



SIMMONS
COLLEGE OF KENTUCKY

THE ANGELA PROJECT PRESENTS

40 DAYS OF PRAYER

FOR THE LIBERATION OF
AMERICAN DESCENDANTS OF SLAVERY



1619 - 2019

Commemorating 400 years of slavery
and its evolution in America

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS—TEACHER EDITION

40 Days of Prayer

Sunday School Lessons Outline

Week 1

She Was the First

Sunday, July 14, 2019

Genesis 16 (NRSV)

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, 2 and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. 4 He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!" 6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her.

7 The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." 9 The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her." 10 The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." 11 And the angel of the Lord said to her,

"Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the Lord has given heed to your affliction.

12 He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him, and he shall live at odds with all his kin."

13 So she named the Lord who spoke to her, "You are El-roi"; for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?" 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

15 Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

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The first slave mentioned by name in America: Angela

The first slave mentioned by name in the Bible: Hagar

I. Hagar's Identity

An Egyptian (see Genesis 12:16. Notice as well that the slaves are mentioned in the same context as livestock—donkeys and camels. She was part of a gift to Abram from Pharaoh)

A girl

A slave (Specifically, she was *Sarai's* slave; a fact that is noted at least 8 times in the passage)

Acknowledged by: The narrator

Sarai

Abram

The Angel of the Lord

Hagar herself

II. Hagar's Change in Status

In light on Sarai's inability to conceive, her solution was to make her slave-girl Hagar into a surrogate mother. Of course, there is no mention of Hagar's consent to this arrangement. Hagar may well have expected her status in the household to improve, becoming the mother of the apparent heir to Abram's considerable wealth. Bear in mind, Abram is about 85 years old by now. Verse 3 suggests that Hagar had been a part of the household for ten years by this point—a slave girl becoming a young adult.

From "slave girl" to "wife"? (See verse 3: given as a *wife*)

From "slave girl" to "concubine"?

From "slave girl" to "slave girl with the mistress's child" (See verse 2b)

III. Hagar's Transgression

Events unfold according to Sarai's plan: at her invitation, the younger Hagar sleeps with Abram and conceives. It does not require much "reading between the lines" to recognize that Sarai's jealousy is quickly aroused.



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Hagar did not do anything rebellious

Hagar did not say anything rebellious

Hagar “looked” with contempt on her mistress (See verse 4b)

Sarai then “dealt harshly” with Hagar. What this means exactly is left to our imaginations, but suffice to say that Hagar was willing to risk everything, her life and the life of her child, to escape.

IV. Hagar’s Flight

Hagar ran away.

She was found by The Angel of the Lord (A “theophany”, or the presence of Christ in the Old Testament)

The Angel’s Inquiry

“Where have you come from and where are you going?”

The Angel’s Instructions

“Return and Submit”

Controversial words for someone fleeing from abuse!

(Was the Angel aware of a change of heart by Sarai? Abram?)

The Angel’s Insight

Hagar will have a son

Named Ishmael (meaning, “God Hears”)

The Angel’s Identification

Hagar names the Lord “El-roi” (meaning, “God Sees”)

Week 2

Joseph's Long Journey

Sunday, July 21, 2019

Genesis 37:23-28, 36 (NRSV)

23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; 24 and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

25 Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt.

26 Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?

27 Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. 28 When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

36 Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

Genesis 39 (NRSV)

Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 **The Lord was with Joseph**, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that **the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands**. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him; he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking. 7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand. 9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" 10 And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her. 11 One day, however, when he went into the house to do his work, and while no one else was in the house, 12 she caught hold of his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. 13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, 14 she called out to the members of her household and said to them, "See, my husband has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us!

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He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice; 15 and when he heard me raise my voice and cry out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside.” 16 Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home, 17 and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; 18 but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside.”

