

Read: Exodus 19:1-8

Chickens and Eggs, Blessings and Obedience

Exodus 19:4,5

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Which came first—the chicken or the egg? It's a fun question that teaches us something about the order of things. Go ahead and debate it for a moment, just for fun! Then let's apply it to today's Bible reading.

In our reading, God assembles the people of Israel and asks them for their obedience. Listen again: "...If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then ... you will be my treasured possession" (verse 5). In other words, "Be good, and you'll be blessed."

That doesn't sound too hard to do, does it? Maybe we've heard or said these things:

- "Be good and we'll go to the park."
- "Be quiet and you'll get extra recess."
- "Eat your dinner and I'll give you a cookie."

So it's easy to hear today's Bible reading and think, "I want to obey and be good because I want God to bless me."

But like the chicken and the egg, which comes first—the obedience or the blessing?

What really helps to answer that question is verse 4: "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."

This verse comes *before* the part about obedience. God reminds the people of Israel what he has already done for them. There they were trapped and suffering in Egypt—their freedom taken away by harsh masters. But God rescued them and brought them safely to a place where they could live freely. All this God did *before* he asked the people to live as his obedient children. First, he rescued them and made them his family. *Then* he asked them to obey and live like the special family members they were.

We are like the people of Israel. Without Jesus, we would be trapped in our sins, in a life without hope. Jesus rescued us from sin and death and carried us into his grace. By faith in Jesus, we are treasured and loved as members of God's family. Now, God asks us to live as thankful children.

Do you see the real reason we obey God (or our parents, or others in authority)? Because we are loved, now we can show love in return.

So which comes first—the blessings or the obedience? The blessing of God's grace comes first. Let's remember the true order of things and live as grateful children.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- How do you know that God loves you?
- Name a way you want to show your love for God.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Reread Exodus 19:4 and compare it with Galatians 3:23-27. How did you become a child of God?
- Name two choices you can make in life that demonstrate to others that you are a thankful child of God.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Describe the difference between obeying for a reward and obeying out of love and thankfulness for God's grace.
- Discuss the meaning of this phrase: "God's grace is free, but it is not cheap." How does understanding the value of God's grace motivate your Christian living?

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for rescuing us and giving us the chance to live as your treasured children. Help us live with gratitude and obedience. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.