



# The Lord is My Strength

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## *Bad Things Get Worse*

### Exodus 7

- We asked the question in our last class, why does God often take so long to keep His promise to you? Why does God actually let things get worse instead of better?
- Many times God 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.
- In Chapter 7 we see the demonstration of God's power
- The first thing that we want to notice about this demonstration of God's power is the instructions for the demonstration, which were received by Moses before the demonstration of God's power actually took place.
- First, as God gave Moses instructions about this demonstration that He is going to give, we have in verses 1-2 an assignment of relationship. Notice in verse 1:
- Exodus 7:1-2 KJV
  - 1) And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.
  - 2) Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.
- In these verses, as you can see, God assigns Moses, Pharaoh, and Aaron specific places in relation to each other and in relation to God.
- For Pharaoh, Moses will be his god: "I have thee a god to Pharaoh," there in verse 1.
- You will notice that the word *god* is not capitalized. God is not saying, "I have made part of the Deity," or anything like that. He is saying, "You are going to take the place in Pharaoh's life that God has in any individual's life. You are going to be representative of God."

- In the next three chapters, you will see that Pharaoh will actually have to ask Moses to do things for him. Moses will control Pharaoh in the next three chapters.
- The interesting thing is that Pharaoh doesn't seem to realize that, and Pharaoh is able to make decisions on his own and take his own actions, but the things that are really accomplished in Pharaoh's life during that time are as a result of his asking Moses for things. So Moses literally will be Pharaoh's god in this next section of the book.
- We see in verse 1 that Aaron will be the prophet. Aaron is representative, then, of a prophet of God.
- You see the analogy. Moses is going to take the figure of God and God has prophets, and so Aaron, Moses' brother, the spokesman, is going to be God's prophet or Moses' prophet in the analogy. Here is a picture of what a prophet does---a very good illustration of the office of prophet. A prophet speaks for someone else. A prophet speaks for God.
- So we have the assignment of relationships. Moses is as God. Aaron is as God's prophet. A prophet speaks for someone else. Aaron spoke for Moses to Pharaoh
- Aaron is going to speak what Moses commands him, but Moses is supposed to tell Aaron what God told him. Notice carefully this commission in verse 2:
  - 2) Thou shalt speak all that I command thee:
- A prophet is not free to speak his own words and here that is emphasized again very carefully in verse 2: ``Thou shalt speak all that I command thee..."
- It is an interesting thing to notice that though we believe that the gift of prophecy has ceased at the completion of the writing of the Scripture as we have it, this same kind of instruction is given for those who teach God's Word.
- Consider 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, chapter 4. Paul was writing to his young disciple, Timothy, and giving him instructions about the ministry. We want to notice just one or two phrases here that are very important.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:2 KJV
  - 2) Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.
- Notice the instructions to the teacher: ``Preach the Word." And going on, he says, ``Be instant in season, out of season" - that is, whether it is appropriate or whether it is comfortable, whether you feel like it or not. Preach the Word at all times. Preach the Word even when it may offend someone whom you know to be in your audience. Preach the Word of God. ``Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

- The message of the teacher is the Word of God.
- By means of that Word he is to reprove, rebuke and exhort; but the material with which he reproves, rebukes and exhorts is the Word of God.

We live in a day when this verse, in fact this Book, has been largely forgotten.

We live in a day when men stand in pulpits or persons have personal, private conversations with others and they reprove, rebuke, and exhort on the basis of their own opinions and their own customs and their own traditions.

- The instructions from God are the same today as they were to Moses in his day: "Speak what I have commanded."
- The responsibility of each of us as we minister in whatever place God has given us, is to speak the Word of God, to use it as a tool.
- The same idea is back in chapter 1 of II Timothy. Notice verse 13. It is so specific that Paul writes to Timothy:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:13 KJV

13) Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

- Notice the word *form*. The word *form* is a translation of a Greek word which means "the essence of the thing." This is why it is important for a teacher, particularly, to be able to do research in the original language because, although we have many good translations available to us in English, and it is one of the things that we should thank the Lord for and one of the things that we too often take for granted, at the same time we need to be careful that we are understanding as nearly exactly as we can the message that God was giving as He originally wrote those words. Since He wrote them in a language different than our own, we need to be able to certify and check those things because the instruction is not only to teach the Word, but the instruction is to be sure that we even have the form of the word correct, that we understand the implication, the structure of what God is saying.
- So, in Exodus 7 we see the relationships that God has set up
- Throughout these next chapters, we are going to see Pharaoh having Moses as his authority figure, Aaron being Moses' spokesman, and Moses being God's spokesman.
- Moses is carefully warned to speak only God's instructions. Moses has, by this time, finally come to the place that he is able to do that, and we are going to see how effectively he does that in the coming verses.

