

The Seven “I Wills” of Redemption

Exodus 6:1-27

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Rev. Dave Dorst

CenterPoint Church

Read Exodus 6:1-27

2 Timothy 3:16 – “*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.*”

Introduction: Calvin and Geneva, the Torture Chamber

John Calvin, the famous French theologian and reformer of the late 16th century was the pastor of a church in Geneva, Switzerland for a few years, but was forced out by strife and conflict. He made his way to Strasburg, where he pastored the city’s French congregation, met and married his wife, Idelette, and had a prosperous, peaceful time of ministry. After a few years, though, the leaders of the church in Geneva, specifically William Farel, came and begged him to come back to Geneva. His initial response was “I would rather submit to death a hundred times!” and he referred to Geneva as a torture chamber. But Farel was persistent, even threatening him with God’s anger if he would not return. Eventually he felt that the Lord was calling him back and he agreed to return. His first Sunday back in the pulpit, he picked up right where he left off in the Scriptures years earlier. The Lord used his ministry in amazing ways to advance the Reformation, and he stayed for over twenty years until his death.¹

In today’s Scripture passage, men of God are sent back to the very place where they had spoken God’s word earlier, but had been treated poorly and felt like failures. Going back will not necessarily be easy, as it wasn’t with Calvin, but it is the important work that God needed them to do at that time. As we saw in Exodus 5, Moses and Aaron showed up in Pharaoh’s court to persuade him to let the Israelites go free, but things have only gotten worse. The conditions of the slave labor had multiplied in difficulty, the Hebrew taskmasters had asked God to judge Moses, and Moses had cried out to God in distress. But as we’ll see in the first eight verses, God will remind Moses that there will...

1) God Will Still Do His Part (vv. 1-8)

¹ But the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.” ² God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them. ⁴ I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. ⁵ Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. ⁶ Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.’”

So these verses are God’s answer to Moses’ questions and complaints at the end of chapter 5: “Why did you send me here if you’re not going to deliver Your people?” God says that He is coming to the

¹ <https://www.crossway.org/articles/this-day-in-history-john-calvin-returns-to-geneva/>

aid of the Israelites on the basis of two things: that He has a covenant with their forefathers and that He has heard their groanings. God is including Moses in the line of patriarchs that He's revealed Himself to, these important men that God used in the forming of the Hebrew nation, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He's even saying that He has given a fuller revelation of Himself to Moses than He did to his ancestors, those giants of Genesis. And moreover, His covenant promises of making Abraham's descendants into a large, prosperous nation and giving them a wonderful land of their own are not ended. Despite how it looks, God will still achieve these blessings.

In verses 6-8, there are a series of promises that God makes about the upcoming events. Several commentators called these the 7 "I wills" of redemption:²

- 1) I will bring you out from the burdens of your captor (Egypt) (v. 6)
- 2) I will deliver you from slavery (v. 6)
- 3) I will redeem you with my outstretched arm (v. 6)
- 4) I will take you to be my people (v. 7)
- 5) I will be your God (v. 7)
- 6) I will bring you into the land (v. 8)
- 7) I will give you the land for a possession (v. 8)

That is a staggering list of things that God is going to do for people who have just complained that things aren't happening fast enough. He will still be faithful to His covenant and His promises. I read that these verses are the basis for Jews who celebrate the Passover Sedar by drinking four cups of wine – one for each of the first four promises: "I will free you, I will deliver you, I will redeem you, and I will take you to be My people."³

"I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God" in verse 7 could be the language of adoption, that's certainly how I hear it. But a Jewish commentator, Dennis Prager, says that this is the language of marriage. The idea of God redeeming is mixed in here, and we are reminded of the book of Ruth where Boaz fulfills his duties as the kinsman-redeemer of Ruth, a widow, and marries her. God has both chosen His bride and will act as her kinsman-redeemer and marry her. And the Scriptures will continue that metaphor - the Old Testament prophets will be frank about how Israel, God's bride, was unfaithful and ran after other lovers, other gods. But God has chosen her nonetheless, and pledged Himself to her in a covenant relationship. The New Testament will pick up that imagery and apply it to the church, such as when Paul tells the Corinthian church in 2 Cor. 11:2 – *"For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ."* All the way to the book of Revelation and the wedding feast of the Lamb. Revelation 19:7: *"Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready."*

God is not just freeing the people and leaving them on their own, He is bringing them into intimate, spiritual relationship with Him. So now that God has reminded Moses that He is still working His plan, the next 5 verses see Him sending Moses and Aaron back out.

