

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,
10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 5

EXODUS

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

It is not easy for us to understand the ways of God. Sometimes we question, "Why?" Why is a child born blind or deaf or retarded? Why is the father taken away when his family needed him so desperately? Why am I suffering when I have been so faithful to God? Why the famines, diseases, sufferings, earthquakes, hurricanes and floods? God's ways are not man's ways. But there is no doubt that God is always in control.

In this chapter, Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh to request for Israel's release. Moses thought that God would deliver Israel speedily. When Pharaoh responded by treating the Hebrew slaves harshly, Moses turned to God and asked, "Why, Lord?"

Let us turn to the inspired page and discover the valuable lessons therein.

OUTLINE

**A. "THUS SAITH THE LORD" TO
LET ISRAEL GO (5:1-3)**

1. Moses and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh in the Name of the LORD, "Thus saith the Lord" (v.1)
2. Pharaoh responded insolently (v.2)
3. Moses and Aaron explained who God is and elaborated their request (v.3)

**B. PHARAOH INTENSIFIED HIS
OPPRESSION ON ISRAEL (5:4-9)**

1. Pharaoh asked Moses and Aaron to put the people back to work (vv.4-5)
2. Pharaoh instructed his taskmasters and the Hebrew foremen to work the slaves harder (vv.6-9)

**C. "THUS SAITH PHARAOH" TO
MAKE ISRAEL WORK HARDER
(5:10-14)**

1. Pharaoh's taskmasters increased the burdens of the Hebrew slaves (vv. 10-11)
2. Pharaoh's taskmasters beat up the Hebrew foremen for not meeting the brick quota (vv. 13-14)

**D. THE HEBREW FOREMEN
COMPLAINED TO PHARAOH
(5:15-19)**

1. The Hebrew foremen complained to Pharaoh (vv.15-16)

2. Pharaoh rebuked them for being idle (vv.17-18)
3. The Hebrew foremen realised the trouble they are in (v.19)

**E. THE HEBREW OFFICERS
CONFRONTED MOSES AND
AARON WHO WENT TO GOD
(5:20-23)**

1. The Hebrew foremen confronted and chided Moses and Aaron for getting them into Pharaoh's bad books (vv.20-21)
2. Moses turned to the LORD for an explanation (vv. 22-23)

COMMENTARY

Whom Do We Obey

As God promised, Moses and Aaron were well received by the people as their leaders. Now Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh as the spokesmen of the LORD God of Israel. They declared to Pharaoh, “Thus saith the LORD” (v.1). This is the first time this phrase is used. They called Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go to “hold a feast” in the wilderness. The word “feast” is derived from the root word to mean “go on a pilgrimage”.

Pharaoh responded insolently and arrogantly — “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go” (v.2). Was Pharaoh genuinely ignorant of the God of Israel, or was he heaping insults on God? He

opposed God defiantly and refused to let Israel go.

The Egyptian taskmasters used a similar declaration when they went out to the Hebrew slaves, “Thus saith Pharaoh”(v.10). This was a direct challenge and rebellion against God. In the following chapters, God dealt with Pharaoh and vindicated His commandment delivered through Moses and Aaron. God’s plan and purpose cannot be thwarted by man, not even Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

**The Enemy’s Ploy of Causing Conflict
and Confusion**

Moses and Aaron explained that the Lord is the “God of the Hebrews” and requested that Pharaoh allow the slaves to make a “three days’ journey” into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD. The three days’ journey would take them far enough to avoid offending the Egyptians with their worship. However, Pharaoh knew that they were not asking for a one-time “feast” and “sacrifice unto the LORD.”

Pharaoh rejected their request. He knew that he would lose his slaves. He thought of a “brilliant” plan. He accused the leaders of distracting the people and causing them to stay away from their work (v.4). He also accused the people of being idle (v.5, 17). He commanded the Egyptian taskmasters to increase the workload of the Hebrew slaves. He withdrew the supply of straw previously given to the slaves to make bricks. In Egypt, bricks were made by mixing clay with straw. The bricks were

either shaped by hand or a wooden mould, and dried in the sun.¹ All these were done in the open field under the hot sun. The Hebrew slaves now had to collect the straw themselves. In addition to this extra burden, the quota of bricks for each day must be maintained. Of course it was not possible.

