

## **INTRODUCTION**

Good morning, saints of South Side. It's great to be with you this morning. As you certainly know by now, our VBS starts tonight. And if you're a member here and you didn't know that until this morning, shame on you for not reading the weekly email or paying attention during the announcements for the past month.

But even if you're not part of our church and you're just visiting this morning, you could likely have figured it out. Because the stage is set. The stage being set clues you in to the fact that something is about to happen. A well-set stage helps the characters and events of the story have the right context and communicates to the audience about what to expect in the scenes to follow.

We've been in the Book of Exodus in recent weeks. And as we'll see in our text this morning, the stage is going to be set for a cosmic showdown between Yahweh and Pharaoh, who stands in for the gods of Egypt. The storm has been brewing. The backstory has been building. The God of the Bible is going to show himself to be the promise-keeping God who delivers his people from the hand of this wicked and oppressive ruler of Egypt. But before the drama begins—before the showdown—the stage needs to be set.

If you have a Bible, turn to the Book of Exodus. If you're new to your Bible, Exodus is the second book, right after Genesis. And if you're using one of our Bibles in the seat in front of you, you can find our text beginning on page 44.

## **CONTEXT**

We're going to work through all of Exodus 5 and 6 in our time this morning. So we have a lot of ground to cover. But before we do, it's worth reminding ourselves where we're at in the story.

Remember that the Book of Exodus begins by recalling that Joseph was already in Egypt and the rest of his family from the house of Jacob joined him. And then we're told that God blessed them and that the people of God were fruitful and multiplied greatly so that the land of Egypt was swarming with Israelites.

And there was a new Pharaoh in Egypt who didn't remember Joseph—and out of fear from this rapidly multiplying people in their land, he enslaved them and made their lives bitter with hard service to him. And not only that, but he issued a decree to have all the baby Hebrew boys killed by throwing them into the Nile River.

But there was one special Hebrew boy named Moses that was delivered from death by way of a basket—a little ark. And from the beginning, it was clear that Moses was set apart for something great.

Meanwhile, the people of Israel continued to be oppressed. They cried out to God for help. And God heard their cry. He remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And he saw his people and he had compassion on them.

And God had plans to send them a deliverer. And that deliverer was going to be Moses. So he appears to Moses in a burning bush. And he reveals himself to be Yahweh, “I AM WHO I AM.” And God commissions Moses for this task and gives him signs and promises and instructions for him to follow. He says, “Moses, go tell the people that I have heard their cry and have seen their oppression. And tell them that I promise to bring them out of Egypt into the land that I promised Abraham—a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Of course Moses resists the call quite a few times and gives a whole host of excuses. But ultimately, God prevails.

And then look at how Chapter 4 ends. Look at verse 29:

*<sup>29</sup> Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. <sup>30</sup> Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. <sup>31</sup> And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.*

The people of Israel have their leader. They believed Moses. And more importantly, they believed Yahweh their God, and they worshiped him.

## **EXODUS 5–6**

All of that leads us to where we are in the story now in Chapters 5–6. Now, these chapters don’t divide up into nice, neat little sections for us. So we’ll just work our way through the text little by little and make some observations along the way.

But as we do so, keep in mind how these chapters are functioning in the story—they’re setting the stage for the showdown between Yahweh and the gods of Egypt.

Let’s begin in verse 1.

### ***Exodus 5:1–5***

*Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’”<sup>2</sup> But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”<sup>3</sup> Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”<sup>4</sup> But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens.”<sup>5</sup> And Pharaoh said, “Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!”*

(This is the Word of the Lord.)

Notice how this chapter begins. This word “afterward” just indicates that some indeterminate amount of time has passed, and now we’re jumping ahead to the next main event in the story. Remember, Chapter 4 ended with the people of God believing Moses and worshipping. And now, Moses and Aaron are going to go to Pharaoh.

Now this is not the same Pharaoh that we’ve seen before in Exodus. The first Pharaoh had been trying to kill Moses and caused him to flee to Midian for 40 years. But now, that Pharaoh had died, and so this also unnamed Pharaoh here in verse 1 is a new king of Egypt.

And then we have that weighty and direct statement, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel.” This should settle the matter—if God is saying it, you better listen. And Moses continues with this command, “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.”

Keep your place here and flip back to Chapter 3 of Exodus. God actually gave Moses instructions for how to approach Pharaoh. Look at verse 18.

*<sup>18</sup> And they [that is, the people of Israel] will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’*

God told Moses to say please. This language is that of a request. But as Moses confronts Pharaoh in our text in Chapter 5, he proclaims a command with “thus says the LORD, the God of Israel.” I think Moses is feeling himself a little bit here. Maybe it’s because the people believed and worshiped and he’s feeling confident in the Lord. But he walks right up to Pharaoh and demands that he release the people of Israel.

