

Exodus 5:1 – 6:30

^{5:1} And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.' ² But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go.' ³ 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, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.' ⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, 'Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get back to your labors!' ⁵ Again Pharaoh said, 'Look, the people of the land are now many, and you would have them cease from their labors!' ⁶ So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters over the people and their foremen, saying, ⁷ 'You are no longer to give the people straw to make brick as previously; let them go and gather straw for themselves. ⁸ But the quota of bricks which they were making previously, you shall impose on them; you are not to reduce any of it. Because they are lazy, therefore they cry out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' ⁹ Let the labor be heavier on the men, and let them work at it so that they will pay no attention to false words.' ¹⁰ So the taskmasters of the people and their foremen went out and spoke to the people, saying, 'Thus says Pharaoh, 'I am not going to give you any straw. ¹¹ You go and get straw for yourselves wherever you can find it, but none of your labor will be reduced.' ¹² So the people scattered through all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. ¹³ The taskmasters pressed them, saying, 'Complete your work quota, your daily amount, just as when you had straw.' ¹⁴ Moreover, the foremen of the sons of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, 'Why have you not completed your required amount either yesterday or today in making brick as previously?' ¹⁵ Then the foremen of the sons of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, 'Why do you deal this way with your servants? ¹⁶ There is no straw given to your servants, yet they keep saying to us, 'Make bricks!' And behold, your servants are being beaten; but it is the fault of your own people.' ¹⁷ But he said, 'You are lazy, very lazy; therefore you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.' ¹⁸ So go now and work; for you will be given no straw, yet you must deliver the quota of bricks.' ¹⁹ The foremen of the sons of Israel saw that they were in trouble because they were told, 'You must not reduce your daily amount of bricks.' ²⁰ When they left Pharaoh's presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them. ²¹ They said to them, 'May the LORD look upon you and judge you, for you have made us odious in Pharaoh's sight and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.' ²² Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, 'O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me? ²³ Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all.' ^{6:1} Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land.' ² God spoke further to Moses and said to him, 'I am the LORD; ³ and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them. ⁴ I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. ⁵ Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. ⁶ Say, therefore, to the sons 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 their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. ⁷ Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.' ⁹ So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage. ¹⁰ Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹¹ 'Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the sons of Israel go out of his land.' ¹² But Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, 'Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech?' ¹³ Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and gave them a charge to the sons of Israel and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁴ These are the heads of their fathers' households. The sons of Reuben, Israel's firstborn: Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben. ¹⁵ The sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the families of Simeon. ¹⁶ These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon and Kohath and Merari; and the length of Levi's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years. ¹⁷ The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, according to their families. ¹⁸ The sons of Kohath: Amram and Izhar and Hebron and Uzziel; and the length of Kohath's life was one hundred and thirty-three years. ¹⁹ The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their generations. ²⁰ Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses; and the length of Amram's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years. ²¹ The sons of Izhar: Korah and Nepheg and Zichri. ²² The sons of Uzziel: Mishael and Elzaphan and Sithri. ²³ Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister

of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ²⁴ The sons of Korah: Assir and Elkanah and Abiasaph; these are the families of the Korahites. ²⁵ Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' households of the Levites according to their families. ²⁶ It was the same Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, 'Bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their hosts.' ²⁷ They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the sons of Israel from Egypt; it was the same Moses and Aaron. ²⁸ Now it came about on the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, ²⁹ that the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'I am the LORD; speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I speak to you.' ³⁰ But Moses said before the LORD, 'Behold, I am unskilled in speech; how then will Pharaoh listen to me?'

Historical and Cultural Background

- *Israel's labor*: Pharaoh made Israel build storage cities called Pithom and Raamses (Ex.1:11). Building cities and canals was backbreaking and risky work. 'Herodotus (*Histories*, II, 158) relates that in the restoration of the canal from the Nile to the Red Sea under Pharaoh Neco, 120,000 people perished.'¹
- *God's poetic speech*: God speaks in a poetic parallelism that would have been familiar and highly memorable to the Israelites.

