

May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023  
Pinecrest Baptist Church  
a.m.

Sermon Series: Delivered; Rescued from Bondage  
Sermon #18 Title: - *O Blessed Thought!*  
Sermon #18 Text: (Exodus 13:17-22)

In 1862, a 28-year-old man named Joseph Henry Gilmore had been invited to preach at First Baptist Church in Philadelphia, PA. He was a preacher, but had not yet pastored. As he started to preach to them the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, his heart got stuck on the three of the most important words in all of Christendom. – “He leadeth me.”

So greatly impressed was I with the blessedness of divine guidance that I made this my theme." He later felt that the dark days of the Civil War may have subconsciously led him to focus on God's leadership.

At the close of the meeting, Henry and some others went to the home of a deacon. "There," he wrote, "we continued our discussion of divine guidance. While I was still talking and listening, I wrote on a piece of my exposition manuscript the words to this hymn. I handed the paper to my wife and more or less forgot the incident."

He would go on to say that 3 years later, he went to preach as a guest at the Second Baptist Church of Rochester, in New Hampshire. Sitting down in his pew, he opened their hymnal, and the book fell open to – “to those words.” Someone had turned his words into a song, though he never gave anyone those words.

- But his wife did. She turned them in a publication, without his knowledge, and Dr. William Bradbury had read his poem, and set the music to it for Christians to sing.

The words that Henry had written began with this famous stanza:

*He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!  
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!  
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,  
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!*

There is nothing like God working the circumstances of life for His glory.

This morning we set our attention on that Blessed Thought of God's leading in our lives.

Israel has been turned out of Egypt. They are now without earthly masters; but are under the Living God.

Before we get into our text there are a couple of things to take note of and ponder.

**1<sup>st</sup> - Israel is now facing a National Choice** - For all of Israel's eventual failings, and faltering, they are now living with a choice:

- Being free of Egyptian bondage they could 1.) Continue to follow the God that Freed them; or 2.) Make a break for it, and strike out on their own.

- All that God would do was “lead them” – there is no mention at all of an “enforced followship.”

## 2<sup>nd</sup> – Israelites now had a Personal Choice – They too could

1.) Stay with their nation as it followed the Lord; 2.) Strike out on their own away from Israel, and take a chance away on living away from their people.

Of course, I guess you can paint a scenario of a third possible choice, which would be for each family to decide what to do, if the nation chose not to continue following the Lord.

- At this point in Israel's history that third scenario was unnecessary because:

1.) The National Mood was decided at this point to follow the Lord.

2.) It appears the Individual Moods were united with the nation to walk where Moses walked, and follow wherever God would lead.

All of the Israelites hit the Egyptian Exits united, decided, and in lock step with each other in following the God of Moses, not only out of Egypt; but to His next promised place – Canaan land!

Another thing to take note of. – When God lead Israel out of Egypt, He had informed them He would lead them to Canaan land.

- (vs 5 – “And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites...”)

Now here is the thing to realize today, and the principle with God that has not changed from them till now.

- He told them where they were going!

- He did not tell them what it would be like getting there!

- They are coming out of Egypt blind to their journey, but not to their destination!

(Now it doesn't take much brain power to realize that you and I are on the same trip.

- If you have been saved, your destination is set in divine concrete. – Your destination is Jesus.

- What you do not know, is what life is like getting there.

- And know this. If you are not saved by Jesus, you too are in a very similar circumstance. Your destination is the eternal lake of fire. The only thing not known is what your life will be like getting there.)

-Every person ought to know two things: - Where you are Going, and Who you are Following!

Now with all of that being said, lets look at these five verses of scripture, and see three things to learn about *the God who will lead those who will follow!*

### I. The Mind of God's Leading Care – vs 17-18

“And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not *through* the way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, *through* the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.”

The First thing to take note of here is the “involved care of God.”

**A. The Involved Care of God – “God led them...”**

What a gentle, but firm and confident phrase... “God led them...”

\*Note – He did not “point them;” – He did not “push them”, He did not “drive them;” He led them!

- 1.) twice here in this passage Moses records the phrase, “God led” – “God led them” – vs 18 – “God led the people.”

\*Note – At least 20 times in the Old Testament, the prophets and writers mention, not necessarily “leaving Egypt” but being “led” out of Egypt, through the Wilderness and into Canaan.

I believe any seasoned Christian will tell you this; there is nothing more convoluting in life and contentious in your spirit than when you resist the clear leading of God. And there is nothing as sweet, and peaceful, and relieving, as yielding to the leading of God.

That’s why Elisha Hoffman wrote in 1887 -

***“What have I to dread, what have I to fear,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms?  
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,  
Leaning on the everlasting arms.”***

\*Note – Know this, and know it well – God will lead those willing to be lead; God will judge those who are not!

The Bible tells us in Romans 8:14 – “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

\*The Lord’s involvement in the posterity of Abraham wasn’t just about Israel leaving Egypt during a down season of life but was about God leading Israel from now on.