But it’s like Moses forgot that God also told him Pharaoh wasn’t going to do it. Look at verse 2. But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”

This question of “Who is the LORD?” could be taken as a question of ignorance, as if Pharaoh looks around at his pantheon of gods and says, “I’m so sorry, Moses, I really don’t know who he is. I’ve never heard of him.” And that seems to be somewhat implied when Pharaoh says, “I do not know the LORD.”

But more than that, Pharaoh is saying, “I am not impressed with this God of yours. I don’t know him—and you expect me to obey his voice and let Israel go? No chance.” It’s an expression of disdain and disrespect, even to the point where Pharaoh defiantly declares, “I will not let Israel go.”

I hope you can see this showdown setting up. God had told Moses, “I promise that I will bring you out of Egypt,” and Pharaoh just told Moses, “I promise you will not go.”

In fact, verse 2 becomes a key lens through which the next phase of the story is going to unfold. It's paradigmatic for everything else God does in the exodus event. Pharaoh says he doesn't know the LORD—but God is going to make it clear that Pharaoh knows who he is.

Look ahead at Exodus 7, Verse 5: “The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.”

Look down at Verse 17: Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD...”

Turn ahead to Exodus 8, verse 10: “And he said, ‘Tomorrow.’ Moses said, ‘Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God.’”

Again, look at verse 22, “But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.”

Keep going, look at Exodus 9, verse 14: “For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.”

Verse 29, “Moses said to him, ‘As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the LORD. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD's.’”

I think you get the point—Pharaoh scoffs at God and says he doesn't know him. But he's gonna learn. The stage is being set for the showdown.

When Pharaoh immediately rejects the command, Moses and Aaron try to ask again nicely in verse 3. They say nearly exactly what God had told Moses to say back in Exodus 3. But Pharaoh is completely uninterested in hearing what they have to say. He tells the people to get back to work. The request has been denied. The case is closed.

Let's keep reading. Look at verse 6.

*<sup>6</sup>The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, <sup>7</sup>“You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. <sup>8</sup>But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.’<sup>9</sup> Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words.”*

So on the same day, Pharaoh immediately issues a decree. There could be no doubt what this was in response to—Pharaoh is disgusted with the audacity and the hubris of Moses and Aaron on behalf of the Israelites. And so, to make sure that they don't think too much more about their big plans to leave Egypt, he intensifies the burdens upon the people.

And notice the irony of what he says. He says, “The people want to *go*? Okay, [verse 7] let them *go* and gather straw for themselves.” It's the same word in the Hebrew—just a gut punch to the people.

Essentially Pharaoh takes his thumb and presses it further down onto the Israelites. They have been oppressed and are feeling crushed by this wicked ruler—so much so that they cry out to God for help. And now, he says, “They're just complaining because they're lazy. Let heavier work be put on them.” So now, they have the same quota of bricks to make, but they no longer have a supply of straw—which would have been critical for brick production in Egypt—provided for them.

And Pharaoh is utterly dismissive and hardened in his heart against God—he says to pay no attention to his lying words. This, by the way, is how the world views God's Word. We know it to be the revealed truth from the Truth himself. But the world, under the influence of the father of lies, rejects it.

There's one more slight by Pharaoh here we need to see. Notice back in verse 3, Moses says, “Let us go that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.” But when Pharaoh recounts it, he says, “Therefore they cry, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.’” He intentionally and maliciously omits the covenant name “the LORD.”

The showdown is brewing.

Keep going. Look at verse 10.

*<sup>10</sup> So the taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘I will not give you straw. <sup>11</sup> Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least.’” <sup>12</sup> So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. <sup>13</sup> The taskmasters were urgent, saying, “Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw.” <sup>14</sup> And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, “Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?”*

Okay, so you have the taskmasters, who seem to be some kind of Egyptian authority, and you have the foremen, who are leaders of the Israelites. And they now have to deliver this news to the people as a whole.

Did you notice the way they present it in verse 10?—“Thus says Pharaoh.” This is a direct challenge with the opening verse when he was confronted with “Thus says the LORD.” Pharaoh continues to disrespect our great God.

And the worst part is that Pharaoh seems to have the upper hand. The people had believed Moses when he came and told them about how Yahweh was going to deliver them. They worshiped and thought, “Finally, we’re going to be free!” But now, the burdens are only intensifying. The despair and hopelessness, somehow, have only gotten worse. Israel is tempted to believe they would have been better off had they never cried out to God in the first place.

