

Freedom Promised
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Allen Power

Exodus 5:1-4; 6:2-9

“Things are gonna get worse before they get better, but they WILL get better.” That is essentially what God said to Moses in today’s text. If you were in the middle of a tough season and God said that to you, how might you respond to Him? No “Sunday School” answers; I mean humanly speaking how might you respond?

God is developing an interesting theme in our recent lesson texts. Let me show you what I mean:

- In our last lesson in Acts (chapter 27) was about Paul and the shipwreck. God said, the ship will be destroyed but you will survive. We said in the middle of a storm Christ-followers live at the corner of “TRUST and ENDURE.” Storms will come but “take courage” we have a life preserver and His name is Jesus.
- In our first lesson in Exodus last week (chapters 2 & 3) we learned, that the God of the universe does not have a “mind wandering” problem. His mind never wanders, and His focus never shifts from those He loves. He sees, hears, and ACTS for our good and His glory. The challenge: Though His timing is perfect, it does not always line up with our expectations. Trusting while we wait is hard.
- Now, I would summarize today’s text (Exodus 5 & 6) this way: God said to Moses, *“Things are gonna get worse before they get better, but they WILL get better. I am God, I have a plan, I will use these hard circumstances to grow your faith, your character, and your hope (Rom. 5:3-4), keep your eyes on me and not on the circumstances.”*

Do you see the same theme I see? Lest you think I manipulate our choice of texts to create a theme, I use the text exactly as it is assigned to us in our Lifeway curriculum. I don’t “write the mail”; I just “deliver the mail.”

In the brief time we have let me summarize what we see in Exodus chapters 5 & 6:

- Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh saying God wanted him to let the Israelites go into the wilderness to hold a feast dedicated to the Lord.
- Pharaoh replies, *“Who is the LORD, that I should obey him? NO they can’t go! Stop distracting my slaves from their brick-making job! Get out of here!”*
- Pharaoh was so irritated he increased the workload of the Israelites:
 - Making bricks required straw. Pharaoh said, *“Go find your own straw and if you make one brick less than your daily quota, you’ll get a beating!”*
 - The Israelites scattered, looking for stubble to make the bricks.
 - The Israelites said to Moses: *“Thanks a lot! You made Pharaoh hate us more than ever and made our life worse than ever. Great plan, Moses!”*

- Moses complained to God: *“Lord, why did you ever send me to Pharaoh? Since I spoke to him things have only gotten worse for our people. This doesn’t feel like a rescue plan to me!”*
- In chapter six, God replied to Moses:

Exodus 6:1–9 (NLT) — **1** Then the Lord told Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. When he feels the force of my strong hand, he will let the people go. In fact, he will force them to leave his land!” **2** And God said to Moses, “I am Yahweh—‘the Lord.’ **3** I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty’—but I did not reveal my name, Yahweh, to them. **4** And I reaffirmed my covenant with them. Under its terms, I promised to give them the land of Canaan, where they were living as foreigners. **5** You can be sure that I have heard the groans of the people of Israel, who are now slaves to the Egyptians. And I am well aware of my covenant with them. **6** “Therefore, say to the people of Israel: ‘I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment. **7** I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from your oppression in Egypt. **8** I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will give it to you as your very own possession. I am the Lord!’ ” **9** So Moses told the people of Israel what the Lord had said, but they refused to listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the brutality of their slavery.

