



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Created and Called

October 26, 2025

Exodus 19:1-6

Clint Pressley

19 On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³ while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴ ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

(Pastor Prays)

I was in Istanbul, it used to be called Constantinople, named after their emperor Constantine. In the 4th century, he was converted, and then he founded the eastern part of the Roman Empire in Constantinople. And for 1000 years, there was a Christian city until 1453. The church overran the walls of Constantinople, and we went to see some of the ruins. We saw some of the historic sites. And if you're standing in Constantinople and you get in a car and you ride southeast for about four or five hours, you'll come to a town called Ephesus. We know the town of Ephesus from the little letter written by Paul to the church at Ephesus called Ephesians. In a letter, Paul

wrote to Christians that needed some sort of solid understanding of their own identity. He wrote to them to confirm their identity and to combat what we would call today, expressive individualism. Here's what he said to them. That you are his workmanship. You have been created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Now that New Testament writing has a principle with it that we find right here in Exodus chapter 19. Here in Exodus chapter 19, we find what you might call some of the high points of the Old Testament. In fact, some biblical scholars have said this is the most important passage in the Old Testament. I feel like they say that about every passage. I don't know that it's the most important, but I would say it is very important. Here we find a pivotal point. Israel is coming out of Egypt. They are coming out of the wandering, and they're sitting at the mountain. And from this point forward, we'll go to the Ten Commandments. Do you know that from chapter 19 of Exodus through the rest of Exodus, through Leviticus, into Numbers chapter 10, they sit right there at that mountain. Here, you have in front of you something that outlines the formulation of God's people and calls them to do something. And what I'm hoping today is that when you read this passage, you might understand that God created you. This is a theme of my sermon.

God Created You to Use You

And you are created to live your life to the glory of God. Let's do a little quick run-through of these six verses. It's just six verses. And I'm going to just kind of make it a little Bible study. Let's look at it, and then I'll come back and try to make some applications for our lives. You join me there in chapter 19, we'll start in verse 1. This important passage sets us up for the Ten Commandments in chapter 20. Now, I don't know what I'm going to do with the Ten Commandments. I can't decide if I'm going to do commandments one through four and then five through six as two sermons. Or, what I'm thinking I'm going to do is take each commandment and just preach each one and go through it. So we'll see. Y'all pray for me and pray a certain way, and we'll see whose prayers are effective, all right?

So what we have here in front of us is the picture of the Old Testament law. And if you're not careful, what you end up doing is saying, in the Old Testament, we were saved by the law, and in the New Testament, we are saved by grace, and that is not the case. If you're not careful, you end up saying Old Testament was all law, and the New Testament is all grace but that is not the

case. God has always saved His people by grace. Always. What you have here is getting ready to get the law. Verses 1 and 2 are a formal introduction. Do you see it? Did you notice that in verse 1, there is a timestamp? On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt. The third new moon would make sense. They've been traveling almost three months. This is telling us how long it's been since they came out of Egypt. That's important because there's another timestamp in Numbers chapter 10 that says they spent almost a year right there at the base of that mountain. So, you have a timestamp in verse 1, and then you have a clear picture of where it is physically in verse 2. They set out from Rephidim, and they came to the wilderness of Sinai. It's mentioned twice, in verse one and verse two. It's the first kind of stamp of where they are in the Sinai. They camp there at the bottom of that mountain. That's important because you might remember at the burning bush in Exodus 3:12, when God spoke to Moses, he told Moses, look, here's the sign for you. When you lead the people out of Egypt, when you pull them out into the wilderness, bring them back right here to this mountain and worship me at this mountain. And that's what they're doing.

