

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

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EXODUS 5 v 22 – 6 v 12

In this conversation between God and Moses we have a critical moment in Moses' calling. God was preparing him for a tremendous task - leading the extended family of Jacob through a great refining and formative experience over the next 40 years, to emerge as a complete nation, living in a land of God's choosing. There, the children of Israel would be the vehicle by which God would reveal Himself, His character and His purposes to the whole world. God's ultimate act of that process of revelation through Israel would be the coming of the Messiah as a member of that race, and He would be the one and only Saviour, Redeemer and Lord of the whole of creation.

Moses had an awesome task to perform. As part of that calling, over the 40-year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, Moses would be used to reveal and establish the moral, social and spiritual principles that underlie God's requirements for all humanity in a fallen world. Of course, the only reason why in the Gospel age we do not have to personally observe all these laws and practices is because Jesus did so for us, perfectly and completely. We hide ourselves under the covering of His obedience and righteousness (Matthew 5 v 17 – 20).

This passage focuses on four lessons Moses had to learn, and they are at the very heart of his preparation for the task ahead. Actually, that preparation started when he was born. After being weaned by his mother, God's amazing providence ensured he was brought up for 40 years in Pharaoh's court and family, being moulded in the overwhelming atmosphere there, with its expectation of great privilege, fearless leadership, and a sense of divine authority. (The Pharaohs were considered to be gods.) Then, over the next 40 years, by complete contrast Moses learnt all about humility and tender shepherding as he looked after sheep in the wilderness. At the same time, he learnt the way to survive in that environment, and also the geography of the Sinai Peninsula, lessons which would be so important over the third and final 40 years of his life. The turning point came when, at the age of 80, God met him at the burning bush, which may well have been the first personal encounter with God he had ever had. It was in obedience to the task he was then given that Moses went back to Egypt, met up with his brother Aaron, and talked to the elders of the Israelites. The following meeting with Pharaoh appeared to be a disaster and here, in this passage, Moses fearlessly confronts God about the whole situation.

In 5 v 22 – 23 we see Moses talking to God in the direct, no-nonsense and authoritative manner he had assimilated in his early upbringing in the royal household, and which characterised his conversations with God throughout the rest of his life. Moses's openness, directness and honesty in his relationship with God, tempered by respect, is a great example to us in our Christian lives, and shows the straightforward nature of prayer which Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6 v 5 – 15. However, behind Moses's plain questioning of God in these verses, there lies a fundamental problem he had, and often many of us have, in the matter of guidance; have we heard God aright? Clearly, Moses was sure he had heard God correctly at the burning bush, and the confirming signs were evidence enough. But when he sought to put God's instructions into practice it all appeared to go horribly wrong. How often this seems to happen in our experience, too. In His reply, God focuses on the lessons Moses had to learn first, before he could proceed any further. I'm sure God's "delays" with us are for the same reason; we must learn the appropriate lessons first.

Lesson 1. God's sovereignty – 6 v 1

With his strong character, by nature and by upbringing, it seems clear that Moses would possess the natural ability to achieve success in fulfilling God's purposes through his own planning, leadership gifts and determination. It would be surprising if he didn't! In the same way we can think of Joshua on the plain of Jericho (Joshua 5 v 13ff), no doubt looking at the city before him and planning his military campaign. The Lord met him and gave him a battle plan that no self-respecting commander would have dreamt up. Yet God's plan, totally unusual as it was, worked to perfection. So, Moses was told it would be God who would deal with Pharaoh, God's right hand that would force Pharaoh's will, and then God's hand that would release the Israelites. And thus, God would have the glory, and rightly so.

This lesson certainly speaks to me. Like Moses, we hear what God is saying and maybe even understand prophetically what He is going to do. But then, we are so keen to show God how good we are at achieving His purposes. All that happens is that we succeed in getting in the way of the sovereign outworking of His plans. In Philippians 2 v 7 - 8 we read that in order to bring about God's plan of redemption, Jesus "humbled Himself...He made Himself nothing". Then in verses 5 and 12 - 13 we are urged to do the same. Whenever I have been called to engage in spiritual warfare, I have learnt that this lesson is of prime importance. In our Christian walk, surrendering entirely to His will and denying ourselves with our perceived abilities, feelings and plans, is incredibly humbling, a very hard blow to our pride, and a much surer route to blessing and victory.

