

Title: **GOD’S WORK AND THE MEANS HE USES**
Text: Exodus 6:1
Subject: *The Instrumentality of Preaching*
Date: Tuesday Evening — March, 2007
Tape # Exodus 44

Introduction:

We recognize and rejoice in the fact that “*Salvation is of the LORD.*” It is God’s work and God’s work alone. It is in no way dependent upon, conditioned upon, or determined by anything in man or done by man. We contribute nothing to the salvation of our souls; and we contribute nothing to the salvation of others. It is entirely God’s work. — “*Salvation is of the LORD!*” That cannot be stated too strongly, too often, or too fully. — None “*can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him*” (Psalm 49:7). And “*none can keep alive his own soul*” (Psalm 22:29). Salvation is God’s work (John 1:12-13; Romans 9:16).

(John 1:12-13) “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

(Romans 9:16) “So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

We know this, too. — “*It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe*” (1 Corinthians 1:21). In his infinite sovereignty, the God of heaven condescends to use saved sinners to save lost sinners, to use the preaching of the gospel as the instrument by which he saves his elect (Romans 1:14-17; 10:13-17; 1 Peter 1:23-25).

(Romans 1:14-17) “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. (15) So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

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(Romans 10:13-17) “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

(1 Peter 1:23-25) “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (24) For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: (25) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

GRACE PORTRAYED

We have a beautiful, clear, instructive picture of God’s use of human instrumentality in the salvation of his elect in the Book of Exodus. I keep repeating this because I want you to always read the Book of Exodus in this light, as a picture of God’s saving operations of grace toward and upon his elect.

Turn to Exodus 6, and let me show you the picture. I am going to talk to you tonight about the way God saves his people. The title of my message is — **GOD’S WORK AND THE MEANS HE USES**. My text is Exodus 6:1.

(Exodus 6:1) “Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.”

“Now shalt thou see what I will do.”— **The Lord God had a people in Egypt**. They were the people of his choice and his covenant. They were enslaved in Egypt and horribly oppressed by Pharaoh. Yet, they were his people. God’s purpose in sending Moses down into Egypt was that he might bring his people out of Egypt and make them a separate people to himself,

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that he might bring them into a land that flowed with milk and honey, that they might inherit that land and possess it as perpetual witnesses of his great goodness.

That which the Lord God did for Israel, in bring them out of the cursed land, the land of Ham, is precisely what he is doing today throughout the whole world by the preaching of the gospel. By the preaching of the gospel God the Holy Spirit gathers out from among the nations a people chosen and predestinated by God the Father and redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ to be his peculiar heritage. He fetches out them from among the fallen sons of Adam and makes them his own peculiar people by the distinct experience of his grace.

It is written, “*Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations*” (Numbers 23:9). God’s chosen shall be brought to heaven as a place specially prepared specifically for them from eternity, and a place for which they are prepared in time by the mighty operations of his grace. As Jehovah himself has declared, “*They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels*” (Malachi 3:17).

Proposition: Just as the Lord God sent Moses to deliver Israel out of Egypt, though the deliverance was his work alone, so he sends his servants to deliver his elect from sin and death by the preaching of the gospel, though the deliverance is his work alone.

GOD’S VOICE

First, I want you to see and see clearly that the salvation of God’s elect is by his voice alone. It was not Moses’ voice that brought Israel out of Egypt, but God’s (Exodus 4:22-23).

(Exodus 4:22-23) “And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel *is* my son, *even* my firstborn: (23) And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, *even* thy firstborn.”

And it is not the voice of the gospel preacher that brings dead sinners to life and faith in Christ, but the voice of God alone (John 5:25; 6:63; 10:16, 27; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5).

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(John 5:25) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”

(John 6:63) “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.”

(John 10:16) “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.”

(John 10:27) “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

(1 Thessalonians 1:4-5) “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. (5) For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”

It is the power of God's voice that brings his people out of Egypt. Let me show you three specific things uttered by God himself, by which he brought Israel out of Egypt, three mighty words of grace by which God saves his elect.

