

Paradise Has Been Restored, So Why Do We Keep Losing It?

Ricardo Campos, Teaching Elder Grace Chapel, Orange, CA May 18, 2014

I. Introduction

How's your life? Do you like the life you have now? How's your marriage, your job, and your relationship with your kids? Maybe you're not married, so how's school? How's your boyfriend/girlfriend? Has everything worked out the way you wanted it to? If it hasn't, if you're miserable, how did you get there and more importantly, why are you still there?

II. "Who Told You That You Were Naked?" The Story of Israel and their Identity as Slaves

What we've learned about the paradise we had, lost, and got back, when God made this universe, He made it specifically for us. He even personally built us our first home: the Garden of Eden. He showered us with love and affection and taught us how to share that love with others. It was absolute bliss; we were naked and "not ashamed." Then one day Satan came along and taught us a lie about God. He said that God was holding out on us and if we wanted to, we could take it ourselves. And we did, but we ended up in the bushes covered in shame. What we didn't realize is that the life he was offering us was actually death. So began our struggle in this life. Now, having babies was terribly uncomfortable and hurt worse than pulling your upper lip over your head. Now, we couldn't get along with our spouse; they kept telling us what to do. And trying to earn a living was five times as hard. But still, God didn't give up on us. He told us that one day, He would send Someone who would give us back what we lost. He would take our burden away. Eventually He showed up and started to do just that: everywhere He went, He undid Satan's curse. People were not only healed physically, but emotionally and relationally. Christ, the true King had come to give us paradise back. But then Satan got Jesus' own people to betray Him and kill Him. When it looked like all hope was lost, Jesus came back to life and gave His disciples instructions to go tell everyone the Goodnews of His salvation. And His disciples did just that. They went all over the world telling everyone about the freedom that the true King of this world had brought them and many were freed.....so why don't we remain free? Why do we keep losing the freedom and paradise Jesus died to give us?

Why we keep losing our paradise, Satan keeps deceiving us. He keeps telling us that death is life and life is death and we believe him. Thus, we keep going back to misery. We see this addictive behavior play out in the life of Israel. The nation of Israel began with one man: Abraham. God told him that his people would be the light of the world; the people of God who would bring the One who would save the world, Genesis 12:3, 7; cf. Galatians 3:16. There was only one problem: Israel became slaves in Egypt and they stayed there 400 years. This is a loong time to be someone's slave, after a while you begin to accept this identity. But eventually God freed Israel with some very powerful miracles, the last one devastated their Egyptian captors; it killed every first-born son in Egypt. Having freed Israel with such awesome power, God eventually brings them to the Land He originally promised Abraham. How did these ex-slaves respond? Did they enter the Land as warriors ready for battle or did they still see themselves as slaves? How can anyone see themselves otherwise when you've watched your parents, and their parents, and their parents grow up as slaves? How can anyone be free of such an identity after having lived it so long?

Numbers 13, Israel makes plans to enter the Land but then doubt sets in, God tells Moses to send 12 spies on a recon mission to investigate the Land and report back. But before he sends them out, God tells Moses that He is giving them the Land! Did you catch that? If the President says that you have run of the White House, would you believe him/her? The 12 spies go on their recon mission and bring back the report. They confirm that the Land is indeed as rich as God said, "it truly flows with milk and honey." But then the report gets very negative. They begin to list every obstacle and how impossible it is to conquer the Land. To try and stop the bleeding, Caleb (one of the 12) steps in and tells Israel that they can conquer it. But the other 10 spies cannot overcome their slave identity. So they tell the people that the giants of the Land will swallow them up like grasshoppers. Why were the 10 spies unable to overcome their slave identity and Caleb was?

Numbers 14, doubt hardens like concrete so Israel wants to go back to slavery, not only did the 10 spies think they couldn't do this, they convinced the entire nation that this was impossible. Therefore, the people wept all night and accused God of trying to kill them! That's not all, they also chose a leader (Nehemiah 9:17) and made plans to return to slavery! Caleb and Joshua (another one of the 12 spies) stood before the nation and urged them not to do this. They reiterate God's promise to give them the Land and try to encourage the people by telling them that the giants are nothing but bread waiting to be devoured. Does the nation let go of their slave identity? No! Instead, they get ready to kill Caleb and Joshua. God's had enough of this so He speaks. He tells Moses that He will destroy Israel for utterly rejecting Him. Moses then pleads with God to forgive them. God relents and forgives Israel but not before He pronounces a death sentence over every individual who rejected Him. Why? Because not only did they see the many miracles God did for them in Egypt and the wilderness, they have now tested Him 10 times:

1. Exodus 14:10–12, God frees Israel but they accuse Him of trying to kill them at the Red Sea
2. Exodus 15:23–24, God saves Israel from Pharaoh's army but they complain about bitter water
3. Exodus 16:1–3, Israel accuses God of trying to kill them with hunger in the Wilderness of Sin
4. Exodus 16:11–20, Israel disobeyed God about the manna
5. Exodus 16:22–29, Israel disobeys God about the manna a second time
6. Exodus 17:1–7, Israel accuses God of trying to kill them with thirst in Rephidim
7. Exodus 32:1–10, Israel accuses God of abandoning them and begins to worship a golden calf
8. Numbers 11:1–3, Israel complains against God in Taberah
9. Numbers 11:4–35, Israel complains to God that they had all the meat they wanted in Egypt
10. Numbers 13–14, Israel accuses God of trying to kill them and wants to go back to slavery

Why was the entire nation of Israel unable to let go of their slave identity? Why were Caleb and Joshua able to leave that identity behind and see themselves as warriors who had God on their side? Satan is very cunning; his main weapon is deception. And if he can get you to believe that you are a slave for 400 years—even though God has now freed you over and over and over again, with miracles no less—then you will still believe that you are a slave who will be overpowered. He did it to Adam and Eve. He did it to Israel and he does it to us every day. First, Satan destroys your life, then he uses it against you to keep you a slave.....the story of "Joe" the truck driver.

III. Conclusion

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die." Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked?"