^{6:6} Say, therefore, to the sons 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 their bondage.
I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.
⁷ Then I will take you for My people,
and I will be your God;
and you shall know that
I am the LORD your God,
who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
⁸ I will bring you to the land which
I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
and I will give it to you for a possession;
I am the LORD.'"

¹ Cornelius Houtman, *Exodus* (Kampen: Kok, 1993), 1:245

Questions

1. Why does God approach Pharaoh this way? What other ways could He have dealt with Pharaoh, or rescued Israel?
 - a. God seemed to want Pharaoh to willingly let go of Israel. This says something about God's character and His commitment to human free will. Notice that God knows that Pharaoh will resist, but He still tries anyway. Pharaoh hardens his own heart in plagues 1 – 5 and 7. Notice also that God plays a later role in hardening Pharaoh's heart in plagues 6 and 8 – 10, but this is reciprocal to Pharaoh's own decisions.
 - b. God seemed to work through a human representative, Moses, and also his brother Aaron. This shows the commitment of God to having human beings be His image bearers, from Genesis 1.
2. What does Pharaoh suspect? Why?
3. Pharaoh increases the workload. What did this experience teach Israel about being a captive to other rulers?
 - a. Israel was mistreated as foreigners, and God would later remind them
 - b. Israel was forced to work as slaves, without freedom and without Sabbath rest
 - c. Pharaoh opposed God's ordinance for Israel to worship
 - d. Great human kingdoms turn [some] people into slaves for production, like in Cain's city of Enoch (Gen.4:16 – 24) and Nimrod's city of Babel (Gen.11:1 – 9)
4. What does Pharaoh represent to us now? What does the New Testament do with this story?
 - a. Sin is portrayed as a tyrant and ruler like Pharaoh, from which Jesus delivers us and leads us out (1 Cor.5:7 – 8; 10:1 – 13; Col.1:13 – 14; Eph.1:15 – 2:10)
 - b. Sin is the force (within us!) that does not want us to experience our true identity as child of God. Sin resists the commands of God.
 - c. Illus: In the movie *Spiderman 3*, there is the black alien substance called Venom. It becomes Spiderman's black suit, and it feeds off of Peter Parker's anger and arrogance, and even amplifies it. Sin is like that. It's a corruption of ourselves, and it feeds off our selfishness and our resistance to the one and only good and true God.
 - d. Illus: There was an article I read by a student at Harvard about the hookup culture and what it left her longing for. 'Goddamnit did I want everything: brown leather heels and quotes from "Ulysses," endless red lipstick, and sex. Sex especially. At eighteen, I thought the feminist revolution had happened. You ever had a morning when you can't even enter Annenberg without tripping over like three people whose genitals you've interacted with? That was my freshman year. But there was always something funny about those breakfast run-ins: Very few of them involved eye contact... Crossing paths with last night's hookup in the servery, I can see him looking at everything but my face. At the seasonal gourd display. At the breakfast pizza. Ten hours ago, I was blowing him. Now, he doesn't know my name. What's up with that?' (<http://www.thecrimson.com/column/material-girl/article/2014/10/24/toward-better-nakedness-policy/>) She goes on to lament the fact that 'friends with benefits' eventually gets whittled down to 'benefits' alone. But she still wants a morality. A morality of kindness, sensitivity, and friendship. But what is she appealing to? On what basis can she hold that over people? There is none.
 - e. Illus: leader tell a story of resisting Jesus
5. Why does Moses really think that a better speaker will persuade Pharaoh (6:12, 30)?
 - a. Of course Moses is intimidated. Maybe he is looking for an excuse. Maybe he really does have a stutter of some sort, and this is his most obvious defect in his own view of himself, and he is characterizing himself by this limitation.
 - b. Regardless, we as readers find that God is 'the better speaker.' We are drawn to look at God's power expressed through His word.
6. How does God define His identity? Allowing Israel to name Him...
 - a. This God will bring you out and into your inheritance.
 - b. This God will redeem you from bondage.
 - c. This God will take you for His special people, as His children, even His 'first born son.'