Maybe you’re here this morning and you’re tempted to believe that too. Maybe you’re tempted to believe that evil seems to be winning. But make no mistake—Pharaoh’s victory here is extremely short-lived. Because in the end, the wicked will not prosper.

Consider the words of Ecclesiastes 8:13, which says, “But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.”

Or Psalm 52.

*<sup>1</sup> Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man? The steadfast love of God endures all the day.*

*<sup>2</sup> Your tongue plots destruction, like a sharp razor, you worker of deceit.*

*<sup>3</sup> You love evil more than good, and lying more than speaking what is right.*

*<sup>4</sup> You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue.*

*<sup>5</sup> But God will break you down forever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living.*

Our God is a just God—and the wicked will be judged. If you’re here today and you have not trusted in Christ, turn from your sin and put your faith in him. Because judgment is coming.

Of course, Pharaoh thinks very highly of himself because of his political might as the ruler over the people of Egypt. But what’s ironic is that it was God who put Pharaoh in power. We’ll see next week that God says he is the one who raised Pharaoh up.

And this is the testimony of Scripture—that God is sovereign over all political rulers.

The Book of Daniel tell us, that God removes kings and sets up kings, and that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.

Or consider Jesus’ words in John 19. Remember right before Jesus was given over to be crucified, he came before Pilate. And Pilate asked Jesus a question. But Jesus didn’t answer him. And this offended Pilate. So he says to Jesus in John 19:10, “*You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?*”

But Jesus answers in verse 11, “*You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.*” Jesus says, “Listen, Pilate. You only have this authority over me because God gave it to you.”

We live in a world that is seemingly dominated by those who are opposed to the fulfillment of God’s will on earth. But don’t be fooled by Pharaoh’s hubris here. He’s not in charge. God Almighty is sovereign over all earthly rulers. He’s the one who set him up. And so during the next election cycle when our world is all turned upside down over the political races of the day, rest your head at night on the pillow of a sovereign God. God doesn’t react—he reigns. And so even though Pharaoh seems to have the upper hand, we know God has him right where he wants him.

Verse 15:

*<sup>15</sup> Then the foremen of the people of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, “Why do you treat your servants like this? <sup>16</sup> No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, ‘Make bricks!’ And behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people.” <sup>17</sup> But he said, “You are idle, you are idle; that is why you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.’ <sup>18</sup> Go now and work. No straw will be given you, but you must still deliver the same number of bricks.” <sup>19</sup> The foremen of the people of Israel saw that they were in trouble when they said, “You shall by no means reduce your number of bricks, your daily task each day.”*

So the foremen of the people of Israel—these are the men who were getting beaten because the quota of bricks wasn’t being met—they come without Moses and Aaron and they essentially make an appeal. They say, “Pharaoh, be reasonable—we were already operating at max capacity beforehand. And now, you’ve given us an impossible task.” They appeal to his humanity.

But Pharaoh doesn’t budge. He holds his ground. The appeal is denied.

I think it’s worth noting here—Pharaoh is a cruel taskmaster. He’s vicious and unrelenting. He’s not just going to let the people go. He has a firm grip on them. They are his slaves. Now for us, we aren’t slaves to Pharaoh. But we too have a vicious and cruel taskmaster—and that is our sin. Our sinful flesh refuses to let go without a fight. It’s not just going to roll over and die. When confronted, your flesh will harden itself and refuse to let you go—because in our flesh we are slaves to our sin. We too need to be redeemed and rescued. We too need a work of God to free us from this cruel oppressor over us.

Verse 20:

*<sup>20</sup> They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; <sup>21</sup> and they said to them, “The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.” <sup>22</sup> Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, “O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? <sup>23</sup> For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.”*

So the men realize that the window for negotiation is closed—they saw they were in trouble. And so they left the meeting with Pharaoh and saw Moses and Aaron, who seem to have been eagerly supporting them and waiting outside. And they turn their anger against them and essentially say, “May the Lord judge you for what you have done to us. You’re responsible for this extra harshness and extra work from Pharaoh. You’ve done more harm than good for us.”

These are the same men who were rejoicing and believing and worshiping at the end of the previous chapter. They had believed that God would deliver them. But now, they are angry and full of despair. They had gone from hopefulness and faith to resentment and doubt.

Have you ever aimed to be obedient to the Lord and then been confronted with more adversity? Have you ever believed the promises of God only to then face circumstances which make it seem like the promises are further away from being fulfilled?