- In the instructions for this demonstration we see an alert to rebellion. The reason for this rebellion is in verse 3, if you will notice:
- Exodus 7:3 KJV
  - 3) And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.
- God is saying, "Moses, it is not going to be easy. You are not just going to walk in there and say, 'Pharaoh, let my people go,' and he will say, 'Well, I have been kind of considering that. I guess I will.' No, you are going to find rebellion, and I want you to know that to begin with. You are going to go in, and you are going to demand that he let your people go, and Pharaoh will harden his heart."
- The result of that rebellion is given in verses 4-5:
- Exodus 7:4-5 KJV
  - 4) But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, *and* my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.
  - 5) And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.
- We need to think very carefully about verses 4-5, the results of this rebellion that God is predicting and God is warning Moses of in advance because there are some very important principles here that I think have to do with the way God works in our lives even now.
- Notice, first the structure of the things that God says here. He says in the first part of verse 4: "Pharaoh is not going to listen to you."
- The second thing God says is, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." In verse 3, He has already told us that He will harden Pharaoh's heart, and so He says, "I am going to demonstrate My power."
- Can you imagine as Moses has gone through all of these years of training, all of these years of preparation, and now he finally stands before Pharaoh and makes God's demand, what a surprise that Pharaoh will not listen. Moses might have said, "God, why? After all of these years and the culmination of this plan, why would you have it that I would walk in before Pharaoh and Pharaoh not listen?"
- God gives His answer here. It is the second thing that He says in verse 4: "Not only will Pharaoh not listen, but there is a reason for that, Moses." Notice the reason in verse 4:

- That is the second factor in this instruction: ``Pharaoh won't listen so that I can demonstrate my power."
- Then there is a third thing in the middle of verse 4: ``...Israel will be delivered. Israel will be brought out of her bondage..." Then notice verse 5, where we see a fourth thing involved in this:
  - 5) And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD,
- There are four things involved in this rebellion that Pharaoh is going to pursue. ``Pharaoh is not going to listen to you, Moses, and when he doesn't, I am going to work wondrous works. When I do that, he will let the people go; and when he lets the people go as a result of that kind of situation, all of Egypt is going to know that I am God."
- You see, God is saying, ``Moses, I am going to accomplish this thing. I am going to let the people go, and I am going to use you in getting the people out of bondage; but Moses, I am going to go about it a little differently than you might have planned. I am going to accomplish a number of things as I let My people go."
- God very rarely kills one bird with one stone. Usually God accomplishes many purposes in the accomplishment of that thing which you are asking Him to do. Sure God could have gotten the Israelites out of Egypt just like that, but God had taken a long process and God is going through many steps because He is going to accomplish many things.
- There is a very important application to what is told us in those verses.
- Think with me for a moment and put yourself in the place of Moses or in the place of some of those Israelites, particularly, because Moses was being informed by God step-by-step what was taking place. Think perhaps about an Israelite who was in bondage in Egypt, and he was praying that God would deliver him from that bondage. We have read many places here in Exodus that the Israelites were crying out to God by reason of their bondage. Suddenly Moses comes on the scene and they think, ``Praise God. We are going to be delivered. We finally have a deliverer, and God is going to answer our prayers."
- Then over a period of the next few days and weeks, things don't get better.
- In fact, **things get worse**.
- The bondage gets worse. Pharaoh begins to have problems and he begins to get mean like most people do when they have problems, and he comes down even harder. He tightens the screws and things get worse.
- Then someone says, ``You know, I was in the capital last week and I heard Moses preaching a sermon and it was a funny thing he mentioned. He mentioned that God had told him that God was going to harden Pharaoh's heart."

- You think, ``What is this? Here I thought that God was going to deliver us and actually God is working against us. God is causing Pharaoh to harden his heart and things are just worse. What in the world is this?"
- Haven't you ever been in a situation where you had asked God, perhaps agonizingly, to solve the problem, and you pray about it and you pray about it. You see some glimmer of hope that God is going to work, and then things get worse. If you haven't been there already, be prepared because you will be. That is what happened to the Israelites. Why is that?
- Sometimes it is going to appear that God is actually working against you, but God has recorded these details for your benefit in His Word because here is one of the ways that God operates. Sometimes He has to make it appear that He is working against you so that He can accomplish the great good that He is going to accomplish for you.
- You see, in the beginning, the Israelites could hardly believe that God was working for them, but actually even those things that He did that made it worse for the Israelites were ultimately for their good.
- A perfect illustration of the truth of Romans, chapter 8, verse 28: ``All things work together for good..."
- We need to clearly understand that that verse does not say, ``All things are good for the Christian..." It doesn't say that. Sometimes we have that idea, but God is very clear about that. ``All things work *together* for good." These two elements are put into the package and blended together and the outcome is good.
- The outcome that God defines as good is that you are made more like Jesus Christ.
- You need to be careful, too, of your definition of *good*. ``All things work together for good." All things do not work together to make you healthy, wealthy and wise, necessarily. They work together to make you more like Jesus Christ, but some bad elements, some painful elements may have to go into that mixture to make those things work together for good.
- Here is a living example of that.
- Things got worse, but God was previewing this for Moses, and in verses 6-13 it begins to happen
- Exodus 7:6-7 KJV
  - 6) And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they.
  - 7) And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.

