

For GC Discussion

- How do we tend to respond to failure? What can we do to help ourselves respond in a godly way?
- Do we truly see ourselves as God's ambassadors in the world? How should that truth change us, and how can we live more in the light of it every day?
- Why does God want us to know the fulness of who He is? How might this affect the life we live every day?

Next Week: we will look at the first 9 plagues as God shows His might to the people of Egypt.

Notes and Questions

For Worship: Listen to *'Shout Hosanna'* by Kristian Stanfill. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



Week 3: Rejected by Pharaoh

Exodus Chapters 5:1-7:13

This Weeks Summary

Moses and Aaron's first attempts to persuade Pharaoh fail, but we see that God already knew this would happen. His plan to rescue His people and display His glory is in no way compromised by Pharaoh's hard heart.

For Study:

Here are some more verses on 3 of the main subject areas in this weeks message:

Hardened Hearts:

Zechariah 7:8-14
John 12:44-50
Hebrews 3:7-15

God's Ambassadors:

Acts 1:4-8
2 Corinthians 5:9-21
1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Faith when it's falling apart:

Proverbs 3:5-6
Isaiah 55:6-11
Isaiah 43:27-31
Psalm 27:1-14

Our text this week takes us through the first two unsuccessful attempts by Moses and Aaron to persuade Pharaoh that he should allow God's people to leave Egypt to worship in the wilderness. Here are a few things we can pick out of the text:

Not a great first attempt

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the first attempt to speak to Pharaoh and accomplish what God had sent Moses and Aaron to do was a complete disaster! Maybe by this point Moses had got over some of his doubts and fears, and was expecting a successful attempt - maybe God would use the signs of the snake and the leprosy, Pharaoh's mind would be immediately made up, and Moses would become a hero in leading the Hebrews out of their slavery. However, that is the exact opposite of how it all plays out. Not only does Pharaoh instantly refuse their request - he doesn't know their god, so why should he listen to him - he also punishes the perceived cheek of Moses and Aaron by laying even heavier burdens on the people of Israel and therefore putting them into an even worse situation than they were before.

We can look back at the first couple of chapters of the book and see that exactly the same thing was happening then too - just as God seems to be doing something, opposition comes in and it just gets worse for the people rather than the hoped for redemption coming to pass. It's a commonly used phrase even in normal life, but sometimes the truth is that God allows things to get worse before they get better, and this is a really important thing for us to remember. Just because things around us seem to be falling apart, does not mean that God is out of control, and is not working out His perfect plan of redemption as the full account of the Exodus will soon show us. Not only does this turn of events leave God's people dis-believing everything that Moses says, it also must leave Moses in a difficult place. Having plucked up the courage to go before Pharaoh despite all his doubts and fears that were exposed before the burning bush, he now has another failure to deal with, and this time it isn't just his life that has been negatively affected but the whole of the people of Israel.

I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that the way in which we respond to failure can often define our Christian lives. It wasn't entirely his fault it worked this way, but the last time Moses failed he ended up in a wilderness for 40 years, and we can so easily do the same. This time it wasn't Moses fault at all that his appeal failed - it was all in the plan of

God - but it could so easily have lead to Moses and Aaron giving up, running away again, or simply drowning their sorrows in self-pity. The reality of the Christian life is that we will all fail, both because of our sin, and in ways that are of no fault of our own. At those times, God wants us to take our sin straight to the cross and continue to stand firm in our faith, knowing that He is a God who delights to use even broken failures like Moses, and broken failures like you and me to display His glory.

God's ambassador to Pharaoh

There is a powerful statement at the beginning of chapter 7 - God tells Moses that He has made him 'like God' to Pharaoh. The statement isn't explained in any huge detail, but at the very least it indicates that Moses was to stand before Pharaoh as God's ambassador, and with Aaron as his mouthpiece. Everything that Moses said to Pharaoh were as if they had come straight from God Himself because God had picked out Moses to represent Him in Pharaoh's court. What an amazing responsibility and privilege for Moses to carry, and yet it reminds me of a statement the Apostle Paul makes in the New Testament:

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20

What a great privilege for us too, just like Moses, to see God reveal Himself through us. On the other side of the coin though, what a sobering thought, that when we speak to people and they reject us, they can be rejecting the very words of God through us, His ambassadors.

The Purpose of the Rescue

A couple of times in our text this week we also find out the reason behind the initial failure of the request for God's people to be released. God tells Moses to go to the people and re-assure them that despite what has just happened, He will still rescue them, and when He does they will 'know' that He is the Lord (6:7). Secondly, God says that the consequence of Pharaoh's refusal to let them go will mean He will multiply signs amongst the Egyptians, and then they too 'will know' that He is the Lord (7:5). Why did the Exodus take place as it did? So that God could show to the world back then, and to many more in subsequent generations including ours that He truly is 'the Lord' - He has no rival. We can take great comfort from the fact that the God we worship is the God above all gods, and nothing and no-one can thwart His plans.