Noon Bible Study: Exodus 6:10-7:25

Last time we journeyed with Moses and Aaron back to Egypt where they had their first face to face confrontation with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. It did not go well. Pharaoh responded to their request to let God's people go with anger and an increase in their burdens as his slaves. Even the children of Israel, who initially welcomed Moses' announcement that Yahweh was going to rescue them, eventually were upset with how things turned out.

And yet, as we discussed, God begins teaching Moses that even when things seem to backfire, the seemingly negative circumstances & results of obeying God's word do not imply that he has been foolish to obey Him. Sometimes things get *harder* in life when we do what God commands, but that doesn't mean we were wrong to obey. So Moses is reminded by God that He will be with Him, and that this truly spiritual battle between Yahweh & the gods of Egypt is only just beginning.

Exodus 6:10-13 - Moses Recommissioned

We have a mini repeat of Moses' initial calling at Mount Horeb. Moses' first visit to Pharaoh didn't go well and yet God is calling him to go back and speak the same message - "let my people go." Moses reminds God of his own limitations, but the LORD is undeterred in his calling of Moses. Stuttering Moses is just who God wants to be His spokesman.

Exodus 6:14-27 - Moses' Family

Here we have one of those Old Testament stereotypical listings of genealogies and hard to pronounce names. But this list starts to list out the sons of Jacob/Israel in birth order - Reuben, Simeon, Levi - but then upon reaching Levi, spends the remaining verses on Moses & Aaron's family. It's as if the narrator begins to tell the story of Israel but then weaves in (and stops telling the story) with where Moses and Aaron fit in to the overall Abrahamic account. In fact we never pick up the genealogy again.

Many of these names will come up again in our story. So while they seem unfamiliar now, they will be familiar later. (That's why we never skip genealogies - you never know what you'll find!)

Exodus 6:28-7:7 - Moses & Aaron's Calling

This section describes God's reinforced call on Moses and Aaron. Some of the language is similar to when Moses (and Aaron) were first called. Moses repeats his feeling of inadequacy and God repeats His sufficiency. It also provides us with an important statement which we would do well to remember as we journey through Exodus. God tells Moses the ***purpose*** to why Egypt will experience what it is about to experience.

God knows that Pharaoh is not going to listen to Moses and Aaron (v. 4) & God tells Moses that one of the reasons is that the LORD himself is going to "harden Pharaoh's heart" (v. 3) to ensure that Pharaoh does not agree to release the Hebrew slaves. But the ultimate purpose for all of this is that it will result in the Egyptians knowing that Yahweh is God. Pharaoh's initial response to Moses was "who is Yahweh?" (**5:2**) - in a few chapters all of Egypt is going to know first hand.

Exodus 7:8-13 - The Battle Begins (Staffs & Snakes)

Moses and Aaron return to Pharaoh and begin to show the signs from the LORD. Aaron threw his staff on the floor and it became a serpent! Yet amazingly the magicians of Pharaoh's house are able to do the same thing! This tells us right off the bat that this face off with Pharaoh is not going to be easy or simple, just as the LORD had said (7:3-4).

We may be troubled by the ability of the Egyptian priests to seemingly replicate the miracle of the staff turning into a serpent. Yet, in a quick line, we read "But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs (**Exodus 7:12b**)." So yes, there is some power at work, but it is uncontrolled and "swallowed up" by God's power.

There's a few things for us to think about in light of this. First, we should take note that the evil powers of darkness in this world are not powerless. That might make you uncomfortable to think that the magicians were able to do something. Good. That should wake us up to the reality of the spiritual battle we are in! The devil is real, demons are real, evil is real.

However, waking up to the reality of spiritual darkness should not cause us to fear. For God is greater in **every** and **any** way. The devil may be able to seemingly replicate the power of God, but he does not possess the power of God.

Popular culture has presented God and the devil as two equally powered rivals - the "good" on one shoulder whispering in humanity's ear, and the "evil" on the other, pulling us towards our vices. But that picture is a deceitful attempt at explaining the war between evil and good. The devil is not the opposite of God. He is not even comparable to Yahweh.

So fine, the magicians can make a snake out of a staff...but God's power is going to gobble it all up in the end. And we will see that though they have a few chances to match what God does, they will soon be no match for what the LORD does.

Exodus 7:14-19 - The Nile Will Turn To Blood

Here's a pattern we'll see the next few chapters. God is going to tell Moses what he's about to do, and then Aaron will go and actually tell Pharaoh what God said, leading to it actually happening. God says that the Nile, the main water source for Egypt is going to turn to blood. In fact, the vessels throughout the land of Egypt that contained Nile water will also turn to blood. We're talking a powerfully pervasive plague.

Exodus 7:20-25 - The Nile Turns To Blood

Just as the LORD said, the Nile turns to blood at the word of Moses and Aaron. Fish die, the land begins to stink and the Egyptians are unable to drink from the Nile. This will affect the entire land. Can you even imagine?!

