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Let My People Go!

Ex. 5:1-6:1

Moses having been called and commissioned by Yahweh, went to Egypt with his brother Aaron to deliver the children of Israel from their bondage.

1. They gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. Ex. 4:29
2. Aaron spoke all the words, which the LORD had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. Ex. 4:30
3. So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped. Ex. 4:31
* All of this was in direct obedience to the instructions Yahweh gave Moses on Mount Horeb. Ex. 3:16-18

What an encouragement to the children of Israel, as well as Moses and Aaron, but it would be short-lived, because Pharaoh would not be as excited about the news of Yahweh visiting His people, let alone to obey the command to release them from Egypt.

We want to look at the first time Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh, to let the children of Israel go

worship God in the wilderness, which is laid out for us in three movements. Ex. 5:1-6:1

- I. The bold request of Moses. Ex. 5:1-5
- II. The blatant vindictiveness of Pharaoh. Ex. 5:6-14
- III. The bewildered complaint of the Hebrews. Ex. 5:15-6:1

I. The bold request of Moses. Ex. 5:1-5

- A. Moses and Aaron petitioned Pharaoh to release the people of God. vs. 1-2
 1. The event took place after Moses and Aaron had met with the elder of Israel. vs. 1a
 - a. The word “afterwards” looks back to the previous chapter. Ex. 4:28-31
 - b. The amount of time between the two is not given, but it probably was too long after.
 - c. Whether the elders went also as God told Moses is not recorded but they are implied. Ex. 3:18c, 5:4d
 2. The authority in which they came in was not their own but God’s. vs. 1a-b
 - a. Moses and Aaron went in as the representatives of God. vs. 1a
 - 1) Moses was the prophet of God.
 - 2) Aaron was the spokesman for Moses.

- b.** Moses and Aaron said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel.” vs. 1b
- 1) The LORD, Yahweh, the all-existing One, the covenant God.
 - 2) God, Elohim, the Creator of everything.
 - 3) The God of Israel “Yisra’ el”, meaning God prevails, He was the true deliver, not Moses.
- c.** Moses and Aaron declared the command of God to Pharaoh, ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’” vs. 1c-d
- 1) Yahweh claimed the people as His possession, “My people”.
 - 2) Yahweh commanded Pharaoh, “Let My people go” release His people to worship Him in the wilderness.
 - 3) The word go “shalach” is often used with forceful authority, such as for a divorced wife or exile. Deut. 22:19, 28, Jer. 24:5
* The corresponding word for feast “chagag” in Arabic means to make a pilgrimage to Mecca.
 - 4) Remember this is Egypt, the most powerful nation!
- 3.** The Pharaoh was not intimidated by the command of the LORD God of Israel, delivered by Moses and Aaron. vs. 2

- a.** Pharaoh did not acknowledge the authority of Yahweh, the One God who created everything, as greater than his authority. vs. 2a-c
- 1) He was irreverent said, “Who is the LORD, implying he is not one of the gods of Egypt, he was unfamiliar with this God. vs. 2a-b
 - 2) He being prideful sarcastic, said, “that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?”, implying, He commands nothing in Egypt, vs. 2a-c
- b.** Pharaoh rebelliously defies the command of the God of Israel, considering himself, as a god on the throne of Egypt. vs. 2d-e
- 1) He said, “I do not know “yada” the LORD”, know Him by experience. vs. 2d
 - 2) He said, “Nor will I let Israel go”, he had no obligation to Yahweh, to obey His command. vs. 2e
 - 3) The pantheon of gods were many, some like human beings as Osiris, the judge of the dead, some like birds, like Horus the Hawk, the son of Osiris and the founder of the Egyptian realm; Djehuty, the god of mathematics, magic and the art of writing, who had the head of

an ibis: others like Sebek, the crocodile god, and the cobra goddess, Wadjet or Buto, whose likeness adorned the crown of every Egyptian king, and also the vulture goddess Nekhebet or Mut, who was a deity featured in Upper Egypt, corresponding to Buto. patroness of Lower Egypt.