- a.) Leading them to a place
- b.) Leading them through a journey
- c.) Leading them with His presence.

- That’s the Involved Care of God!

**B. The Intelligent Care of God – “God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea:**

\*Note – The first thing that Moses tells us about God’s leadership is where He does NOT lead them:

- 1.) Where He did not go – “God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near ...”
  - a.) They did not go the “practical way”
  - b.) They did not go the “prepared way”
  - c.) They did not go the “public way”
  - d.) They did not go the “popular way”

Why? – He tells us: - “Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.”

- Quite obviously the LORD knew the spiritual, mental, and emotional constitution of the people – and they wouldn’t be able to “handle it.”

- At this point in Israel’s stamina, their fear of man was much stronger than their faith in the LORD.

When they see “war.” –

- “the way of the land of the Philistines” was dotted with people, continually ready for battle; and by the language used here, appeared to be very aggressive people as well.

\*Note – There is something important to note here. Moses doesn’t say, lest they become engaged in a war – just lest they see it.

- the term for see it, means to perceive it and understand it.

Many settlers moving west avoided Indian country because of news of battling tribes.

- This may very well just mean; this way exposed the Israelites to a whole new kind of world; a whole new threat of intimidation and worry.

- this was an “uncontrolled” country.
- In Egypt, there were no warring tribes.
- In Egypt, all things were under control, horrible control for the Jews – but control nonetheless.

Now here’s a good question: Why not just blow through the Philistines with a little divine dynamite, and get to where they were going rather than detour through the Mountains?

- First – that obviously was not God’s plan for the Philistines...
- Second – Israel needed a long journey in a short distance.

(Note the Bible says God didn’t go this way “although it was near.”

Let me ask you this question? – Why didn’t God just go ahead and take you to heaven the moment He saved you? Why doesn’t God do that?

- I don’t know all the reasons; but
  - that might hamper the evangelistic call... every time someone came to Jesus, they died.
  - there must be a living, journeying, work of God, for lost men to watch and learn and see.

Israel needed a longer journey, because we needed a Red Sea miracle.

Israel needed a longer journey because God had an Egyptian army to bury in the sea.

Israel needed a longer journey because men needed to witness not just the Work of God, but the Wisdom of God as He led His people His way!

2.) Where He did go – “But God led the people about, *through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea:*”

- a.) “in circles” – “God led the people about...” – about – to go in a circle

\*Note – Do you know why it sometimes seems that you’re on a merry go round? – It may very well be you are and the Lord is the One spinning the wheel.

- Going in circles, spinning your wheels, going nowhere fast, is NO WASTE, When God is the One leading the march.

(Listen – Even when Israel was going nowhere, they were going somewhere!)

- There was a difference in “Going to the Promised Land” – and “Going where God leads.”

- Whether this was God’s intent or not, I do not know – but one of the things that Israel had to deal with along each step of the way was their decided trust in God.

(God had already told them where He had for them!

– Palestine – Canaan land!)

- But HE was not walking in the obvious direction of the promised land.

Now here’s the choice:

- Follow Him wherever He goes:

- Or break with the group and go there on your own!

- There must be a decision that says – “I’m with You!” not “I’ll gladly go to the place you have for me!”

- That’s like wanting Heaven, but not Jesus!

All men must have the right view of the Lord’s leading, and their following.

A man walks up to a jobsite one afternoon, and sees three bricklayers doing their assigned work.

- He asked the first one – “What are you doing here?” – He replied, “I’m laying bricks, what does it look like!”

- He asked the second one the same thing – He replied, “I’m building a house!”

- Not being satisfied with the information given, he asks the third one, and the third one said, “I’m working for my father!”

- the first one saw the work – the second one saw the project – the third one lived in fellowship!

- There is the Involved Care of God – There is the Intelligent Care of God; and there is the Interceding Care of God

***C. The Interceding Care of God*** – “and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.”

1.) Israel was not ill-equipped outwardly – they were ill-equipped inwardly.

a) Harnessed -means arranged in battle like array, and indicates that they had the tools of battle available to them.

b.) but outward appearances does not mean you are inwardly ready.

\*Know this – Just because something makes sense to you; doesn’t mean it actually makes sense.

(You may have all the outward accouterments, and logical information necessary, and you can’t find one good reason not to “go that way”, or “not to proceed with your plans” and for some reason God just keeps pulling the plug on you. – Let me tell you this: God not leading the short way, the clear way, the obvious way; is the GREATEST reason NOT to go that way!)

God’s Will and Wisdom is always, always, always, ***The*** reason you move, and ***The*** reason you don’t move! - Though Israel may have appeared outwardly equipped – In the Lord’s infinite wisdom His intercession spared them, because they were not inwardly equipped.

