

# forced perspective

exodus 6.1-7.7

Putting in at Exodus chapter 6 this morning. When we left off, the people accused Moses of condemning them and Moses in turn accused God of failing to deliver His people at all. Now the Lord is going to answer Moses and have a talk with him.

In this passage we see the Lord very graciously defending Himself, while also persisting in His plan for Moses and the people.

In the back and forth what was highlighted to me was the difference between our perspective and God's. You see a contrast between how the people saw things and how the Lord did.

Because Moses and the Israelites had an expectation of how God should act. They had an idea about what they needed in their distress - and that was to free them from the physical bondage and suffering in Egypt. That's what they were looking for and that's what they were demanding.

Interestingly, 40 years ago that's what Moses tried to offer them when he killed the Egyptian, but at that point in time the Hebrews weren't as keen on the idea.

But now, since Pharaoh had turned up the heat, they called out to God again and said, "God, since you're on the scene now, it's time for you to cut us loose and let us run free from this terrible government we're under."

There's a scene in the movie *Tombstone* where some rail workers are moving horses off of a train car. One of the workers has a spirited horse who won't walk down the ramp and so the worker whips the horse hard. Wyatt Earp has just rolled into Dodge and sees what's happening and goes over and yanks the whip out of the guy's hand and hits him in the neck with it and then says, "Hurts, don't it?" Then he tells the guy to get lost.

That's effectively what the Israelites wanted God to do for them. But here, as the Lord reiterates His plan and His intentions, He shows them that they need more and are going to get more than just to be cut loose.

**Exodus 6.1 - Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."**

Why is it important that they see what God would do with His strong hand?

Well, Isaiah 53 verse 1 says:

**Isaiah 53.1 - Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?**

God wants to show Himself to people so that His message can be verified and amplified.

He shows Himself through creation, He shows Himself in His word, He has shown Himself through Christ, the incarnation, and the Bible says that He shows Himself through our lives.

**Colossians 1.26-27 - This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's people. For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.**

The Lord wanted the whole world to know that He had power over Egypt and over creation and over all things. And He wanted the whole world to know that Israel was special to Him.

And on top of that, He didn't want to simply alleviate their physical abuse. His plan was to redeem and *adopt* Israel, not just cut and run. As you see the Lord's end goals you figure out that the Hebrews were going to need a lot more than simple freedom. They needed saving from Pharaoh, but they also needed saving from their sins. They needed a place to go. They needed ongoing protection. They needed a deep connection with a God who could provide for them. So, there were a lot of things that needed to happen for the long term benefits of Israel.

**Exodus 6.2-8 - And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them. I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord.' "**

Commentators point out that there are 7 "I will" statements in these verses. The 7 'I Wills' of Redemption.

In those promises God not only points out what He was going to do, but He also points out the things they really needed. What they wanted was physical relief, and the Lord would bring that to them, but their perspective was completely nearsighted. "We want the whipping to stop!"

Pain is no fun. But in the spiritual life, pain often leads to something wonderful. The Bible sometimes uses the analogy of a woman giving birth. The people were focused on the pain and the stress and the crushing contraction that Egypt had brought to their lives, but the Lord, while mindful of the suffering, was focused on the life that was soon coming. He was working together a far better plan than the simple liberation the Hebrews were demanding.

But they struggled with their perspective.

**Exodus 6.9 - So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.**

Often the things we get hung up on are things that God could deal with in a moment if He needed to.

But this is where faith comes in. Situations like this that seem hopeless or seem insurmountable are moments for us to walk by faith rather than by sight. Naturally, our mindset is, "If I see it, I'll believe it!" But God asks us to do the opposite: To believe without seeing. That's a very plain principle in the Bible.

**James 1.3-4a - For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow...**

See, God isn't a vending machine. He's a Person. So He demands real devotion and real trust from us.

For the people of Israel, walking by faith meant enduring and trusting God to provide for them.

For Moses, walking by faith also meant advancing into the palace and trusting God to prevail against Pharaoh. As an individual he needed to wait on the Lord for salvation to come, but with that he still had a job to do, in spite of the obstacles he faced.