In verse 3, we see Moses going up to God. By the way, that's just a reminder, going up to God, that's a reminder of the transcendence of God, the holiness of God, our need for God, that God is not like us. And the only way that we actually can be in his presence is through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. So Moses has gone up to God. There's a purpose for it. And the Lord tells him, this is what I want you to say to the house of Jacob. Look at the two names there in verse 3, to the house of Jacob, and the people of Israel. It's a parallelism; it's talking about the same people, the house of Jacob, and the people of Israel, but it also is a reminder, don't forget where you come from. You used to be the house of Jacob. Then God does something, and you become the people of Israel. Don't forget that you, at one time, were lost under condemnation and you were an enemy to God, and in his goodness, he sent Jesus Christ, the perfect Savior, to live perfectly, and die on the cross. God raised Him from the dead. You believed that, and it converted you. Your sins are forgiven, and you became a new person. You used to be Jacob. You now are Israel. He uses those two names to remind them, don't forget, who you used to be.

This is, by the way, you see those two names, Jacob and Israel? It's a reminder for God's people to not be prideful. Please don't think that God was in heaven and looked at you and saw, you

know what, she has such great potential. She can be really useful. Let's go down there. She's kind of a diamond in the rough; let's just make her a diamond. Let's go down there and save her, and we'll use her because she's really got all this potential. That is not the case. That is not how God looked at us. He saw us in our filth and sin. We were enemies before him, running away from God, and he pursued us with the gospel, and your ears heard it, your eyes saw it, your heart believed, and you were saved. Not because you had potential and great value, but because of God's goodness and grace in Jesus.

So you have this picture in Jacob and Israel, and then in verse 4, this is picked up a little bit. The Lord says, you have seen what I did to the Egyptians. Don't forget, there is judgment. There's a picture of God's judgment. Let us not be afraid to talk about our God, the God of the Bible, as a God that judges sin. That when you came into this world, because of your sinful nature, when you could make a choice, you ended up at some point making the wrong one. You didn't have to learn how to sin. You just knew. You inherited that. If you're mean, you inherited that from your folks. So blame it on them. You got that all the way back to Adam and Eve. We came into this world, and we make those choices, and there we are, sinners, enemies of God. That sin demands a punishment. That punishment was over our heads, and the gospel is what tells us we can be saved from that punishment. What you have here in verse 4, the Lord says, don't forget what I did to the Egyptians. I'm thinking mostly about that 10th plague. You go back and look at the plagues, that 10th plague, when the angel of death came and hovered over each house, and any house that did not have the blood of the lamb over its doorpost, the angel of death would take the life of the firstborn. Judgment was because there were sinners. But judgment was taken away from any person that was underneath the lamb, the Passover Lamb, and the New Testament tells us that Jesus Christ is our Passover Lamb. So, when we read about judgment, don't back away from it. You go ahead and look at it, full-throated, look at judgment, but remember the gospel saves us from judgment. There's a great professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. His name is Jim Hamilton. He wrote a book that's difficult to read, but it would benefit you. The name of the book is God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment. Tough title, only a professor would come up with that—God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment. God saved people through judgment. God saved you through the judgment that fell on Jesus at the cross. He received judgment; you received grace. So, remember that when you read passages of judgment.

Verse 4, ⁴ *'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.* And isn't that a beautiful picture? How I pulled you out. You think you're wandering in the desert? It is all God and all grace. I bore you out on eagle's wings. And look at the intimacy in verse 4, how it ends. I didn't just save you out of slavery; I brought you close in. It's like the story of the prodigal son, when the father stands on the hillside looking out for his son, waiting on him to come home. When he finally sees that boy walking his way, the father takes off running and embraces the son. It's a picture of God saying, I didn't just save you, I brought you close.