However, just like with the staff in the previous record, "the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts... (7:22)." And so while his nation is filled with blood, Pharaoh goes home and sleeps easy because his magicians calmed his fears. "*Eh, no big deal. This God of the Hebrews can do a couple tricks, but my boys can do the same thing - big whoop*!

Isn't that just like the world? When there is a potential for the fear of the LORD to impact their lives, they will do whatever they can to ignore their conscience and pacify their concerns. They will become skeptics, they will look to other places for help, they will block their eyes and ears - anything to avoid admitting God is real and right and surrendering their lives. And as long as they find something to make them forget or ignore God's hand, they feel they can keep living their life.

The text says that Pharaoh went home *"with no concern even for this..."* One translation says that "*Pharaoh returned to his palace and put the whole thing out of his mind* (7:23, NLT)."

His whole nation is digging for underground water that might be drinkable and he's at home with his fingers in his ears saying "la la la la la." How representative of humanity. Turn up the noise so you don't hear from God. Keep your face in front of the screen to not think about your life. Get drunk or smoke some marijuana to not have to deal with what's really going on at home. Isolate yourself so you don't have to have outside influence or accountability.

The world around you might be bleeding, but just shut yourself in your own little palace and put the whole thing out of your mind.

Yet Pharaoh will not be able to hide in his palace. He's not going to be able to rely on his priests. The LORD is about to unleash a judgement like the world has never seen. He's going to use some of the smallest parts of his created realm to bring down the most powerful nation in the world. The great Pharaoh is about to begin to feel very small.

So for the time being Moses & Aaron may feel like they are losing, but it's only the first round. Even Pharaoh's hardness is because the LORD is in complete control. And we'll leave it here for now.

An important lesson worth highlighting is that though it seems like this section is a bit repetitive with content we have already read and learned, there may be more to this story. We read in previous chapters that God called Moses, while in the land of Midian to be his representative before Pharaoh. We already know that Moses didn't feel up to the job. We already know that God allows Aaron to speak to Pharaoh and that God will talk to Moses and Moses will talk to Aaron. We already know that Pharaoh isn't going to let Israel go after the first request from Moses and Aaron. And yet we read this again.

Some skeptics will point to repetitive sections like this as evidence of later editors coming into the Biblical text and adding or changing what God had originally had written. While there are instances where scribes did add clarifying information to the text, those rare instances, do not change the inspired word or the content of salvation history (for example, when the books written by Moses tell about how Moses died, obviously a later writer would have concluded that part of the story). However, that's a side note in this point.
Why do we need to hear about the back and forth again about God calling Moses and Moses hesitating and God helping him again? We know this already, why remind us? Let's just get to the next part of the story! Why tell us again?

Because that's the way God works with those He calls.

Notice the text tells us an important detail about when they have this repeated conversation: "Now it came about on the day when the LORD spoke to Moses *in the land of Egypt*" (**6:28**).

This actually isn't a retelling of their conversation at Mount Horeb, this is the *second time* that God and Moses have this conversation. Moses is now in Egypt, he's already visited Pharaoh once, he's likely tempted with discouragement, frustration, doubt and fear. He's seeing firsthand the power of evil that he is up against. And so God has this conversation again with Moses. He reminds Moses of what he's been called to, that the LORD will be with Him and that in the end, though there will be difficulty from Pharaoh, God is going to win.

When God calls someone to serve Him, he promises to be with them and help them and bring about His purposes through them. And yet sometimes we need to be reminded of God's calling upon our lives, and God is happy to have that conversation again. Sometimes we start looking at our limitations again, and God is happy to remind us of His provision again. Sometimes we get discouraged with the results in our lives, and God is happy to tell us again that His will is going to be done. Sometimes we hear and consider what our enemy is saying and God is happy to remind us of what He has already said.

This is what it means to have a relationship with God. It's not a one and done "I've said it, you should have figured it all out on your own after that" – No! It's an ongoing, back and forth, talking and listening, step by step, moment by moment thing. God knows where Moses is struggling, and part of God's love & presence & power is to help Moses in moments of doubt or weakness or temptation. God is for us, not against us - and there are going to be times when we, like Moses, need to hear again about our purpose, calling & assignment for Him - and so that's what He'll do.

If we forget who we have been called to be and what we've been called to do, God will come and remind us. For those on the outside it may look like a repeat of something that has already occurred in our story. But for us, it is a moment of renewal, refreshment, and restoration of our purpose. If we try and live without a clear understanding of our calling, we're going to struggle. But if we have our purpose clear, we will be infused with the ability to stand for and walk with God no matter what is going on around us.

So today, if you feel like you're unsure or unprepared, let God remind and empower you with His purpose once again. **He's happy to.**