

## EXPOSITION OF EXODUS

### Message #10

Exodus 5:1-6:1

A while back, there was an interesting thing that happened on our web site. I went to check to see if any one had written any emails to us and discovered there were two. I opened the first one and it was a wonderful encouraging letter that expressed gratitude for the web site of TCBC. The person writing the letter said that they loved our approach to the word of God and that they were listening to Bible book studies and doctrines and growing. As I read this letter, my spirit soared.

When I completed reading the first email, I opened the second one. This email was from a disgruntled person who did not like our approach to Scripture. In fact, this person actually contacted our web site carrier and said they should not even let us be on their network. This individual was mad because we dared take doctrinal stands that did not square with his position. So within the span of a few minutes because of our approach to God's word we go from a high to a low, from praise to protest, from a positive to a negative.

That is the way it always works in the true work of God. When it comes to obeying God's word and doing God's will we may be sure that one minute there may be great exhilaration and the next minute great humiliation. In the work of God, you can go from being very high to being very low. Some one can praise you one minute and someone else can demean you the next minute. That is the lesson Moses is about to learn right here:

**OBEYING GOD'S WORD AND DOING GOD'S WILL ALWAYS LEADS TO GOD'S BLESSINGS BUT BEFORE THOSE BLESSINGS COME THERE WILL BE A SOVEREIGNLY DESIGNED PROCESS THAT WILL FEATURE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES; EMOTIONAL ELATION AND EMOTIONAL DEPRESSION.**

This is the lesson Moses learns here. His job was to bring Israel out of Egypt, but this was not going to be an easy job. But what Moses needed to learn in the midst of the set backs is that God is still sovereign and still working out His plan.

This is the lesson we need to learn too. When we purpose to understand and obey God's word and do God's will, we are guaranteed that God will bless us. But the path to His blessings will be sovereignly designed by Him and that path will include some negative things. All of that is part of His sovereign plan.

Now God had told Moses that he was to go to Egypt and get the Hebrew nation and bring it back to the very spot He had met Moses. He also told Moses that when he would first go to Pharaoh, He was going to harden his heart so that he would not let Israel go (4:21). **All of this was part of the sovereign plan of God to display God's glory.**

There are at least nine reasons why God wants this conflict between Himself and Pharaoh:

- 1) It shows God has superior power and sovereignty over Pharaoh and false gods of Egypt.
- 2) God would use this confrontation to strengthen the faith of His people- they would see and trust that God did have a major national plan for Israel.
- 3) God would use this conflict to heighten the anticipation and appreciation for redemption.
- 4) God would use this conflict to show how His will overrules man's will, yet man is still responsible for choices he makes.
- 5) God would use this conflict to show that there are serious consequences for those who persist in sin and rebellion against Him.
- 6) God would use this conflict to show that no one can stop what He wants to do.
- 7) God would glorify Himself through the witness and spread of the facts of this conflict.
- 8) God would use this Egyptian conflict to teach the nations they better give Israel her land (Josh.2:9)
- 9) God would use this Egyptian conflict for evangelistic purposes (i.e. Rahab- Josh.2:10-13)

Now let's remember the context. **Moses had just spoken to all the elders of Israel and performed all the signs for the people of Israel and the people believed (4:29-31).** What a wonderful beginning. What a great moment for Moses and for the people. Moses must have thought, obeying God and doing God's will is exciting. But that was about to change.

There are eleven key narrative facts that are brought out in this text:

**FACT #1-** Moses and Aaron appear before Pharaoh to make their request. **5:1**

This fact right here is interesting because we don't exactly know how they got this meeting with this Pharaoh/King. You don't walk up to kings for a chat. This in itself is a great work of God.

Now the Pharaoh that Moses is appearing before is probably Amenhotep II. He was a very successful Pharaoh who completed many different building projects and was a shrewd business man.

