

**A BAD SITUATION MADE WORSE**

Moses - Part 5  
Exodus 5:1-6:9

**Intro:** We are usually inclined to think that, if something is the will of God, it means that everything will run smoothly. Then, if it does not, we begin to question our guidance. This is exactly what happened to Moses.

I want you to see how the evidence began to grow that Moses was to go back to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel.

In the first place, there is no question but that this is what the Lord wanted Moses to do. The Lord appeared to Moses in a most unusual way and told him, “I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt” (Ex. 3:10). Very seldom is the Lord’s will that clear to us, but there was no need for Moses to doubt what the Lord wanted him to do.

But we saw last Sunday, in Exodus 3 and 4, the objections that Moses raised with the Lord against his call:

- 1) Moses did not feel that he was the one for the job.
- 2) He did not know that he knew the Lord well enough.
- 3) He did not think that the people would believe him, nor follow him.
- 4) He did not feel that he was a great enough speaker to be their leader.

In fact, Moses said that he was “slow of speech, and of a slow tongue” (Ex. 4:10).

One by one the Lord answered all of those objections. And this took us down to chapter 4, verse 17.

But Moses was working for his father-in-law, taking care of his sheep. And so he had to get Jethro’s permission. When Moses told him that he wanted to go back to Egypt to see if the members of his family were still alive, Jethro readily gave his permission, and said, “Go in peace” (Ex. 4:18).

At that point the Lord appeared to Moses a second time, and told him again that he was to return to Egypt. See Ex. 4:19. This gives us an important point in knowing the will of God. The leading of the Lord will be consistent. He doesn’t tell us to do something, and then tell us not to. If we are inclined to believe that something is the will of God, but then

we begin to question the Lord's leading, we had better stay where we are until the Lord confirms His leading. He did this for Moses, and He will do it for us.

And then as they were on the way the Lord confirmed His leading for Moses a third time. See Ex. 4:21-23.

The only problem that Moses had was from Zipporah, his wife. She probably did not really want to leave her home, and move to Egypt. But what the text is very clear on, is that she did not want her son, Gershom, to be circumcised. What Zipporah did not realize was that she was rebelling against the Lord, not just Moses. And so as they stopped at an inn on the way back to Egypt, we are not told exactly how it happened, but it seems that Moses got sick, seriously ill, and it looked like he was going to die. See Ex. 4:24. Zipporah realized what was wrong. She circumcised Gershom (evidently because Moses was too sick to do it), but she did it with a rebellious heart because she told her sick husband, "A bloody husband thou art" (Ex. 4:26), because of the circumcision. So if I were punctuating that verse, I would put punctuation marks around the first five words of verse 26, and leave the rest of the verse Moses' own explanation as later he wrote about this incident, and was explaining why she said what she said.

But there is probably another bit of information that we are not given here. Let me explain. When we get to chapter 18, after all of the plagues, and after Israel had been delivered from Egypt and from the Egyptian army, even after the Lord had miraculously delivered Israel from the Amalekites in Rephidim, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, paid him a visit, to bring Zipporah back to him after Moses had sent her back home. In the meantime a second son had been born who was named Eliezer. So this would mean that Zipporah was pregnant when Moses sent her back home. Evidently Moses and Zipporah had agreed that she would go back home, and join Moses later.

But let me go back to what we read in Ex. 4:24, if Zipporah had been the one who was rebellious against the will of God, *why did the Lord seek to kill Moses?* This is a very important point in the life of Moses, and one with a solemn lesson for all of us. Sometimes if a person is rebellious against the Lord's will, the Lord, instead of laying His hand in judgment upon the one who is rebellious, He will strike instead someone who is very precious and important to the one who is in rebellion – the husband,

or, if the case is reversed, the wife, or a child, or a father or mother, or someone else who is closely involved with the situation. It is not unheard of that a husband and wife were reconciled to each other and to the Lord as they knelt by the bedside of a dying child, only to see the child recover. Sometimes the stricken one does not recover. God does different things at different times, but He is not going to let any of us stand in the way of His will being done. But this was the case between Moses and Zipporah. This was the only problem that Moses had in returning to Egypt, and how the Lord resolved it.

Sad to say, Zipporah never became a vital part of Moses' ministry because her name never appears again in Scripture after Exodus 18:2. Whether she ever shared Moses' faith, we cannot say, but the evidence seems to say "no." It is a sad story, and a part of the fruit of Moses' failure to wait on the Lord instead of foolishly killing the Egyptian who was attacking an Israelite.