2) Moses Will Still Do His Part (vv. 9-13)

⁹ *Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.* ¹⁰ *So the Lord said to Moses,* ¹¹ *"Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land."* ¹² *But Moses said to the Lord, "Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?"* ¹³ *But*

² Maxie D. Dunnam, *Exodus* (W Pub Group, 1987), p. 99.

³ Dennis Prager, *Exodus: God, Slavery, and Freedom* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2018), p. 72.

the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

Why don't the people listen to Moses? Imagine you show up announcing that you're going to make everything better, but things actually get worse because of you. It's understandable that they're upset. Their spirits were broken, their slavery was harsh, verse 9 says. Have you ever met someone that was so bitter towards life that they wouldn't believe anything about God? I know a couple whose daughter, their firstborn, died of a rare disease when she was ten years old. They were devastated, understandably so, and have held so tightly to their anger that they have not returned to church or been willing to believe that if there is a God, that He is loving or good. Family members have witnessed about God's love to them, but it's been decades and they have not been willing to hear it.

We spent a lot of time during the burning bush dialogue back in chapters 3 and 4 talking about Moses' objections to God, and here he throws most of them into one speech that takes up one verse (v. 12): "*Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?*" "God, neither side of this thing is listening; I'm a failure as your spokesman, your ambassador. But God just pats him on the head and says essentially, "Nope, you're going to talk to Pharaoh. That's your mission, you're not getting out of it. This is how I will accomplish everything."

And now the last half of the chapter is a genealogy. I won't read it again, but keep your Bibles open to this list of

3) Aaron And His Family Will Do Their Parts (vv. 14-27)

¹⁴ These are the heads of their fathers' houses: the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the clans of Reuben. ¹⁵ The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the clans of Simeon. ¹⁶ These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the years of the life of Levi being 137 years. ¹⁷ The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. ¹⁸ The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. ¹⁹ The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations. ²⁰ Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses, the years of the life of Amram being 137 years. ²¹ The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. ²² The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. ²³ Aaron took as his wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ²⁴ The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the clans of the Korahites. ²⁵ Eleazar, Aaron's son, took as his wife one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites by their clans. ²⁶ These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said: "Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts." ²⁷ It was they who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron."

Why are there so many genealogies in the Bible? They seem to interrupt the flow of the narratives so often, your typical Bible reader probably flies right through them. They seem extraneous, I mean who is going to designate Exodus 6:17 "*The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans*" as their life verse, or get it put on a bookmark or a coffee mug? Nobody, right?

Let me tell you a true story: Des and Jenny Oatridge were a young couple ministering with Wycliffe Bible Translators in the 1970s and 80s in Papua, New Guinea with the Binumarien people. The couple were translating the entire Gospel of Matthew with the help of one of the tribesmen, whose

name was Sisia. They had finished the whole Gospel, but had to go back and translate the genealogy in chapter 1. As they finished that portion, Sisia said that they would need to come to a meeting packed with the tribe that night. Des couldn't figure out what was happening, but he went and Sisia asked him to read through Jesus' genealogy, so he did. As he finished, he sensed real tension in the room, and the first voice that spoke up said, "Why didn't you tell us all this before?" Someone else said, "It's only real people who record their ancestors. Jesus must be a real person!" "This ancestry goes back further than ours." "Jesus must have been a real man on this earth then. He's not just white man's magic." To the Binumariens, who had heard the entire story of Jesus' life from Matthew's gospel, had thought it was just a made-up story. Now they realized that it was history, it was true. For them, the truth of the Scriptures was now beyond doubt because they heard the genealogy.⁴

So the first reason that genealogies are included in the Bible is because the Bible is a historical record that preserves the history of a people, God's people. It's a reminder that the actions of redemptive history happened in time and space, and while they have theological meaning, they happened at the same time that all of the other parts of world history happened. Nobody dreamed them up or was carried off in visions to see them happen (excluding the apocalyptic and prophetic books and sections that say "this is a vision or a prophecy"). Archeological digs and historical records have never contradicted the Bible's historical records because they were real people and actual events.⁵ Additionally, the names in the genealogies remind us that God knows our names and remembers us, no matter how insignificant we are to the rest of history. And God works through families, seeing the faith passed on through generations, even as you see scoundrels mixed in with the faithful. What's that saying - "every family tree has a few nuts"? The Bible doesn't hide those.