19 When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, “This is the way your servant treated me,” he became enraged. 20 And Joseph’s master took him **and put him into the prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison.** 21 But **the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor** in the sight of the chief jailer. 22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph’s care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph’s care, because **the Lord was with him;** and whatever he did, **the Lord made it prosper.**

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Last week we looked at the case of Hagar, an Egyptian slave owned by Hebrews

This week we consider the case of Joseph, a Hebrew slave owned by Egyptians

I. Joseph in Betrayal

Sold by his brothers

Motivated by jealousy

Threw him into an empty pit

His brothers only lifted him up in order to sell him out (verse 28)

Sold as a commodity

The caravan was carrying a variety of products (including the “gum, balm, and resin” mentioned in verse 25) along a well-traveled trading route from Gilead to Egypt.

A note of hope: Even from the moment he was sold into slavery, Joseph was accompanied by “the balm of Gilead” (verse 25), a reference to the hidden Christ.

Sold to slave traders

Ishmaelites: Descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abram and the slave-girl Hagar (see last week’s lesson). Note the intergenerational negative impact of abuse: From the son of a slave to a tribe identified with slave trafficking in just a few generations.

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Perhaps another reference to the hidden Christ: Remember that the name Ishamael means “God hears.”

From “40 Days of Prayer for the Liberation of American Descendants of Slavery:”

“Consider the prayers of the enslaved as they lay on the slave ship, stored chained together and stored like cargo for months on an unknown journey that was thousands of miles long...”

Sold to Potiphar

II. Joseph in Slavery

In a Successful House

Trusted by Potiphar

In a Seductive House

Targeted by Potiphar’s wife

The Lord was with Joseph

The Lord caused Joseph to prosper

The Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for the sake of Joseph

Blessed in the house

Blessed in the field

Potiphar had no concerns as long as Joseph was in charge.

III. Joseph in Prison

Even while incarcerated (under false accusation),

The Lord was with Joseph

The Lord showed Joseph steadfast love

The Lord gave Joseph favor

Joseph demonstrated trustworthiness

Joseph was entrusted with responsibility

Whatever Joseph did, the Lord made it prosper

Week 3

Sunday, July 28, 2019

The Experience of a People

Exodus 1:8-14 (ESV)

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. 10 Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” 11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. 13 So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves 14 and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.\

Exodus 5:4-14 (ESV)

4 But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens.” 5 And Pharaoh said, “Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!” 6 The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, 7 “You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. 8 But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.’ 9 Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words.”

10 So the taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘I will not give you straw. 11 Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least.’” 12 So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. 13 The taskmasters were urgent, saying, “Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw.” 14 And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, “Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?”

Exodus 3:7-10 (ESV)

7 Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

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In previous lessons we examined the personal experience of slavery from the points of view of Hagar and Joseph. In this week’s lesson we consider slavery as a means of social control—a calculated policy of oppression and domination.

I. The Plan

- “The Egyptians’ Plan” was not about economic enrichment
- “The Egyptians’ Plan” was not about building projects
- “The Egyptians’ Plan” was explicitly aimed at social control

Fear was the motive for the plan (verse 9)
Israelites were too many and too mighty (verse 9)

II. The Policy

- “Come, let us deal *shrewdly* with them...”
 - Implies a lack of transparency
 - Implies manipulation
 - Implies intimidation
 - Laying the groundwork for domination

- “They set taskmasters over them to afflict them...”
 - The Egyptians’ only stated task was affliction
 - Oppression (verse 12)
 - Ruthlessness (verse 13, 14)
 - Bitterness (verse 14)

III. The Push-back

Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh

God's message to Pharaoh:

“Let my people go, that they may hold a festival to me in the desert”

Truth speaking to power

An ownership dispute: Does Israel belong to Pharaoh or God?

IV. The Punishment (Exodus 5:4-14)

Bricks without straw

Same quota

More work

Note: The only reason straw was no longer provided was to have an excuse to further dominate the Israelites

An unreasonable demand that was simply an excuse to further dominate

Performance goals not being met leads to the beating of the Israelite foremen (5:14)

V. The People (Exodus 3:7-10)

God claims Israel: “My people” (verses 5:7 and 5:10)

VI. The Provision

God Sees: “El-roi,” from Hagar's story (Genesis 16)

God Hears: “Ishmael,” also from Hagar's story (Genesis 16)

God is completely aware of Israel's:

Affliction

Sufferings

Oppression

God's intervention (verse 8):

Week 4

One Word; Many Uses:

What Does the Bible Mean by “Slave”?