That's verse 4. Now look at verse 5. ⁵ *Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine.* Our part of the covenant is obedience. It is not; if you'll do this, you will be. The covenant is what God has already done, and our obligation is to obey. If you obey my voice to keep my covenant, you are my, look at the phraseology, my treasured possession. You are uniquely loved by God. In other words, God does not love everyone exactly the same. For those of you who are in Christ, there is now a covenant obligation God has to you that He's put on Himself to love you. And here is a picture of the common grace of God. Does God provide for his creation? Yes. The common grace of God says that the rain falls on the just and the unjust. But the specific grace of God is that His people in Christ are his treasured, that you are treasured by God, not because of your great value, but because he's filled you with that great value. That's verse 5, among all peoples, for all the earth is mine. That is one of the clear monotheistic statements in the Old Testament. It's not that God is greater than all gods; it is that there's only one God, our God, the God of the Bible.

Verse 6, here's the first time you see this little phrase, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. Here's this assignment. ⁶ *and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* *These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."* This is what we believe. that Jesus Christ is our intercessor. We go to God the Father, through God the Son, by the Holy Spirit. We can only do that through what Christ has done for us. We do not believe in earthly priests. We believe that God has made each individual. We are now a kingdom of priests, and we are to intercede for other people. Not only that, there is an ethical part, a holy nation. It's obvious we are to live a certain way.

And so we get all of that out of verses 1 through 6. God sends Moses back down the mountain to speak to the people, and we'll cover all of that next week. But for now, we see that God has created you to use you. That's how you might understand verses 1 through 6. Now, that's sort of the Bible study part. We catch our breath, and we'll go back to it and think, all right, now I've got an understanding of the interpretation. How would I apply the passage? What does this do for me in 2025? Let me just offer up a few suggestions. Here's the first one, number one.

God knows what he's doing

It's good for you to just remember, God not only is in control, he knows what he's doing. In verse 1 and verse 2, you have that sort of formal introduction, and I'll just rifle through it. But in verse 1, you have a very specific time. God is very specific about the time. He didn't just set the earth in order and step back and watch it unwind. He is intricately involved in his creation. Not only is there a specific time, but if you look hard enough at it with that timestamp in light of Numbers 10, you understand that there is a specific amount of time. It's not just when, it's also how long. Not only that, if you get down to verse 2, then you find God has named a very specific place. This is God's choosing for God's people. Now, why do I say all of that? It's just to remind you that our God, according to the Bible, is working out his eternal plan in his own all-wise time. He's doing that generally in the world, all around the world. He's doing that specifically with you, with his redeemed people. He knows exactly where you are. He knows who to bring into your life. He knows who to take out of your life. He knows how long to make each season in your life last. He knows where you need to be. He knows how to get you there. He knows when it's time for you to live. God will do what he will do. He knows what he's doing.

So what do you do then? What's your obligation? Here are a couple of things that you need to do as a Christian man or a Christian woman. One is that you need to rejoice that you are not forgotten. Just rejoice that he knows. He's redeemed you, he knows where you are, and he is doing something. Something else you need to do that I've thought about is that if you're at a certain spot for a certain amount of time at a certain place, you should be growing, you should be developing, you should find ways to strengthen your Christianity. You need to know who and why and what you believe, to live your life as one who honors God. So we rejoice that we're not forgotten and we develop. Let me give you a third thing that's helpful. You need to trust. You need to trust God and remember that God is God and you are not. Trust Him in that. For all of

you that like to be in control, I mean, you really want to be in control, it's good to remember you actually are not in control. People have asked me, what's it like to be the President of the Southern Baptist Convention? And it's about the same as being the pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church. It's like riding a bull. I'm on top, but I am not in control. And sometimes life is like that. Let's not forget that our God is absolutely in control. What else? Don't forget that you, in this time of your life, spend your life working for God's glory and the gospel, and other times, you just need to remember, God knows what he's doing, and I need to rest my soul in that and just trust him. So that's one thing you can learn from this passage: that God knows what he's doing. Let me give you another thing to learn from this passage. Here's the second thing, number two.

