

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

6-17-20

Exodus 5

Moses and Aaron Confront Pharaoh - Verses 1-4

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

²Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go." ³Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword." ⁴But the king of Egypt said, "Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!" ⁵Then Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working."

5:1-2 Pharaoh's response to Moses and Aaron is very illuminating and sets the tone for the whole Exodus account. Here we see Moses and Aaron going before the Pharaoh of Egypt boldly. We could take a lesson from this. We must be bold in the Lord. We must not back down from telling the truth, because of a person's station in life. We must learn to be bold in bringing the message of God. When Moses and Aaron gave the message to Pharaoh, they were explicit with him about what God this was.

5:1-2 Pharaoh was familiar with many gods (Egypt was filled with them), but he had never heard of the God of Israel. Pharaoh assumed that the God of the Hebrew slaves couldn't be very powerful. At first, Pharaoh was not at all worried about Moses' message, for he had not yet seen any evidence of the Lord's power.

5:3 Pharaoh would not listen to Moses and Aaron because he did not know or respect God. People who do not know God may not listen to his Word or his messengers. Like Moses and Aaron, we need to persist. When others reject you or your faith, don't be surprised or discouraged. Continue to tell them about God, trusting him to open minds and soften stubborn hearts.

Pharaoh Increases the Israelites' Labor - Verses 6-14

⁶That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: ⁷"You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. ⁸But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' ⁹Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies." ¹⁰Then the slave drivers and the overseers went out and said to the people, "This is what Pharaoh says: 'I will not give you any more straw. ¹¹Go and get

your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.”¹² So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw.¹³ The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, “Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw.”¹⁴ And Pharaoh’s slave drivers beat the Israelite overseers they had appointed, demanding, “Why haven’t you met your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?”

5:6-7 Here we see cruelty to the utmost. The Pharaoh wanted the people to know that he did not appreciate this request of Moses and Aaron, so exacted this extra work load as immediate punishment. These taskmasters here were from a different root word than the ones earlier mentioned, and probably were talking about officers close to the Pharaoh who would carry out the Pharaoh’s orders. Straw was chopped up and used as bulk in the making of the brick. The job of getting enough straw to make bricks for a full day’s work would require several extra hours of work each day. This punishment inflicted by Pharaoh was to deter any future requests from Moses and Aaron on behalf of the Hebrews.

5:8-9 Moses and Aaron took their message to Pharaoh just as God directed. The unhappy result was harder work and more oppression for the Hebrews. Sometimes hardship comes as a result of obeying God. Are you following God but still suffering—or suffering even worse than before? If your life is miserable, don’t assume you have fallen out of God’s favor. You may be suffering for doing good in an evil world.

Pharaoh Increases the Israelites’ Labor – Verses 15-21

15 Then the Israelite overseers went and appealed to Pharaoh: “Why have you treated your servants this way? **16** Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, ‘Make bricks!’ Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people.” **17** Pharaoh said, “Lazy, that’s what you are—lazy! That is why you keep saying, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.’ **18** Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks.” **19** The Israelite overseers realized they were in trouble when they were told, “You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day.” **20** When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, **21** and they said, “May the LORD look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

5:15-21 The foremen were caught in the middle. First they tried to get the people to produce the same amount; then they complained to Pharaoh; finally they turned on Moses. Perhaps you have felt caught in the middle at work, or in relationships in your family or church. Complaining or turning on the leadership does not solve the problem. In the case of these supervisors, God had a larger purpose in mind, just as he might in your situation. So rather than turning on the leadership when you feel pressured by both sides, turn to God to see what else he might be doing in this situation.

Moses Complains to the Lord - Verses 22-24

²² Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me? ²³ Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."

5:22-23 Evidently, Moses did not anticipate what effect Pharaoh's refusal and reaction would have upon his own people. Confrontation with Pharaoh so far had provoked both the angry resentment of Israel by the Egyptians and of Moses by Israel. This was not the expected scenario!

Every minister who has spoken for God throughout all time has felt this frustration that Moses felt here. He felt that he had been a failure not only to these people, but to God as well. He was almost accusingly pointing a finger at God here. It is as if he was saying you told me you would deliver them, now why haven't you? We are an impatient people. God can see the end and knows they would be delivered. He doesn't count a few weeks as anything.

5:22-23 Pharaoh had just increased the Hebrews' workload, and Moses protested that God had not rescued his people. Moses expected faster results and fewer problems. When God is at work, suffering, setbacks, and hardship may still occur. In James 1:2-4, we are encouraged to be happy when difficulties come our way. Problems develop our patience and character by teaching us to (1) trust God to do what is best for us, (2) look for ways to honor God in our present situation, (3) remember that God will not abandon us, and (4) watch for God's plan for us.