

Learn How Good God Is

👁 **El Shaddai – God of the Covenant (vv.2-5)**

👁 יהוה – **the Savior-God, “I AM” (vv.6-8)**

In the name of Jesus, our mighty Redeemer, dear pilgrims of heaven:

Little boys love to brag about their fathers. “My dad can throw a baseball 100 miles an hour!” “Well, my dad can run faster than that!” “My dad could throw a 100-mile-an-hour fast ball, run ahead and catch it!” When they grow older, bragging fades in the face of taxes and bills. Then the young man is glad to know that the “CPA” behind Dad’s name does not stand for “Coolest PA.” His dad always was a Certified Public Account. But he couldn’t see the importance until he had to pay taxes.

If you were always young and strong, would you ever feel the need for God or long to go home to heaven? But even Christian teenagers will tell you, “I hate the world,” as they begin struggling with jobs and bills and the cruel pinch of “withholding.” From youth to age God’s children below are on a quest to **Learn How Good God Is**. And God has a strange way of teaching us His goodness.

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Look at Moses. He did not want to go back to Egypt. Forty years earlier he killed an Egyptian without God’s command. Now at eighty (Exodus 7:7), he has no desire to leave the peaceful flocks of his father-in-law Jethro for powerhouse Egypt to command Pharaoh, “The LORD says, ‘Let my people go!’”

The LORD finally persuaded Moses to go back with his brother Aaron. They were armed with miraculous signs that should have convinced Pharaoh of God’s power. Instead, Pharaoh clamped down on his slave labor force and ordered the Israelite foremen to fill their quotas of bricks, but find their own straw. Can you hear Moses’ desperation just before our text? **“O LORD, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.”** (Exodus 5:22f)

Ever find yourself in conflict with God over how He answers prayer? “Lord, you commanded me to pray, and I did. But where is the help you promised? Why do I keep getting sick? Why must I watch my child suffer? Why can’t I go home from this hospital bed? How long, O LORD, how long?” the psalmists asked. Even the prophet Elisha hit the Jordan River with Elijah’s mantle and asked, **“Where is the LORD God of Israel?”** Sometimes instead of things getting better, a river of trouble blocks our way.

But this is the gift of Old Testament history to help us understand how God deals with His people. Otherwise, we’re like little ants trying to understand the construction of a skyscraper. Take note. Before the Lord God acts in majesty, He speaks in mystery about what He’s going to do. Amazing prophecies like these are impossible for man to imagine, much less produce. The LORD said to Moses, **“Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.”** (Exodus 6:1 NIV)

Then He takes Moses back a few centuries to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the ancestors of those Jewish slaves in Egypt. He promised the land of Canaan according to His Name-reputation of *El Shaddai*, God Almighty. They were like the little boy who needed his Dad to be big and powerful. But now slavery called for a new revelation of **How Good God Is**. His promises to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage He would bring to pass as יהוה, the LORD, the Savior-God of free and faithful, independent grace. Moses in the middle of history needed God’s mighty Word to uplift and sustain him.

That’s the way we are too. Theoretically we believe God is omnipotent, all-powerful. He created all things by His almighty Word. But when we’re healthy and rich, how much do we want God’s Word?

More than going out to dinner, watching a movie, attending a wedding? Not until our times of distress and testing do we really appreciate **How Good God Is** not just in His sovereign power, but the loving way He uses His might for our good. The Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, trusted God as *El Shaddai* even though they all died without owning more than a burial plot in Canaan. But bondage in Egypt meant they needed to learn the meaning of יהוה as the Savior-God who, unlike Egyptian idols, actually does exist as the Champion-Redeemer of His people from the slavery of sin, death and hell.

👁 יהוה – the Savior-God, “I AM” (vv.6-8)

“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. 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.’ ”

It’s not that the LORD ever forgets His people or His covenant of grace. Only our sins God says He will forget. But when God “remembers,” it means He focuses His love and power to give us strength to bear our burdens and power to trust, steady and calm, until He removes them in His own good time.

Even unbelieving Bible scholars have to admit this is unique in history. Why would anyone make this up when no one could brag about being slaves in bondage? Why would anyone want to admit he could not help himself, but had to rely completely on God to help him? As human beings we cannot understand how our misery can move God to mercy and powerful acts of kindness on our behalf. But God explains, *“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* (Isaiah 55:8f NIV)

The LORD was going to make an example of Pharaoh and his mighty armies. He would humble the Egyptians like no other nation before them. He would perform *“mighty acts of judgment”* in Ten Plagues to devastate Pharaoh’s land and economy and finally wipe out their firstborn sons and animals. When that was not enough, the LORD would drown Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. They wanted to worship other gods. There is no God but One. And they were about to **Learn How Good God Is**. Meanwhile, for the Israelites things would get much worse before they got better.

How about you? Are you are lined up with Pharaoh against God? Then your idea of “goodness” will never match His. You might want to master your own destiny. But God’s goodness knows that earthly pleasure ends here on earth. Some think if they give up pleasure here they can earn their way to a place beside God. Martin Luther tried in his poverty as a Roman Catholic monk. Mother Theresa’s published letters show the more she served, and the world admired, the more distant from God she felt. But **Learn How Good God Is** when He comes to give us the Promised Land as an inheritance paid by the blood of Christ. No one can earn that. We can only trust in God’s goodness to deliver us.

You may know some ancient history, but have you learned **How Good God Is** for your life today? Jesus said, *“Before Abraham was born, I AM!”* (John 8:58) Do you trust Jesus as your eternal God and Savior-Redeemer even when life hurts? *Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.* (Exodus 6:9 NIV) But you and I can look back and see how the LORD did not let their hopelessness or Pharaoh’s power stop Him. What we know in theory we can only truly know by experience in God’s school of grace. **Learn How Good God Is** as **El Shaddai – God of the Covenant** and יהוה – the Savior-God, “I AM.” Learn to praise God in the middle of your troubles and you will conquer them before they’re done. In Christ, you’ve won. Amen.