It reminds me of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Christian has this great burden on his back and he read in his book about the impending destruction coming for his city. And he was confused and weeping and unsure of what to do. And then Evangelist points him to the gate and tells him to go there and knock and then he will be told what he must do. And so Christian runs. And his family tries to convince him not to go, but he put his fingers in his ears and began to shout, “Life! Life! Eternal life!”

And so he ran. And as he ran through his town, others came out and saw him running. Some mocked him and some threatened him and some cried after him to come back. And there were two who tried to stop him—Obstinate and Pliable. And they began to ask Christian questions and tried to convince him to stay. But of course, Christian will not. He believes his book. He knows destruction is coming. And so Obstinate lets him go. But Pliable is intrigued and wants to go with him. And so they began to go.

And Christian is telling him all about what awaits—about the endless kingdom and everlasting life and crowns of glory and garments of grace and the end of suffering and sorrow and the presence of the King himself. And Pliable can hardly contain himself. And he tells Christian, “Hurry up—let’s go faster!”

But then immediately, without warning, both Christian and Pliable fell into the Slough of Despond. And it says that Pliable immediately began to be offended and said to Christian, “Is this the happiness you told me about? We just started on this journey—if this is how it’s going to go, I’m not interested in going anymore.” And he worked his way out of the bog—and away he went, and Christian saw him no more.

Brothers and sisters, hear me say this—your faith **will** be tested. Untested faith is no faith at all.

Consider how Peter says it in 1 Peter 1:6–7:

*6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Or James 1:2–4:

*2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

So when you face difficulties and uncertainties and hardships—do you climb out of the bog and turn back from following Christ? Or do you rejoice, knowing that the testing of your faith will help you to mature? Do you trust that going through trials will actually result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ?

Beloved, maybe you're here this morning and you're in the thick of it. Maybe it's a cancer diagnosis. Or maybe it's infertility. Or prolonged singleness. Or financial hardship. Maybe you have a wayward child or a marriage that's on the ropes. Maybe everything seems great on the outside but the clouds of depression and despair just seem to block out all the light and your life feels perpetually dark and hopeless.

And maybe it feels like all these circumstances continue to crush you even as you believe in the promises of God. Maybe you're trying to believe and trust and worship, but it feels like adversity and trials continue to throw punches.

Brother; Sister—you're not forgotten. God is not distracted or confused or scrambling. Keep trusting him. Cry out with the psalmist, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God."

Moses is discouraged and dismayed. It seems hopeless. It seems like God hasn't been faithful to his word—he has not delivered his people at all.

But lest we forget—God is moving exactly as he intends.

Think about this—hundreds of years prior to this, a man named Joseph went to sleep one night just like any other night. But that night, he had a dream about 11 stars and the sun and the moon bowing down to him. Who do you think gave him that dream?

And that dream led to some jealous brothers who ultimately decided to sell him to some Midianite traders who eventually sold him to a man named Potiphar. While faithfully serving Potiphar, he was wrongfully accused of trying to sleep with his master's wife and was thrown in jail, where he was presented with another divinely initiated dream—this time from a forgetful cupbearer. A couple of years later, the purpose of that encounter was revealed when Joseph was brought from a jail cell to the right hand of Pharaoh and became the second most powerful man in all of Egypt.

Then, God sent a famine which ultimately landed Joseph's entire family—the beginning of the people of Israel, to the land of Goshen within the territory of the Egyptians.

Church, it might seem like God is absent—but everything is going exactly as God intends in order to accomplish his purposes. Over the course of hundreds of years, God slowly moved history along through a series of providential events in order to provide the backdrop to the Exodus event, which is the greatest act of redemption in the history of the people of Israel. And of course, through the progressive revelation of God's redemptive plan, we can now see that the exodus was a shadow or a type that points to the greater act of redemption accomplished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—which is a new exodus from our sin.

Listen, sometimes we want to know where God is. But God is doing what God is doing for God's purposes.

Moses is questioning God wondering why God hasn't made good on his promises yet. But God isn't fazed. In fact, look at Chapter 6, verse 1:

*But the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."*

God doesn't condemn Moses for doubting. He extends grace. He comforts and reassures him. And he says, "Stay tuned. I'm about to show you what I'm going to do to Pharaoh."

God's about to show his strong hand. The showdown is coming. Aslan is on the move.

Keep going. Look at verse 2:

*<sup>2</sup> God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. <sup>3</sup> I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. <sup>4</sup> I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. <sup>5</sup> Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.*

Note how God begins in verse 2—"I am the LORD." Pharaoh asked, "Who is the LORD?" And Yahweh responds here and says, "I am!" And here, God is reaffirming and reassuring Moses. He reminds him that he has uniquely revealed himself to Moses.

