

# The Strong Hand of God

2.23.2020

Message 8

Exodus Series

Exodus 5 (CSB)

**5** Later, Moses and Aaron went in and said to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival for me in the wilderness."

**2** But Pharaoh responded, "Who is the LORD that I should obey him by letting Israel go? I don't know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go."

**3** They answered, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go on a three-day trip into the wilderness so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, or else he may strike us with plague or sword."

**4** The king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why are you causing the people to neglect their work? Get to your labor!" **5** Pharaoh also said, "Look, the people of the land are so numerous, and you would stop them from their labor."

**6** That day Pharaoh commanded the overseers of the people as well as their foremen: **7** "Don't continue to supply the people with straw for making bricks, as before. They must go and gather straw for themselves. **8** But require the same quota of bricks from them as they were making before; do not reduce it. For they are slackers—that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' **9** Impose heavier work on the men. Then they will be occupied with it and not pay attention to deceptive words."

**10** So the overseers and foremen of the people went out and said to them, "This is what Pharaoh says: 'I am not giving you straw. **11** Go get straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but there will be no reduction at all in your workload.' " **12** So the people scattered throughout the land of Egypt to

gather stubble for straw. <sup>13</sup> The overseers insisted, "Finish your assigned work each day, just as you did when straw was provided." <sup>14</sup> Then the Israelite foremen, whom Pharaoh's slave drivers had set over the people, were beaten and asked, "Why haven't you finished making your prescribed number of bricks yesterday or today, as you did before?"

<sup>15</sup> So the Israelite foremen went in and cried for help to Pharaoh: "Why are you treating your servants this way? <sup>16</sup> No straw has been given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' Look, your servants are being beaten, but it is your own people who are at fault."

<sup>17</sup> But he said, "You are slackers. Slackers! That is why you are saying, 'Let us go sacrifice to the LORD.' <sup>18</sup> Now get to work. No straw will be given to you, but you must produce the same quantity of bricks."

<sup>19</sup> The Israelite foremen saw that they were in trouble when they were told, "You cannot reduce your daily quota of bricks." <sup>20</sup> When they left Pharaoh, they confronted Moses and Aaron, who stood waiting to meet them.

<sup>21</sup> "May the LORD take note of you and judge," they said to them, "because you have made us reek to Pharaoh and his officials—putting a sword in their hand to kill us!"

<sup>22</sup> So Moses went back to the LORD and asked, "Lord, why have you caused trouble for this people? And why did you ever send me? <sup>23</sup> Ever since I went in to Pharaoh to speak in your name he has caused trouble for this people, and you haven't rescued your people at all."

Exodus 6:1 (CSB)

But the LORD replied to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: because of a strong hand he will let them go, and because of a strong hand he will drive them from his land."

1. If anyone ever tells you that following Jesus is easy, they lied to you.

A. During the past few months, the Lord has reminded this congregation of this truth.

1. Following Jesus is the best decision you will ever make.

## 2. But it will not be the easiest.

a. Jesus anticipated this when He told his disciples to “count the cost” of following Him.

b. And when Jesus told His followers to “pick up their cross and follow Him”, I guarantee there was no one getting warm fuzzy feelings or printing t-shirts.

### B. But Moses had not received this message.

1. So when he goes into Egypt, and the situation gets harder and more desperate, and people get mad, Moses wonders what went wrong.

2. You can be walking in total obedience to God and still have difficulty.

3. The presence of difficulty and opposition does not mean you are out of the will of God.

4. Often, it is a sign that you are exactly where God wants you to be and exactly where Satan doesn't.

### C. Today's passage is the stirring up of a storm.

1. It won't be long before Egypt is hit with the power and wrath of God.

2. It won't be long before God demonstrates His complete sovereignty over the gods of Egypt.

3. In a matter of days, God's people will be free from Egyptian slavery.

4. But first, the situation darkens, the opposition grows fiercer, and the desire to quit almost wins.

Before we extract some amazing truths, let's look at the context.

## 2. Israel had long been the workforce for Egypt.

A. There is no evidence that the Hebrews built the pyramids, historically or biblically.

1. What they built were the storage cities of Pithom and Ramesses.
2. They built infrastructure, storage facilities, and the like.
3. The Pyramids were probably built long before and were not built all at once, but over several centuries.