This particular genealogy is intended to establish Aaron's call and credentials, emphasizing the tribe of Levi.⁶ Remember that there are twelve sons of Jacob whose descendants were the twelve tribes of Israel, but only the first three are listed here: Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. Who's the fourth son? It's Judah, and his lineage will be very important in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, because the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Jesus, will be born from that line. But this list in Exodus 6 is not going to go there because it is more intent on showing who Aaron's family is, Levi's line. Moses is well-established by now in the text as God's leader of Israel, Aaron and his family have the spotlight here.

One thing that stands out in the genealogy, let's see if you read it closely: how were Moses and Aaron's parents originally related? Verse 26: "*Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses.*" Their mom was their dad's aunt! Yikes. But apparently OK back then. Leviticus 18 is going to outlaw a man from marrying his aunt, but apparently it was not illegal before, or in the time they were enslaved.⁷ Some other names in the genealogy are going to get their own stories later in the Bible:

Verse 16 - The three sons of Levi - Gershon, Kohath, and Merari - are all very involved in the building of the tabernacle.

Verse 23 - Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, will be destroyed by the Lord with fire in Leviticus 10

⁴ Tas Walker, "How the Binumarien People of New Guinea Discovered Jesus Is Real" from October 9, 2012, posted at <https://creation.com/binumarien-people-find-bible-true>

⁵ As Nelson Glueck states, "*It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever contravened a biblical reference*" and that "*Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.*" - Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Cudahy, 1959), p.31.

⁶ James K. Bruckner, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), p. 66.

⁷ Prager, p. 75.

Verse 24 - Aaron's cousin, Korah, will lead a rebellion against Moses in Numbers 16; but his sons will write some of the Psalms, notably 44-49

Verse 25 - Phinehas will turn God's anger away from the people in Numbers 25

Conclusion

J. Vernon McGee tells the story of a Scottish woman who had worked very hard to save up money so that her son could attend the local university.⁸ He went and studied hard, but in the course of his studies, he began to have serious doubts about God and questioned the faith that his mother had passed on to him. When he came home on holiday, he did not come right out with his doubts, but after listening to his mother go on and on about how good God had been to her, he finally couldn't hold it in. "Mother, you do not seem to realize how small you are in this universe. If you lost your soul, God would not miss it at all. It would not amount to anything."

His mother didn't reply at first, but later came to him and said, "I've been thinking about what you said. You're right. My little soul does not amount to much; I would not lose much and God would not lose much. But if He does not save me, He will lose more than I will. He promised if I would trust Jesus, He would save me. If He breaks His word, He will lose His reputation and mar His character."

I love that story, I have no idea if it's true or not. But the sentiment is very true. God keeps His promises to us through Jesus. God still honors those 7 "I Wills" for us!⁹ All of those promises to Israel are still promises to us today:

- 1) I will bring you out from the burdens of your captor – Galatians 1:4 – *"The Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age."*
- 2) I will deliver you from slavery – Romans 6:17-18 – *"But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."*
- 3) I will redeem you with my outstretched arm – Ephesians 1:7 – *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."*
- 4) I will take you to be my people – 1 John 3:1a – *"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."*
- 5) I will be your God – John 17:3 – *"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."*
- 6) I will bring you into the promised land – 1 Peter 1:3-4 – *"... He has caused us to be born again... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."*
- 7) I will give you the land for a possession – Hebrews 12:28a – *"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken."*

The Bible summarizes how God will keep His promises in 2 Corinthians 1:20a: *"For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him (Jesus Christ)."* Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were the plan that God used to deliver and redeem His people from their darkness, bringing them into relationship with Him, and securing a place in heaven for each one of them to live eternally with Him. That is a stunning list, it should humble us and make us absolutely grateful. All who believe that God keeps His promises, said, "Amen."

⁸ J. Vernon McGee, *Genesis-Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1981), p. 27.

⁹ Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus* (Nashville: Holman, 2014), pp. 42-44.