- B.** Moses and Aaron persisted in their petition of Pharaoh for the release of the people of God. vs. 3-5
1. Moses and Aaron both gave witness of Yahweh's existence. vs. 3
 - a. They inform Pharaoh's question, Who is the LORD?, they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us." vs. 3a-b
 - 1) The LORD is the God of the people you have enslaved and are oppressing.
 - 2) The meeting took place at Mount Horeb, in Media. Ex. 3
 - b. They seem less confident saying, "Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the LORD our God." vs. 3c-d
 - 1) Yet, these are the very words given to Moses. Ex. 3:18

- 2) The specific of three days distance in the wilderness is to worship their God.
- c. They said, "Lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." vs. 3e
 - 1) They gave warning of Yahweh's power.
 - 2) They gave warning of Yahweh's retaliation.
2. The Pharaoh charged Moses and Aaron with distracting the people. vs. 4-5
 - a. Pharaoh said they were only attempting to take the people from their work. vs. 4
 - 1) The king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work?", it would only interrupt his building projects. vs. 4a-c
 - 2) The king of Egypt said, "Get back to your labor", which implies that the elders were present, also. vs. 4d
 - 3) The King of Egypt appears to be more powerful, attempting to embarrass Moses and Aaron, making them look foolish.
 - b. Pharaoh said they would affect the building and economy of Egypt. vs. 5
 - 1) Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are many now. vs. 5a-c

- 2) Pharaoh said, “and you make them rest from their labor!” vs. 5d
- 3) Pharaoh was dismissing the appeal, as a superstitions of the people.

Illustration

Nathan came boldly before David to confront him regarding his sin of adultery.

Application

1. Sometimes God saves a husband or wife in a marriage.
 - a. When the Christian attempts to share with their mate their conversion experience:
 - 1) Some times the unbelieving mate is won to Christ without any real opposition.
 - 2) But the majority of the time it is not received very well.
 - b. In fact the unbelieving mate, at time says, things like:
 - 1) “Who is this Jesus that you are telling me about” .
 - 2) “Why should I let you go to church all the time, you have a lot of work to do at home and taking care of the kids.”
 - 3) “You are not going to tell me what to do and how to live.”
 - c. At times, becoming a Christian puts the unbeliever at a great separation by their extreme reaction.

- * You are to be an example to your unbelieving mate, that they might see Christ in you and be saved. Eph. 5:18-32, 1Pet. 3:1-2
2. At other times, singles get saved but their boys-friend or girl-friend do not.
 - a. The response of the boy-friend or girl-friend, usually is one of dismay, “What, how could you become a Christian?”.
 - b. The relation has to be broken off, due to the fact that if one was involved sexually, they no longer can continue, as a Christian.
 - * Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. 1Cor. 6:19
 - c. And even, if there is not sexual involvement, the Bible tells us that we are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. 1Cor. 6:14
 3. At other times young teens except Jesus and the parents respond in an irate manner.
 - a. Often parents will accuse the young person of changing their religion.
 - b. At other times prohibited from going to church, read their Bible or hear any form of Christian studies, etc.
 - * The Bible tells us to be obedient to our parents and honor them, especially while we are under their authority, but it does not mean that you turn your back on Christ!

- c. You worship God in Spirit and truth, praying, studying His word, as you can, until you are of age to make your way, for God will be faithful! Jn. 4:24

The bold request of Moses was denied by Pharaoh!

II. The blatant vindictiveness of Pharaoh. Ex. 5:6-14

- A. Pharaoh ruthlessly made the labor of the people much harsher. vs. 6-11
 - 1. He did it without delay, on the very same day Moses and Aaron had asked Pharaoh to let the people go. vs. 6
 - a. Pharaoh commanded the Egyptian taskmasters “nagas” of the people, meaning oppressors, exactor or slave drivers. Ex. 3:7
 - b. Pharaoh commanded also their officers “shoter”, the Hebrew official or overseers.
 - 2. He gave two commands to the taskmasters and officers. vs. 7-8
 - a. The first command had to do with the process of how they made the bricks. vs. 7
 - 1) They were to cease giving the people straw to make brick as they had before. vs. 7a

- 2) They were to have the people go and gather straw for themselves. vs. 7b
 - * Interesting that both straw made bricks and pure clay bricks have been found in Pithom and Tanis.
- b. The second command had to do with the product, the amount of bricks they were required. vs. 8a-b
 - 1) They were to lay on the people, the same quota of bricks as before. vs. 8a
 - 2) They were not to allow them to diminish the previous quota. vs. 8b
- 3. He gave the reason for the harsh command. vs. 8c-9
 - a. Pharaoh declared the people had too much leaser time on their hands, they were lazy, “For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’” vs. 8c-f
 - b. Pharaoh declared the people had paid attention to deceptive lies, “Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words.” vs. 9
 - c. Pharaoh wanted to eliminate any reoccurrence by crushing the aspirations and hope of the Hebrews!

- B.** The people undeniably, could not meet their quota of bricks, under the harsh demands of Pharaoh. vs. 10-14
1. The taskmasters of the people and their officers went out and gave the command to the people. vs. 10-11
 - a. Thus says Pharaoh, “I will not give you straw.” vs. 10
 - b. ‘Thus says Pharaoh, “Go, get yourselves straw where you can find it.” vs. 11a-b
 - * The straw was available but the time constraint, to gather it and chop it up, caused them to get further behind!
 - c. Thus says Pharaoh, “Yet none of your work will be reduced.” vs. 11c
 2. The people went searching for building material. vs. 12
 - a. The people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt.
 - 1) This would use up some of their time.
 - 2) This would automatically diminish their time to make the bricks.
 - b. The people gathered stubble instead of straw.
 - 1) Stubble “qash” were mall sticks and whatever else they found, not adequate for giving the bricks strength.