B. The work they did was hard and backbreaking.

1. They made bricks, carried bricks, and laid bricks.
2. All under the terrible heat and sun of Egypt.
3. It was hard work, work that the Egyptians didn't want to do themselves.

C. They probably had more freedom than the slavery we think of taking place in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

1. For example, Aaron was permitted to go and see Moses. (He was probably too old for laying bricks).
2. Also, the Egyptians provided straw which was a needed ingredient for the bricks.
  - a. Straw helped the clay to dry more quickly.
  - b. Straw also added strength and binding to the brick, acting like wire or rebar would today.
3. Countless millions of bricks were made as Egypt expanded in size and wealth.
4. Then, in one day, all of that changed.
5. A hard life got even harder.

3. The main accusation Pharaoh used was accusing the Israelites as being "slackers" or "lazy".

A. Remember, God had told Moses to deliver the message to Pharaoh to let his people to go into the wilderness to worship.

1. This was originally a 3-day journey.

2. Surely, Pharaoh could do without their labor for 3-days.
3. But Pharaoh absolutely refused.
4. And when everything started to snowball, Pharaoh accused these people of being "idle" ESV or "slackers" in the CSB.

B. I'm learning that one of the attacks the enemy still uses against God's people is to accuse them of being lazy.

1. Sometimes, we are just being lazy.
2. But when we make the effort to worship, commune with God, or (heaven forbid) rest, we feel this gnawing guilt that we aren't doing enough.
  - a. Our identity is too often found in what we do, not who we are or who we worship.
  - b. In Pharaoh's world, there was no reason why Israel should be allowed to worship God.

C. In Exodus, we will encounter God's teaching on Sabbath and rest.

1. Sabbath has not played any role in God's people yet through Genesis.
2. We know God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day BUT Genesis hadn't been written yet
  - a. If Moses was the writer of Genesis, like we believe, then Moses wrote Genesis sometime while they were in the wilderness.
  - b. God's resting, and the principle of the Sabbath are lessons that were taught in the wilderness, not in Egypt.
  - c. Why?
3. Because there is no rest for those who are slaves to the world.
  - a. A slave to Pharaoh had no rest.
  - b. A slave to work has no rest.

- c. A slave to sin has no rest.
- d. Rest only happens when we are slaves to God.

4. Pharaoh, just like Satan, did not want God's people to have the opportunity for rest or worship.

- a. A well-rested and a well worshipped person will find strength in the supernatural power of God.
- b. A weary and worship-starved person is easily defeated by the enemy.

4. After the Israelite foremen complained to Moses, Moses complained to God.

A. Moses is troubled.

1. He asks God "why have you caused this trouble" and "why did you send me?"

- a. These two questions will surround every person who has ever been called by God.
- b. You will have times when you ask God "Why this and Why me?"

2. Then Moses takes the accusations one step further.

- a. He blames God for not having rescued his people at all!
- b. In a couple of weeks, we will look at God's response more fully.

3. But Moses' response is short sighted and not fair.

B. God responds in 6:1: Now you will see my strong hand.

1. Moses hadn't even given God a chance.

2. Too often, we start blaming God and threatening to quit because we haven't given God a chance to work yet.

3. It's like leaving a movie while the opening credits are still playing:

a. If you leave while the opening credits are playing, you haven't even started the movie yet.

b. Too often, we quit on God before He has ever got started.

C. So God responds by saying, "Watch this!"

1. God is fixing to bring about a power like the world hadn't seen before.

2. God had never brought this force of his power against one king or one nation like this before.

3. God is getting ready to do a new thing in Egypt, and Moses was going to have a front-row seat.

## 5. What can we learn from Moses and Israel's experience?

**A. #1 The situation gets harder because we need to realize our total dependence upon God.**

1. Once again, being dependent upon God is not a bad thing.

2. God doesn't do miracles for people who don't need help.

3. If you are self-sufficient, you don't need a miracle.

4. If you have every situation under control, you don't need the Spirit's leading.

5. It is in our weakness that God shines the most.

**B. #2. When the game is on the line, put the ball in God's hands.**

1. I personally believe that Michael Jordan was the greatest basketball player of all time.

a. When the game was on the line, the Bulls had one goal:

b. Get Michael the ball.

c. Why? Because he was the best.