But let us move on. Did Moses have any other confirmations that he was doing the will of God? The answer to that question is, "Yes." He had two more confirmations.

One was Aaron. Read Ex. 4:27-30. The second was the response of the people. Read Ex. 4:31.

So Moses had many confirmations that he was doing the will of God.

But now we come to chapter 5 where Moses and Aaron go before the Pharaoh of Egypt for the first time. Now let me remind you of something that the Lord had told Moses before. As the Lord was answering the objections that Moses raised as to why he was not the man to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, the Lord told Moses what we read in Ex. 3: 18-20. (Read.) And then the Lord told Moses the same thing as Moses was on his way back to Egypt. (Read Ex. 4:21.) But it is so easy to forget something like that when everything else seems to be pointing to success.

So as we come to Exodus 5, we come to:

## **I. MOSES' FIRST REJECTION (Ex. 5:1-5).**

Things had been going so well. The Lord had moved upon the hearts of the children of Israel, and they were ready to God. It had caused the

whole nation to stop in order to worship the Lord. But then Pharaoh reacted like the Lord was not the Lord. And in spite of the additional appeal that Aaron and Moses made, the answer was the same: “No!” There was no indication that Pharaoh would ever do otherwise. In fact, Pharaoh told Moses and Aaron to get to work, and just accused them of trying to keep the Israelites from doing the work that they were required to do.

And so an already bad situation was going to get worse.

## **II. PHARAOH’S NEW EDICT (Ex. 5:6-14).**

From that moment on the Israelites were not going to be given straw to put into the bricks. They were going to have to get their own straw, and yet make the same number of bricks! Of course, this was utterly impossible, and Pharaoh knew that it was. But he was determined to make their lives just as difficult as he could.

It seems especially from verse 14 of this chapter (5) that the taskmasters were Egyptians, and the officers of the people were Jews. The officers were responsible to the taskmasters to make sure that the Jews made the required number of bricks each day.

The taskmasters put pressure on the officers to produce the same number of bricks, and when they failed, the officers were beaten. They knew that the following day the Jews would fail again, and this could only mean more beatings for the officers. This, of course, made the officers very unhappy because they could see that the future was hopeless. And so they decided to take their case to Pharaoh.

## **III. THE APPEAL OF THE OFFICERS TO PHARAOH (Ex. 5:15-19).**

They wanted to know why they were being treated the way they were. Pharaoh’s response was that they had too much time on their hands, and so they had asked the Pharaoh to let them go to do sacrifice to the Lord. So Pharaoh had decided that if they had time to worship the Lord, they had time to do more work. And this was the reason for the new orders.

The officers knew where that request had come from. It had come, not from them, but from Moses and Aaron. The world never understands

why the Lord's people want to worship the Lord anyway. So Pharaoh rejected the appeal of the officers, and the officers knew, as verse 19 tells us, "that they were in evil case." This meant that they knew that the Pharaoh was not going to change his mind, either to reduce the number of bricks that they were to make, or to give them straw once again. Notice in verse 16 that they had been beaten for their failure to keep up with Pharaoh's demands, and so as they looked into the future all they could see was daily beatings for their failure.

#### **IV. THE OFFICERS WITH MOSES AND AARON (Ex. 5:20-21).**

When we read that Moses and Aaron were standing in the way, it means that they were eagerly waiting to talk to the officers who had seen the Pharaoh to learn if he was going to give the Israelites any relief. They were not long in finding out what the answer was. The officers placed all of the blame upon Moses and Aaron, and actually were calling upon the Lord to judge them.

This was what Moses had feared when the Lord spoke to him out of the burning bush. Not only did they not believe him, but they blamed him for the worse condition, the hopeless condition, which they now faced.

What do you do in a situation like this? It wouldn't have done much good to speak to the officers, trying to assure them that the Lord would finally deliver them. Moses and Aaron were just as much in need of help as the officers were. It looked like their hopes had been dashed, and that it would have been better if Moses had not come back to Egypt. So they did the only thing they could do: they took their problem to the Lord. And so in the following verses we have:

#### **V. MOSES' PRAYER AND THE LORD'S ANSWER (Ex. 5:22-6:8).**

First we have:

##### **A. Moses' prayer (Ex. 6:22-23).**

Notice that Moses did not really ask the Lord to do anything. He only asked the Lord, "Why?" – two whys! Why have you treated your people this way, and Why did you send me? At this point in his life Midian looked very good to Moses. And maybe he was about to feel that Zipporah had been right. Not only had the Lord not answered prayer, but

He had brought on a situation that was even worse than the Israelites had been in before.