- 2) Straw “teben” made the bricks cohesive and strong.
3. The taskmasters pressured the people to keep up with the production of bricks. vs. 13
 - a. The taskmaster were under pressure by Pharaoh, “And the taskmasters forced them to hurry.” vs. 13a
 - b. The taskmaster having to give an account to Pharaoh, said, “Fulfill your work, your daily quota, as when there was straw.” vs. 13b-e
4. The taskmasters mistreated the Hebrew officers for not meeting the production quota. vs. 14
 - a. They beat the Hebrew overseers physically, unjustly. vs. 14a-c
 - b. They asked them, why they were two days behind, “Why have you not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today, as before?” vs. 14d-e
 - 1) Pharaoh wanted to embitter the Hebrews against Moses and Aaron.
 - 2) Pharaoh wanted to divide the people from the leaders God sent!

Illustration

A young Russian soldier I 1972, age 20 was persecuted for his faith in Jesus. (Jesus Freaks. Vol. 1:30-35)

Application

1. Throughout history there have been horrible tyrants that hated Christians, so they did everything in their power to persecute them.
 - a. Nero stretched Christians on the rack and poured hot led on their bellies.
 - b. They would wrap Christians up in animal skins and let wild animals devour them.
 - c. Nero would dip Christians in wax and light them on fire to light the city.
 - d. Christians were tortured in horrible ways, with diabolical instruments by the Catholic Church and burned at the stake, for not recanting Jesus.
 - * Jesus said to the church of Smyrna, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be **faithful** until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Rev. 2:10
2. The most recent Christian persecution has taken place in Sudan by Islam.
 - a. The killing of Christians.
 - b. The raping of women and young girls.
 - c. The selling of children and women.

* “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will **suffer** persecution.”
2Tim. 3:12

3. The work force today is a very hostile place for Christians.
 - a. Some are automatically passed up in promotion because they are Christians.
 - b. Others are marked, mocked and are made to work under very difficult atmosphere.
 - c. Still other are fired for their faith in Christ.
4. The place that sometimes is the most difficult and vindictiveness, is in one’s own family.
 - a. When a wife or husband give her life to Christ and their spouse goes out of the way to make her life miserable and very difficult.
 - b. Mocking and ridiculing them whenever they please.
 - c. Turning their children against them.
 - d. Devastating them financially, by withholding support or selling the house right under them.
 - * “For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. “And he who does not take his cross

and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.” Matt. 10:35-38

The blatant vindictiveness of Pharaoh was to crush the hope of the people!

III. The bewildered complaint of the Hebrews. Ex. 5:15-6:1

- A. The Hebrew officers went before Pharaoh. vs. 15-16
1. They made their complaint to Pharaoh. vs. 15
 - a. The officers of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh.” vs. 15a

* The word cried out “qeu tsa’aq” means to cry out for help being in distress.
 - b. The officers said, “Why are you dealing thus with your servants?” vs. 15b-c

* The required bricks were impossible to meet with the added work.
 2. They made it clear that it was the fault of the Egyptians. vs. 16
 - a. They told him, “There is no straw given to your servants, and they say to us, ‘Make brick!’ ” vs. 16a-c

* Literally, “they keep saying to us, make brick!”

- b. They told him, “And indeed your servants are beaten.” vs. 16d
 - c. They told him, “But the fault is in your own people.” vs. 16e

* In affect, it was the fault of Pharaoh, for giving the order!
- B. The Hebrew officers were rebuffed by Pharaoh. vs. 17-19
1. Pharaoh quickly rebuked the officers, repeating his original reason for his command. vs. 17
 - a. “But he said, “You are idle! Idle!” . , you have too much time and lazy. vs. 17a-b
 - b. He said, “Therefore you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.’ ” vs. 17c-d
 2. Pharaoh reaffirms his original command. vs. 18
 - a. They were to go work and no straw would be given to them. vs. 18a-b
 - b. They nevertheless had to deliver the quota of bricks. vs. 18c
 3. Pharaoh made it very evident, they were in a no win situation. vs. 19
 - a. The officers of the children of Israel perceived they were in trouble. vs. 19a
 - b. The officers realized this, after Pharaoh said, “You shall not reduce

