



## TIME OF GRACE®

# *Am I Strong Enough? How God Fights for You*

## Study Notes

### *Summary*

People with power don't give up control easily. Thus injustice and oppression continue, leaving victims in their wake. But our God cares about injustice. He hears the cry of his suffering people. And he has a divine plan to set us free, to let his people go.

- **John 8:34:** Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin."
- God \_\_\_\_\_ to set us free.
- **John 8:36:** So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.
- **Exodus 5:1,2:** <sup>1</sup>Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'" <sup>2</sup>Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go."
- **Exodus 6:6-8:** <sup>6</sup>"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. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>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 12:31:** During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested."
- God sets us free through . . .
  1. Our \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. His \_\_\_\_\_.

## *Points to Ponder*

1. Has there ever been a time in your life when you've felt that a particular sin had a hold on you? How did God help deliver you from that temptation? Or how is he still helping you?
2. Read Exodus 12:31. Pharaoh let the Israelites go. Now skim through Exodus chapters 7-11. How did God fight for his people and change Pharaoh's mind?
3. What's the biggest frustration right now in your life? Consider the possibility that God lets it stay because he doesn't want to lose you. Maybe he knows if you got too comfortable in that, you wouldn't run to him for hope, mercy, or for meaning. Maybe the stuff that makes you mad at God is the greatest gift from God. Think about it.

## *Homework for Next Week*

Read Exodus chapters 14-15.

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Am I Strong Enough? How God Fights for You**  
John 8:34,36; Exodus 5:1,2; Exodus 6:6-8; Exodus 12:31  
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And so, I want you to think for just a second, what's the biggest frustration right now in your life? And what's that thing you pray about that you just want God to make go away, like that. Maybe, he let's it stay because he doesn't want to lose you.

I want to take you back, all the way back to 1863 when an escaped slave named Gordon was darting through the fields of Louisiana with the scent of onions on his dark skin. He had been running for 10 days, fleeing from his master, a cruel slave owner named John Lyon. And that explain the onions in his pockets. Lyons was not about to let his property go that easily. And so, he had sent a pack of bloodhound dogs to chase down Gordon's scent. And so Gordon would rub the onions on his skin to throw off the dogs, and every time he crossed a river, stream or creek, he would reapply. Until one day, by the grace of God, 10 days after he had fled, he had reached at Baton Rouge, the Union Army, and he found solace and safety.

Soon after he got there, Gordon was changing, and a local photographer noticed something disturbing. He asked Gordon to pose, and he snapped a picture that would later become famous. It's a picture that those who opposed slavery would print, and reprint, and pass out across America. One picture that would remind people of the horrors and brutality of slavery and how difficult it was for those who were owned to escape. The picture became known as Gordon's scars, and it looked like this. That picture, when Americans first saw it, reminded them of the gross injustice happening in this country. That a man who had been bought and sold, was then whipped and scarred and it took 10 days, with onions on his skin, to escape those horrors.

I wanted to show you that picture today because when Jesus talked about you and God, when he talked about your day to day life, and your spiritual situation, he used that same graphic picture. These words from John 8 say this, "Very truly I tell you, Jesus replied, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." You know, sin sometimes in the moment, can seem interesting or intriguing or preferable, or fun, but Jesus wanted us to see any violation of God's rules as something as grotesque and bad for us as slavery. He wanted to paint a picture that, sometimes sin would seem to have this power over us, but sin never loved us, it would whip us and scar us, and it would feel almost impossible sometimes to escape it.

And I wonder, as you think about the past 24 hours, or the past year of your spiritual life, is that a phrase that you can relate to? And have you ever felt like sin isn't something that just happened, but something that had a hold on you? If you ever read something in this book, the Bible, or heard us say something in church, and just kind of thought in the back of your mind, "I have no clue how I could ever live like that. I mean, to give up that part of my life, I can't imagine it. To

do that with my sexuality, or that with my money, or that with my friendships, that conversation with my kids, or my parents, or my best friends, I would die!”

