



SCRIPTURE:

Exodus 1:8-21

INTRODUCTION:

We wrap up another year of "The Cloud" series. It is always a fun stretch of Sundays when we get to speak about these men and women throughout church history. They inspire us. Their lives give us hope and help in our own lives.

Life is full of circumstances and scenarios that require you to do some thinking. Christians especially will face hardships, afflictions, and choices that demand some serious reflections. There are ethical situations that require us to apply what we know from the Bible to our circumstances to know how to think. There are afflictions we face that bring pain and hardship to our lives that require us to reflect on God's sovereignty and nature. These are not always easy things to figure out, and good Bible-loving Christians can land in different places.

During WW2, the British broke the code (called Enigma) that Nazi Germany used to send their messages about attacks, places, times, etc. The information it rendered was crucial wartime plans, but the British intelligence team debated about what to do. If they quickly intercept and foil Nazi plans, the Germans will learn their communication has been discovered and change their codes, leaving the British back at square one. But if the British are selective in how they use it, and only use it where they can make the most difference without giving away their secret, then they can maintain this advantage throughout the war. So that's what they did. For years, they knew of plans that Germans were executing that would cost British and American lives on the battlefield, but their justification was how the information could help them win the whole war (not just one battle or attack). And it did. But this is a highly debatable ethical situation. It is easy to make compelling arguments on both sides. But this is what real life is like. It's filled with real conundrums.

The Bible gives us insights into even issues like this and sincere Christians will use our minds to use God's Word to discern how to live most faithful in a complex world.

EXEGESIS:

Years after the story of Joseph and his brothers living in freedom and luxury in Egypt, the Hebrews are now under oppression and slavery from the Egyptians. It's been hundreds of years since they were in favor, now they are nothing.

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. 10 Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." 11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. 13 So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves 14 and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

15 Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 16 "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." 17 But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. 18 So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?" 19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." 20 So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. 22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."

VS 8-11 -- The Egyptians feared the Hebrews becoming too powerful.

VS 11-14 -- They worked the Hebrews as slaves. They made life difficult and painful for them.

VS 15-16 -- The king of Egypt issued a decree for all the Hebrew midwives to kill the male born children of the Hebrews. This was a sure fire way of preventing the Hebrews from growing in number and power.

VS 17 -- The midwives did not do it. Why? They feared God. They feared God more than the king of Egypt. They gave their allegiance to God over the king of Egypt. They let the male children live.

VS 18 -- The king found out and wants to know why they've done this? He wants an answer.

VS 19 -- The midwives answer to the king that it's because the Hebrew women give birth much faster than the Egyptian women do and the midwives can't get there in time. Now let me ask you a question...is that the reason all the Hebrew male sons were spared instead of killed? No. It wasn't because the midwives couldn't get there in time, it's because they refused to carry out this command.

Now here's the question this immediately raises for us: Is this a lie? Is this a sin? Is this an ethical problem? Pastor Nick and I have talked about this before, with some other pastors, and I think it is good to ponder the question.

Making a statement that doesn't correspond to reality is not moral or immoral in itself. The context matters and the intent matters. For example, if I told my wife we were running to the house to grab something I forgot, and everyone was hiding inside for a surprise birthday party for her, have I committed an ethical no-no? Have I sinned? Should I ask the Lord for pardon later for surprising my wife? Telling a joke does this too. Undercover cops and investigators pass themselves off as people they are not. There are lots of situations where this issue arises.

We like to automatically call statements that don't correspond with reality a lie or deception but that is not how the Bible is dealing with that concept. From a biblical perspective, lies and deception are always tied to motive. The intent determines the moral value. It's not just the words that fail to match reality. So there is a difference between being asked if you took money from the cash register and saying "no" when you really did, versus the Hebrew midwives saying the Hebrew women are just having their sons too quickly to get there. In one situation, the person is making a false statement to cover their sin and avoid the punishment, and in the other the false statement is seeking to protect the innocent lives of the Hebrew sons and prevent an injustice.

I know some will disagree with this assessment and the importance of intent in rendering an ethical judgment, but you have some explaining to do with many other texts that not

only show this, but God Himself seems to initiate such things...only with holy intent, yet never compromising His character as the God who cannot lie.

VS 20 -- God doesn't condemn the Hebrew wives for disobeying the king of Egypt or giving him a story that didn't correspond with reality. Instead, God dealt well with them. Because the midwives feared God, God gave them families.

VS 21 -- Pharaoh continued with his decree and encouraged all the people to help apply it. The example of the Hebrew midwives is similar to the story of Rahab lying to protect the Hebrew spies. The Bible commends her faith. This leads us to our person in the great cloud of witnesses: **Corrie Ten Boom**.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:

Corrie Ten Boom was born April 15th, 1892. Her whole name is Cornelia Arnolda Johanna ten Boom. She's the fourth and youngest child of Casper and Cor ten Boom. Her place of birth was Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Her family were devout Christians of the Dutch Reformed tradition.