Sunday, August 4, 2019

Leviticus 25:35—55 (NLT)

35 “If one of your **fellow Israelites falls into poverty** and cannot support himself, support him as you would a foreigner or a temporary resident and allow him to live with you. 36 Do not charge interest or make a profit at his expense. Instead, show your fear of God by letting him live with you as your relative. 37 Remember, do not charge interest on money you lend him or make a profit on food you sell him. 38 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

39 “**If one of your fellow Israelites falls into poverty and is forced to sell himself to you, do not treat him as a slave.** 40 Treat him instead as a hired worker or as a temporary resident who lives with you, and he will serve you only until the Year of Jubilee. 41 At that time he and his children will no longer be obligated to you, and they will return to their clans and go back to the land originally allotted to their ancestors. 42 **The people of Israel are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt, so they must never be sold as slaves.** 43 Show your fear of God by not treating them harshly.

44 “However, **you may purchase male and female slaves from among the nations around you.** 45 You may also purchase the children of temporary residents who live among you, including those who have been born in your land. **You may treat them as your property,** 46 **passing them on to your children as a permanent inheritance. You may treat them as slaves, but you must never treat your fellow Israelites this way.**

47 “Suppose a foreigner or temporary resident becomes rich while living among you. **If any of your fellow Israelites fall into poverty and are forced to sell themselves** to such a foreigner or to a member of his family, 48 they still retain the right to be bought back, even after they have been purchased. They may be bought back by a brother, 49 an uncle, or a cousin. In fact, anyone from the extended family may buy them back. They may also redeem themselves if they have prospered. 50 They will negotiate the price of their freedom with the person who bought them. The price will be based on the number of years from the time they were sold until the next Year of Jubilee—whatever it would cost to hire a worker for that period of time. 51 If many years still remain until the jubilee, they will repay the proper proportion of what they received when they sold themselves. 52 If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, they will repay a small amount for their redemption. 53 The foreigner must treat them as workers hired on a yearly basis. You must not allow a foreigner to treat any of your fellow Israelites harshly. 54 If any Israelites have not been bought back by the time the Year of Jubilee arrives, they and their children must be set free at that time. 55 **For the people of Israel belong to me. They are my servants,** whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

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The above passage from Leviticus details some of the laws and regulations having to do with slavery in Bible times. It is worth noting that an earlier verse in this same chapter, verse 10, contains the phrase that is inscribed in the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia: “...*proclaim liberty throughout the land...*” Certain slaves described in Leviticus 25 would never in their lifetimes experience that liberty.

The Israelites were at that time a nation recently delivered from the oppression of 400+ years of slavery in Egypt. It is worthy of noting that the first detailed treatment of law following the delivery of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai concerns slavery (see Exodus 21).

Slavery in the Bible shares some aspects in common with the experience and practice of slavery in North America, but there are some important differences as well. Be careful when reading the terms slave, servant, or bondservant: they may be describing very different situations.

I. Temporary Indentured Hebrew Servants

- An arrangement typically used for someone who could not pay their debts (“Indentured Servitude” was also used in North America)
- Must be freed after 6 years of service
- Must be freed with liberal provision from flocks, threshing floor, and wine vat
- Reserved for Hebrews
- Was to be treated well, as a brother
- An opportunity to develop trade, business, or other economic skills
- See Exodus 21:2 and Deuteronomy 15:12-15 for descriptions

II. Voluntary Permanent Hebrew Servants

- A Hebrew servant could voluntarily become a permanent servant of his master
- Servant must love his master
- Servant must fare well with the master
- See Exodus 21:5-6 and Deuteronomy 16-17 for descriptions

III. Slavery as Restitution for Criminals, either Hebrew or Gentile

- In Bible times there was no established system of jails
- Criminals unable to make financial restitution to their victims were liable to be sold to pay off their debt
- See Exodus 22:3b: “Anyone who steals must certainly make restitution, but if they have nothing, **they must be sold** to pay for their theft.”

