

Introduction

1. We learned back in chapter 1 that after Joseph and his brothers died, the sons of Israel **“were fruitful and increased and multiplied and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them”** (1:6)
2. But, a new Pharaoh arose who didn’t know Joseph and when he saw that Israel was **“more and mightier”** than the Egyptians he began to oppress and enslave them
3. It’s not clear in the Bible on how many years the Hebrews were enslaved during their time in Egypt:
 - a. In Genesis 15:13, God told Abraham **“Know for certain that your seed will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.”**—so this suggests they were enslaved for 400 years
 - b. However, Exodus 12:40-41 states that the TOTAL time Israel lived in Egypt (from the day Jacob entered Egypt to the day of the Exodus) was 430 years to the day— but we know they weren’t slaves that entire time:
 - 1) Exodus 1:6ff says they didn’t become slaves until sometime after Joseph and his brothers died (Joseph died 60 years after Jacob and the brothers came to Egypt)
 - 2) The same passage also reveals that before they became slaves, they had multiplied and increased from the original 70 people to a population that outnumbered the Egyptians which many suggest was over 2 million people— this would have taken many, many generations
 - c. Some suggest that Israel couldn’t have been enslaved for any more than 80 to 120 years because there only appear to be three different pharaohs mentioned in Exodus 1-5 and Moses appears to have been born under the first and it was then only 80 years before he lead them out of Egypt
 - d. There’s no definitive answer, but Israel was likely enslaved for somewhere between 120 and 200 years; our first verse today refers to it as **“those many days”**
 - e. The length of time they were enslaved isn’t necessarily as important as the severity of their oppression and slavery; chapter 1 uses words like brutal, hard, and bitter to describe it
4. This brings us to our passage today where Israel is crying out due to their enslavement (READ 2:23):
 - a. It says here they **“sighed because of the bondage”** which refers to groaning due to physical or mental distress, both of which were likely severe for Israel
 - b. As a result, they **“cried out”** and it was a **“cry for help because of their bondage”**:

- 1) Moses used two different words for cry here and most often they refer to calling out for help in times of distress
- 2) The words and the repetition in this verse stresses the severity of the bondage and the anguish and distress Israel was experiencing
- 3) When Dustin and I got together on this passage we both noted that this verse doesn't specifically say they cried out to God, only that they cried out:
 - a) If I remember correctly, we both wondered if that meant they were just crying out in a general sense or if crying out to God should be implied
 - b) A review of how the Hebrew word translated "cried out" is used throughout the OT indicates that it's almost always a crying out to someone and when God is involved it's synonymous with prayer
 - c) Joshua 24:14 and Ezekiel 20:8 both state that Israel worshipped other gods in Egypt
 - d) But, there are two other passages which reference their crying out for help when in Egypt and they specifically say that Israel was calling out to God (Deuteronomy 26:7; 1 Samuel 12:8)
- c. The most important part of this verse is that their cry for help "**rose up to God**":
 - 1) Douglas Stuart in his commentary brings up an important point: It's not clear exactly what Israel knew about God at this point:
 - a) They likely knew about Him because 1:21 says that the midwives feared God but the word there is Elohim which is the most generic way to refer to God
 - b) Throughout Genesis, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob referred to God and spoke to Him using His name, Yahweh, but when God announced Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses had to ask Him what His name was
 - c) This suggests that Israel was still aware of God, but had forgotten His name and likely worshipped him as one god among the many gods of Egypt
 - 2) The reason I think this is important is because even though their knowledge of God may have been limited, their prayers still "**rose up**" to Him and He responded to them

I knew of God, but I didn't know Him, when I cried out to Him for help

5. What we see next in vs. 24-25 is God's response to their cries and it forms the main outline of our study today:
 - a. God heard them
 - b. God remembered His covenant
 - c. God saw them
 - d. And God knew their struggles

A. God heard Israel (2:24a): **“So God heard their groaning”**

1. The Bible is filled with comments about God hearing when we call on Him or hearing our prayers, but more is implied than just listening or hearing
2. When the Bible refers to God hearing, it means that He responds and acts on our behalf:
 - a. Psalm 34:6: **“The poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles”**
 - b. Psalm 34:17: **“The righteous cry, and the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.”**
 - c. Psalm 66:19-20: **“But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer”**
 - d. God told Daniel, **“...Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set our heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words”** (Daniel 10:12)
 - e. One of my favorite examples of God hearing is when He responded to Ishmael’s and Hagar’s cries of distress in the wilderness (READ Genesis 21:14-20)
3. Takeaway: It is because God not only hears but answers and responds to us that we are encouraged to pray as Christians:
 - a. In John 14:13, Jesus told His disciples, **“Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”**
 - b. In Matthew 21:22 He said, **“And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”**
 - c. 1 John 5:14-15: **“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”**

