

Text: Exodus 5:1 – 6:1

Title: “Deliverance is spiritual war before it is spiritual peace”

Time: 4/26/20 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: On September 3, 1783, Great Britain recognized the sovereignty of the United States of America by signing the Treaty of Paris. In 1788, our new nation at peace ratified its Constitution, and in 1789 America inaugurated its first president, George Washington.

On January 8th of the following year, President Washington addressed Congress for the very first time. He did so to lead them to care for important needs that they still had to address as they established our new nation. The first need Washington spoke of was a national defense. Here is what he said about the necessity of a nation’s preparations for war:

“Among the many interesting objects, which will engage your attention, that of providing for the common defense will merit particular regard. To be prepared for War is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.

“A free people ought not only to be armed but disciplined; to which end a uniform and well digested plan is requisite: And their safety and interest require, that they should promote such manufactories, as tend to render them independent on others for essential, particularly for military, supplies. [A lesson the COVID-19 threat has taught us again.]

“The proper establishment of the Troops, which may be deemed indispensable, will be entitled to mature deliberation. In the arrangements, which may be made respecting

it, it will be of importance to conciliate the comfortable support of the Officers and Soldiers with a due regard to economy.

“. . . you will perceive from the information contained in the papers which I shall direct to be laid before you . . . that we ought to be prepared to afford protection to . . . the Union; and if necessary to punish aggressors” [<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-8-1790-first-annual-message-congress>; accessed 4/24/20; quoted with some updated spellings].

Our first president understood that a peace-loving nation must be prepared to fight wars. This is true when it comes to the bondage of political tyranny, but it is also true when it comes to the bondage of spiritual tyranny as well. Most who look to religion are looking for peace, not war. But the Bible is clear that true religion faces war-mongering enemies of the soul, and many are the battles that we must be prepared to fight against them.

Our current president has referred to the health pandemic we are facing as the “unseen enemy.” The enemies of the soul are often unseen, but they become especially apparent when God’s gracious work of deliverance is resisted.

We have come to the first chapter of the Book of Exodus that describes what God has to do to deliver people from bondage. The first four chapters told us of the need for deliverance and God’s provision of a deliverer. Now the deliverance begins here in Chapter 5, and from the start we see that this deliverance has a war on its hands.

I have titled the message this morning, “Deliverance from bondage is spiritual war before it is spiritual peace,” and I

want us simply to see the two sides of the war this morning. First, on one side of this spiritual war of the ages is the arrogance of Satan. Second, on the other side is the condescension of God. We must choose one of these sides.

I. On one side is the arrogance of Satan (5:2).

Illustration: C. S. Lewis, writing about “The Great Sin,” said that “it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.” Unfortunately, however, when the author spoke of this great sin, he was not only speaking of the devil. He also writes:

“I now come to that part of Christian morals where they differ most sharply from all other morals. There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which everyone in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves. I have heard people admit that they are bad tempered, or that they cannot keep their heads about girls or drink, or even that they are cowards. I do not think I have ever heard anyone who was not a Christian accuse himself of this vice. And at the same time I have very seldom met anyone, who was not a Christian, who showed the slightest mercy to it in others. There is no fault which makes a man more unpopular, and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others.

“The vice I am talking of is Pride or Self-Conceit: and the virtue opposite to it, in Christian morals, is called Humility” [*Mere Christianity*, Chapter 8].

Application: Pride is what made the devil the devil and put him on the side of the enemy in spiritual warfare. And pride is what makes man join him on that side. Exhibit A for this problem in our passage, of course is Pharaoh. Notice with me three expressions of Pharaoh's satanic pride in this spiritual battle:

1. Arrogant Pharaoh views God as less than sovereign (v. 2). We spoke of this last week when we talked about obedience. Pharaoh asks, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" His answer was that the Lord is no one worth obeying, that He is someone less than sovereign. Why was that his answer? Because he was committing the great sin - pride. Like Satan, he viewed himself as rightfully higher than the Most High (Isa. 14:14, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High"), at least when it came to whose will would be done with his life.

2. Arrogant Pharaoh views God's Word as less than true. He is willing to put his "Thus says Pharaoh" (v. 10) up against Moses's "Thus says the Lord" (v. 1). For Pharaoh, taking the time to listen to the Lord is to have too much time on your hands, and worse yet, to listen to a lie (v. 9). His point seems to be that the Israelites were trying to be too heavenly minded to be any earthly good. Worship does not matter to the man that has rejected God's Word; only bricks do.

3. Arrogant Pharaoh views God's people with suspicion (vv. 4-18). It was Pharaoh's conclusion that God's people are not to be trusted, and in fact, they ought to be singled out for cruel treatment. Why? Because they want to worship their God.