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(Notice the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment for crime** whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, nor any place subject to their jurisdiction.")

IV. **Permanent Non-Hebrew Slaves**

The ancient Hebrews did have permanent slaves obtained from the non-Jewish nations that surrounded them. They came into their possession as a result of military conquest or outright purchase.

Non-Hebrews only

No automatic release after 6 years

May be treated as property

Could be left as an inheritance to the next generation

Did not have to be treated as well as a fellow Israelite

Regarding the taking of slaves through military conquest:

2 Samuel 12:31 (NLT)

31 He also **made slaves of the people of Rabbah and forced them to labor** with saws, iron picks, and iron axes, and to work in the brick kilns. That is how he dealt with the people of all the Ammonite towns. Then David and all the army returned to Jerusalem.

Even after their exile in Babylon, Israelites still had slaves—on the order of 15% of their total returning population:

Nehemiah 7:6-7; 66-69 (NKJV)

These are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own town, ⁷ in company with Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum and Baanah):

The list of the men of Israel...

⁶⁶ The whole company numbered 42,360, ⁶⁷ besides their **7,337 male and female slaves**; and they also had 245 male and female singers. ⁶⁸ There were 736 horses, 245 mules, ⁶⁹ 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

A Reparation Conversation:



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Week 5

The Slave Traders

Sunday, August 11, 2019

Revelation 18:1-13 (NKJV)

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, **“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”**

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, **“Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. 7 In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ 8 Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.**

9 **“The kings of the earth** who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, 10 standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

11 **“And the merchants of the earth** will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: 12 **merchandise of gold** and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; 13 and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, **and bodies and souls of men.**

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Slavery—in one form or another—persists through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

The book of Revelation describes two competing world systems—the “New Jerusalem,” which is governed by the principles of the Kingdom of God, and “Fallen Babylon,” reflecting a world driven by de-humanizing structures that pay homage to the false deities of profit and power.

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Chapter 18 of Revelation describes the judgment and fall of those sinful structures: “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!” Who mourns and laments the passing of the old oppressive structures? Two groups—kings and merchants. Let’s see how these two groups are linked to “fallen Babylon” structures.

I. **The Kings of the Earth**

Not just one nation, but global
Kings make the laws

Kings represent political systems

II. **The Merchants of the Earth**

Not just one nation, but global
Merchants make the profits

Merchants represent economic systems

III. **Kings and Merchants are symbiotically related**

Merchants need Kings
Develop the laws that are of advantage to moneymaking

Kings need Merchants
Enrichment via tax revenue and other benefits

IV. **Notice that neither Kings nor Merchants are destroyed in the judgment**

They are merely denied the structures they exploited

V. **Notice as well the “Merchandise List” of the Merchants (verses 12-13)**

The list begins with gold
The list concludes with “the bodies and souls of men”
(that is, slaves and the slave trade)

For more on slave trading in the Bible, see the following verses:

Deuteronomy 24: 7 (NKJV)

“If a man is found **kidnapping** any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or **sells him**, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall put away the evil from among you.

Exodus 21:16 (NKJV)

16 “He who **kidnaps a man and sells him**, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death.



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1 Timothy 1:9-10 (NRSV)

This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, 10 fornicators, sodomites, **slave traders**, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching

Genesis 37:26-28 (NKJV)

26 So Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 Come and let us **sell him** to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.” And his brothers listened. 28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and **sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver**. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Where else do we see an “unholy alliance” between Kings and Merchants (or, politics and economy) in the ADOS (American Descendants of Slavery) experience?

- Slavery
- Jim Crow Laws
- Convict Leasing
- Red-lining
- Urban Renewal
- Mass Incarceration
- Gentrification of urban neighborhoods
- Philanthropic Red-lining



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A Reparation Conversation:

“Reparation” is defined as the action of making amends for a wrong one has done, by providing payment or other assistance to those who have been wronged. From the Latin, *reparare*, “to make ready again.”

Considering “New Jerusalem” values, what does reparation from a “Fallen Babylon” system look like?

What relationships need to be restored at a societal level? What institutions need to be involved? How?