Moses and Aaron went before him and said the I AM, the God of Israel, has said you are to let His people go into the wilderness so they may celebrate a feast or a festival to Him. This formula "thus says the LORD" becomes a key point in the confrontations between Pharaoh and Moses (5:1; 7:17; 8:1,20; 9:1,13; 10:3; 11:4). Moses is stressing the fact that he is not inventing this idea, but that it is coming directly from God.

Now there were all kinds of religious festivals in the Egyptian world. It has been estimated that there were over 500 deities that were worshipped in the Egyptian world. What this means is that religious festivals were not uncommon.

**FACT #2-** Pharaoh refuses Moses' request. **5:2**

Pharaoh responded in total arrogant defiance against the request of Moses. He said I don't know this God of Israel and I am not going to let Israel go. By the end of the story, He will know Him.

His question “who is the LORD” means that Pharaoh is saying I don’t know or recognize your Israelite “I AM” God and I don’t care what He has to say because I am not going to let you go. I heard a great Bible expositor tell the story of a time when he went to Cairo to the museum and actually saw the mummy of this very Pharaoh on display in a glass case. He said he specifically looked at the mummy in the face and said he thought a couple of things. First, he thought that he was actually looking into the same face that Moses looked into in these confrontations with Pharaoh. Second he thought that I am looking at a disintegrated mummy of a Pharaoh who at one time was so powerful and arrogant and defiant against God. God is still glorious and this Pharaoh is a dead rotting, mummy corpse.

But the question Pharaoh asks is one that still needs to be asked, “who is the LORD.” We live in a sophisticated world of computers, satellite TV and GPS systems. Most people think as highly of themselves as this Pharaoh did. But every person would do very well to ask the question “who is the LORD” and “how can I be right with him?”

**FACT #3-** Moses again requests that Pharaoh let Israel go worship. **5:3**

Now most of what Moses’ requests is exactly what God told him to say in Exodus 3:18. However, Moses adds something in this verse that does not show up in 3:18. He adds that if they were not permitted to leave, God would strike them(Hebrews) with pestilence or a sword. He is saying that God has the power to destroy the Hebrews if they don’t worship Him and by saying this, He is implying that a dead work force is of no value to Pharaoh and also he is implying that God has the power to also destroy the Egyptians.

**It is true that God considers it to be a serious act of rebellion and delinquency when His people do not worship Him. If God told Moses to say this, then the actual threat of pestilence and death exists for those who do not obey him.**

But from initial observation what God told Moses to say to this Pharaoh is let my first born go and if you don’t I will kill your first born son (Ex.4:23). It appears as if Moses is softening this a bit here.

**FACT #4-** Pharaoh again refuses Moses’ request. **5:4**

Pharaoh basically told Moses you are wasting time and slowing down production. All of this talk about going away to worship God was drawing people away from their work and so he said tell them that they all need to get back to work because I am not letting them go.

**FACT #5-** Pharaoh makes life miserable for Israel. **5:5-9**

Now Pharaoh realized that the number of Hebrew people working for the Egyptians was astronomical. He began to worry that this talk could affect the work force. If they stopped work, it would truly bring the building projects to a halt.

So according to **verses 6-7**, Pharaoh contacted the taskmasters and foremen and told them to intensify the work load. This shows the contempt Pharaoh had for God and His people.

The word “taskmaster” really emphasizes that these Egyptians were slave drivers. What they were to do was to stop giving the Hebrews straw to mix in with the bricks, but make them gather their own straw and yet maintain the same quota of bricks.

Pharaoh’s opinion, according to **verse 8**, was the Hebrews are lazy and just want a break from work so they have made up a story about going away to worship God. So in **verse 9** he says let’s work these people at a heavy level so they will forget about the false words of Moses and all this silly talk of getting away to worship God. To this Pharaoh the word of God was just a bunch of fairy tales and lies. But in time, those who think this way about God’s word, will be crushed.

**FACT #6-** Egyptian taskmasters make horrible demands and beat the Israelites. **5:10-14**

So the taskmasters did exactly what Pharaoh told them to do. They went to the Hebrews and told them they were to get their own straw but still produce the same amount of bricks per day (**verse 11**).

