



The Lord is My Strength

Everyone Needs a Pep Talk

Exodus 5

- We've been looking at God's preparation of Moses and Moses' conversion from a man who thought that he could single-handedly deliver Israel from the Egyptians, to a man 40 years later who sings, 'The LORD is my strength.'
- We've seen how God called Moses to perform His work, the credentials he gave him, and the unique way in which God goes about providing things for us
- Now we see Moses actually ready to begin the ministry he was called for
- God had brought Moses along through the training of the Pharaoh and caused him to be an eloquent man, gifted in word and deed. He was learned and a very qualified man.
- Moses went out with all of those qualifications in mind and committed a complete and total flop in the original beginning of his ministry, but that was because he was starting in his own strength.
- He was not following God's timetable; he was following his own plan.
- Now, 40 years later, the training program is complete, and God brought him out to begin the ministry according to God's plan
- What we notice is that Moses is still learning, even as he begins his ministry
- The beginning of his work is not a particularly enviable beginning
- It's important for us to recognize the way that God actually operates in these cases that we tend to overlook
- First, we'll look at the presentation that Moses and Aaron made before Pharaoh
- Exodus 5:1 KJV
 - 1) And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

- It's not really a request is it, it's more like a statement...
- This is a demand presented by God's spokesman in a formal, court-type presentation
- Remember how the Pharaoh that knew Moses was dead?
- It really shows God's power that Moses and Aaron got a hearing because they had no status before the court. They were representatives of a slave people. They were representatives of a God whom Pharaoh did not recognize, and so God's power is demonstrated that they were even able to come and make this statement before Pharaoh.
- Here in the very beginning of this presentation by Moses to Pharaoh is a picture of something that is a very basic part of the Christian life.
- One of the basic underlying truths of the New Testament is that we have been released from slavery to sin, just as God is going to release the Israelites from their slavery.
- We have been released from slavery and bondage to sin, but we haven't been released to just wander around and do whatever we want to do. Rather, in I
- The tragic thing about the Christian life of many individuals is that they are released from sin by faith in Jesus Christ, but they don't turn to serving God and to worshiping the Lord.
- They wander around and after awhile, their lives begin to be frustrating and their experience of life in the Truth isn't what they thought it would be.
- They look at other believers and they see others going on with the Lord and seeming to be fulfilled and enjoying it, and they wonder what the problem is.
- If you find yourself in that category, and if all of the things that make up your religious life seem to be just sort of empty and you wonder if some of us really mean that, you wonder why it is not as exciting to you as it seems to be to other people, may I suggest that one thing you might check out in your life is this: Perhaps you have been set free from slavery, but you haven't really turned to serving the Lord.
- To enjoy all that God has for you as a believer, to enjoy all that God has for you as one of His children, you must give your life to Him completely.
- Exodus 5:2 KJV
 - 2) And Pharaoh said, Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.
- Notice how Pharaoh refers to YAHWEH

- As you notice when you keep track of it, YAHWEH was the name by which the God of Israel was known to those who did not necessarily accept Him. That was why Pharaoh would use this name.
- It was a very holy and precious name to the Jews, but it was a common denominator for God to other nations. So Pharaoh is speaking very literally. "Who is Jehovah?"
- In saying, "Who is Jehovah?" in a very sarcastic way, Pharaoh is really expressing his own condition. He is ignorant of God and therefore he is totally disobedient to God. He has no loyalty and no honor for God.
- It's interesting to note, however, that as Pharaoh said, "I know not the Lord," he is also expressing his own ignorance of his own condition.
- Fast Forward to chapter 9, and you see God speaking to Pharaoh
- Exodus 9:16-17 KJV
 - 16) And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.
 - 17) As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?
- Do you see what God is saying? God is saying, "Pharaoh, you would not have any of the things that you have, you would not be in the position you are if I had not raised you up. Pharaoh, you would have been just another little Egyptian boy. You might not even be on the scene, Pharaoh, if I had not given you what you have."
- This is a very important thing to keep in mind, not only for Pharaoh, but for all of us.
- Pharaoh was so proud; He was so powerful. He had things all completely planned. It was his decision, he thought, whether to let the people go or not. God said, "Pharaoh, the only reason you are where you are is that I put you there. The only reason that I have put you there is to accomplish My purposes, and if My purposes were not accomplished, I would have no need of you, and I would not have put you where you are."
- What an ironic thing and what a silly thing that Pharaoh thought that he was in control.
- He thought that he was important enough and big enough to resist God, even though God was the one who put him there.
- It may seem simplistic, but the same thing is true of your life and of my life.
- We sometimes think that it is my life, and I can do with it what I please

- God can say the same thing to us that He says to Pharaoh, "I put you where you are. For My purposes, you have been raised up."
- Perhaps you have a place of importance in your school or in your business or your community and you are thinking, even though you might not ever say so publicly, "I have designs and I have priorities that God has no right to interfere with." You are thinking like Pharaoh. You are thinking like the Israelites, and God knows that is a characteristic of the human race.
- Could God be speaking to you, saying, "You are a Pharaoh type. You are an Israelite type. For this cause, I have raised you to power. For this cause, I have put you where you are, only to accomplish My purposes." Pharaoh was not only ignorant of the Lord, but he was ignorant of his own position in life also.