B. God remembered His covenant with Israel (2:24b): **“and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”**

1. Just as the phrase **“God heard”** means that God not only heard but responded to Israel’s cries, here **“God remembered His covenant”** means something similar:
 - a. If I did the math right, there are 13 references to God remembering His covenant with individuals and Israel in the OT, and another 4 references to Israel not remembering their covenant with the LORD
 - b. In every one of these instances, remembering the covenant is a synonym for being faithful to the covenant and responding accordingly (e.g. both parties fulfilling the promises and conditions of the covenant)

- c. It is because **“God remembered His covenant”** He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that He is now preparing to send Moses to deliver them and lead them out of Egypt to the Promise Land
2. There’s something else here that we shouldn’t miss: by referring to His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in succession (naming all three names) He was revealing the ongoing and enduring nature of His covenant and His loyalty and faithfulness:
 - a. His covenant with Abraham extended to Isaac, Jacob and ultimately Israel who were now enslaved in Egypt
 - b. We saw this back in Genesis 12:7 when God first made His covenant with Abraham: **“The LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land...’”**
 - c. There another at least another 30+ references to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jabos being included in God’s covenant
 3. Takeaway: God remembered His covenant with Israel by sending Moses and leading them out of Egypt; in the same way, He will remember the New Covenant we have with Jesus by delivering and confirming us to the very end when Jesus returns:
 - a. 1 Corinthians 1:4-9 (READ)
 - b. Look at what Paul says here about God’s faithfulness to us:
 - 1) He has given us grace in Christ Jesus (4)
 - 2) He has enriched us in Him in all speech and all knowledge (5)
 - 3) He has confirmed the testimony concerning Jesus in us (6)
 - 4) He has not withheld any spiritual gift from us (probably as a body) as we eagerly wait for the revelation (return) of Jesus (7)
 - 5) He will confirm (i.e. sustain) us to the very end so we will be blameless in that day
 - 6) And we KNOW He will do it because as Paul says, **“God is faithful”** (9)

C. God saw Israel (2:25a): “God saw the sons of Israel”
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1. We’ve seen a pattern with the first two verbs, heard and remembered, in that when it comes to God they both mean more than simply hearing or remembering
2. The same is true with the word “saw” here:
 - a. While the Hebrew word is simply the word for seeing, in this context it means that God was intimately aware of what Israel was suffering:
 - 1) Exodus 3:7: **“The LORD said, ‘I have seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to (heard) their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings’”**
 - 2) Exodus 3:9: **“Now, behold the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.”**

- b. We saw something similar with Hagar when the Angel of the LORD appeared to her in the wilderness after Abraham sent her away:
 - 1) Do you remember what she named God? (Genesis 16:13): **“Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, ‘You are a God who sees’”**
 - 2) God didn’t just see her there in the wilderness; He saw her suffering and despair
- 3. God didn’t just see the sons of Israel, He was intimately aware of and understood the severity of their oppression and slavery and this leads to the last phrase in our passage

D. God knew Israel’s struggles (2:25b): **“and God took notice of them”**

- 1. If you have an NASB you may have noticed the word **“them”** is italicized and this is because it’s not in the Hebrew text
- 2. The previous three verbs all have direct objects (God heard their groaning, remembered His covenant, and saw the sons of Israel), but the last one doesn’t; it’s simply, **“and God knew”** (captured by the ESV and CSB)
- 3. That’s a bit awkward because it begs the question, What did God know?; So most English translations supply the word “them” and take the word know to be a reference to God noticing or being concerned about Israel:
 - a. NASB: **“and God took notice of them”**
 - b. NIV: **“and [God] was concerned about them”**
 - c. KJV: **“God had respect unto them”**
- 4. However, I believe the answer to what God knew is found just a few verses later:
 - a. READ Exodus 3:7 and pay notice how many of the words use there are the same as those used here (LSB): **“And Yahweh said, “I have surely SEEN the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and I have HEARD their cry because of their taskmasters, for I KNOW their sufferings”**
 - b. To know their sufferings implies He was intimately aware of them; he understood them because they were His covenant people and He had seen their affliction and heard their cries
- 5. Takeaway: God knows our struggles and our suffering too:
 - a. He knows because He sees our affliction and hears our cries:
 - 1) David spoke of this often in the Psalms (over 50 times)
 - 2) READ Psalm 9:13; 25:16-18; 31:7
 - b. However, He knows our struggles and suffering for a more important reason: He came down and experienced them for Himself (READ Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15)

Conclusion