Let me give you a few examples. Those of you who have battled an addiction know exactly what this is. You know it’s scarring you, you know it’s hurting you, and those around you, but the thought of living the rest of your life without ever feeling buzzed again, it just seems like a life you could never live. If you’re one of those people who fell apart when you got your first B in middle school, this might be you. If you’re a person who gets passed over for the college application or for the job opportunity and you just emotionally lose it, this might be you too. God wants us to rejoice in the ups, the downs, the successes and the failures, but if you can’t—if a good, content life feels impossible without doing great things, you might be a slave to that sin.

And for others of you that slavery might be—being chained to being liked. You know, are you one of those people who are used to be liked by everyone? Your whole life mission is to make everyone in your family and at your job super happy? It’s a good thing, to want to serve other people, but do you ever fall apart when someone or anyone doesn’t like you? If you’ve never told a dear friend that you love, who’s walking away from Jesus, that they’re about to throw away their eternity—if the only time you’ve used the word “Hell” is with a blurted out expression, and not about the actual place where those who refuse to give up their sin go, you might be a slave to what people think. Or how about this? This is a very religious example of this. You’ve ever been a slave to earning God’s favor? This old religious idea that a lot of us grew up with, that if you’re going to make it to a better place, you had better be a better person, and you better try, and you better improve, and you better change, you better balance the scales and be good, because God only accepts the good ones. And so when you really mess us, or you fall back into that same sin, it’s like you want to believe that message that Jesus said, that God loves people and he loves sinners, and he forgives all types of sin, but it just feels impossible. Like you’re chained to this old religious idea that a person like you could never be with a God like him. The enemy is crafty, and he can find a thousand different chains that will fit on the wrists of your soul. It might seem very religious, it might seem very accepting, it might seem the partying lifestyle, or what only good boys and girls in the church do, but what he wants is to make your soul look like Gordon’s back. He wants to hurt you, he wants to enslave you, he doesn’t want you to get close to God, and here’s the hard part, he will not let you go without a fight. Those old ideas and beliefs will not let you go just because I say so. And so if I would say to you today, you don’t need another drink again to have a good life, if I would say, you never need to indulge that sexual desire and identity you feel to have a great life, if I would tell you, you don’t need to get your way, you don’t need to get rich, popular, famous, comfortable, anything to have the best life that God can give, some of you would say, “Yeah, right!”

Which is actually why I’m excited I don’t have to say that! Because today, I get to preach to you. Sometimes I say, I’d just like to talk to you and teach, but today, I’m going to come with a message of authority that is not my own, and I’m going to tell you the best thing in the world. Here’s what I want to share with you today with an open Bible, it’s our big idea, that God fights to set us free. Not the pastor, not you, not me, God himself fights to set us free. That Jesus will go to war with whatever wants your soul. That Jesus Christ himself wants to crush the skull of every lord that will lie to you and keep you from life with God.

Today in the book of Exodus, we're going to see that we have a God who doesn't just let his people go, he fights so they can be truly free. So today, when I open this book, there's going to be no weak, sappy "How you doin'?" kind of God. There's going to be a warrior Jesus who's going to step up and fight because he wants so much more for you than just 10, or 20, or 50 years of a so-so life. He wants you to have life with God forever.

So we're going to jump back about 3,500 years to the days of Moses, and we're going to see how God fights to set people free, want to talk about how he still does it today. Now, today, my plan is to cover eight entire chapters of the Bible in 10 minutes. Some of you know I can't teach eight words of the Bible in ten minutes, so . . . We're going to be flying at like 50,000 feet. We're going to just touch down at a couple different spots, and I'm going to try to prove to you with an open book that God fights for you, and he fights for me, to set us free. So, we're going to go back to the year 1446 B.C., when God sent two brothers in their 80's, Moses and his brother Aaron, to a slave master named Pharaoh, with a message of freedom.

