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He's Always Been Faithful and Always Will Be

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TEXT: Exodus 5:22-6:9 (ESV)

Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all."

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."

God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord. 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. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. 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. 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. 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.'" Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.

Life is largely built upon promises, promises made and promises received. For example, in the upcoming months, we'll hear many campaign promises from politicians vying for office, asserting that they'll improve our lives if elected. Advertisers market their

products with the promise that purchasing a particular item will significantly enhance our lives. At times, we share personal details with others and ask them to keep this information confidential. If you've purchased a home, you're requested to sign a promissory note or a contract, promising the bank that you'll repay what you've borrowed. Similarly, in marriage, one usually pledges fidelity before a pastor or priest. Parents make promises to their children routinely, and employees vow to give their best effort to their employers. In return, employers promise fairness and just compensation. Joining a club entails a promise to abide by its rules, just to name a few. The overarching point here is that someone, including ourselves, is continually making promises. Unfortunately, as imperfect and sinful beings, we often fail to keep those promises. We tend to break, forget, set aside, or fall short of fulfilling them.

These unfulfilled promises leave us feeling more skeptical and cynical, fostering feelings of mistrust, discomfort, discouragement, and uncertainty. It's a regrettable state of affairs. We question if anyone's word can be wholly dependable and absolutely reliable. Yet, God's Word assures us that there is indeed one who can always be counted on to keep His word, who is consistently faithful. He not only makes promises but remembers and fulfills them unwaveringly, and that person is God. This forms the essence of today's reading from Exodus. Moses and the Israelites found themselves at a low point. Moses had obeyed God's call to confront Pharaoh, asking for the release of the enslaved people, only to witness the situation worsen. Pharaoh intensified their suffering, leading to doubt and disappointment among the Israelites and Moses regarding God's trustworthiness.

As human beings and believers, we can relate to their feelings, can't we? At times, as God's people, unfortunate events occur, prompting us to question why God permits such happenings and leading to disappointment. Doubt infiltrates our thoughts, and God appears to have let us down, making His presence and power seemingly elusive. Our prayers seem unanswered, and we ponder if God truly cares about us. The Israelites and Moses were grappling with this line of thinking; they felt trapped in seemingly hopeless circumstances and questioned if their God had abandoned them or lacked the capability to uphold His promises to their ancestors—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this passage, God reassures Moses that the opposite is true. He can be counted on, despite the bleak situation. Even though circumstances looked grim, everything was unfolding according to a plan.

God assured Moses that He would show Pharaoh what He was about to do. He was orchestrating Pharaoh's actions to free the people. In essence, God was reassuring Moses that Pharaoh's actions were part of His plan. God reminded Moses about what He had revealed at the burning bush—that He is the Lord, the eternal, unchanging creator, and sustainer of all existence. He affirmed that He would be with Moses and support him. God emphasized His faithfulness to keep His covenants. He made Himself known as God Almighty—El Shaddai—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, portraying His power to them. Yet, He disclosed Himself in a new manner as Yahweh, the Lord, promising to be with their descendants and assist them.

God reaffirmed His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to grant them the land of Canaan, even though they hadn't taken possession of it yet. He declared that He had heard the suffering of His people in slavery and had not forgotten His covenant. He reassured that He sees and hears them, always remembering His promise. So, what is this covenant? It's the promise God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as described in the early chapters of Genesis. It involved three parts: the pledge to grant them the land of Canaan, to multiply their descendants, and to make them a blessing to all nations. God's emphasis was on remembering and keeping His word, His promises.

Human beings can be forgetful, but God isn't. There's a story about a pastor at a preaching conference where a speaker made a witty remark that caught his attention. The speaker mentioned, "Some of the best years of my life have been spent in the arms of another man's wife," which initially startled the audience. But the speaker clarified that he was referring to his mother, leaving the pastor chuckling and jotting it down, thinking it might be a good line for one of his sermons. Several months later, during a sermon that failed to capture the congregation's interest, he attempted to use the same line, saying, "Some of the greatest years of my life have been spent in the arms of another man's wife." However, he drew a blank and blushed, confessing that he couldn't remember who she was. This humorous incident highlights the fallibility of human memory and the tendency to forget.