So the people of Israel scattered all through the land of Egypt to gather the straw they needed to make the bricks (**verses 12-13**). But they were having a hard time meeting daily brick quota and the Hebrew foremen were beaten by the taskmasters (**verse 14**).

Now we will be the first to admit, we do not, at this point, really see the hand of God in any of this. If you are living this nightmare, it is difficult to actually see God at work. But He is at work. This is all setting the stage for the most remarkable deliverance of Israel in its history.

**FACT #7-** Israelite foremen appear before Pharaoh to ask him to ease up. **5:15-16**

The foremen appeared before Pharaoh to discuss all of this. They wanted to know why he was doing this. They wanted to know why he was demanding they get their own straw, maintain the same number of bricks and why they were being beaten. The real answer to their “why” question is that he is a man with a hardened heart against God and His word.

**It is interesting that the verb “cry out” in verse 15 is exactly the same verb used in Exodus 2:23 where Israel cried out to God.** This is important to see because the fact is these Hebrew leaders are crying out to the wrong person for help. The one Person they should be crying out to is God. When God’s people cry out to God and seek Him, God hears and will help. But when God’s people cry out to worldly men or worldly leaders, they are crying out to the wrong person.

**FACT #8-** Pharaoh refuses to ease up on the Israelites. **5:17-19**

Pharaoh didn’t care, in fact he said you Hebrews are very lazy and you need to get back to work and you need to maintain the same brick quota, but you must also get your own straw.

Now keep in mind “God is hardening Pharaoh’s heart here.” **So when God is setting up a leader for His judgment by hardening his heart, one of the things He does is make that leader totally insensitive to real rational thinking.** Things will appear to get worse for God’s people before they get better.

**FACT #9-** Israelite foremen meet with Moses and Aaron and blame them. **5:20-21**

At the end of chapter 4 things were so positive and good for Moses in that the people believed and worshipped, but by the end of chapter 5 that has all changed. They didn't seem to believe any more.

This is typically what the people of God do when things don't work out in a seemingly good way- they blame management who may or may not be responsible for the problem. They blame the God ordained leadership. Instead of the Hebrew leadership saying, we need to get our people to cry out to God for His help; they just start blaming Moses and Aaron for the trouble. This was not Moses and Aaron's fault.

**FACT #10-** Moses complains to God questions God and blames God. **5:22-23**

Moses never wanted this job in the first place. He is an 80 year old man who did every thing in his power to get out of this assignment and now this appears to be one big mess and disaster. Moses says, I came here in good faith and you have not delivered them at all. Moses has apparently forgotten what God told him. Now look at this. **Moses is blamed for the bad treatment of the Israelites. God is blamed for the bad treatment of the Israelites and the one guy who is actually responsible for the bad treatment- Pharaoh- he is not blamed at all.** This is exactly how Satan works- he calls good bad and bad good. The wrong people are being blamed here, and the one person who should be blamed isn't.

Now carefully look at the question Moses asks God- "Why?" Why have you brought this evil to these people? Why did you ever send me here? It is a question we tend to ask God all the time- "Why, Why, Why?" You just want to say "quit whining and shut up and watch."

**FACT #11-** God informs Moses this was all part of His sovereign plan. **6:1**

Thank God that he is a patient God. Notice He never does directly answer Moses' question. He never does tell him exactly why? Moses knew that God had sent him to Egypt to get the nation, but God never specifically explains to Moses all He is doing at this point.

**What Moses needed to understand and what we need to understand is that God always knows what He is doing and we can rest in that and trust in that.**

When our world is completely falling apart and we don't know what is happening or why it is happening we need to understand two things: 1) We can and should cry out to God for help; 2) We can trust God always knows what He is doing.

God simply says Moses you are about to see what I am going to do to Pharaoh and by My strong hand I am going to break this Pharaoh down and he will be glad to let the Hebrews go.

Even though Moses as this point was very depressed and very low, he was about to participate in some of the most amazing things that God would ever do.