**Session 18: Week 10b**

**Start at 17:50**

***God of Deliverance***

**Exodus 18**

**16-17 January 2023**

**Our Own Battle** – We saw in chapter 17 how God was training the children of Israel how to defend themselves and how to defeat their enemies. But what are we to do with this today? We don’t have a literal “ensign” to carry, and we don’t make war with the person down the street. We don’t have flesh and blood enemies—but we *do* have very real *spiritual* enemies, and **we should make holy war against the sin that would seek to live in our hearts.** We are to wage war on all that would set itself in opposition to God in our own lives.

**Helper** – When Jethro came to visit Moses, he brought Moses’ wife and two sons with him. This is the first time that the second son, Eliezer, is mentioned. His name means “God is my helper” (El = God; ezer = helper). Back in Genesis 2, we saw that woman was created to be a helper for the man. Now God Himself is referred to as a helper.

**An Unlikely Convert** – Jethro is described as “the priest of Midian”. What does that mean? The Bible doesn’t really say much about his ministry; he may well have been involved in some form of syncretism (blending various belief systems together). But when he comes to visit Moses, it becomes clear from both his words and his actions that he has put his faith in the one true God. His testimony is very similar to that of Rahab, who also came to faith because of what she had heard about the God of Israel. This gives us strong encouragement to keep praying for our own unsaved family members: if the Lord can save a priest like Jethro, who was devoted to a foreign religion, because he has heard of the mighty deeds which the Lord has done in delivering those who are faithful to Him, **then shouldn’t we be good at telling *our* story?** [Edie’s note: Learning how to effectively tell our stories of God’s faithfulness will be one of the things we will cover in the B.L.E.S.S. class that begins next week.]

**Helpers for a Strong Leader** – Moses initially was the only one involved in settling disputes among the Israelites. This was an enormous task, given that there were at least 600,000 men, plus everyone in their households! When Jethro saw that Moses was *all alone* in this task, he told him very frankly that what he was doing was *not good*. And he suggested that Moses needed some *helpers*. (Hear the echo of Genesis 2:18 in this account.) Jethro also laid out a very wise plan for obtaining qualified men and structuring a hierarchy of judges for the Israelites. The style of leadership that Jethro describes does NOT involve a strong leader looking for a bunch of weak people to follow him. Rather, **a good leader recognizes his areas of weakness and then searches for people who are really strong in those areas, so that their strengths offset and complement his weaknesses. He does everything he can to make sure that they flourish in the roles God has given *them* to do.**

**Echoes of Genesis** – What we have learned about the nation of Israel in Exodus is strongly reminiscent of the creation account in Genesis. In Exodus, God says in effect, “*Let there be* a nation of Israel…” and it was so. The next thing God did in Genesis was to begin bringing *order out of chaos*, and he charges the man and woman to continue that work as they “rule the earth and subdue it.” So in Exodus we see Jethro stepping in to help bring order out of chaos in judgment. Moreover, as the Genesis account unfolds, we see God *giving form* to sky, sea and land during the first three days and then *filling them* with the things that will inhabit them during the next three days. So in Exodus 18 God is forming a judicial system for the nation of Israel. But what do these judges need to perform their task? The Law. And that is precisely what will be given when the people come to Mount Sinai.

**Finding Our Story in the One True Story** – So these are the stories that we need to be telling the coming generations. But we can’t tell a story that we don’t know by heart! Everyone is “living in a story”—but is it a true story or a false story? People live in all kinds of false stories. For example, Pharaoh’s story was, “Who is Yahweh? I am! I am self-sufficient: I provide for all my own needs. I am self-existent: I create everything you see around me, and then I sustain it by my mighty, powerful hand. I am all-knowing. I am all-seeing.” We have a thousand “I am’s” that we live in and tell ourselves that these are a true and good story. But what *this* story is telling us is the one, true story, which is, “There *is* ‘I AM’, and it is not me!” That true I AM saw me and heard my groanings. He toppled all my idols and rescued me from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light. He led me through the door of Christ’s blood and washed me through the waters of baptism. My sins were taken away; my old life was cut off and is no more. He led me into the wilderness to test me, that ultimately my faith might prove as gold. He sustains me with daily bread that is the bread of life, and he quenches my thirst with living water. He grants me rest for my soul. He turns my eyes toward the Promised Land.

**And May It Be So** – May we tell this story to the coming generations. May we fear God more than we fear Pharaoh in everything we do. May we render to God the worship that He is due. And may all the world know that Yahweh is God alone.

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