

## GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN OUR FAITHLESSNESS

Series part 5: Exodus 5-6  
Stonebrook Sunday AM, 9/3/23, Matt Heerema

Today's passage sits at a transition between two famous "scenes" in the Exodus narrative: The Burning Bush, and the Plagues. It sets the stage for one of the most important and encouraging messages God sends his people by his actions in delivering them from their bondage. Paul puts it this way to his young protege Timothy:

### **2 Timothy 2:13 (CSB)**

13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

Let's back up into our passage from last week to get a running start into our text today. Remember where we just were. God shows up to Moses in the burning bush and commissions him to be the deliverer of his people. But an important detail is that Moses complains and resists three times:

### **Exodus 4:1 (CSB)**

1 Moses answered, "What if they won't believe me and will not obey me but say, 'The Lord did not appear to you'?"

### **Exodus 4:10 (CSB)**

10 But Moses replied to the Lord, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent—either in the past or recently or since you have been speaking to your servant—because my mouth and my tongue are sluggish."

### **Exodus 4:13 (CSB)**

13 Moses said, "Please, Lord, send someone else."

God mercifully condescends and says, "all right, you're still going to do this, but I'll have Aaron accompany you." So Moses and Aaron go to the people, they show the people the miracles that God gives them to prove their message, and they immediately respond with praise because their prayers were heard.

### **Exodus 4:30-31 (CSB)**

30 Aaron repeated everything the Lord had said to Moses and performed the signs before the people. 31 The people believed, and when they heard that the Lord had paid attention to them and that he had seen their misery, they knelt low and worshiped.

It's a good start. But it doesn't last. We are going to see in our passage today that their faith, as it will turn out, is very fickle. And when faced with hardship, it melts immediately. But the good news of our passage today, is that God's faithfulness is *not* fickle.

Our passage today opens with Moses and Aaron showing up and delivering God's word to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh immediately rejecting it.

## THE UNBELIEF OF PHARAOH

### **Exodus 5:1-5 (CSB)**

1 Later, Moses and Aaron went in and said to Pharaoh, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival for me in the wilderness."

2 But Pharaoh responded, "**Who is the Lord that I should obey him by letting Israel go? I don't know the Lord, and besides,** I will not let Israel go."

3 They answered, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go on a three-day trip into the wilderness so that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, or else he may strike us with plague or sword."

4 The king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why are you causing the people to neglect their work? Get to your labor!" 5 Pharaoh also said, "Look, the people of the land are so numerous, and you would stop them from their labor."

Pharaoh is not about to let his cheap labor force go. And fearing a rebellion, he responds. He knows that if God's message of salvation gets into their hearts he's going to lose his slaves. Does this sound familiar?

Moses knows what he's doing as he records this account. He's giving us hints that there are more forces at work than just Pharaoh. It is no accident that Pharaoh's crown has a serpent on it. Our enemy, Satan, was active back then against God's people, and he employs an old old trick that he is still using today:

**KEEP THEM BUSY TO DRAW THEIR ATTENTION AWAY FROM GOD'S WORD AND WORSHIP.**

5:6-13 Pharaoh loads the Israelites with more work to cause them to not have time to worship God, and experience the freedom he has for them in the gospel. Instead they are rushing around trying to get all their work done. They are slaves. Can you relate? Are you taking the time in your life to give attention to God's word?

### **Exodus 5:9 (CSB)**

9 Impose heavier work on the men. Then they will be occupied with it and not pay attention to **deceptive words.**"

Notice here too that Pharaoh denies God's word. He calls God's promise of salvation "deceptive words" - Satan is still employing these tactics today.

## **THE UNBELIEF OF THE ISRAELITES**

The Pharaoh's scheme works. They immediately forget about God's promise of deliverance and respond only to their immediate circumstances.

### **Exodus 5:14-19 (CSB)**

14 Then the Israelite foremen, whom Pharaoh's slave drivers had set over the people, were beaten and asked, "Why haven't you finished making your prescribed number of bricks yesterday or today, as you did before?" **15 So the Israelite foremen went in and cried for help to Pharaoh:** "Why are you treating your servants this way? **16** No straw has been given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' Look, your servants are being beaten, but it is your own people who are at fault." **17** But he said, **"You are slackers. Slackers! That is why you are saying, 'Let us go sacrifice to the Lord.'** **18 Now get to work.** No straw will be given to you, but you must produce the same quantity of bricks." **19** The Israelite foremen saw that they were in trouble when they were told, "You cannot reduce your daily quota of bricks."

This is a pretty damning sequence of events. "They cried out for help to.... *to Pharaoh...*" in their suffering they do not turn to the Lord, they turn to Pharaoh. They turn to a solution that they can see and touch and possibly influence in their own strength.

What is Pharaoh's response? The same that Satan always gives us: "Get back to work." "Forget about worshipping your so-called "god." He derides them, calls them names ("slackers"). He lays heavy burdens on them. Can you relate to this?