That is the Mind of God’s Leading Care

– ***His involvement, His Intelligence, and His Intercession!***

II. The Memory of God's Living Promise – vs 19 – “**And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.**”

- Being released from Egypt, did not mean Moses was released from ancient duties. Notice that the Bible takes care to put this verse at the same level of study, that it does the exodus itself.

**A. The Deed Moses Carried Out** – “**And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.**”

1.) that means the bones of Joseph had been kept! – for over 300 years, in freedom, and in slavery, in high times and low, the Israelites had kept the bones of Joseph!

(The Pharaoh may have forgotten Joseph – but Israel did not. – Moses did not.)

\*Note – It appears to me that the Israelites have a very different view of their place in God's plan, than we do.

- Israelites pay close attention to God's “eternal work” for their nation.

(Here's what I mean.

- Israel is perpetual.

- Israelites are born, live, and die.

\*Note – It appears that they Israelites took their place in Israel, rather than living for Israelites. Their individual lives just fit into God's overarching plan that spans the ages.

We have the tendency to think that God starts with us when we're born, He works His will for us, we die, and our role is over!

- God is not working on you from the cradle to the grave to help you have a good ride. God is using your time between the cradle and the grave to suit His eternal purpose. – His cause in your life – has nothing to do with your life – it has everything to do with His ages spanning plan.

- Over 300 years after Joseph died, Moses and Israel are still focused on God's plan for the family of Israel, not merely the moments in Israel!

Now why did Moses keep THIS Box – Why was there this Deed to do in the first place?

**B. The Word Moses Kept** – “**...for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.**”

1.) Moses kept the Word God gave through Joseph!

- Before Joseph died, in freedom and prosperity – He told his sons – God is coming to get the family out of Egypt; and when He does carry my bones with you – I wouldn't be caught dead in this place.

Genesis 50:24-25 – “**And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.**”

I can imagine some shallow headed air bag looking at Moses when he ordered them to get that coffin and bring it with them, saying – “*Are you kidding? – You're gonna take this*



*that serious? – Man lets go! – Joseph’s dead, he doesn’t care!”*

(For some people the Word from God is nothing more than nice moral guidance for consideration. – For Moses, and the Israelites, it was Marching Orders!

- Friend, it still is!)

- Moses knew that was an old instruction for the present day!

(And as time has gone on, all of God’s Word has served as eternal instructions for the ever present now.)

- Just as much as God expected Moses to hold to that Old Word then, is just as much as God expects us to hold to His Word now!

We see the Mind of God’s Leading Care

We see the Memory of God’s Lasting Word

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### III. The Manner of Gods Lighting Way – vs 20-22

\*Note – Moses records for not necessarily the day God made His presence known, but he does tell us the place

- they were “**encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.**”

- Apparently this is the place, after leaving Egypt they first went to Succoth (12:37) – and from Succoth to Etham – and it is here in the edge of the wilderness, the Lord God shows His Presence in a awe-inspiring display!

**A. It was Natural** – “And the LORD went before them...”

1.) Not behind them, but before them. It is only natural for the One who will lead, to be in the front of parade.

\*Note – It ought to go without saying, but if you are going to follow the Lord, you have to get behind Him! – His action comes before yours! – His direction takes place before yours.

When you follow the events out, it was not philosophical, theological, or mysterious. – God would move – They would Move. God would stop – They would stop!

**B. It was Supernatural** – “by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light;”

\*Note – This is the only time in all of history, and the only people in all of history that the Lord showed Himself to the human eyes of a nation this way!

1.) A Column out front. –

a.) The column was cloudy, or dark during the day.

b.) The column was a column of fire by night.

\*Note – It should be noted that this entire scenario is wonderful training for New Testament truth.

- Israel was delivered from Egypt under the blood of a Lamb – They are directed from Egypt by the column of cloud and fire.

- In the New Testament men are delivered from sin, by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus) - And men are directed from then on by the Holy Spirit!

- What came before whole nation – A column of cloud and fire.

- What came to individual members of the first church – a “tongue of fire, and a sound of wind”

- As God guided the nation with cloud and fire from without!
- The Holy Spirit came to His people with wind and a fire within!

God did outwardly for Israel in that time; what God does inwardly for the saved, in all time.

*C. It was Continual* – “He took not away pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of the fire by night, *from* before the people.” – for as long as they were on their journey.

Let me tell you the most wonderful thing about the Spirit of God for the Christian. – You are Sealed by Him. He is ever-present with you. – You may grieve Him. You may quench Him. You may disobey Him, but you cannot disconnect from Him.

Conclusion:

1. All the way my Savior leads me,  
What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt His tender mercy,  
Who through life has been my Guide?  
Heav’nly peace, divinest comfort,  
Here by faith in Him to dwell!  
For I know, whate’er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well;  
For I know, whate’er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well.

What a verse of song, written by a woman who wrote over 8000 songs, completely blind from 6 weeks old. – No one knows what it means to be “led” like the one who cannot see, but knows how to trust!