1. He said to Pharaoh, “**Israel is my son, even my firstborn.**”

It is written, “*The Lord knoweth them that are his.*” The Lord God claims his inalienable right to his people, and asserts his unflinching interest in their welfare, saying, “*Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*” Though they were slaves in Egypt, he said, “*Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*” Though they were up to their necks in mud, making bricks, he said, “*Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*” Though they were terribly degraded, so degraded that they could not even dream of deliverance, even when the day of deliverance dawned upon them, and could not believe “*for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage,*” the Lord God said, “*Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*”

- They had no thought of liberty.
- They were sunk into the base idolatry of the Egyptians.
- They did not even know God by his great name, — “*Jehovah.*”

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- Yet, the Lord said of those poor, wretched, hopeless people, “*Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*” They were his all the while; and he owned them as his own.
- Though they forsook him, he never relinquished them. — “*Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*”

So it is with God's elect in this world. Though lost and ruined by the sin and fall of our father Adam, though dead in trespasses and in sins, up to our necks in mud, though we all went “*astray from the womb speaking lies,*” though we did not know him and did not want to know him, though we hated him and rebelled against him, and were by nature “*children of wrath even as others,*” the Lord God said of his chosen, “*Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*”

Blessed be his name forever, our Savior was not, even then, ashamed to call us his brethren. Even then, our Father was not ashamed to own us as his sons and daughters, his firstborn! He proclaims his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sin. He loved us when we were cast out from our mothers' wombs, lying in our blood, unwashed, naked and filthy. When no eye pitied us in the day of our nativity, and we were cast out in the open field, he passed by in the time of love, and said unto us, “*Live.*” Oh, wondrous grace!

Does God own his people as his people even before they know him? Of course he does! If he did not, we would never have come to know him. We love him now, because he first loved us. And had he not known us and loved us before we knew him, we could never know and love him now.

When the Lord God said, “*Israel is my son,*” he was speaking in reference to the covenant he had made with Abraham 400 years before any of those now in Egypt had been born. And the Lord knows his people, and shows favor to them, not because of any personal merit, worth, or work by which they recommend themselves to him. — We have none. There was no superiority in our nature, no brightness in our minds, no beauty in our character that was pleasing in his sight.

The only title any sinner can have to God's grace is that ancient covenant ordered in all things and sure which he has made, not with Abraham, but with our Lord Jesus, who stands from everlasting as our covenant Head and Surety. This is the great fountain from which the wells of salvation are

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continually filled with the living waters of grace.

“We’ll sing the vast unmeasured grace
Which from the days of old,
Did all the chosen sons embrace
As sheep within the fold.

The basis of eternal love
Shall mercy’s frame sustain;
Earth, hell, or sin the same to move,
Shall all conspire in vain.

Sing, O ye sinners bought with blood,
Hail the great Three in One;
Tell how secure the covenant stood
Ere time its race begun.

Ne’er had ye felt the guilt of sin,
Nor the sweets of pardoning love,
Unless your worthless names had been,
Enrolled to life above.

Oh what a sweet, exulting song
Shall rend the vaulted skies,
When, shouting grace, the blood-washed throng
Shall see the Top Stone rise!”

— *John Kent*

This is the reason why God called Israel his son. **Israel was made his son by an ancient covenant; and so were we.** Some are so ignorant that they deny this blessed fact of Divine Revelation. I have often read and have often heard men say, “God never calls anyone his son until he believes. We become the sons of God by believing in Christ.” But that is not true. True, we come to know that we are the sons of God by faith in Christ, his Spirit bearing “*witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*” (Romans 8:16). But we were made the sons of God in eternal grace. We were born again in time and caused to trust Christ in time, because we were the children of God from eternity (Galatians 4:6).

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(Galatians 4:6) “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

It is because his people are really his sons before they know anything at all about it, that in due time God sends the Spirit of his Son to give them the nature of his Son that they may enjoy the adoption of children and say, “*Abba, Father.*” Our faith in Christ does not make us God’s children. Our faith in Christ is the fruit of us being his children from eternity. Faith in Christ does not give us birth. It is the result of our heavenly birth. But the Lord God owned us as his own before the worlds were made. He loved us as “*his son, even his firstborn*” with a love that cannot be measured and cannot be broken from everlasting.