Here's how it starts in Exodus 5. "Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.' Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.'" Notice one little word in that section, the word "My". God said, "Pharaoh, let My people go." Which kind of implied, "Pharaoh, they're not your people, because I'm God, and you're not!" But Pharaoh, like any slave master, was chained to something. His power, his comfort, his kingdom, and his glory. So he mocked the name of Israel's God, and he commanded his slave-masters to put whips on Israelite backs.

But before Moses and the people can get too discouraged, God showed up with a promise, in fact, it's a paragraph of promises from Exodus 6. Here's what God said, "Therefore Moses, 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. 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.'" I love that. I will, I will, I will, I will. I will, I will. I actually think I missed a couple of wills. Like God said, "Here's what I'm going to do, you sit, you watch, I'm going to fight." And fight, God did. In all these pages, God went nine rounds with Pharaoh. Some people call them, the nine plagues. The nine supernatural miracles, the punches that God threw to try to crack Pharaoh's hard heart. And I won't cover all of them, but here's what you need to know. Every one had a singular message, "Pharaoh, I'm God, these are My people. You're not God, so these are not your people, so let them go!" But Pharaoh won't budge. The Egyptian people worshiped the sun like a God, so the true God made the sun stop shining. They worshiped the Nile River like it was divine, so God turned that river into blood. Pharaoh thought he was God because of his great kingdom, so God sent frogs and flies and boils and locusts and hail. He crushed the whole kingdom, till Pharaoh had nothing left, but still, still he hardened his heart. And so God threw one last punch, it was called the Passover, heard of it before? To bring justice on this nation that had enslaved millions of people, God was about to send one angel throughout the land of Egypt. And the firstborn son

in every Egyptian home would die. There was a way to escape the tragedy though. If a person took an innocent lamb, they killed it, and put its blood over their doorpost, when that angel came, it would, it would pass over the home, and everyone would live. And that's exactly what happened. The Israelite people who had faith, they killed the Passover lamb, and they lived. And Pharaoh, and all of his people who had picked up the whips and allowed the injustice, they did not. And that's what it took.

In Exodus 12, we finally, finally, find these words from Pharaoh. During the night, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said to them, "Up! Leave my people! You and the Israelites, go! Worship the Lord as you have requested. Just go!" He will fight, he will use supernatural resources that you and I don't have to open your eyes to break the chains and then set you free. From any kind of life where you need something more than God to be okay, he'll fight. From any sin, or guilt, or shame you feel, that you think would separate you from his love, and from Heaven, he'll fight.

And today, I want to show you, just two of the many ways that God will fight for you. If you're taking notes, here's the first one. God sometimes sets us free through our suffering. Sometimes the way he makes us realize that our plantation is not paradise is through suffering. And, actually, I brought some proof. This is a stack of letters that I have received from the Wisconsin prison system. Bunch of guys, some whom are watching me right now, in jails and prisons, who saw this ministry on TV and they wrote to me. I can't tell you the details or the names who wrote these letters, but I can tell you this, that there's two things that I see in almost every one. First, I meet men who are free. Rarely do I see in these letters, guys who think they are so good, like sin has this grip on them. No, they know that they've messed up, and yet they know that there's grace. That on the cross, Jesus didn't just die for good people, or law-abiding people, he died for bad people, because bad people are all that there are! And they know where they're going, even if they spend their entire lives behind bars, they know that they're apart of God's family, his sons, not through how good they are, but through how good Jesus was. There's amazing faith in these letters, and you know what else? Suffering. Struggle. For most of these guys, it took the suffering of an incarceration to set them free. On the streets, they're all about power and comfort, their next high, their next drink, their next sexual experience, the violence that made them feel strong, but God had to break them. He had to let the law catch up with them, and it was only through that suffering that he humbled them and set them free.