God keeps his promises

I tried to point that out in verses 1 and 2. You find out they're not only in the wilderness of Sinai, but they are at the mountain. See the end of verse 2? Look where they are. They are camped before the mountain. That's important because, you know, in Exodus chapter 3 is the time when God met with Moses. It was the burning bush incident. They're out by the burning bush in Exodus 3:12. What did God say to Moses? ¹² *He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."* And here we are, 15 chapters later, God has done what he said he would do. Now, this Bible right here, it's why it's important for you to know the Bible. It's why we preach the Bible through expositional preaching. We read the passage, explain what it means, and then apply it. It's just the simple, meat-and-potatoes kind of approach to doing church. Why do we do that? Because it's good for you. What does the Bible say, and what are the promises of God in the Bible?

In Isaiah 43, when God says to the people of Israel, when you walk through the waters, I'll be with you. That's the promise. In Matthew chapter 6, when Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount, he tells them that God will provide. It's a promise. Go and get Romans chapter 8, memorize Romans chapter 8, and there you find that God loves you and Christ. That's a promise. In Philippians 4:6, when Paul gives instructions about prayer, he promises to remove anxiety. Be anxious for nothing, but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. And what's going to happen? It's the peace of God that goes

beyond understanding. It's a promise from God. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says, come to me and I will give your soul rest. It's a promise. Paul says there's a promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that God is going to give you a way out of temptation. What does he say? That God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but when you are tempted, he is going to provide a way for you to actually endure it. That is a promise. It's a promise that, in Christ, God will save you through the gospel.

You know the gospel. We say it every Sunday. Here's the gospel. The God of the Bible is a God who is holy and a loving creator who created you in his image. You have dignity because God created you in his image. But the image of God in you is so covered by sin. It's almost indiscernible, having been disfigured. That sin is not just us making wrong decisions. That sin is a crime against a holy God. And God, who is also just, must judge sin. We understand justice. We like law and order. God will judge sin. Because of our sin, we live our lives under condemnation. We are under condemnation, but we don't have to stay under condemnation. The story of the Bible is that God, in his goodness, has given us Jesus, who is fully God and fully man. And, as a man, Jesus kept all of the laws in the way that we can. That's why we need his righteousness. We are not righteous, but Jesus is fully righteous. But not only that, he goes to the cross, and at the cross, where God will pour out judgment, it's not us. You weren't nailed to the cross; Jesus was. And there on the cross, Jesus takes the wrath of God in our place. And that's not all he does. He doesn't just pay for our sin; he then covers us with his righteousness. It's the great exchange: your sin given over to him, his righteousness given to you. Now, none of that means anything unless you trust that Jesus did that for you. But if you do, come on. The promise of the Bible is if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, the Bible says you will be saved.

When you flip through the pages of the Bible, and you get to the very end, Revelation 21, there you'll find this great promise. In the end, God will make all things right. Jesus will come, receive his church, and he will abolish all sin, and we won't ever have to struggle with it anymore. He'll take away grief and depression and crying and death. And the promise of the Bible is that God will make all things right. Hallelujah. I think you can find that here. I think you read this passage, and you find out that, number one, God knows what he's doing. Number two, God keeps his promises. I think there's a third application, number 3.

God judges sin

I tried to point that out in verse 4. You'll find it there in verse 4. When God says to the people of Israel, you yourselves know, you've seen what I did, to the Egyptians. Now, you could go through the plagues if you'd like. You could go to the Red Sea and see them drowning. But I think a better place to go is at the very last plague, the 10th one. That 10th plague is a terrible thing. On that night, the angel of death would come to every home. And every home, one of two things would happen. Every home would experience death in some capacity. Any home that did not have the blood of the Passover Lamb on the doorpost, inside that home, because every one of them were sinners, the firstborn would die. If the angel of death came to a home that had the blood of the Passover Lamb on the doorpost, then the angel of death would pass over that home because the lamb would be the substitute.

And that right there is the hope of the gospel. That is when the angel of death hovers over your soul, one of two things is going to happen. You are going to die and go to hell because of your sin, or because your soul is covered with the blood of a substitute, the Passover Lamb, our substitute, because your heart has been found in Christ, that condemnation passes over you. When you read this passage, it's good to remember that God judges' sin. I think you can get that from this passage.

