

*God Is Still In Control*  
Exodus 5:1 – 6:9  
Series: Book of Exodus [#05]  
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Theme: **When Everything Goes Wrong, God Is Still In Control.**

## Introduction

Sometimes everything goes wrong. An aspiring young professional applied for a great position with a company in a different city and was granted an interview. He planned and prepared. He booked his flight early, scheduled to arrive the day before so he could check out the city and get a good night's rest before this all-important interview. The day came. He dressed casually for his flight with jeans, T-shirt and sandals so he could be comfortable and relaxed. He carefully and neatly packed his best clothes for the interview. He got to the airport early. Then it started:

- His flight was delayed.
- He didn't arrive at his destination until late in the day.
- His luggage was lost.
- He found only one store with clothing that was still open, and it didn't have anything in business clothing. In fact, they didn't have any pants, shirts, shoes or a coat in his sizes, and no socks at all—which is important if you came barefoot in sandals. He did his best to put together a partial, mis-sized wardrobe.
- He returned to his hotel and requested a wake up call in the morning.
- The wake up call wasn't made. He overslept. He had to quickly throw on his horrible attire and rush to the most important interview of his life. *Everything had gone wrong.*

You may be able to relate to that kind of experience. Certainly Moses could. He had questions and struggles when God called him to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. But in the end he stepped out in faith, he answered the call and, as we see in the opening of this section, he faithfully did what God told him to do. But then, everything began to go wrong.

The central truth I want us to see today from this section is that *when everything goes wrong, God is still in control.*

## Moses Was Faithful In This Difficult Task.

Let's start with the task itself, which was very difficult from a number of perspectives. First, while God had told Moses all those in the palace who wanted to kill him were now dead (4:19), his history *was his history*: he had renounced his tie as the adoptive son of a Pharaoh to identify with his people; he had killed an Egyptian to protect an Israeli. He would not be welcomed with open arms at the palace.

Then, even though Acts 7:22 tells us “Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of *power in words and deeds*,” Moses struggled with seeing himself as one who could speak and lead effectively (6:12; cf. 3:11; 4:10). Just the numbers, the two million or more people to lead was a daunting task to him.

As well, from the start God told Moses that freeing the people would not be instant or easy. He told him that the Pharaoh would only let the people go “under compulsion,” as God stretched out His hand and struck them (3:19-20).

And, of course, Moses was an unknown quantity to the Israelite leaders and people. He was raised and lived as an Egyptian until age forty and then he was away from his own people and Egypt in Midian for forty years. From all of these perspectives, and more, this was a very difficult task.

In spite of that, Moses accepted God’s call and was faithful in this first round encounter with the Pharaoh. Let’s review and bring this up to date. God appeared to Moses in a blazing fire in a thorn bush while he was tending his father-in-law’s sheep in Midian. God told Moses “... I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt” (3:10). After God answered his questions and moved his focus away from himself, away from what he thought he could and could not do to God and His almighty power, Moses agreed.

So he left Midian with his wife and children and headed toward Egypt, meeting up with Aaron his brother whom he had not seen in at least forty years, and who would be his right hand man. When he entered Egypt, we read starting in 4:29,

“Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel; and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people. So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.” (29-31)

Moses was faithful. He headed back to Egypt in spite of uncertainties and fears about what he might face there. Moses was faithful. He met and enlisted Aaron as God had directed. He was faithful as the two of them spoke to the elders of Israel.

Right after this, 5:1 tells us, they went to Pharaoh.

“And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.”’”

While I am sure there were a few formalities and pleasantries, Moses got straight to the difficult task of telling this powerful ruler, who his people believed was a god, that “the LORD,” the everlasting almighty God, the God of Israel, was directing him to release the Israelites to go celebrate a feast in the wilderness.

When the Pharaoh arrogantly brushed the demands aside, most likely thinking that Moses was disrespectful as well as now just a lowly, despised shepherd, Moses remembered what God had told him, and moved on. In 5:3 he tells Pharaoh,

“The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”

Moses was faithful in all of this. But then...

### **Everything Goes Wrong.**

First, Pharaoh rejected God’s word through Moses and Aaron. Look at verse two.

“But Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go.’”

Those were arrogant, dismissive words with a large dose of ridicule. First, let’s look at the phrase “that they [Israel] may celebrate a feast to [God] in the wilderness.” This is what God told Moses to say, as we see back in 3:18, and was not dishonest. Those who study ancient Eastern culture point out that in their negotiations the first positions were generally understated, but enough was said so that all the parties understood the ultimate goal or position. Here God’s words, “Let My people go” is the ultimate goal, request or bottom line position.