Lesson 2. God's name – 6 v 2 – 3

His names are the principle source of our knowledge of the one true God. Progressively through the Old Testament, God revealed Himself more and more, by means of His names, until the Lord Jesus Christ came. His names show the fullness of God completely. God had only revealed Himself to Abraham by the name "El Shaddai", God the Provider, but Moses was told God's name is also "Yahweh", I am who I am. This was a major revelation. The eternal and only God is the source of all existence, the fount of all being, the giver and upholder of all life. From Him, (Spirit, dwelling in spiritual realms, John 4 v 24) all material, physical things emerge - space, time, matter and energy. It's a good thing we have this revelation. As Bible-believing Christians, it is the firm foundation for our entire understanding of what life is and how it arose, the amazing process of creation beyond the constraints of time, the purpose and structure of the entire creation, and its ultimate destiny. This is in complete contrast to the ideas of origins held by those whose belief systems are based on other gods and philosophies. Moses is being told he needs to fully understand the nature of the God he is obediently serving – infinitely greater than all other false gods of his day, and all other powers and authorities. In our day we must ask whether the Church's dalliance with the godless philosophy of chance evolution shows we have ignored the revelation given through God's name, and thus incurred His anger (Romans 1 v 18 – 23).

Lesson 3. God's covenant – 6 v 4 - 5

God operates completely on the basis of law. Any other way of working in His creation would be anarchy, which is certainly what other religious and materialistic belief systems assert, where the "god(s)" can be quite capricious and the believers don't know where they stand as humans or eternally. The whole functioning of creation from the cosmic level to the atomic level follows precise mathematical laws called "constants", which are fixed values and which cannot change. Over 50 constants have been identified so far by science. Jeremiah 33 v 25 – 26 states these fixed laws are unchangeable because God has established a covenant with them (and compares this covenant with His covenant with Israel!). Similarly, through Moses God established the legal framework – morally, socially and spiritually – for human beings to live on this planet for the rest of time. As we have seen, these laws were kept for us vicariously by Jesus. That brings us to the law of salvation, stated so precisely in John 3 v 16. All of these legal frameworks have been inaugurated by God and embodied in legal concepts known as covenants. In His covenants made with humanity there are penalties for non-compliance on man's side (e.g., Romans 1 v 24 – 32), but God is faithful and covenants are utterly sacrosanct on His side. It is this aspect of God's relationship with Israel, based on God's eternal covenant with Abraham, that Moses must constantly keep in mind as a sure foundation for this nation, whatever happens. Moses obviously took this lesson to heart, as he made sure Israel understood it 40 years later (Deuteronomy 7 v 6 – 9). In the same way, we can be sure God's covenant with us, based on John 3 v 16, is eternally secure, and it is underwritten by the covenant Jesus has with His Father, to successfully stand in our place (John 17 v 4, Hebrews 12 v 24).

Lesson 4. God's promises – 6 v 6 – 8

Within the overall covenant God had made with Israel, and would never break, there were clear and specific promises. These are wonderfully reflected in His promises to us under the covenant of salvation.

- i) v 6. "I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians." We are brought out from bondage to sin and the world (2 Corinthians 5 v 17, Colossians 1 v 13).
- ii) v 6. "I will free you from being slaves to them." We are free from the power of sin (Romans 6 v 11 - 14).
- iii) v 6. "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement." Our redemption was procured by the Lord upon the cross, His arms outstretched, and with God's judgement on our sin laid upon Him.
- iv) v 7. "I will take you as my own people." We are now God's children and He is our Father - a new family and sense of belonging.
- v) v 7. "I will be your God." We will not need luck, or superstition, or chance, etc.
- vi) v 8. "I will bring you to the land..." We have a certain home in Heaven (John 14 v 2 – 3).
- vii) v 8. "I will give it to you as a possession." We are joint heirs with Christ eternally (Romans 8 v 17).