- The first thing that we want to notice is Moses' authority.
- A few moments ago we were talking about the commandment for the prophet. He is to speak God's Word, and in response to that, since God has recorded that as part of His instructions to Moses, He is faithful to record that Moses did that. Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them. God just wants to give recognition to the man who is faithful. Moses simply did what he was asked to do, but God was good enough and gracious enough to give Moses credit for that. This is Moses' authority. He spoke for God.
- Then, in verse 7, we have an interesting verse. It is not very inspiring in and of itself. Moses was fourscore years old and Aaron was fourscore and three years old when they spoke before Pharaoh. Why would God include that in the narrative? Of all the things that God does not include in His Word, all the details of history and all of that, why do you suppose that God would put a verse like this in the text?
- He actually has a very important reason for that. This verse really is specific, and it is important.
- First, this verse is included because God is about to do one of the greatest things in all of history. God's deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians is known in all societies where there is any degree of education at all even today. People still make jokes about the crossing of the Red Sea and about those kinds of things that are included in the plagues. That is a well-known story even in this generation thousands of years later, so God is just being accurate. He is specifying details of this most significant event, but there is more to it than that. The more important thing, I think, is to demonstrate for you and me in this generation and for that generation, too, how long God had waited to meet their needs and to solve their problems.
- Why was God waiting? I think we have covered the subject many times before and we touched on it a moment ago that God was not just twiddling His thumbs and sitting around watching the people squirm, but He was taking time to work out His plan in great detail. It had taken so long for this plan to come into effect that by the time that God began to specifically work to get those people out of bondage, Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three years old.
- You remember the subject of our first study of the life of Moses was Moses' birth. The bondage out of which Moses was going to be used to deliver these people was already going on when he was born. You think you have it bad because you have been praying about it for a month and haven't seen God work yet. I hope we do not take this as a promise that God always takes eighty-three years to begin to work, and I don't think that is what it means, but it is a subtle reminder that God's timing is not always the same as ours, and yet God works in such a miraculous way that this event is still being talked about hundreds and thousands of years later. God works on His own schedule, and so there is just a little reminder thrown in here.

- Another reason that God took so long is that there is going to be judgment involved here, and God always moves even more slowly in the matter of judgment.
- So should we...
- We often want to resolve all of our problems with a single meeting on Tuesday night from 7:30 to 9:00
- God took 83 years just to put the pieces in place to begin to work this problem out...

### **The Performance Before Pharaoh**

- In verses 8-10, Moses and Aaron go in and for the very first time begin to actually do their work of representing God. It has taken this long, even in their ministry, to be able to put into effect the things that they have been preparing for. The plan is in verses 8-9. There we read:
  - Exodus 7:8-9 KJV
    - 8) And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
    - 9) When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast *it* before Pharaoh, *and* it shall become a serpent.
  - They went in and Pharaoh said, ``If you are a representative of God, if you claim to represent the God of the universe, then do something to prove it." And so they did. They put this rod down, and it became a snake.
  - Exodus 7:10 KJV
    - 10) And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.
  - The interesting thing is that Pharaoh does the same thing!
  - Exodus 7:11 KJV
    - 11) Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.
  - What a surprise! Moses and Aaron go in and do this thing that was calculated to astound Pharaoh and to prove beyond any shadow of a doubt about who they were and Who they represented, and Pharaoh very glibly turns around and has his magicians do the very same thing.
  - It must have been very disheartening to Moses and Aaron.



- They probably thought that they were going to march in there and even though God has said that He is not going to let the people go, at least that Pharaoh would be very impressed with what they could do. But Pharaoh was not impressed at all. He said, ``I have seen that before. That is one of the leading nightclub acts here in Egypt right now. Come here, fellows, and show them what you can do."
- In fact, notice the specific wording here in verse 11: ...``they also did in like manner..." They did the very same thing. In fact, some Bible teachers have tried to explain this away, that these were magicians and they did some kind of magic trick, but notice in verse 12 it says that the rods BECAME Serpents
- The Scripture is very clear that this was not just some kind of slight-of-hand trick, but that Pharaoh's magicians were able to do exactly the same thing that God had enabled Moses and Aaron to do. Their rods became serpents.
- This speaks to the amazing knowledge and advanced learning of the Egyptians
- But, God is not outdone by man's wisdom
- Exodus 7:12 KJV
  - 12) For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.
- Do you see that? Again, notice that we are talking about rods. Their rods became snakes, but God's snake was superior to the Egyptian's snake.
- 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:4 KJV
  - 4) Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.
- God is greater than any of the wisest or most intelligent or powerful of men!
- Next class we will look at the Plagues and how that would have affected Moses...