Now, when Pharaoh dismissed “the LORD, the God of Israel” he was not saying he never had heard of him. In Egypt the Pharaoh was seen as a god. He is saying, “Who is your *Israeli God* anyway? I am the ruler, the god over mighty Egypt and *over you!* Don’t think for a moment I am beneath, or that I should listen to *your God!*”

After this initial, out of hand rejection, Moses restates the request and Pharaoh’s response goes from bad to worse, it becomes very personal. Drop down to verse 4.

“But the king of Egypt said to them, ‘Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get back to your labors!’ Again Pharaoh said, ‘Look, the people of the land are now many, and you would have them cease from their labors!’” (4-5)

He points the finger at them—“*You, Moses and Aaron* are the cause, the ringleaders of this dreaming, this discontent, this rebellion against my established order and authority.” He singled them out by name because some of the elders of Israel may have been with them in this meeting. In any case, he made this very personal to both warn and intimidate them.

Then he turns up the heat some more. “*You* are responsible for *your* people not wanting to work, for them not working. Their labor is important. Forget this nonsense and get back to work!” In verse eight he states that all this about “celebrating a festival” is because they are lazy. Moses delivered God’s word to Pharaoh. Pharaoh rejected it.

Not only that, the Pharaoh then intensified his oppression of the Israelites. If you recall the earlier escalations of oppression, you might wonder how it could get worse. But it does. In verse 7 the Pharaoh directed that from now on straw not be provided to the Israelite workers making bricks. They would have to gather it themselves. Even though that required a great deal of extra time and effort, their quota of bricks remained the same.

And it gets even worse. In verse 14 the Israelite foreman were beaten by the Egyptian taskmasters because they were not meeting this now impossible quota. And when the foreman requested and were granted a meeting with Pharaoh, he ridiculed them, again saying in verse 17 “You are lazy, very lazy; therefore you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.’” There was no relief. The foreman, Moses writes, knew now for certain “they were in trouble” because the demands were impossible.

But this is not the only front on which things were going wrong. The elders of Israel, who welcomed Moses and Aaron and worshiped God in response to the word and signs through them just a short time ago, now blamed them for their suffering. Drop down to verse 20.

“When they left Pharaoh’s presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them. They said to them, ‘May the LORD look upon you and judge you, for you have made us odious in Pharaoh’s sight and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.’”

Moses and Aaron probably went with them and waited outside to support them. And, of course, if there was any good news, they would want to hear it.

But, what these foreman thought and said was not at all what Moses and Aaron expected. “It’s all your fault! If you hadn’t come with all that talk about God leading us out of Egypt to our own land, or would have at least presented it better, none of this would have happened! Now we are worse off. Now they detest and abuse us even more! And, because you got it wrong, or did not present it well, *God will judge you!*”

And if all of this was not already too much, sadly, Israel rejected God’s word through Moses and Aaron. After God reassured Moses that yes, He certainly would deliver the people as He had promised, Moses shared that word with them. Go to the end of this section, verse 9 in chapter 6 to see their response. “So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage.”

They not only rejected what Moses said but, because He was speaking God’s truth, they rejected God’s word. What a turnaround from shortly before gladly receiving God’s word worshipping Him. While we can empathize with their situation, no situation however extreme, justifies rejecting God’s truth.

Moses was faithful, and then everything went wrong. I am sure all of us have had experiences of being faithful to God and then have seen everything go wrong. Remember, *when everything goes wrong, God is still in control*. “Yes, but what do we do? How do we handle it?” Moses’ response gives us some practical lessons.

## Moses Turned To God, The Rock Of His Salvation.

Take note of four key things involved in Moses seeing and knowing that God was still in control. There was a practical process that led him, that will lead us to move forward when we have been faithful and everything has gone wrong.

First, Moses came to God, the Rock of his salvation, with faith and honesty. Moses had learned to trust God. He depended on God. God was his solid rock of salvation for each day and circumstance in addition to eternity. This truth is a theme in the Psalms.

- King David in Psalm 18, “The LORD is *my rock* and my fortress and deliverer; My God, *my rock* in whom I take refuge...” (18). Again, “The LORD lives, and blessed be *my rock*, and exalted be the God of my salvation” (46).
- The writer of Psalm 89 said “You are my Father, My God, and *the rock of my salvation*” (26).
- And Psalm 95 opens, “O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, let us shout joyfully to *the rock of our salvation.*”

Moses came in faith and honesty to God, his rock. Look at verses 22-23 in chapter 5.

“Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, ‘O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all.’”

Yes, God had told him Pharaoh would only release the Israelites under compulsion. But this increased burden of suffering on top of suffering that already was too much to bear troubled him deeply. And so he asked God, “Why do the people have to go through this? Why do I have to see it?” I am sure he was thinking, “God, I’ve done my part, but you haven’t done what You said you would do. You haven’t delivered the people at all. Everything has gotten worse.”

As you read through 6:1-9 you do not see God scolding Moses. He accepted Moses’ questions because Moses was coming to Him with faith and honestly expressing what was on his heart.

In your days like that, remember that *God is still in control*, that He *is* the rock of your salvation. Dottie Rambo wrote a song, *I Go To The Rock*.<sup>1</sup>

Verse 1   Where do I go when there’s no one else to turn to?  
            Who do I talk to when no one wants to listen?  
            Who do I lean on when there’s no foundation stable?  
            I go to the Rock I know that’s able, I go to the Rock.

Verse 2   Where do I hide ’til the storms have all passed over?  
            Where do I run to when the winds of sorrow threaten?

Is there a refuge in the time of tribulation when my soul needs consolation?  
I go to the Rock.

Chorus I go to the Rock of my salvation.  
Go to the Stone that the builder rejected.  
Run to the Mountain and the Mountain stands by me.  
The earth all around me is sinking sand, on Christ the solid Rock I stand.  
When I need a shelter, when I need a friend, I go to the Rock.

2) Remember, and come to God your rock in faith, honestly expressing your questions, frustrations, doubts and fears.

As I mentioned, God did not scold Moses when he came with his troubled feelings and questions. God responded to Moses by providing the reassurance he needed. Let's review the first part of chapter 6.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land.’ God spoke further to Moses and said to him, ‘I am the LORD; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.’” (1-5)

God reassured Moses that it was He, God eternal and almighty, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who is always in control. He reassured Moses by reminding him of the covenant He had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God always keeps His word. He reassured Moses as He told Him He was well aware of the people's suffering and His covenant promises to them. He reassured Moses by reaffirming that He will act and the Pharaoh will let the people go.

Notice that God did not give Moses any new information here. God took Moses back to His word. That is how God reassures us. The Holy Spirit guides us as we read the Bible, applies the truths, the promises to the needs of our heart. When everything goes wrong, stay in touch with God by prayer and also by reading the Scriptures. Ask God to apply them to you and your situation—to all of your questions, doubts and fears. Rely on God to reassure you through His word.

Next, God refocused Moses' vision. Let's pick it up at verse 6.

“Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I

will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.’” (6-8)

When God originally called Moses at the burning bush, He refocused Moses’ vision from being on himself and what he thought he could and could not do, to being on God. Here God gives Moses a refresher course, He refocuses His vision again. God uses the word “I” eleven times in these three verses. He tells Moses:

- “I am the LORD”
- “I will bring you out”
- “I will deliver you”
- “I will also redeem you”
- “I will take you for My people”
- “I will be your God”
- “I am the LORD your God”
- “I will bring you to the land”
- the land “I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”
- “I will give it to you”
- “I am the LORD”

God is saying, “Moses, remember it is not all about you, it *is* all about Me.”

When everything goes wrong, remember that it is all about God. He is in control. He is moving things forward to His own purposes according to His plan. Refocus your vision.

And then, finally, God sent Moses back to work. Verse 6 opens with the direction, “Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel...” And then, in verse 9 we see Moses going back to work. “So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel...” God did not say, “Moses, I know it has been tough. Take a break. Go back to Midian for a while.” No. God said, “Moses, I have given you my reassurance, I have reminded of you of your proper focus, now get back to the task I have given you.”

There are times when we need to rest and be refreshed. But often when everything goes badly, we are tempted to simply opt out, drop out. God says to us for those times, “Know that I am with you, that I will fulfill my promises, focus on Me not on yourself and everything that is going wrong.” And “Get back in there. Get back to the task I have called you to do.”

## Conclusion.

When everything goes wrong, remember, never forget, God is still in control.

Let's go to God now. Thank Him that He is still, He always is in control. I would be very surprised if there were not at least a few of us who have seen everything, or at least many things, going wrong lately in spite of our faithfulness to God.

- Bring those things and yourself to God in faith now.
- Ask Him to use His word to encourage, to reassure you.
- Ask Him to help you really know it is all about Him and what He can do, is doing, that it is not all up to you, not all about your problems.
- Take shelter in God your Rock.

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