And by the way, don't miss the fact that God must reveal himself for us to know him. He initiates in that revelation. He is the one who makes himself known to us.

And God essentially says to Moses, "Hey, I know it looks like I haven't done anything yet. But don't misunderstand—I have heard the groaning of the people. I have remembered my covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." He's reminding him of the truth that we have seen already at the end of Exodus 2.

And then he tells him what to say to the people of Israel. Look at verse 6.

*<sup>6</sup>Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup>I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'*

There it is again—3 more times in these verses, God says "I am the LORD." It bookends what God says to the people, both at the beginning and the end of his message. And notice the way God reinforces his promise. Seven times you see God promise to the people:

- I will bring you out
- I will deliver you
- I will redeem you
- I will take you to be my people
- I will be your God
- I will bring you into the land
- I will give it to you for a possession

This is in direct contrast to what Pharaoh said in Chapter 5, verse 2. At the beginning of this passage, Pharaoh declared with certainty, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover I will not let Israel go." But here, God flexes back and says, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."

The stage has been set. The showdown is about to begin.

But the people are discouraged. Notice how they respond in verse 9:

*<sup>9</sup>Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.*

At the end of Chapter 4, Moses had declared to the people what God said and they believed him. But now, they don't. Their circumstances have clouded their faith. Their oppression and slavery have robbed them of their trust in God.

Perhaps you're here this morning and you can relate. Perhaps your circumstances have broken your spirit and fractured your faith. But hear me say this—God is always faithful to his Word. God keeps his promises. If God says, “I will,” it's as good as done. It may not be on your timeline. It may not be in your preferred way. But God will accomplish his purposes for your good and for his glory.

Notice what God says to do in Verse 10:

*<sup>10</sup> So the LORD said to Moses, <sup>11</sup> “Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land.” <sup>12</sup> But Moses said to the LORD, “Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?” <sup>13</sup> But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.*

God says, “Go back to Pharaoh and say it again.” And Moses is like, “Yeah, that's kinda silly. It didn't work last time. And now, not even the people of Israel believe me. Why would he listen now? Maybe I'm not the guy.”

We've seen this kind of attitude from Moses before. And God has been patient with him. And, you can kind of empathize with Moses here, right? Like he tried to help the Israelites before and they say, “Who put you in charge over us?” And then he tried again 40 years later with God's help, and he only made things worse. Maybe he's not really the guy after all.

But then—like a commercial that comes up right before the big fight is about to start—you have this genealogy thrown in. We don't have time to work through it, which is unfortunate because there are a lot of really interesting observations that we could make here. But the main function is to show that Moses is the guy. It's to show that Moses and Aaron were indeed the ones whom God has called for this task. They are true Israelites, from the tribe of Levi, who will perform the priestly role of spiritually interceding for the people before God. And this genealogy is strategically placed here to emphasize that point.

In fact, you can see that at the end, down in verse 26:

*<sup>26</sup> These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said: “Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts.” <sup>27</sup> It was they who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron.*

When we finally arrive at verse 28, the text resumes where it had left off in verse 13:

*<sup>28</sup> On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, <sup>29</sup> the LORD said to Moses, “I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you.” <sup>30</sup> But Moses said to the LORD, “Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?”*

And with that, the scene closes. The questions about what will happen linger as we prepare for the next episode.

## **CONCLUSION**

But we have the benefit of knowing how the story ends. We know that God will indeed keep his Word. We know that Pharaoh will eventually listen and let the people go. Not because Moses demonstrates any kind of diplomatic excellence or persuasive argumentation. No, Pharaoh listens and lets the people go because Yahweh is sovereignly orchestrating all things according to the counsel of his will. Decades later, before the people finally enter into the Promised Land, listen to the way Moses reflects on these events in Deuteronomy 4:32–35:

*<sup>32</sup> “For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of. <sup>33</sup> Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and still live? <sup>34</sup> Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? <sup>35</sup> To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.*

We know where the story is going. But for now, the stage has been set. You know, I entitled my sermon “Setting the Stage for the Showdown”. But the reality is, this is more like setting the stage for the beat down.

This is not going to be a fair fight. God has no rivals. He is going to judge Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. He’s going to annihilate the harsh, oppressive Egyptians and decimate the land. He’s going to keep his word and bring the people out of Egypt, just like he promised. He’s going to demonstrate his sovereignty and leave no doubt in the mind of Pharaoh and the rest of the people of Israel that he is Yahweh, the LORD.

So when the so-called showdown happens, we can be sure of this—God is going to get the victory.

Let’s pray.