This response that Pharaoh gives, might be reasonable, if you look at it from the human standpoint, that Pharaoh might have thought that the God of the Israelites was not very powerful because, after all, they were in bondage and they had been for four hundred years.

- Surely if their God was very powerful, He would never have let this happen to them. He may have thought that this was just a silly request from a silly bunch of folks and that he didn't have to accede to it.
- However, on the other hand, Pharaoh was a believer in many gods, and God has brought this situation to bear to demonstrate to Moses and the Israelites and to us that Pharaoh was completely unreasonable because surely a believer in many gods, as Pharaoh was, could have very easily let these people, whose worship to him was just another of many gods, have a little bit of time to worship their God, even if he didn't believe in the validity of that God.
- But he was so cruel and so unthinking and so uncompassionate that he wasn't even willing to let them go and worship a God that evidently was important to them.
- So God clarifies the request...
- Exodus 5:3 KJV
 - 3) And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.
- This verse shows God's graciousness. It was as if Pharaoh didn't really understand their request, and so God, in His grace, causes Moses to clarify the request, to state it over again, just as if Pharaoh were too busy to understand or too thick to understand.
- Pharaoh said, "I know not the Lord. Who is the Lord? I don't know Him."

- Moses comes back at God's direction and says, ``The LORD Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews..." Here is God's formal name explained. It is as if God wanted to show us and to show Pharaoh that He really means business about this.
- A question that comes up very often about verse 3 is, why did they say, ``Let us go three days' journey into the desert," when they knew that they were asking him to let them go?
- Their intention was that God would deliver them from slavery, and yet they came to Pharaoh and said, ``Let us go three days..." Wasn't that misleading? Wasn't that deceitful? Why did they do it in that way?
- Go back to Exodus, chapter 3, and notice that as God was commissioning Moses for this job, He prepared him in advance. Notice verse 19, where God is previewing things for Moses:
- Exodus 3:19 KJV
 - 19) And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.
- God had already told Moses and Moses had conveyed this information to the Israelites that Pharaoh was not going to let them go, and so as we go back to chapter 5, this request was designed by God just to demonstrate Pharaoh's unreasonableness.
- Here is proof for Moses and for the Israelites and for us of the unreasonable nature of this man. You see, if they had come in and said, ``Pharaoh, let us go. We need to be free people." Certainly none of us would have thought it unreasonable if Pharaoh had said, ``No. You are the backbone of my economy. I am not going to let you go." That would have only been reasonable, at least from a human standpoint, but to come in and say, ``Pharaoh, we want to take a three day break. Let us go for three days." There was nothing unreasonable about a request like that. Pharaoh was a mercenary man. Pharaoh, I am sure, insisted on a certain number of bricks being produced, but even an unreasonable and hard taskmaster could have considered the possibility of letting the people have three days off. You see, God wants to demonstrate the fierce, unbending and unreasonable nature of this man.
- Why is this important? This is important because our purpose is not so much to study the book of Exodus as it is to study the life of Moses presented in the book of Exodus, but God is going to do some terrible things to Pharaoh.
- Some of these things we will be looking at, and some of them we won't because Moses was not directly involved in some of the things that God did to Pharaoh, but God did some terrible things to Pharaoh.

- Sometimes people say, "How could a God of love do things like that? If He is really a God of love, how can He rain down that kind of judgment on what are relatively innocent people? After all, Pharaoh was the one who was responsible, so how could God do that?"
- God is illustrating here in chapter 5 a principle that He illustrates again and again in the Word of God, and that is that He is a God of love, but He is also a God of judgment.
- God is a God who cannot and will not tolerate sin.
- Ultimately, He allowed His Son to die in order to pay for sin. That is the extent to which He could not tolerate sin.
- If God could have in any way tolerated sin, Jesus would never have had to die.
- God is intolerant to sin to such an extent that even His only begotten Son had to die to settle the sin question.
- God **IS** a God of love, but He cannot tolerate sin.
- God is also a God of judgment because of His intolerance of sin, but it is important to know that His judgment is always preceded by His love. His judgment is always preceded by His mercy. God is giving Pharaoh every opportunity to be reasonable by giving a three day pass as an option. God is giving Pharaoh every opportunity to respond in mercy to God's extension of mercy. Because Pharaoh continues to go on against God, even as God gives him opportunity, then God's judgment falls.
- So, God clarifies his request to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh clarifies his response:
- Exodus 5:4 KJV
 - 4) And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens.
- It is very obvious that Pharaoh thought that this was just another dodge, just another attempt to get the people out of work.
- Probably the Israelites had stopped working. We didn't look at chapter 4 in detail because it doesn't deal directly with the life of Moses, but in chapter 4, after God had commissioned Moses in the verses that we did look at in our last lesson, Moses went to the people of Israel and he gave them the news that God was going to deliver them. Probably they quit working right then.
- So what Pharaoh had on his hands was a work stoppage, and he thought that Moses was just some sort of labor organizer. He had come in here and gotten the people agitated, and so he was going to put a stop to this right then