Let me give you a fourth thing. Look, I had 10 of these. I spent a lot of time on an airplane, with nothing to do. I can't sleep, so I'm flipping through commentaries. But I shrunk it down. I got home Thursday night late. Connie was home Thursday afternoon, so she's here, kind of policing, so I struck it down. So, I'm just going to give you six. But here's a fourth, number four.

God lifts us up

Here's a great promise. Isn't it beautiful? It's in verse 4, do you see it there? ⁴ *'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.* It's said even more poetically over in Deuteronomy 32:11. Over there, it said like this. ¹¹ *Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions.* That's getting them out of the nest. If you've got adult children at home, you understand. Get them out of the nest. Hallelujah. Get them out.

But they didn't just let them fall. The eagle *flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions*. In other words, knocking them out, and then, when they're falling and not flying, swooping them up. And here's what he's saying. That's what I did. I carried you out. The power of an eagle, it's a reminder that he lifts up our heads. In Psalm 145:14 it says, *The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down*. Peter says, 1 Peter chapter 5, *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you*. Or maybe Isaiah 40:31, we all have heard this one. *But they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint*.

Brothers and sisters, and those of you that are not even my brothers and sisters in Christ yet, God will raise you up. God will take you out of the pit. God will take you out of your sin, out of the filth, out of addiction, out of uselessness. God is able to take you out of sadness, out of depression, out of this inward cocooning of yourself and thinking of yourself. God is able to save you from that. And like an eagle swoops in, he carries you, and it's all God, and it is all grace, and it is all found in Jesus. Why does he do that? God does it because he created you to use you. What do we have so far? What do we learn about God from this passage? Number one, he keeps his promises. God knows what he's doing. That's the second one. God judges' sin. God lifts you up. And number five is...

God brings us close

Look at the language there in verse 4. That I bore you out on eagle's wings and I brought you to myself. And don't you know it, Psalm 145, that the Lord is close to all of those that call on him, so call on him. What did James say? Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. We pray for people that are going through a brokenhearted period. We know that Psalm 34 says that the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and he saves those that are crushed in spirit. He will bring you close. Not only that, let me give you one last one, and I'll call it a day here. It's in verses five and six. So, the Lord brings us close. Number six,

God gives us value

Look at the privilege in verse five. What a great privilege. Here is our identity. Verse 5, ⁵ *Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession.* That is our identity. You know what Paul writes in Colossians? If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. You have this identity in Christ. What does that mean? That means that you, as a saved man or woman, you have been adopted by God legally. You are now his child. You have been redeemed. You've been bought out of slavery. It means that you are loved. What a great privilege, a treasured possession.

Not only that, it's not just a privilege, but we also have a calling. Look at verse 6. ⁶ *and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.* That means we live as an example to those around us. That we become a church or you as an individual are somebody that proclaims truth. Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:9, he quotes this passage and he says, ⁹ *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, What for? that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* That is a kingdom of priests. We believe in the priesthood of believers. That is one of our distinctives as Baptists. What does that mean? That means that you, as someone who's been redeemed by Christ, have every right and access to approach God the Father because of what God the Son has done for you. You don't need somebody else to help you with that. Christ has done that for you. And you, as a believer, have full access to God the Father. And we are called then to intercede for other people. Why? Because we have full access to the Father. God created you to absolutely use you.

Brothers, sisters, take great heart in that. A little while later, we'll take the Lord's Supper, and as we do, we'll be reminded of God's grace given to us in Jesus. And I want you as a believer to find strength there, to find your hope there, to put your trust in God the Father through Jesus the Son. And I want you, if you're not a Christian, to contemplate what it means to not just believe in God, it's not enough, but to believe in the God of the Bible that has given us his Son, Jesus, to save you from your sin.

(Pastor prays)