- Moses was in a real pickle. He obeyed God and everyone was mad about it. He did what God said to do and things went from bad to worse. Ever been there?
- If things seem to be going wrong how can I know I’m doing what God wants?
- We might say, *“At least God spoke audibly to Moses.”* Why did God speak audibly then and not now? In trying to determine what God wants us to do, what benefit do we have today that Moses didn’t have? How do we seek His direction?
- Here is a link to a great article on how we seek to discern God’s will.
<https://www.gotquestions.org/will-of-God.html> To summarize the 12 key principles for discerning God's will:
 1. Scripture: Consult the Bible for specific guidance or general principles[1][4]. God’s will never contradicts His word.
 2. Consecration: Commit fully to God in all areas of life[2][8].
 3. Willingness: Be prepared to follow God's will, even if it's not your preference[7]. Jesus said, *“Not my will but yours, Father.”*
 4. Prayer: Ask God for wisdom and guidance[4][7].
 5. Circumstances: Pay attention to how God may be working through events around you[1][4].
 6. Counsel: Seek advice from mature Christians[1][4].
 7. Common sense: Use your God-given reasoning abilities[1][4].
 8. Holy Spirit: Be attentive to the Spirit's leading[4][7].
 9. Peace: Generally, pursue paths that bring inner peace[4][7].
 10. Gospel impact: Consider how decisions affect the spread of the Gospel[7].
 11. Stewardship: Evaluate how choices align with managing God's gifts[7].
 12. Obedience: Act on God's will as you discover it[7].ⁱ

- When things go from bad to worse we tend to ask God, “Why?”
- Instead, we should ask “What?” “What are you teaching me?”
- **Romans 5:3–4 (NLT)** — **3** We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. **4** And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.
- Aside from growing the faith of the Israelites, why do you think God made Moses go to Pharaoh nine times and unleashed ten plagues? Why didn’t He just make Pharaoh let them go the first time?
- God’s purpose wasn’t making the Israelites lives miserable; it was making a statement to the world: *“I AM the LORD; I am in control; I will accomplish My will; and I will deliver my people.”*
- His purpose in our “bad to worse” times is the same.
- He is growing our trust that He is God, He is in control, He loves His people and He will care for those He loves.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Spoiler alert! As we know, God DID deliver His people as He promised.
- In His divine sovereignty and for His reasons He allowed things to get worse before they got better for Moses and His people. Sometimes He does the same with us.
- This isn’t easy, but if we believe scripture, we can trust Him and endure.
- In Exodus 5:1, Moses and Aaron said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord.”
- Sometimes we need to say that to ourselves.
- In our “worse before it gets better” times we need to “preach” to ourselves about what God has promised in scripture, His faithfulness in the past, and Who He is.
- We need to tell ourselves: *“I don’t know why things are the way they are but here is what I do know:”*
 - God said, *“I am AM the Lord.”* We need to say, *“Here is what I know about God’s character, and He never changes.”*
 - God said, *“I will”* six times in Exodus 6:6-8. We need to say, *“Here is what God promised in His word and I believe His promises!”*
 - God accomplished what He told Moses He would do for His people. We need to say, *“Here is what God has done for me in the past. His faithfulness in the past gives me confidence that He will be faithful in the future, even when I don’t understand what He is doing in the present.”*
 - There are many great verses we can “preach” to ourselves, here are two:

Isaiah 46:9–10 (NLT) — **9** Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. **10** Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.

Psalms 138:8 (NLT) — **8** The Lord will work out his plans for my life— for your faithful love, O Lord, endures forever. Don’t abandon me, for you made me.

- There are seasons in our lives when things may get worse before they get better, but we can trust that God will use our situation to grow our faith that He is God, He is in control, He loves His people, and He will care for those He loves.

ⁱ Citations

- [1] <https://kenboa.org/spiritual-formation/principles-for-discerning-gods-will/>
- [2] <https://www.jesusrestores.com/blog/consecrate-yourself>
- [3] <https://www.bensenvillebiblechurch.com/01-transformative-power-of-god-s-word-hebrews-4-1-11>
- [4] <https://pilgrimcenterofhope.org/media-and-resources/blog-spiritual-reflections/blog.html/article/2024/01/15/7-practical-principles-for-discerning-god-s-will-in-our-lives>
- [5] <https://newcovenantunderstanding.wordpress.com/2019/06/23/a-study-on-consecration-to-god/>
- [6] <https://www.acton.org/public-policy/environmental-stewardship/theology-e/biblical-perspective-environmental-stewardship>
- [7] <https://www.idisciple.org/articles/obedience-the-key-to-knowing-gods-will/>
- [8] <https://www.lifewellinspired.com/the-cost-of-consecration/>
- [9] <https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/topical-studies/8-keys-to-knowing-god-s-will-for-your-life.html>
- [10] <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-consecration.html>