In contrast, God reassures Moses of His trustworthiness. He instructs Moses to communicate to the Israelite slaves that He is the Lord—Yahweh, the unchanging, eternal being who brings about events, rescues, and redeems His people, always remaining true to His word. God gives Moses seven promises to convey to the people: 1) He will free them from their slavery, 2) He will deliver and redeem them with great

acts of judgment, 3) He will be their God and make them His people, 4) They will know that He is their Lord, 5) He will bring them to the land promised to their forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and 6) He guarantees a great future for them.

Moses shares these promises, but the broken spirit and harsh slavery of the people cause them to disregard his words. However, God remains true to His promises. He orchestrates a series of confrontations with Pharaoh, ultimately leading to the release of the Israelites from slavery. God parts the Red Sea for their escape, protects them, and leads them through the wilderness for 40 years, despite their continual lack of trust and obedience. Eventually, under Joshua's leadership, God fulfills His promise by establishing His people in the Promised Land.

Throughout history, despite the people's unfaithfulness, God remains committed to His promises of land, descendants, and a blessing to the nations. The ultimate fulfillment comes with Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, the Messiah fulfilling the promise of blessing to the nations. Jesus arrives not to establish a political kingdom but to be the Savior for humanity's greatest problem—sin, death, and separation from God. He sacrifices Himself on the cross for our sins, and God resurrects Him, offering forgiveness and eternal life to all who trust in His Son.

God demonstrates His faithfulness by seeing through His plan to save the broken world. He guarantees a promised future and a new heaven and earth where God will rule, dwelling among us forever. Thus, we can anchor our lives in God's faithfulness because He has always kept His word throughout history. This becomes crucial for us to remember as we face uncertainties, global crises, personal challenges, and times of darkness, ensuring that we don't lose hope but stand firm in God's unwavering promises.

"God, where are you in all this? Are you really there? Are you truly in charge?" The Holy Spirit communicates through this story, urging the people of God not to despair and to trust, assuring that they belong to God forever and will not be forgotten. Nothing can snatch them from His unwavering grasp. Personally, finding strength, comfort, and reassurance in this Exodus story is deeply significant for me. Here's why.

Back on February 4, 1954, a couple named Earl and Delores Kramer brought a beautiful baby boy to be baptized in a Lutheran church in Everett, Washington. The pastor

sprinkled water on the child's head and spoke the words, "Stephen Earl Kramer, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." A baptismal covenant was established that day. Promises were made—my parents committed to raising me in the faith, teaching me about God's work through Christ at the cross and empty tomb. More importantly, God made a covenant with me, promising, "You are now my child, forgiven of your sins. I will always love and walk with you, never abandoning you. You are mine."

Reflecting on today's story reminds me of God's faithfulness. I can, once again, find reassurance as a child of God through Jesus Christ, relying on the promise that God made to me. I hope this story encourages you too. God has consistently proven His faithfulness from the beginning of time to this day. The entirety of the Bible narrates God's faithfulness and His fulfilled promises. That's why it's essential for us to continually study our Bibles. Through this spiritual practice, the Holy Spirit works within us, reinforcing our faith and fortifying our trust in God and service to Jesus. This word reminds us time and again—God is faithful, He is present with us, and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This story brings to mind a father in the Bahamas who called out to his son, trapped upstairs in their burning house. The house was in flames, and the family was escaping, but the youngest boy panicked and ran back upstairs. The father, outside the burning building, yelled, "Jump, son, jump! I'll catch you!" The boy cried, "But Daddy, I can't see you." "I know," the father responded, "but I can see you." In a similar manner, God sees and loves us. He is with us, and He holds our future in His hands.

Years ago, a Lutheran songwriter, John Ylvisaker, blessed the church with these comforting words "From God to you," which I'd like to share with you now.