Her father was a jeweler and watchmaker. The family lived in the upstairs rooms of the shop. The place was called Beje house. They also had a deep respect for Jewish people living in their community and considered them "God's ancient people." In 1844, Corrie's great-grandfather, Willem ten Boom, started a meeting dedicated to praying for the Jewish people.

Corrie trained to be a watchmaker and in 1922, at 30 years old, she became the first woman in Holland to be licensed as a watchmaker. She worked in her father's shop, but in addition to that, she started a youth club for teenage girls and sought to instruct them in theology as well as sewing and other performing arts.

But everything changed for Corrie and her family in May of 1940. The Nazi German war machine stormed into the Netherlands, as it had done all over Europe, and soon they were under Nazi rule. Immediately, the Beje house became a place of refuge for Jews. The fact that it was a watch shop helped to keep it off the radar of the activities they were doing. A secret room, the size of a small closet, was built into Corrie's bedroom behind a false wall. The space could hold six people. The Nazis did regular sweeps of the neighborhoods, looking for Jews to round up and send to the concentration camps. A buzzer in the house would signal the danger coming, allowing people about a minute to get to the hiding place.

Some of the people running from the Germans at the Beje house would stay a few hours, some a few days, until they could be relocated to another safe house. The Beje house soon became a Beje network of houses around the country that provided refuge for Jews hiding from the Nazis. It is estimated that 800+ Jews were saved through this action.

In 1944, exactly one hundred years after Corrie's grandfather started the prayer gathering for Jews, Corrie and her family were arrested for their part in saving Jewish lives in World War II. Someone informed the Gestapo of the ten Booms' activities. A total of 35 people were arrested. But they never found the six Jews safely concealed in the hiding place. They stayed there for nearly 3 days until others in the underground movement came to rescue them.

All the family members living there were arrested. Corrie's father, 84 years old at this time, soon died in the prison. Corrie and her sister Betsie were in a notorious concentration camp Ravensbruck (near Berlin). Betsie died there on December 16th, 1944. Twelve days after her death, Corrie was released for reasons that nobody knows.

After the war, Corrie returned to the Netherlands and established a rehabilitation center for concentration camp survivors. She also welcomed those who had cooperated with the Germans during the occupation. She began a worldwide ministry in 1946 that took her around the world to over 60 countries. In 1971, she wrote the best-selling memoir of her World War II experiences entitled *The Hiding Place*. In 1975, the book was made into a movie.

On February 28, 1977, at the age of 85, she settled down in a rented house in Placentia, California, completed several book manuscripts, and made filmed versions of her messages, directed again by James Collier (director of *The Hiding Place* movie). In August 1978 (just over a year after moving to California), she suffered the first of three serious strokes which eventually confined her to bed in the front room of the home, which she had named "Shalom House." It was there that she passed away on April 15, 1983, on her ninety-first birthday.

APPLICATION:

1. The Bible gives us examples that help us make real decisions when we need wisdom.

Notice how the story of the Hebrew midwives and Rahab the spy are helpful for someone like Corrie Ten Boom in knowing what is the right and ethical decision to make in her

situation. Christians have God's Word. We need to know it, study it, and apply its revelation to our lives and circumstances. How do you know how to act in difficult moments? The Word helps us. You have to know that Corrie Ten Boom knew the Scriptures we read today as she evaluated what actions and steps she would take against Nazi tyranny in her town.

She wasn't guilty of lying. She wasn't in sin for all the years of the war. We don't marvel at her heroics today because they were sinful. We marvel at them because they are virtuous and courageous.

We may find ourselves in situations in our own day that will require for us to think and reflect on what the Bible teaches. It is not always as simple as "any false statement is a lie and lies are sin." But also, don't be a liar that says "well, you know, Corrie Ten Boom..."

2. Civil disobedience is sometimes the most obedient thing we can do.

We have touched on this before, but it needs to be addressed again. There is a time when obedience to governing authorities is impossible to render. We cannot obey the governing authorities if it means disobedience to the Lord. Yes, Romans 13 instructs us in obeying the authorities over us, because they are from God and we absolutely should! But we cannot obey commands from our rulers that would lead us to disobey the commands of The Ruler.

When governing authorities say it's legal for people of the same-sex to marry. They can issue that decree but I do not have to follow it. I will follow what God says. Corrie Ten Boom did not follow the commands of her Nazi captors. When they sought Jews living in the city, to send them to concentration camps, she actively worked against the Nazis to hide and protect Jews. Her disobedience to the Nazis was obedience to God.