He said to Pharaoh, “Israel is my son. You, Pharaoh, may call him your slave, but he is my child. He was mine before he was yours. Israel is my son. You say, ‘No, he is my slave.’ I say, though he has fallen under your yoke, I maintain my right to him as my firstborn. He is a prince, and to that estate he shall be raised.”

The long and short of that is this: — The Lord God has a claim upon his elect as his own sons and daughters, the claim of the firstborn, — a claim that all the claims of law and all the chains of sin and death and hell can never undo. Though we basely submitted to the claims of the wicked one, and made a covenant with death, and a league with hell, Jehovah’s claim stood firm. He said, “*Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand*” (Isaiah 28:18).

The Lord Jesus will not allow those he has made to be his own in everlasting love, and ransomed by the price of his precious blood poured out upon the cursed tree, to remain the slaves of sin and Satan. They are his. His Father gave them to him. They are his. He bought them. They are his. Their names are written on his hands and graven on his side. They are his. He will not leave even one of them in bondage to the adversary. By owning us as his people, the Lord God exerts a positive claim upon us, a claim that makes all other claims null and void!

2. **With the bare assertion of his absolute right he demands our unconditional freedom.** — “*Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: and I say unto thee, let my son go*” (Exodus 4:22).

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What a great word from our God that is! What a blessed edict of absolute sovereignty! As God said, "*Light be, and there was light,*" so these short words are launched with sovereign force — "*Let my son go!*" Let us apply those words to ourselves. That is the reason they are written, that we may see and understand that our salvation is accomplished by the irresistible, sovereign edict of our God.

- The law held us under its curse; but God said; "*Let my son go!*"
- Satan, the god of this world claimed us as his subjects; but God said, "*Let my son go!*"
- Death held us in its cold grip; but God said, "*Let my son go!*"
- Hell grasped us in its clutches; but God said, "*Let my son go!*"

In due time our Redeemer appeared. The Lord Jesus Christ came, identified himself with his enslaved brethren, bore all our curse, paid all our debt, fulfilled the law; and now, on the ground of simple justice, he demands for us full and perfect liberty, and life everlasting. He who was made sin for us, and being made sin put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself, says to his own holy law, "*Let my son go.*"

(Zechariah 9:11) "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein *is* no water."

The law, Satan, death, hell and sin release the ransomed sons of God by the voice of God our Savior! When he speaks, the chains that held us captive are snapped like dried twigs, and ransomed sinners go free! When he commands life, the dead come forth in life (John 11:43-44).

Fast bound in our prison, as Peter was in Acts 12, deliverance seemed impossible. The iron gates, one after another, enclosed us in the innermost ward of our dungeon prison. But at midnight, as we slept in senseless darkness and carelessness, the Angel of the Lord smote us on the side. Around us there shined a great light. And Christ, the Angel of covenant mercy led us through gate after gate with such ease that the iron gates seemed to open of their own accord, and we found ourselves free! At first, we could not believe it. It was as though we had seen a vision. But the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free filled our hearts with laughter. — "*The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad.*"

That same omnipotent voice will continue to echo, as long as we are in this world, "*Let my son go!*"

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- When troubles crush us down, tender Omnipotence says, “*Let my son go!*”
- When sin trips us and we fall into the snare of the devil, Omnipotent grace says, “*Let my son go!*”
- When the law would accuse and condemn us, Irresistible mercy says, “*Let my son go!*”
- When our own consciences scream accusations against us, Infinite goodness says, “*Let my son go!*”
- When at last our bodies are laid in the grave, the day will soon come, when our glorious, sovereign God and Savior shall appear and say, “*Let my son go!*”

There shall not a bone of a believer be left in the grave. As it was said of old, “*not a hoof shall be left behind,*” so nothing that belongs to the redeemed man be left either in the grave. Our Savior’s word to the Father is, “*Of all that thou hast given me I have lost nothing.*” And nothing shall be lost!

The voice of God claims us as his own, and demands our freedom.

3. **And that same omnipotent voice, the eternal, unalterable voice of the Almighty, is that which causes us to know and worship him by faith in Christ.** — “*Let my son go, that he may serve me*” (Exodus 4:23).