**Exodus 6.10-11 - And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the children of Israel go out of his land."**

God sent him back into the lion's den.

It's easy to perform when we run unopposed. When there's nothing standing in the way, there's not a lot to obedience and service.

But the Christian life isn't a pageant, it's a battle, which means we've got to expect some combat. Moses got redeployed back to the palace a second time.

**Exodus 6.12-13 - And Moses spoke before the Lord, saying, "The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?" Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them a command for the children of Israel and for Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.**

Moses is struggling with his faith. I can identify with that and take comfort in it. When we lack faith, it's a matter of perspective, not circumstances. "Lord, if things were better, easier, didn't hurt as much, I'd believe!" Of course we would! But take circumstances out of the picture for a moment - God is the same. His power is the same. His plan is the same. So, doubt is generated from perspective. This is why we're commanded to walk by faith.

Now, the Bible says that some people have the supernatural gift of faith. But it also says that all of us have been given a measure of faith by the Lord. We don't have to create it, we just have to choose it. And when we can't understand or hope seems lost, we've got to train ourselves to pray that wonderful prayer that was spoken to Jesus:

*"Lord, I believe...help my unbelief!"*

That's faith. Choosing to trust the word of the Lord and rely on the power of the Lord in times of pain and fear.

Now, Moses interjects his and Aaron's family lineage to prove the historicity of these accounts.

At the end of the genealogy of his family here's what's written of him:

**Exodus 6.27 - These are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. These are the same Moses and Aaron.**

One good takeaway from Moses here is that we see we can obey *even when* we're struggling with doubt. Clearly he was reluctant and struggling with his faith, but he obeyed God and did what he was called to do.

**Exodus 6.28-30 - And it came to pass, on the day the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, that the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "I am the Lord. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you." But Moses said before the Lord, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?"**

Clearly we've seen over the last few weeks that this issue was a hang up that Moses had.

But, again, this is a matter of perspective, not of his physical ineloquence. The real problem was not the weakness of his speech. Because when we minister, it's not *us* that we're presenting. Moses said, "They're not going to heed *ME*". But Moses wasn't supposed to present himself. It's the Lord that he was presenting. It was the Lord that Pharaoh would be heeding or rejecting.

And that's ministry. Whether you're Paul or Apollos or James or John, the message and presentation is Christ. John the Baptist looked at his ministry and his conclusion was, "He must increase, I must decrease."

So, as a Christian, my life should be less and less about me every day. And when I present Christ and His message, then my weaknesses don't really matter. My strengths don't necessarily matter either. It's the power of the Gospel and the greatness of God that matter.

Every day I should be more and more concerned not about how I'm perceived or received, but about how I can deliver the Lord and His word more potently.

Paul goes so far to say in Galatians 2 that "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Our lives are just vehicles for delivering Jesus.

And we see that idea in God's response to Moses' reluctance.

**Exodus 7.1-7 - So the Lord said to Moses: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them."**

**Then Moses and Aaron did so; just as the Lord commanded them, so they did. And Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh.**

As the Lord dealt with a complaining, doubtful people and a reluctant servant, He was gracious and long-suffering, but He didn't change His tactics or His mission or His message. God is not an appeaser. Politicians do that. They'll say something and then there's a backlash and then they come out and say, "Well, I didn't really mean that, I meant the *OPPOSITE* of that." And they change and adjust and massage so that they can appease the greatest number of people.

But God doesn't do that. His program stayed the same here, despite the reaction He was getting from Moses and the people. Because the things the Lord wanted to happen absolutely needed to happen for them.

What we're seeing in this story is that a lot of our doubts and struggles are a matter of perspective, not a matter of God being inactive. God isn't inactive. He's terribly busy on your behalf.

But if we think through life with a human perspective, being nearsighted and comfort-oriented, then our situations are going to feel much different and much more dire than if we look at things the way God does. And He tells us how He looks at things. That's why He says, "Now set your mind on heavenly things, not on things on the earth."

As the Lord promised to Moses, we *will* see God working mightily if we watch for Him. It's a proper perspective that fuels our faith. And when we exercise faith it gives opportunity for our endurance to grow.

So let it grow!