

Exodus Chapters 5-6 - John Karmelich

I was tempted to call these two chapters "The Empire Strikes Back" like the second Star Wars movie. I decided instead that a better title was "Why life usually gets worse before it gets better!" Anyone who's dealt with an addiction knows that's true. The same idea can apply to trying to give up a bad habit. I'd say it even applies to surgery as a doctor has to cut one open to deal with the problem. I know most of us realize this, but it's important to realize why God often works that way in our lives. A reason for this is it glorifies God when we appreciate how He's guided us through a recovery process. Remember God wants to get our focus on Him and well, pain is a great way for us to do that! I'm getting into all this as these chapters show life getting worse for the heroes of this story before the 10 Plagues start. That's the focus of about the next four chapters (so you know)!

Yes I'm going to get into specifics in a minute. I just want everyone to realize why God included all of this in the bible. It's to understand why things usually get worse before they get better. It's a way for us to keep our focus on God and thank Him for what He does for us! Consider that in this story God could have just killed all the Egyptians and told the Israelites to start walking towards the land that I'm giving you because that's where I want you to be! Instead we'll get the 10 Plagues on Egypt that again is what the next few chapters are about. Until then, things will get worse for them before they get better. As I always preach, the bible isn't here so much to give us history lessons, as it is to guide us how it is we're to use our lives as a witness for Jesus. If you get that, learning the bible is downhill from there.

I can just hear many of you saying, "I know suffering is a part of life, so why should I study this text?" I'd answer is to remind ourselves again that things usually get worse before they get better! As we each deal with our own struggles in life, realize that God has a master plan and He never relents on what He promised He'd do. It does not mean life will work out the way we want it to! It doesn't always mean a "happy ending" is in store in this life. It means we're to trust Him no matter what we must deal with in our lives as we were created to glorify Him and not vice versa! With that hard, but necessary statement out of my system, it's time to get back to Moses in Egypt roughly 3,500 years ago!

The story last left off with Moses explaining his vision of God to the Israelite leaders in Egypt. Now it is time to face the leader of Egypt and explain God's "Game plan". I pondered if the Pharaoh agreed to see Moses out of curiosity given his background or because the Israelites considered him their leader. I would argue that meeting took place because the Israelites were millions in number so the Pharaoh had to deal with whatever it was that Moses wanted to say to him.

Moses does not say, "Hey your highness let all the Israelites go or else God's going to kill all your first born sons!" Instead, Moses tries to appeal based on a reasonable request. He states in effect, "The god we worship requires we travel three days to a specific spot in the wilderness or else he will strike a big plague on us and we'll be worthless to you as slaves!" It was a half-truth and well it didn't work. What we see the Pharaoh saying in effect is "I think you're lying to get out of your slavery. I'm now going to make your work load harder so you won't have time to speak to your god!" Part of the Israelites job as slaves was to build things. They built buildings with bricks that contained straw. The acid in that straw made the bricks stronger. The Pharaoh now said the Israelites had to gather that straw, which increased their workload. When that order was given, the Hebrew leaders were whipped as the Israelites couldn't handle all of this.

The Israelites leaders then complained to Moses saying in effect, "We can't handle this. God isn't going to do this (on our timing)! So Moses asked God, "What's the deal? We're suffering based on what You

told me to say?" Chapter 5 ends with Moses asking God about it. Chapter 6 opens with God saying in effect "I know what I'm doing so bear with Me"! The point is God keeps His promises on His timing as we must wait for His timing as well, it's perfect. OK John, we've all seen the 10 Commandments as we know what's going to happen. The lesson is about learning to trust God when things are going horrible in our lives and waiting on His timing. God never promises us things will be wonderful all the time as we go through life. He asks that we be a witness for Him no matter what we must deal with!

Anyway, all of this leads to a speech by God. He tells Moses in effect, "I promised Abraham as well as his son Isaac and then his son Jacob that I'd lead the Israelites into the land. What you're doing is what I desire to fulfill that promise. So are you going to trust Me or not?" Moses repeated all of those details to the Israelites but they were more concerned about their slavery problems! It reminds me that people often prefer to be taken care than to be set free! Despite that, God's will, will occur and the 10 Plagues are about to begin.

Besides all of this, Moses was discouraged at this point. Remember a few miracles were shown to the Israelite leaders to prove that God was behind all of this. Moses wasn't excited about another face off with the Pharaoh again after the "get straw too" order! Anyway God spoke to Moses again here and it led to the next confrontation with Pharaoh that we'll get in the next chapter.

Then of all things, the text pauses to give Moses's genealogy, starting from when the Israelites came to Egypt. Why? First it's not a complete genealogy. The idea is Moses wanted to show he was not picked because he was something special based on ancestry. He was just who God picked. I suspect He wants us to know Moses's background to prove he was an Israelite and a few things about his family to prove that God picked him and Aaron and "that's that". We must deal with the fact this is God's plan and who are we to question it? We get a few details that tie to events later in their wilderness years but the main point is to show God picked Moses because He did, so let's accept it and move on.

The chapter ends in effect with God telling Moses, "Look, I called you to do this! Stop grumbling, and get moving with the game plan! "OK, we got that, how do we relate?" God called Moses to lead lots of people out of slavery. In effect that's what God calls us to do! God didn't pick us so we can "sit on our behinds" the rest of our lives and ignore Him. We're saved for a purpose: to be witness to people of the fact we're slaves to this world and God has a better purpose for us! That doesn't mean we get rewarded based on how many people we lead to Jesus. We get rewards, but it is based on our obedience of being a good witness for Him. Pray about how God wants to lead you! God can't resist answering, when we want to know how we can best serve Him and draw into a closer relationship with Him. Like all of life God works on His timing, just as He did in this story. The point isn't to learn history, but to learn to be obedient and that's what God desires of us!

If interested, there are two other links on this chapter. They are for a more detailed lesson that I wrote about 20 years ago. Of course, you're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John