The “officers of the children of Israel” (v.14), who were the Israelite foremen or section-leaders, were directly responsible for the daily quota of bricks. They were beaten up by the Egyptian taskmasters (v.14) when the quota could not be met. They complained to Pharaoh hoping that he would understand their plight. How naive! They seemed oblivious to the fact that the order to make bricks without straw came from Pharaoh himself (v.16). Pharaoh told them off and charged them for being idle and lazy.

Angry and furious, they accused Moses and Aaron of giving their Egyptian taskmasters a reason to slay them (v.21). The Israelite foremen were frustrated. The slaves were oppressed and unhappy. The people had no time to think of leaving Egypt to sacrifice to the LORD in the wilderness.

This is exactly how the adversary draws us away from worshipping and serving the Lord – he creates conflict and division in the Church, sets the leaders and members against one

¹ F. B. Huey, Jr., *Exodus—A Study Guide Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 36.

another, and distracts them with all kinds of work and pastime.

Turn to the LORD our God

Moses turned to the LORD for answers. Why did God bring this “evil” upon the people? Why did God send him? His audience with Pharaoh did not have the desired result of delivering the Hebrew slaves (vv.22, 23).

The word “evil” here does not mean moral evil. It refers to the afflictions and sufferings of the people, in particular, the extra burden that had been unfairly imposed upon them.

Why did Moses blame God instead of Pharaoh? In the mind of the Israelites, God is sovereign. He is in control of everything. God had earlier revealed to Moses that He had seen and heard the plight of the children of Israel (3:23-25). He promised Moses that He would deliver the people (3:7-8). He wanted Moses to lead them out of Egypt (3:10). God told him that the people would listen to him. However, God also warned that Pharaoh would refuse to release them initially (3:18,19). God knows all these because He is in control². Pharaoh hardened his heart

² Later, through the prophets God revealed more explicitly that He is sovereign and completely in control over the affairs of men and everything: Amos 3:6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done *it*? Isaiah 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these *things*.

And our Lord Jesus Christ emphasised this fact when He taught: Matthew 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a

and insulted God because of his pride. God could have removed him even before he uttered his first insolent remark. But as Paul the Apostle said, all these happen so that God may be glorified.

Moses' questions were legitimate. He was confused because he did not anticipate Pharaoh's harsh retaliation on the people. He had thought that Pharaoh's opposition would be brief.

Living Faith

How should we respond to sufferings, conflicts, misunderstandings, trying times, hardships and difficult relationships? Let us remember that God is ever in control³. These trials contain precious lessons for us. If God permits trials to befall us through no fault of ours, trust that they are always for a good purpose. The blessings would far outweigh the sufferings. We will emerge spiritually, emotionally and mentally more mature.

We also learn that pride leads to hardening of the heart, which in turn leads to foolish thoughts and actions. We need to humble ourselves and be submissive to God's Word.

Moses turned to the Lord. He went to the right person. So must we. In life's struggles and storms, turn to the

only source of power, life and light --
Jesus Christ, our Father in Heaven.

farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

³ Maxie D. Dunnam, *Exodus* (Waco, Texas: Words Publisher, 1987), 99.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Exodus 5:1-3; Isaiah 55:1-13; Romans 1:18-25

TUESDAY: Exodus 5:4-9; 1 Samuel 12:6-15

WEDNESDAY: Exodus 5:10-14; Psalm 42:5-11

THURSDAY: Exodus 5:15-19; Psalm 43:1-5

FRIDAY: Exodus 5:20-23; James 5:9-10; Psalm 38:1-22

Discussion Questions

1. How would you analyse Pharaoh's personality by his response to Moses' request in Exodus 5:1?

2. How would you answer Pharaoh's questions in Exodus 5:2?

3. Compare Moses' request to Pharaoh recorded in Exodus 5:1 and God's instructions to him in Exodus 3:18. Do you see any difference?

4. How did Pharaoh interpret the request of the people of Israel to worship the Lord? (Cf. Exodus 5:17).

5. Why do you think Pharaoh rejected the message of God through Moses and Aaron?

6. Who were the “taskmasters” and the “officers”?

7. Who were reproached for work that did not measure up to expectation?

8. Was Pharaoh’s method of managing his workforce cunning? Why?

9. Who did the “officers of the children of Israel” blame for their oppression?

10. How did Moses feel when the officers accused him?

11. What did Moses accuse God of?
Who was responsible for the
oppression of the Hebrew slaves?

12. Give a title to this chapter.
