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The LORD: Our Faithful God Who Keeps His Promises Exodus 6:2-8

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. The word from God through which the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith in Jesus is Exodus 6

God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty. And did I not make my name, the LORD, known to them? I even established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, that foreign land where they lived as strangers. In addition, I have heard the groans of the people of Israel, whom the Egyptians have enslaved, and I have remembered my covenant.

"Therefore, say to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD. I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will rescue you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and mighty judgments. I will take you for myself as my people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am the LORD, your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will give it to you to possess. I am the LORD.'" (Exodus 6:2-8)

Dear friends in Christ, fellow saints washed clean in the blood of our risen Savior:

The image of a young girl holding her teddy bear dangling at her side silhouetted against the flames of a burning house. She alone made it out. Her family's gone. A scene of despair.

A husband pulling at his hair as he pours over pile of bills. He and his wife have been laid off. The children wonder why they never go out to eat any more. The landlord is threatening to evict them. He can't even provide for his own family. A scene of despair.

The other teenagers finally invite her to come along. Finally a chance to make friends. One of them is even a boy she likes. But it's all a set up to ridicule and embarrass her. A scene of despair.

We've all struggled with despair, those time of feeling hopeless, helpless. And even though those moments may not have been dramatic scenes for others to see, the burden of the hurt still pressed down hard. Despair testifies how empty people's promises can be. The promises of family went up in flames for that little girl with the teddy bear. The promises of determination, hard work, and self-reliance could not provide for that husband's family. The promises of fun and friends left that teenager heartbroken.

But, dear friends, let even the darkest times of despair highlight the faithfulness of the Lord, our God. He keeps his promises. He is there for you even in the worst, just as he was there for his people when they were burdened by slavery in Egypt. He keeps his

promises. His faithfulness not only brings us hope in the face of despair but also courage to serve him with all our strength. The Lord: Our faithful God who keeps his promises. That's the theme. His faithfulness brings both hope and courage.

A. His faithfulness brings hope

Moses has returned to Egypt after spending forty years tending sheep in Sinai. At the burning bush that did not burn up the Lord had called him to lead Israel out of Egypt. But after his first audience with Pharaoh, it looked hopeless. Pharaoh not only refused to let Israel go but also ordered them to make the same number of bricks without being provided the necessary straw. Now the Israelites had to spend time and manpower gathering straw stubble throughout Egypt, and when they failed to meet their quota of bricks, their foremen were beaten by the slave drivers. No wonder the Israelites said to Moses, "May the LORD look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us" (Exodus 5:21 NIV84).

How hopeless it all seemed! His arrival only brought trouble to his people. So Moses prays to the Lord, and the Lord answers in the text: "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, and by my name the LORD did I not let myself be known to them? I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens." (Exodus 6:2-4 NIV84-footnote)

"I am the LORD." Notice in the text "LORD" is written with all capital letters. That tells us this is not the regular Hebrew word for "lord," but the special name the one, true God used to show that he does not change. He always is the same, the eternal I AM. So when he makes a promise, he keeps it. He is the covenant-God, the promise-making God. And no matter how bad things look, his promises are still good. For he keeps his covenant. He is faithful to his promises. "I am the LORD. I am the covenant-God who faithfully keeps his promises."

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had certainly witnessed his almighty power. Contrary to all laws of nature, God gave Abraham and Sarah a son after they were so old that their bodies were as good as dead. But he also made his covenant, his promises to Abraham. He was a stranger in the land of Canaan. But the Lord would give that land to his descendants. He would make them a mighty nation. And from them the Savior for all nations would come.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not see any of those promises fulfilled. They lived by faith. For they knew and believed that the Lord is the faithful God who will keep his promises.

But when we met their descendants in the text its, 400 some years later. Had he fulfilled his promises yet? They were not a great nation; they were lowly slaves. They did not possess the land of Canaan; they toiled away in Egypt. Had the Lord forgotten? Of course not. He is the faithful God who keeps his promises. The right time to act had now come, so he continues telling Moses, "Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. Therefore say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you

with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment” (Exodus 6:5, 6 NIV84).

And as you well know, the Lord did exactly that. Ten devastating plagues against the Egyptians displayed the Lord’s might power. He freed his people and brought them out of Egypt. He had not forgotten. He kept his promise. For he is faithful. He is the LORD.

And he has not forgotten you, dear friend. He has not forgotten you. Jesus stretched out his arms on the cross to die for you. He redeemed you at the ransom price of his own blood. Listen to the mighty judgment Easter proclaims—not a judgment of condemnation like the plagues against the Egyptians, but a judgment of acquittal. Jesus’ resurrection proclaims God’s verdict that he has forgiven wicked sinners for Jesus’ sake. He has set you free from slavery to sin and from the terror of death.

That’s the Lord’s promise, not made to your ancient ancestors, but made to you at your Baptism. In those moments of despair, remember your baptism and cling to his promise. All other promises can fail, but the Lord does not. His faithfulness brings hope. For he is the LORD. He keeps his promises.

B. His faithfulness brings courage

What courage that brings us as well! Courage to serve him in our lives. Courage to resist sin. Courage to love others as ourselves. Courage to take up our cross and follow him. Courage to lose all for his sake. Courage to live for him who died for us.

The Lord’s faithfulness gave Moses the courage to go back to Pharaoh. It gave him the courage to continue to work for Israel’s release, even though the Israelites rejected him. It gave Moses the courage to keep on leading them for forty years, despite their stubborn ways and rebellious attitude. That courage came from the Lord’s promises. For the Lord is faithful. His faithfulness brings us courage.

Apply the closing words of the text to yourself and see how the Lord’s promises bring us courage because he is faithful. The Lord says, “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD” (Exodus 6:7, 8 NIV84)

In Baptism, the Lord took you as his child. Faith calls him your God. He didn’t bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians, but did something much greater instead. He brought you out from under the yoke of Satan. Baptism rescued you from the devil.

What courage this gives us, courage to say no to sin and to boldly dare all for our God. Since through faith you are his child, he certainly will take care of you. So boldly seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Why worry about earthly things? For the Lord keeps his promises. It’s only our own wavering that holds us back, wondering whether we can be happy with what we have. But lasting happiness and true joy come from the Lord’s promises. For no one is faithful like him.

And look at where he is leading us, not to some plot of ground, but to the true Promised Land, our heavenly home. What courage to live each day according to his will. For no matter what we suffer, even death itself, nothing can separate us from him, but

only brings us closer to the Promised Land.

Yes, I know, that like me, you are weak. We lack courage. We want a safe comfortable existence. We want security that we can see and touch. We want happiness that brings us pleasure sooner rather than later. But those wants are from our natural self. Our new self feeds on God's promises. Look at how sure he wants you and me to be. Although his word alone stands firm forever, he's also raised his hand and taken an oath, so that your faith is sure that he will keep his promises. For he is the LORD. He is the faithful God.

Look at how he brings his promises to you and me to make our faith sure. He speaks them in his word. He connects them with water in Baptism. He connects them with bread and wine in the Lord's Supper even as he gives us his actually body and blood to eat and drink. He wants you, dear Christian, to be sure.

So dear friends, when you face those moments of despair, when you long for courage to serve your God, draw your hope and strength from the Lord's faithfulness. He keeps his promises, for he is the LORD.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.