When you are suffering, who or what do you look to for comfort? For help?

What is the response or feeling or message you hear back from your source of comfort?

And then they run off and confront God's messengers. They question God's word. They complain and argue. This is pattern of behavior we'll see throughout the book. Good thing we're different these days...

### **Exodus 5:20-21 (CSB)**

20 When they left Pharaoh, they confronted Moses and Aaron, who stood waiting to meet them. 21 "May the Lord take note of you and judge," they said to them, "because you have made us reek to Pharaoh and his officials—putting a sword in their hand to kill us!"

But Moses's response is no different.

## **THE UNBELIEF OF MOSES**

### **Exodus 5:22-23 (CSB)**

22 So Moses went back to the Lord and asked, "Lord, why have you caused trouble for this people? And why did you ever send me? **23 Ever since I went in to Pharaoh to speak in your name he has caused trouble for this people, and you haven't rescued your people at all.**"

What is God's reply to all this complaining and unbelief? A promise that he will be faithful.

## **THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD**

First God reminds Moses of God's character: who God is, and what God has done.

### **Exodus 6:1-4 (CSB)**

6:1 But the Lord replied to Moses, **"Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh:** because of a strong hand he will let them go, and because of a strong hand he will drive them from his land."

2 Then God spoke to Moses, telling him, "I am the Lord. 3 I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but I was not known to them by my name 'the Lord.' 4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land they lived in as aliens.

God reminds Moses that God hears, sees, knows Israel's situation, and has not forgotten his promises.

### **Exodus 6:5 (CSB)**

5 Furthermore, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are forcing to work as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.

And on the basis of God's character, God's deeds, and God's understanding of the situation, God powerfully restates his promises.

### **Exodus 6:6-8 (CSB)**

6 "Therefore tell the Israelites: I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from the forced labor of the Egyptians and rescue you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from the forced labor of the Egyptians. 8 I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord."

What a beautiful, powerful statement!

I am the Lord! I remember my promises to you and your ancestors!

I will rescue you from slavery! I will redeem you! I will be your God!

You will know me! I will bring you to the promised land, and I will give it to you!

I am the Lord!

If this were a movie, this would be the rousing battle cry, and the people would cheer, and the rebellion would begin! But what is their actual response?

Unbelief.

## **ISRAEL'S DISBELIEVING RESPONSE**

### **Exodus 6:9 (CSB)**

9 Moses told this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their broken spirit and hard labor.

## **HOW DOES GOD RESPOND TO THEIR UNBELIEF?**

Anger and abandonment? "Never mind then. Have it your way. If you don't want me, I'll go find someone else who does. To hell with you." No. These are God's chosen people. He is going to rescue them anyway.

### **Exodus 6:10-13 (CSB)**

10 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, 11 "Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go from his land." 12 But Moses said in the Lord's presence, "If the Israelites will not listen to me, then how will Pharaoh listen to me, since I am such a poor speaker?"

Moses gets one last shot of doubt and argumentation in. God just ignores it.

13 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them commands concerning both the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt to bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.

And this is the confusing situation Israel finds itself in just before God's powerful rescue of them.

A doubting, halting prophet/deliverer in Moses.

An unbelieving ungrateful people who can't see beyond their immediate circumstances to trust the God of their fathers to follow through on His promises.

This is the circumstance Israel finds themselves in. What would you expect God's reaction to be to them? What did they deserve from God in this scenario?

But what does God do? He rescues them anyway.

And this is exactly how God still deals with his people today. This story should feel familiar.

Jesus came to his people with a message of salvation, and with miracles to back up his claims. And when he came, the response of the people was largely a positive reception, until things got rough, just like with Moses and the Israelites.

Under what circumstances were we in terms of our relationship with God when He saved us? Romans tells us.

### **Romans 5:6-10 (CSB)**

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for **the ungodly**. 7 For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. 8 But God proves his own love for us in that **while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us. 9 How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. 10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.

Who did Christ die for? The ungodly.

When did he die for them? When they were still sinners.

When did he reconcile them to himself? When they were his enemies.

You don't get yourself right with God before he saves you.

He's not waiting on you to have a massive breakthrough of faith and trust, He's saving you through His Son's work.

Are you worried that God is holding out on you waiting for you to shape up before he shows you his love and mercy? Are you concerned that he's not going to save you after all because you don't measure up to some standard?

I have good news for you.

Just like God saved the Israelites from their slavery and made them his people, while they were still faithless, grumbling, complainers...

Christ saves us while we are still sinners, still his enemies.

He does that not because of who you are or what you've done.

He does that because of who He is and what He's done.

He wants you to believe Him.

That's what we're talking about when we talk about faith in Christ. Believe his promise that He's done everything needed for you to be saved.

We're just getting started with the good stuff in Exodus. Stick around.

Let's Pray.