3. Experiencing the forgiveness of Christ enables us to forgive others.

Forgiveness is a powerful part of Corrie Ten Boom's story. The Nazi's took a lot away from her. Her father died in their prisons. Her sister died. Their tyranny destroyed lives and families, leaving many without homes, cities, and families. A big part of Corrie Ten Boom's message after the war focused on forgiveness. She knew forgiveness was required of the Christian, and only possible through Christ.

“Even as the angry vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him....Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me your

forgiveness....And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives along with the command, the love itself.”

Listen to her description about anger and vengeful thoughts. She isn't unlike us. Don't think we are unique or special in our pain. People throughout history have been hurt and suffered loss. Many have buried loved ones. Many have undergone physical ailment. We're not unique in that. Many have been betrayed and mistreated. But all in Christ share the same command: **forgive as you have been forgiven.**

I love how Corrie Ten Boom reminds us that it's not about how we feel. She says, **“Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.”** She goes on to say, **“Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness.”**

Withholding forgiveness from others only cripples us. It doesn't hurt them. Forgiveness is the key to unlock our resentments and hatred. You may wonder how it is possible to do such a thing. You've been hurt too bad. There's no way you can do it. But that is the point. You can't. You must cast yourself upon Christ. You have to trust him. You have to call out to him. You have nothing to contribute or add to this, it is his work in and through you. Boom says, **“You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have.”**

Christ is all you need.

4. The only remedy for worry, stress, and pain is trust in the Triune God.

What do you do when the Nazi soldiers are on your street, searching homes. You know your house is coming. Your heart is racing. You know this is life and death stuff. It's a high stakes business. They come to your door and enter your house, and the search begins. They are cold, scary, and heartless. And this is just an average day under their tyranny. You can't escape it. You can't go to sleep and make it disappear.

How do you keep from becoming overwhelmed with anxiety, fear, or stress? You must draw your strength and peace from trust in God. Worrying does not change anything. Boom says about this, **“Worrying is carrying tomorrow's load with today's strength - carrying two days at once. It is moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.”** Yes, it is hard not to

worry. Our sinful hearts and minds are hardwired to worry when we don't have control but we must fight to remember God is in control.

There are four quotes from her that correspond to this quote that I want to wrap up with today.

“If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God you'll be at rest.”

Where are your eyes? Are they looking at the world? That will distress you. Are they looking within yourself? That will depress you. Are they looking at God? That will comfort you.

“There is no panic in Heaven! God has no problems, only plans.”

Remember what reality is. God is in control. There's no panic in Heaven! Trust the Author of history for its future.

“Hold everything in your hands lightly, otherwise it hurts when God pries your fingers open.”

In this life, we lose things. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. But if we live holding all things loosely, then it doesn't hurt as much if the Lord takes it. Often our theology doesn't have a place for God to take it, so we need to recognize the Lord's ways are not our ways. It's His world. Everything is His. Hold anything He puts in your hands loosely. Trust him with what He gives and takes away.

“There is no pit so deep, that God's love is not deeper still.”

And when things are taken, the pit is real. The pain is real. The hurt is bitter. The tears flow.

The love of God is deeper for us than any pit. Christ has purchased us from the dead. Eternal life is ours through him. These light momentary afflictions are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison (Romans 8:18). All of this is ours in Christ. The love of God is poured out on His people. We are never abandoned. We are never forgotten. Our names are graven on His hands. He cannot forget us. So no matter what pit you are in, and no matter how deep it is. God's love is deeper still. You can trust Him.

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever been in a situation that tested your allegiance to God? How did you respond? What was the outcome?
2. Why doesn't God condemn the midwives for lying to the Pharaoh?
3. Read the following passages and discuss the importance of knowing and understanding God's Word:
 - Hebrews 4:12
 - 2 Timothy 3:16
 - Psalm 119:105
 - Romans 12:2
 - Proverbs 30:5
4. Read the following passages and discuss what they teach us about forgiveness:
 - Ephesians 4:32
 - 1 John 1:9
 - Matthew 18:21-22
 - Matthew 6:15
5. Read Matthew 6:25-34 and discuss the five questions that Jesus gives his disciples that will help us.
6. Read Psalm 56:3 and 1 Peter 5:6-8 and discuss the remedies in these passages for our anxiety.
7. Is there anyone you're unable to forgive? Is there something you are worrying about? Give these things to God and let your Life Group know so they can be praying for you.

PRAYER TOPICS:

- TJC Pastor: Matt Espenshade
- NAMB Church Planter: Franco Albano - Haverhill, MA - *Celebration Church Haverhil*
- International Partners: Reed and Steppie Carr - Rome