And so, if you've noticed that romance and dating can't satisfy, that marriage isn't happily ever after, that going to work is hard, that you literally can drive 70 MPH in an air-conditioned box telling a robot what kind of music you want to listen to— you could live a life like that and still feel frustrated, that's God. Because he never, ever, ever wants you to be chained to something that doesn't love you eternally. And so, I want you to think for just a second, what's the biggest frustration right now in your life? And what's that thing you pray about that you just, you want God to make go away, like that. Maybe, maybe he lets it stay because he doesn't want to lose you. Maybe he knows that if you got too comfortable in that, you won't run to him for hope, and for mercy, and for meaning. Maybe the stuff that makes you mad at God is the greatest gift from God. Because sometimes, like these letters prove, it takes suffering to set us free.

There's another way God sets you free though. It's the last thing I want to share with you today. Sometimes God does it through our suffering, but the best way God sets us free is through his suffering through Jesus. Because, if you know the story of Jesus, Jesus was like, like a better Moses. He walked right into the throne room of sin, he looked it in the eye, and said, "Let my people go." And Jesus was the better Passover lamb. Remember the innocent one, whose blood was shed so that death would pass over God's people? Kind of sounds like Jesus, huh? He's innocent, he's sinless, and yet he dies. Why does death come to the house of God and strike down his firstborn? So that eternal death can pass over your life and you can live with God forever. Now, Jesus is like the better Exodus. A way out of guilt and shame of that old religious thinking that, "I'm not good enough yet, and I have to try harder, I have to give more, attend more, pray more, before God will accept me." Jesus is the way out of that to know that right now through faith in him, you are totally free! And the devil can bark and lie, but you're not behind bars, he is, because if they son sets you free, well then you are free indeed! Jesus suffered and did everything so that you and I will never have to be afraid. Never have to wonder, never have to wait until we're good enough, instead through Christ, we would be.

I love this great picture that one of my favorite artists drew. He drew this picture of Jesus in the plagues. That on the cross, inside the body of Jesus is the darkness, and the hail, the boils, and the blood, the flies, the gnats, the frogs. When that sword pieced his side, when Jesus died on the cross for us, all the punishment and pain was poured out on him, so that God could look at anyone who looks at Jesus with a face that's shining and with grace that's never ending. And that's the gift that God wants to give to you today. He might use suffering, he might use a lack of satisfaction to point your eyes on the suffering of Jesus where souls are set free. Where people like you and me can live forever.

There's an old story about a white man who once purchased a black girl. He traveled years ago from the American north and went to a slave auction, where he saw this young black girl and he bid the right price, and he bought her. And as they walked away from the slave auction, once they were out of sight and earshot of everyone else. He turned to her and said, "You're free." And she said, "Free?" "Yeah! Free!" She looked around, "Free to go where I want?" "Free!" "Free to do what I want?" "Free!" She looked around again, and looked back at the man and said, "Okay, then I want to go with you." And that, friends, is what Christianity is. There's a thousand lifestyles you can live, but once you know the one who sets you free, you look Jesus in the eye and say, "I want to go with you." Because if the son sets you free, you'll be free indeed.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, you know every lie, every sin, every struggle that has a grip on our hearts. Some of it's obvious from what people see, and some of it is hidden deep in our hearts. So we pray today that you will set us free. From thinking that we're so good that we don't need you, but that we're so bad that we can't get to you. Set us free, from not just enjoying the good things of this life, family, sex, work, success, and help us never to need them, but to enjoy them when you give them. May we be so free that we can obey you with contentment and great joy and become living examples of what the apostle Paul once said, that Godliness with contentment is great gain. God, there's so many people in our culture who are enslaved to what the world tells them.

How we need to look and act and be. Set us free from all of it, that we can live with joy every day, and have peace knowing that we walk with Jesus. We're so grateful that you're a God who fights for us, you're a God who comes down to get us, when we can't get up to you. Please, give us the joy today, as we remember who we are because of what Jesus did. We pray in his name. Amen.