



EXODUS

FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM

BIBLE TEXT | EXODUS 18:13-27

13 The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. **14** When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" **15** And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God; **16** when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws." **17** Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. **18** You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. **19** Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, **20** and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. **21** Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. **22** And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. **23** If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace." **24** So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. **25** Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. **26** And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. **27** Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country.



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DEVOTIONAL FOR EXODUS 18:13-27

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One of my biggest struggles these days is self-reliance, which really is a nice way to say I struggle with pride and control. In those moments, I'm indicating with my actions that I don't need anyone, including the Lord, other than myself. That sounds ridiculous when I say it out loud. I KNOW I need the Lord desperately, but my flesh cries out otherwise. I am no different than Adam and Eve in the beginning or the Israelites that we have read about in Exodus. I am prone to think more of myself than of God.

The last few chapters of Exodus have been great reminders to me that the LORD is the only one who is sufficient to meet all our needs. He's the only one who can bring about water from a rock (Exodus 17:6) and rain down bread from heaven (Exodus 16:4). He is the only one who can defeat enemies for which I am unprepared to battle (Exodus 17:8-16). And He is the only one who provides other people, as His instruments, to help bear our burdens (Exodus 17:10-12; Galatians 6:2) and, as we see in today's passage, to speak into our lives.

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, was a priest of Midian. We do not know exactly what he believed other than that he heard what God had done for the Israelites and worshipped the Lord as greater than all other gods (18:11). What we do know is the Lord used him to speak into Moses' life. When Israel left Egypt, it is estimated that there were about two million people in total. Can you imagine Moses being the only leader among that many people trying to govern and bring about peace and reconciliation? How long do you think people had to wait to see him and get his help? Jethro observed what was happening and warned Moses of bearing that load alone (18:14-18). He encouraged Moses to gather able, faithful and trustworthy men to help him lead the people (18:21-22). Sound familiar? Paul encouraged Timothy to do the same in 2 Timothy 2:2. God Himself confirms to Moses the words of Jethro in Numbers 11:14-17 that he should not carry the burden for the people alone but should appoint other men. Moses' role was to pray and teach (Exodus 18:19). We see New Testament examples of this with the disciples in Acts 6:1-6 and how Paul instructed church leaders in Ephesians 4:11-12.

God created us for dependence on Him. He created other people to bear our burdens and continually point us to Him (Hebrews 10:24-25). I once heard it said, "If dependence is the goal, weakness is an advantage." It is in my weakness that I discover I am not self-sufficient. It is in my weakness that much is made of Christ instead of me (2 Corinthians 12:9). It is in my weakness that I am reminded I need other people to help bear my burdens (Galatians 6:1-3). I can do nothing good apart from Christ and the people He places in my life (John 15:5; Hebrews 3:13-14).



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Questions:

1. In what ways or areas do you rely on your own strength? Why?
2. Who in your life has been or is a "Jethro"? Have they pointed you to God's truth? In what ways?
3. Have you spent more time lately complaining or grumbling about your circumstances (or weaknesses) or praising God that he is using it to bring about your righteousness and His glory? Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.