

The Book
of
Exodus



5. Out of the Frying Pan.... Exodus 5:1-7:3

In our previous instalments of Exodus we saw how God called Moses to go to Egypt and be the person to bring to an end the bondage of His people. However, we saw how Moses was very reluctant to be that person. Moses was given God's name, Yahweh to be his authority, was given miracles to display and Aaron to accompany him as one confident with speech. And we saw at the end of chapter 4 how all of Moses' reservations about the call melted away as he saw the people of Israel accept him and Aaron as the God-appointed spokesmen.

It's always wonderful when we discern the will of God isn't it. It gives us a feeling of such confidence as we know whatever happens we are going to see the power of God at work. I've started to do a morning series on reaping and encouraging us to be expectant – to realise the harvest that's there; that God has given us: and then go for it!

And I'm sure that's what Moses and Aaron thought as they went off to see Pharaoh. Oh dear! As we read, the tyres quickly deflated on their wagon! They go into Pharaoh *"The LORD, the God of Israel, says, "Let my people go, so that they can hold a festival in the desert to honour me." 2 "Who is the LORD?" the king demanded. "Why should I listen to him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD; and I will not let Israel go."* In other words Pharaoh quite rightly says "Yahweh, who's He?

He wasn't going to be impressed. He was Pharaoh – the world's most powerful ruler – regarded as a god by Egyptians. Why should he feel intimidated by a the God of a people that he kept under bondage. Surely the bondage itself was evidence that Israel's God was less powerful than him?

People just don't do that to God and get away with it. And all this was the zenith of decades of bondage. They thought they could do anything they like. And as a penalty for the impudence of the Israelites, Pharaoh no longer supplies them with straw to make the mud bricks they were building with – they had to find their own straw. And what did the Israelites do – they blamed Moses.

As we look at this story we see not just a personal battle between Moses and Pharaoh, but a spiritual one between a man who thought he was deity and his gods, and the only Living God. It was a spiritual battle. Satan never lets off his grip willingly and without opposition. The Egyptians had seen the power of God in the past but had put the Israelites into bondage. Satan had them under the deception that they and their gods were more powerful and they lived in that deception.

As we move forward with God here in Maidstone Road, we must realise that as we want to free people in Felixstowe from the spiritual bondage of sin, we need to realise that Satan will oppose us and as a result, it will bring us disappointment. Almost every situation I've been in as a believer and as a Pastor that has seen a move of God has always also been faced with opposition before the blessing. We've been starting to talk about reaping and harvest. Expect that Satan will oppose. I know of many enterprises over the years where people sought to go forward in mission being dashed and people not following up a good idea because of discouragement that put people off.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. We don't battle the people; we are here to rescue them. As we start out looking for a harvest to reap realising that we enter a spiritual battle. It's not a logistic problem – it's a spiritual one and we need to recognise that in our prayer life. And we also need to understand that we are not going to be protected from disappointment, but that working through the battle we grow spiritually and understand the ways of God more.

So let's see what we learn through Moses' and Aaron's disappointment.

◆ Disappointment can discourage us from doing God's work

Moses was clearly discouraged by this situation and at the end of chapter 6 we read this: 28 When the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, 29 he said, "I am the LORD. Tell the king of Egypt everything I tell you." 30 But Moses answered, "You know that I am such a poor speaker; why should the king listen to me?" Familiar? That's exactly the same he said to God by the burning bush. He found the going tough at the first hurdle and feels inadequate.

When we see the challenge ahead of us do we feel inadequate? Join the club. And in truth we all are inadequate. We can't beat satan alone. We can't save a single person. It's all the work of God from beginning and end. And Moses needed to learn that right at the start of his ministry.

And sometimes the only way we can be reminded of this is to go through disappointment – and God allows it and we often only see His purposes through it through hindsight. We know the end of the story here but Moses don't

◆ Disappointment should drive us into the hands of God

That's what happened to Moses. He went straight to the right place and found God renewing His promises before him and giving him encouragement to return to Pharaoh and witness the amazing display of God's power through the plagues. I say this because it's what is supposed to happen. When we are encouraged then: turn to God. Take it to Him in prayer. Cry out before Him. Ask others to pray with us and encourage us.

But that isn't what happens with many Christians is it. They are like the Israelites. They are discouraged. They blame others like the Israelites did. And rather than turning to God and to one another for strength, they just stop coming to church. I can understand why but it's the worst thing to do as it just cuts us off further from God and from His voice.

◆ Disappointment requires visionary leadership

And of course they all blamed Moses for it. He was only doing what God had commanded him but they said "You're the leader – it's your fault". And I know as a leader and encourage those of you who are leaders tonight not to be deterred by disappointment when you know something is right before God.

The children of Israel didn't care for Moses' efforts on their behalf at this point. But leadership often requires you to make the hard decisions that aren't very popular. You can't please everyone at all times. And your efforts to help others the most are sometimes appreciated the least. A pat on the back, maybe, but sometimes it's a kick in the pants you receive! -Jerry Shirley

That's why spending time with God to discern what's right as a church is important because when we start to do that and walk with it, we must not fall at the first hurdle when satan opposes and we experience disappointment. Again, the solution was found as Moses cast himself on God with all his pain and weakness and found his call renewed.

◆ Disappointment should drive us towards God's perspective

6:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you are going to see what I will do to the king. I will force him to let my people go. In fact, I will force him to drive them out of his land."

Moses – did he think because he had seen a bit of the power of God that Pharaoh would just roll over and submit. He thought and the people probably did too when they saw the miracles. Note – prophetic word – Moses did things at his pace, but needed to allow himself to be swept along by the Holy Spirit.

Go back to the original prophecy and we see that God was going to punish Egypt for their bondage of Israel. That is essentially repeated to Moses at the end of chapter 6 and the first part of chapter 7.

Pharaoh giving in would have not fulfilled that and assuage God's righteous anger. Moses had to step back, be God's mouthpiece and let God show his vengeance on Egypt – and when Moses did accept that we see an immense display of the power of God as the Holy Spirit just swept him and

everything and everybody along.

Personal testimony. “Let go and let God” - and you’ll be amazed!

In the end Moses was not going to need Pharaoh’s permission, Pharaoh was going to be glad to see the back of them! Let’s be straight here. Pharaoh was a human who thought he was a god. Why should God respect him or work with him? That wasn’t going to happen. The whole episode showed two things – first of all that God is more powerful than the king of Egypt and the spiritual forces that men go into bondage to. And secondly, that He is a God that delivers His people but that He takes us through these difficulties so as we appreciate His love for us and His power as He takes us through them. At the start of the process God was too small in Moses’ mind and he was the man with all his weaknesses and apprehension. At the end, he was the bold leader who let Israel out of Egypt. And it was through facing disappointment that he understood God’s perspective.

In between was not victory on victory -not at the start. But disappointment. Moses needed to learn a power principle: the weaker we are, the more powerful God becomes. That was the perspective here and Moses had to be reminded of his call again and realise his weakness again before his call is confirmed and again encourages him to go forward with a work which involved a difficult Pharaoh and an awkward people.

We are trying as a church to move against a trend of decline. It’s happening to most of the churches around us. We have a God who is more than powerful to bring people to Himself. We know that. But we must be people who trust and see His perspective. But we also need to be people who recognise that as we try we’ll face disappointment and the suggestion that it can’t happen because it’s against a national trend, we’ll see Satan oppose, we’ll be discouraged. We have the remedy here – fall into the arms of God – and prepare to see Him at work when in our weakness we are led by Him.

Let’s pray

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Scripture Quotes TEV*