So that is the nature of the enemies' side in this spiritual war. Do we ever find ourselves on that side of this war?

That war is engaged anew every day in the heart of every man and woman. I have to ask myself again today, “Is my pride telling me that obeying my will is more important than obeying God’s will? Is my pride telling me that God’s Word is less than heaven’s truth, that bricks are more important than my Bible? Is my pride allowing me to view God’s people with suspicion, simply because they desire to live a holy life of worship?” If so, we need to confess to the Lord our sin of pride. Those are the days we find ourselves on the wrong side of this spiritual war.

II. On the other side is the condescension of God (5:1).

Application: Whereas Satan is the enemy in spiritual war, God is the hero of deliverance. Whereas Satan is deceptively unseen, God has nothing to hide and has revealed Himself plainly for any who are willing to open their eyes. Whereas there are many human examples of Satan’s arrogance, there is but one human example of what the condescension of God is like – the Lord Jesus Christ. *To condescend* is to come down to be together with those lower than yourself. Jesus alone started where God starts, but then sold everything He had and gave it to the poor.

So our passage has no human exhibit of God’s condescension, because Jesus Christ is not yet incarnate in Exodus 5. For this exhibition of condescension, we must look to God Himself. Note with me characteristics of the condescension of God in our passage this morning.

1. God condescends with a simple request (v. 1). Note that the Lord is directing Pharaoh to do something simple, not hard, and He is even doing so with a polite request (v. 3, “we pray thee”). Today, our deliverance from bondage requires only that we respond to a simple request – “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Isaiah

put it this way: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18). “The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And ‘Let him that is athirst come and drink of the water of life freely.’” How else might Pharaoh have answered such an invitation as the one presented to him on that day? How have we answered our invitation?

2. God condescends with simple messengers (v. 3). It almost seems a bit strange to read of Moses and Aaron fearing that God would strike them with a plague and the sword rather than Pharaoh in this passage. But biblically speaking, it is not strange at all.

God’s simple messengers speak with the wisdom that begins with the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction”). Charles Bridges defines *the fear of the Lord* this way: “It is that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father’s law” (*Proverbs*, 3-4). The battles of spiritual warfare and deliverance from bondage need humble Spirit-filled messengers of a wisdom that begins with the fear of the Lord. Only messengers of this kind can be true representations of their Lord, who was Himself that kind of messenger (Isa. 11:1-5).

3. God condescends with a simple explanation (5:22-6:1). There are two sets of slave administrators in this passage. There are the Egyptian taskmasters and the Hebrew officers. It is these Hebrew officers that are beaten when daily quotas for bricks fall short, and it is these who complain to Moses about their calamity (vv. 20-21).

Clearly, while they were accusing, “The Lord look upon you and judge,” they were really more concerned about what the eyes of Pharaoh had seen than they were about what the Lord was looking at. Funny how we can at times confuse what God sees with what Pharaoh sees. We confuse what humility requires with what arrogance demands.

While it was difficult for Moses and Aaron to deal with Pharaoh, dealing with these officers seems harder for them. C. H. MacIntosh: “But then it is a far more painful thing when his service and testimony are misunderstood, unheeded, or rejected by those who are themselves the specific objects thereof. When such is the case, he needs to be much with God, much in the secret of His [God’s] mind, much in the power of communion, to have his spirit sustained in the abiding reality of his path and service. Under such trying circumstances, if one be not fully persuaded of the divine commission, and conscious of the divine presence, he will be almost sure to break down” (2:90). Are we broken down, or assured of our divine commission?

Moses turns to the Lord instead of breaking down. He does so with heart-wrenching questions about the lack of success his ministry had enjoyed to that point. And God condescends with a simple explanation: “Thou shalt see what I shall do.” God controls the outcomes of the duties He places in our path. Our job is to run patiently and purely the race that He has set before us with our eyes on Christ. He promises that He is going to allow us to see someday what He has done. It will not have been an insignificant work.

Conclusion: And so the resistance of God’s work of deliverance, whether it is that of Pharaoh in Egypt, or something we experience in our own hearts, or something we encounter in our ministry to the lives of others around us, reminds

us that true biblical religion is a war. The arrogance of Satan still battles against the condescension of God, and on every battlefield of our hearts' struggles against the bondage of our sin, we must decide which side we will be on. When the battle against sin comes, will we respond in Satanic arrogance or Christlike condescension? Jesus humbled Himself and died for our sins. As your pastor, desiring to be a simple messenger, often comforted by the Lord's simple explanations, I extend His simple request to you this morning:

"Come. Let him who is athirst come and drink of the water of life freely." "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "He who comes to me I shall in no wise cast out." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*