It definitely was a time, not for Moses to minister to the people, but for the Lord to minister to Moses. And that is exactly what the Lord did.

Let us all remember that there are many times in our lives when the only place that we can turn is to the Lord, and it might appear that even that would not help. But Moses had nothing else that he could do. What was the Lord's answer?

### **B. The Lord's answer (Ex. 6:1-8).**

Notice in these verses that the Lord did all of the talking. It was a time when Moses needed to listen and to learn what the Lord was doing.

The first part of the Lord's answer was an indication that the situation was not hopeless. But the point was this: The Lord had purposely put Moses in a situation where he would have to learn that his own work was not sufficient, as obedient as Moses had been, but he was going to learn more about what he had surely known before. And that was, that the best that he could do was not enough; the work was really dependent upon the Lord. "Now thou shalt see what I will do unto Pharaoh." Even with Aaron working with him, Moses still needed the Lord. Moses had gone where the Lord wanted him to go, and he had said what the Lord wanted him to say, but that was not enough. The Lord knew Moses' heart, and He knew that there was still a lot of self-confidence in him which needed to be rooted out, and the Lord knew that the best way to do that was to let Moses fail. In fact, he not only failed, but he was humiliated before the whole nation. Their hopes had been high. They had believed Moses. But now that support was all gone, and Moses and Aaron had was the Lord.

Now in the Lord's first words to Moses the Lord did not say that Plan A had failed, and now they would work on Plan B. The Lord indicated that they were still on Plan A, and that there would not be a Plan B. The Lord said when you see what I am going to do to Pharaoh (meaning Pharaoh and all of Egypt), you will see that he won't be able to get rid of the people of Israel fast enough. That must have sounded utterly impossible to Moses at that time. And it would have been if it has not been the Lord who was speaking.

Notice in verse 1 we read, “Then the LORD said to Moses.” But when we get down to verse 2 we read, “And God spake unto Moses.” Then He said, “I am the LORD.” Where “God” is used, the emphasis is upon the power of God, but where “the LORD,” or JEHOVAH is used, the emphasis is upon the living, unchanging character of God.

God was particularly know to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the Almighty God because He gave them such fantastic promises that only a sovereign God would be capable of fulfilling the promises He gave to those three men. For example, the promise of becoming a nation, and having their own land then occupied by the mighty Canaanites, and through them bringing salvation to all men. But now, after some 500 years, when the people of Israel were not only not in their own land, but were slaves to a foreign king, He intended to reveal Himself to them as JEHOVAH, or THE LORD, showing that neither He nor His plans had changed. He had firmly established His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and neither He nor His covenant had been changed. This does not mean that the Israelites in the days of Genesis did not know that God was Jehovah, but it does mean that the emphasis was not on JEHOVAH in those days like it was going to be in Moses’ day. This is the emphasis down through verse 4.

In verse 5 we are reminded again, as we have been a couple of times earlier in this book of Exodus that God heard what was going on in Egypt, and that He was remembering His covenant. God’s hearing is perfect, and so is His memory.

But then beginning in verse 6 and going down to the end of what the Lord had to say in ministering to Moses, and to Aaron, we have a series of I wills, the I wills of the Lord, Jehovah. These promises begin with “I am the Lord” in verse 6, and it ends the same way in verse 8, with the same in the middle of verse 7. And this is a key statement through the book of Exodus and the other three books dealing with Moses’ life.

(Read Ex. 6:6-8 – verses upon which we can very profitably spend as much time as possible in meditation.)

All of this was for Moses and Aaron. They needed to hear it over and over again. God never fails to keep His promises.

Our text for today ends with verse 9.

## V. MOSES' MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE (Ex. 6:9).

We read that “Moses spake so unto the children of Israel.” That is, he told the people what the Lord had told him. Moses believed what the Lord told him, but the people did not!

**Concl:** What did the Lord tell Moses to do? See verses 10 and 11.

How did Moses respond? See verse 12.

How did the Lord respond to Moses? See verse 13. You see, we are not to be guided by the responses of men. We get our guidance from the Lord and from His Word. We go on preaching the truth, and we will see that God will honor His Word and that He will support us as we stand firmly on what He has promised to do. God never waits unnecessarily. He always has His reasons, good reasons. However long we may have to wait, we can be assured that He is faithful to His promises.