

## The Lord is the Helper of the Helpless

Exodus 1:5-22, Invocavit Sunday

March 1, 2009

Beloved of the Lord..... Few things in life are worse than feeling helpless. Indeed when there are big changes in our life, or even small changes, how quickly we are thrown into a world of chaos and confusion. What was it like for the Children of Israel to one day be free, and the next day made slaves by an evil Pharaoh? How quickly they must have been wearied in both body and soul. How quickly their burdens were made heavy. When such things happen to us in life, whether it be from the hand of an evil Pharaoh, or any other hardship, rest assured the devil is seeking to overthrow our faith in Christ. In the midst of despair how quickly we forget that the Lord is the Helper of the helpless, a very present help in time of trouble.

But who is stronger, dear Christian, the Lord or the devil? Who left heaven and came to earth to overcome our own sin and the power the devil had over us? Who took the weight and burden of our own sins upon Himself, reconciling God and man thereby? By Whom does God favor forever rest upon us? Who set us free from the slavery of sin, so that we can happily serve the Lord with gladness! Who is stronger than an evil Pharaoh? Indeed He is Christ your Savior, and "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." There is therefore a great difference between feeling helpless, and actually being helpless. For those who trust in Christ, in His saving blood, believing in His gracious promises, such are not helpless at all. The Lord "shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."

### I. An evil Pharaoh increased the burdens of the people.

In our lesson today we see the Egyptians were afraid of the growing population of the Israelites. Fear is always what moves evil people to do evil things, but in God's kingdom faith works by love. Fearful Pharaoh first sought to control their population by afflicting them with great burdens. "They did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens." The children of Israel were made slaves by their own government. Yet this did not diminish their numbers but "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Since Pharaoh's first efforts at birth control did not work, he sought to control the population by infanticide. The midwives were to kill the male babies. These efforts and laws of Pharaoh are quite similar today to our government which promotes population control through family planning or the murderous law of Roe v. Wade.

In the ever increasing efforts of Pharaoh to diminish the population of the children of Israel, we see Satan's diligent attempts through evil governments to eradicate

the Church from off the earth. Sometimes governments increase our burdens. We pay more and more in taxes, yet we receive less and less. Our government writes more and more laws, yet we are less safe. Sometimes governments even persecute believers. Many Christians become so discouraged by these burdens they do not want to bring children into this world of hard bondage. Others become so discouraged by the hard Christian life they forsake the faith. Some rebel. The danger here is that the believer reasons the Christian life is just too hard. They leave the straight and narrow path and they enter into broad path which leads to destruction. When the heart stubbornly refuses to suffer all things for the sake of God's kingdom, such deny their cross and lose their own soul.

But when we are having trouble taking up our own cross, we need to remember the Lord is the Helper of the helpless. We look "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." Jesus was persecuted too, yet He did not forsake His cross but for our salvation He accepted it and persevered unto the end. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." This is what the Children of Israel did in the midst of their slavery. Though Pharaoh "made their lives bitter with hard bondage" the more they were afflicted, the more they grew and multiplied. This is a picture of faith in the midst of crisis. The Lord in His divine omnipotence gave to the women the strength needed to bear children. God then is stronger than the laws of any Pharaoh, and those Pharaoh's who oppose Him in the end and drowned in the depths of the sea. If we have an evil Pharaoh who increases our burdens, or even persecutes the Church and our little ones, we must not despair, nor should we despise this cruel taskmaster. God gives each believer the strength needed to bear his burdens and Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

God at times put His own children through the furnace of affliction. He chastens us, makes our life extremely hard and difficult to purge out our impurities of sin. It hurts when He cuts back the branches, but it only makes us more fruitful. In Isaiah 48 the Lord says, "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted?" God's name is polluted when we rebel against authority or refuse to carry our burdens but His name is glorified when we endure all things for the sake of the Gospel. With His help we can indeed bear great burdens, but we do so only when we place our faith and confidence in our Deliverer from sin. But He has

placed us here and planted His Word in our heart for the glory of His name and not our own. Likewise He passes us through the fire of affliction that He might "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

II. Who is the slave and who has been set free? Now concerning the fruitful Children of Israel and Pharaoh, who was the freeman and who was the slave? You see it is the devil himself who wants believers to feel as if we are slaves to an overbearing government, or slaves to the laws of men. Since the devil wants us to switch sides he speaks in this manner, "Aren't you tired of suffering under the lords and authorities of this earth? Aren't you tired of obeying God's Word and only suffering for it? Don't you wish to be free of all this? Follow me and throw off this yoke of tyranny and live freely the way your heart desires." Thus by convincing the believer he is a slave to God's law, the devil incites the believer to rebel against God's Word.....doing so the devil has acquired another slave. Those who are truly captive and bound are those who think they must fulfill God's law in order to be saved. But who is really the slave and who has been set free? Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The Lord didn't free us from our sins so that He could have a bunch of servants. Jesus simply freed us from our sins because He was moved to do so in His own heart. After His own bitter sufferings and death He came to our prison, opened the door and said, "Go in peace." In His Gospel you will find no demands or commands from the Lord that you must now fulfill. Instead the Lord says, "I have fulfilled all God's commands and set you free from all sin." There isn't even one law or good work we must do for our own salvation, "for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." You are righteous simply by believing He was righteous for you! When this Gospel sets us so perfectly free, we are truly changed, transformed, new creatures. We serve the Lord with gladness not because we have to, but because we want to, for we are not under the law, but under God's grace. And even if God has ordained an evil Pharaoh over us, by faith we know we are yet free. Thus, though slaves the Children of Israel are free, and though lord of Egypt, Pharaoh himself was a slave. All unbelievers are slaves to the devil himself, blinded by sin, and captive to the will of their cruel taskmaster, the devil. But "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Now dear believer, when you know that your Savior was moved by love to take the burden of your sin upon

His own back, what is it that you now feel like doing? With joy don't we start looking around to see if we can help and share the burdens of others? The Bible says, "bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." We now weep with them that weep. We diligently labor to provide for our own, or even a stranger, or even our enemy. We "do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Gal. 6 We support the weak and comfort the feeble-minded. We "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." By faith we even become servants of one another. The only time we do not serve one another, is when the other commands us to do something God has not commanded. When Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill the baby boys, they did not obey, for "we ought to obey God rather than man." In like manner if an evil Pharaoh made us slaves, we would have to be slaves for the sake of God's kingdom. But if an evil Pharaoh commanded us to break one of God's commandments "we ought to obey God rather than man." Thus we care little for our own bodies, and the government might well take our freedoms, but we are still free men in the sight of God. We will always fear, love, and trust in God above all things, and we will never give up the Gospel.

Finally brethren, no matter how great our present distress, the Lord will always help and deliver us. Let us not be discouraged. As the Lord blessed the faithfulness of the midwives, so God will richly bless those who do His will. Though sorely oppressed with bitter bondage, the Children of Israel persevered for they knew their Deliverer would come. We too wait for our Savior and Deliverer. Therefore whether we have a good or evil Pharaoh, let us run with patience the race the Lord has set before us, for Christ has set us free from our slavery of sin and even now we are His own precious children by faith. The Lord our God is indeed the Helper of the helpless. "O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." For this reason we can "boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Heb. 13:6 Amen.

Pastor Tobin Pederson, 7685 Maple Hill Rd. Corcoran,  
MN, 55340, 763-494-5164, srmn0739  
solideogloria96@comcast.net , orthodoxlutheran.org