any bricks from your daily quota.” vs. 19b

C. The Hebrew officers blamed Moses and Aaron. vs. 20-21

1. The officers left the presence of Pharaoh. vs. 20
 - a. The officers as they came out from Pharaoh, met Moses and Aaron. vs. 20a
 - b. The two were standing waiting to meet them, without doubt to inquire about Pharaoh’s response. vs. 20b
2. The officers accused Moses and Aaron for all their hardships. vs. 21
 - a. They said to them, “Let the LORD look on you and judge”. implying they were to be blamed and God should pass sentence on them. vs. 21 a-b
 - b. They said, “Because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants”, in a worse relation. vs. 21c
 - * The word abhorrent “ba’ash”, means to stink, be loathsome or odious, something repulsive and irritating.
 - c. They said, Moses and Aaron had put a sword in the Egyptians hand to kill them. vs. 21d

D. The Hebrew prophet blamed Yahweh. vs. 22-23, 1

1. Moses acted just like the people and accused God for the evil. vs. 22
 - a. He was discouraged and frustrated, “So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people?” vs. 22a-b
 - b. He was doubting, “Why is it You have sent me?” vs. 22c
 - 1) Moses got his eyes off the Lord.
 - 2) Moses forgot that Yahweh also told him that Pharaoh would not let them go, until He stuck Egypt with all His wonders. Ex. 3:19-20, 4:21
2. Moses was pointing out flaws in the plan of God. vs. 23
 - a. The mention of His name was not a good idea, “For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people.” vs. 23a-b
 - b. The timing was lousy, “Neither have You delivered Your people at all.” vs. 23c
3. Moses was told by God that Pharaoh was not his problem, but Yahweh’s. vs. 1
 - a. The plan was right on schedule, “Then the LORD said to Moses,

“Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.” vs. 1a-b

- 1) Moses and Aaron saw that they could not stop Pharaoh.
 - 2) The Hebrew officers equally saw that they could not stop Pharaoh.
 - 3) The people both Hebrew and Egyptian would see that Yahweh was the only that could and would stop Pharaoh!
- b. The plan was going to turn out successful. vs. 1c-d
- 1) Pharaoh would set them free, “For with a strong hand he will let them go.” vs. 1c
 - 2) Pharaoh would be eager to see them go, “And with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.” vs. 1d
 - a) There would be seven more request, eight in total. Ex. 5:1-3, 7:10, 7:15-18, 8:1-4, 8:20-23, 9:1-4
 - b) There would be equally eight denial. Ex. 5:2; 7:13; 7:22-23; 8:15, 19; 8:32; 9:7, 12; 9:34-35; 10:11, 20, 27

Illustration

The first settlers of Plymouth Massachusetts, in the spring of 1621 experienced a dreadful plague of

pneumonia, killing half of them, yet they graciously refused the kind offer of the captain of the Mayflower to take them back to England. They determined to abide in the new home of religious freedom, no matter how many of them laid down their lives, only to see God’s blessing in a few decades, as the foundation was laid for what later became a great commonwealth, taking possession of what we now call the United States of America.

Application

1. The experience of difficult people is not only certain but necessary, that we might look to God, to benefit our lives.
 - a. The problem so often with people who are hostile towards Christians is pride and a hardened heart. Jer. 17:9
 - a. They often become hardened with time, more ruthless and more destructive.
 - * “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” 1Pet. 4:12-13
2. The other problem is when people are confronted with the truth, often the situation gets much worst before it gets better.

- a. Some unbelieving husbands or wives become so verbally abusive that it is impossible to live with them.
 - b. Others become physically abusive, endangering the health and life of the person.
 - c. Some, at times, become so hateful towards the church or Christian faith, they become vindictive and blasphemous, having no fear of God.
* “The **fear** of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Prov. 1:7
3. The only thing to do is to allow God to deal with their hearts.
- a. Through prayer, going before the throne of grace. Heb. 4:14-16
 - b. Through example. 1Tim. 4:12
 - c. Through a transformed life. Rom. 12:1-2
 - d. Sometimes God ends up saving the most ungodly mates.
 - e. Other times, God provides the grace to live with the unbelieving mate or provides the way of escape. Matt. 5:32, 1Cor. 10:13
4. The believer must guard his or her heart against bitterness against people and most of all God.
- a. “The heart knows its own **bitterness**, And a stranger does not share its joy.” Prov. 14:10
 - b. “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another,

- tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” Eph. 4:31-32
- c. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” Heb. 12:14-15

The bewildered complaint of the Hebrews would see the power of God!

Conclusion

This was first time Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh, to let the children of Israel go worship God in the wilderness, laid out in these three movements.

- I. The bold request of Moses was denied by Pharaoh!
- II. The blatant vindictiveness of Pharaoh was to crush the hope of the people!
- III. The bewildered complaint of the Hebrews would see the power of God!