What resources need to be considered? Human resources? Economic resources? Political resources?

What recommendations would you make in this situation?



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Week 6

Refresh Our Hearts in Christ

Sunday, August 18, 2019

Philemon (NRSV)

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, 2 to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God 5 because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. 6 I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. 7 I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because **the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.**

8 For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to **command you** to do your duty, 9 yet I would **rather appeal to you on the basis of love**—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. 10 I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. 11 Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. 12 I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. 13 I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; 14 but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be **voluntary and not something forced.** 15 Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, 16 **no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother**—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

17 So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18 If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. 19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. 20 Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! **Refresh my heart in Christ.** 21 Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

22 One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, 24 and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

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25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Acts 3:17 (NKJV)

19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, **so that times of refreshing may come** from the presence of the Lord,

.....

With this lesson we draw near to the conclusion of our “40 Days of Prayer for the Liberation of American Descendants of Slavery.” The 400 years since Angela arrived in Jamestown have been years of oppression, de-humanization, exploitation, and marginalization for the American Descendants of Slavery. The time of slavery stubbornly gave way to the Jim Crow era, which subsequently gave way to seasons of new frustrations, broken promises, and missed opportunities.

This year offers us the potential of a new start, or what the Apostle Paul describes as “a heart refreshed in Christ.” Turning away from the “less than-ness” and dignity deficits of the past 400 years, 2019 marks not only the anniversary of the “old way” of enslavement and marginalization, but also the starting point for a national transformation towards wholeness.

That the work of reparation needs to proceed is not in dispute—America has an outstanding justice claim that cannot be ignored any longer.

This lesson would like to pose a question that is seldom asked—perhaps it points to a future that only the bold can imagine: *When is the work of reparation completed?* Such a daring question demands a likewise daring answer: *When all hearts are refreshed in Christ!*

Consider Paul’s letter to Philemon:

A refreshed heart comes:

1. **Enlisting co-workers** (verse 1b-2)

Paul writes an open letter—this is not simply a private appeal

Paul engages the church as:

- a. Witness
- b. Participant (The church met in the house of Philemon, the slaveholder of Onesimus. The church could not pretend they did not know about the situation.)
- c. Agent of change

2. **With a cause that commands your duty** (verse 8)

Our civic duty

Our moral duty



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3. **With a concern that appeals to your love** (verse 9)
If we are not moved with compassion, we must investigate how it was that our hearts became hardened.

4. **Consent** (verse 14)
A preferred, but not entirely necessary, condition
Persuasion at the heart level is more durable than giving “lip service”

5. **Not coercion** (verse 14)
As the model of South Africa’s “Truth and Reconciliation Commission”

6. **Celebration** (verse 17)
Rejoice for a whole, rather than a divided nation
Rejoice that the promise of “liberty and justice for all” is genuine
Rejoice in beloved brotherhood and the beloved community

7. **Charge** (verse 18-19)
Address and settle outstanding accounts

8. **Confidence** (verse 21)
Enter into the process with “good faith”
The process, while admittedly complicated, is worthy of our best efforts
“The greatest failure is succeeding at something that doesn’t matter.”

Begin with the end in mind
If not now, when?
If not us, who?

9. **Confirm** (verse 22)
“Trust and Verify” strategy
Schedule benchmarks for performance

10. **Consecrate** (verse 4)
Continue to pray beyond these 40 days

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A Reparation Conversation:

“Reparation” is defined as the action of making amends for a wrong one has done, by providing payment or other assistance to those who have been wronged. From the Latin, *reparare*, “to make ready again.”

What does reparation look like?

One answer: *“The full and complete participation and enjoyment of American society by the American Descendants of Slavery”*

Your answer: _____

What does reparation look like in Onesimus’ case?

Paul writes this letter to Philemon as an intermediary. Might an intermediary be valuable in addressing the justice claims of ADOS? If so, who would you suggest as an intermediary?

What positive role is God calling me to play in addressing justice for ADOS?

Prayer and action. Paul did not “pray about the issues” and then let it drop—he took specific and meaningful action. What is your next step regarding justice for ADOS?



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