We are no sooner set free from serving Pharaoh than we begin to serve Jehovah. “*Let my son go, that he may serve me.*”

How did Israel serve God? It was in the loftiest capacity possible. Israel became Jehovah’s priest. It was in Israel that the sacrifice was offered. In Israel the incense was burned. From Israel psalms of praise went up heaven. Israel stood before the Lord in that high position of sacred privilege.

So it is with us. As soon as a sinner is brought out of bondage into liberty, he brings the sacrifice of Christ to God by faith, and presents himself a living sacrifice to God with his Savior. His thanksgivings, and his broken and contrite heart, are perpetual oblations and offerings of a sweet smelling savor, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Israel was to be God’s servant, serving him by faith. For forty years they

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walked through the wilderness, living on the word, promise and power of God. Without sowing or reaping they were fed. Without any wells, they were refreshed with water out of the Rock. They had no tailor. Yet, they were perfectly clothed. They had no cobbler. Yet, they were well-shod. Their camp was well shaded by day, and well lit by night.

They had a blessed experience of having nothing and yet possessing all things. With no fertile fields or fruitful trees, yet Israel was made to live upon the fat of the earth, and to ride upon the high places of the earth. She had all things and she abounded. The Lord was her Shepherd, and she did not want.

Tell me, you who live by faith, Is it not so with you? Believing Christ, this is the work of God, the greatest work a man can do!

- Israel alone ate the passover.
- Israel alone had a sabbath rest.
- Israel alone walked with God.
- Israel alone lived upon Manna that fell from heaven.
- Israel alone drank from the Rock.

Israel was brought up out of Egypt by the voice of God. And so it is today. *“Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.”*

A MAN'S VOICE

But, *second*, I want you to see that God's voice spoke their deliverance by a man's voice. — *“Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Let my son go”* (Exodus 4:17). Why do you suppose the Lord did not say it himself? Why did he send Moses to say it? God made the work all the more glorious and all the more glorifying to him by using a man to do it.

(1 Corinthians 1:21) “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

(1 Corinthians 1:26-29) “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called:* (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base

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things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

Why doesn't God speak to every sinner directly, and bring him out and save him? Certainly, he could do so. But when he condescends to take us poor mortals, who have tasted his grace, he uses weak things to confound the mighty and foolish things to confound the wise, making his wonders of grace all the more admirable!

All the works of God redound to his glory; but when the instruments he uses appear to be totally inadequate to do the work he performs by them our reverence is excited, while our reason is dismayed, and we marvel at the power we cannot understand.

- It was by Moses alone that God brought Israel out of Egypt.
- It was by Moses alone that God led and instructed Israel.
- Every time they imagined that God spoke to them by another, they got into trouble. (Aaron and the Golden Calf — Korah and His Sons)

So it is today. God saves his people and instructs them by the preaching of the gospel. He puts the treasure of his grace in earthen vessels like us, to make the treasure shine more gloriously.

(Ephesians 4:7-16) “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (8) Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (9) (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? (10) He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) (11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (14) That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait

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to deceive; (15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: (16) From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; (13) And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.”

(Hebrews 13:7) “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation.”

(Hebrews 13:17) “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.”

- When Moses discovered that he was sent of God, sent to carry God's Word to men, he was fearless before Pharaoh, Egypt and Israel.
- Insignificant as we may be in and of ourselves, the very fact that God sends us to speak for him should suffice to quell our fears.
- If a man is sent of God, he is absolutely assured of success. — “*Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land*” (Exodus 6:1).
- Like Moses, if a man is sent of God, he will steadily keep at his work! — With what diligence he persevered in the work God sent him to perform, till at last the tenth plague found Moses unmoved, ready to conduct the people away to the Red Sea and to bring them out into the wilderness.

DIVINE POWER

Yet, *third*, let us never forget that without the power of God the voice of man would have been an utter failure. It was not Moses, but God who plagued Pharaoh, filled the land of Egypt with lice, flies, frogs and locusts.

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So it is with the preaching of the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

(1 Thessalonians 1:5) “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:25) “Brethren, pray for us.”

(2 Thessalonians 3:1) “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you:”

(Hebrews 13:18) “Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.”

Amen.