- Pharaoh is now irreversibly on record. His response is, "I will not let the people go even for a three day break. They must get back to their work." God is demonstrating very clearly for us where Pharaoh stands on this issue. He is hardhearted. He is rebellious against God. He is ignorant of God, and so God is going to have to deal in the situation.

- Exodus 5:5 KJV

- 5) And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now *are* many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.

- In Pharaoh's opinion, there was no spiritual significance involved in this thing. In Pharaoh's opinion, this was just a labor problem.

- Exodus 5:6-9 KJV

- 6) And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,
- 7) Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves.
- 8) And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish *ought* thereof: for they *be* idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go *and* sacrifice to our God.
- 9) Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words.

- Not only are they going to have to make the same number of bricks, but now they are also going to have to gather their own straw.
- In other words, "If you have time to go worship, if you have time to go and have some kind of ceremony to your God, then you have plenty of time to go gather your own straw."
- Again, this shows the cruelty of Pharaoh, but let's think about it from the standpoint of the Israelites and from our standpoint as God's people.
- Do you see that this illustrates that sometimes it is God's will for things to get worse?
- The Israelites were in a terrible situation. They had been crying out to God for deliverance, some of them for years, and then news comes that God is going to deliver them. He has a deliverer on the scene. He brings the deliverer to them and the deliverer says, "I have come at God's direction to deliver you." They think that their problems are solved, and then things get worse.
- Are you surprised at that? Well, don't be surprised if you are going along in life and you recognize that you have needs and problems, and for whatever reason and through whatever course of events, you finally turn to God with those needs, and God assures you through His Word that He is going to meet those needs and

solve those problems. Then things get worse. Sometimes God does allow things to get worse, and here is perfect evidence of it. Some of you have experienced it in your own lives, and we think, ``What is this? I prayed. I trusted God. I thought I had a promise from Him and things are no better. In fact they are worse."

- In fact many times---perhaps most of the time---God takes what seems to us a lengthy route in the meeting of our needs, but it is because there are things that can only be accomplished by going through certain details, and the story of the Israelites will demonstrate that for us very clearly.
- Sometimes things get worse. They did in this case.
- Notice Pharaoh says, ``This is just emptiness. These are just vain words. All this talk about worshipping the Lord, is just a bunch of emptiness." This is Pharaoh's attitude demonstrated.
- Exodus 5:10-14 KJV
 - 10) And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw.
 - 11) Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it: yet not ought of your work shall be diminished.
 - 12) So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.
 - 13) And the taskmasters hasted *them*, saying, Fulfil your works, *your* daily tasks, as when there was straw.
 - 14) And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, *and* demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and to day, as heretofore?
- Here we see the things that Pharaoh had said put into effect. The command is given and the people of Pharaoh are obedient to command.
- Sometimes it not only appears things are going to get worse, they actually do get worse, and that was true for the Israelites. I am sure they were wondering, as you might be wondering, why has God allowed this to happen?
- You may find yourself in a situation similar to theirs or you have a friend who is in a situation similar God seems to have started working but now things are at a standstill again.
- From a human standpoint, Moses' ministry is not getting off to a very effective start.
- Moses' ministry is not very successful here at the beginning, but always remember, God writes the last chapter. Fortunately, we are familiar enough with this story to know that this isn't all there is. If we had to bring the curtain down here, it would be a pretty sad place to end, but God is not through in your life, either.

- You see, God had to take time to demonstrate the hardheartedness of Pharaoh. God had to take time to demonstrate the fickleness of the Israelites. God had to take time to do these things in order to work this out perfectly.
- Why is God taking so long to keep His promise to you? Why has God actually let things get worse for you instead of better?
- God has not forgotten about you and God has not let this thing take Him by surprise.
- God is doing in your life what He was doing for the Israelites. He is setting the stage for some action that He can take decisively in the future that will have benefits that will last forever.
- God has great things to accomplish through you and me
- But many, many times He can only accomplish those things if we allow Him to properly set the stage as we stay out of His way and let Him do with our lives and in our lives the things that He knows are necessary to be able to use us in the way that He plans to use us.
- We are going to see in our future classes, as Moses' problems continue, that Moses was able to rest in the Lord and was able to cope with these problems.
- Will you remember that God's will is perfect enough to include even the worsening circumstances that you or someone you love may be facing, and God's purpose is to get glory to Himself, and He will do it, even through these difficult times?