2. Moses and Israel are overwhelmed.

- a. They can't compete with Pharaoh.
- b. What does God do?
- c. He says, "Watch this..."
- d. God knew that He had this whole situation under control.

3. When things are out of control, get those things in Jesus' hands.

- a. Pray.
- b. Worship.
- c. Rest and Sabbath.
- d. Tithe.
- e. Do things that FORCE YOU to trust in God.

**C. #3 Fight the temptation to quit.**

1. The temptation to quit is real.

- a. If you have never felt like quitting, then you have probably never done anything hard.
- b. Quitting is often presented as the easiest or the only option.

- 1. Sometimes that is true.
- 2. If you quit, the battle is over.
- 3. If you quit, the fighting will stop for a while.
- 4. If you quit, you can move on.

c. The enemy of your soul will sell you the opportunity to quit early and often.

2. Moses and the Hebrews wanted to quit.

- a. The promise of God was still on their lips and still in their ears.
- b. The promise wasn't even "cold" yet, and they wanted to quit.
- c. They haven't even started the journey yet, and they wanted to quit.
- d. **When we minister in our own strength, we will want to quit.**

1. If you feel like you want to quit, you are in good company:

2. Almost every great man of God in Scripture felt like quitting at some time.

a. Moses wanted to quit.

b. Elijah wanted to quit.

c. Jeremiah wanted to quit.

d. Peter and the 11 wanted to quit.

3. Don't condemn yourself for wanting to quit.

4. But don't excuse yourself if you do.

a. There is a difference between forgiveness and excusing.

b. Forgiveness recognizes wrong and repents.

c. Excuses deny responsibility and accountability.

3. There will be days when you would rather walk away from it all.

1. Honestly, there are times I would rather work in a hay field with nothing more than the sound of a tractor engine than pastor a church.

2. I'm sure you all have had days when you wish you could just run away from it all too.

3. But in those moments, when our minds and emotions are clouded by the temptation to quit, we must go back to where we were clear about God's will.

a. Go back, hit reset, take a Sabbath, and hear from God again.

b. Go back to the One who had called you.

c. Listen to His voice again.

4. When I feel like quitting, it is because my voice or someone else's voice has become louder than God's.

5. That is why we must make room to quiet our souls so we can hear from God again.

6. When Moses felt like giving up, it was the voice of God that pushed him to continue.

4. For everyone who feels like quitting, let the Strong hand of God sustain you.

1. Don't quit your marriage.

2. Don't quit your kids.

3. Don't quit your ministry and calling.

4. Don't quit.

#### **D. #4. Victory comes after the greatest battles.**

1. We have the benefit of knowing what happens.

a. We know that Pharaoh is defeated.

b. We know that victory is only days away.

c. But the Hebrews only feel the pain of the taskmaster's whip and the burning muscles.

2. Even though they felt defeated, victory was coming.

- a. That's because, our victory is dependent upon God's strength not ours.
- b. Through the first chapters of Exodus, Pharaoh is worried about the people becoming too powerful, and overwhelming Egypt.
- c. What he hadn't accounted for was not the strength of the people but the strength of their God.

3. Your impending victory is dependent upon God's strength not yours.

### Closing:

A. Here is who I want to pray for this morning:

1. If you feel like quitting (whatever that might be) in just a moment I want to ask you to come along the front so myself and your friends can pray for you.
2. Some of you are so close to victory, and the Devil is working overtime trying to convince you to quit.
3. So I want to pray for you to be strengthened, encouraged, and anchored in Jesus through this situation.

B. All of us need to learn to rest in God's strength.

1. You are striving, stressing, and dying trying to do this on your own.
2. And your strength isn't enough.
3. I want to pray for people who are wanting to learn what it means to rest in God's power and strength.

So if you feel like you want to quit.

Or if you are in need of the kind of strength and rest only God can provide, would you join me around the front so we can pray together today!

