

The LORD is near to all who call upon him, to all who call on him in truth. (Psl. 145:18)

As for me, I will call upon God; and Jehovah will save me. (Psl. 55:16)

Conclusion

On a snow-swept winter's night in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains, Hal Glover and his wife personally experienced the truth of God's promise: *"While they are yet speaking, I will hear"* (Isa. 65:24.) Many centuries earlier the children of Israel experienced the same truth when they called upon the LORD in the midst of their Egyptian bondage. This is the confidence that is offered to every Christian: When He hears your cry, the LORD will respond in covenant faithfulness and mercy.