

The Lord's Plan

Exodus 6:10–7:7

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If you have your Bibles, I'd invite you to turn with me to Exodus, chapter 6. When we looked at Exodus, chapter 5, verses 15 through Exodus, chapter 6, verse 1, we saw that God's people responded to Moses' and Aaron's announcement in a believing way. They worshiped God. But when Pharaoh immediately imposed heavier burdens upon the people, the people's hearts melted away. They not only turned their back on God's declarations and promises, they turned on Moses and Aaron, and they blamed Moses and Aaron for their hardship. They accused them of being the source of all their problems.

Then when we looked at Exodus 6, verses 2 through 9, we saw that moment in time when Moses really needed some encouragement. Having met the foreman as they came out of Pharaoh's presence, having heard the foreman denounce him, not only denounce him, but actually call down God's judgment on him, we knew that Moses needed some encouragement, and God gave him enormous encouragement.

Beginning In verse 2, of Exodus, chapter 6, God reveals Himself and explains some things to Moses about His name that He had never so clearly explained before. And in fact He said in the very Exodus event itself, He as going to manifest the meaning of His name, the Lord. But, in Exodus, chapter 6, verse 9, having taken that glorious message to the people of God, Moses and Aaron were summarily rejected. It's in that context that we come to Exodus, chapter 6, verse 10. Let's hear God's word.

Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Go tell Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to let the sons of Israel go out of His land." But Moses spoke before the Lord saying, "Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to Me. How then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech?" Then the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron and give them a charge. To the sons of Israel and to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt. These are the heads of their father's households. The sons of Reuben, Israel's first born, Hhanoch and Pallu and Hezron and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben. And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. These are the families of Simeon. And these are the names of the

sons of Levi, according to their generations. Gerson and Okhath and Merari. And the length of Levi's life was 137 years. The sons of Gerson, Libni and Shimei, according to their families. And the sons of Kahath, Amram and Izhar and Hebron and Uzziel; and the length of Kahath's life was 133 years. And the sons of Merari, Mmahli and mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their generations. And Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses; and the length of Amram's life was 137 years. And the sons of Ishar, Korah and Nephug, and Zithri. And Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Nashon, and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. And the sons of Korah; Assir and Elkanah and Abiasaph; these are the families of the Korahites. And Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phineas. These are the heads of the father's households of the Levites, according to their families. It was the same Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, "Bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, according to their hosts." They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, about bringing out the sons of Israel from Egypt. It was the same Moses and Aaron. Now it came about on the day that the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, that the Lord spoke to Moses saying, "I am the Lord. Speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, all that I speak to you." But Moses said before the Lord, "Behold, I am unskilled in speech. How then will Pharaoh listen to me?" Then the Lord said to Moses, "See, I make you as gods to Pharaoh. And your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you. And your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that I may multiply My signs, and My wonders in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh will not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My host, My people, the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. When I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst." So Moses and Aaron did it; as the Lord commanded them; thus they did. And Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

Amen and thus ends this reading of God's holy and inspired word. May He add His blessing to it. Let's pray.

Our Father, we bow before You and we thank You for Your word. The faithful account by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that You have given us of Your workings amongst Your people to bring them out of the bondage of the house of Egypt. We pray that as we look at it that we would remember Paul's words. That this story was written for us. Indeed, it happened for us. Help us by your grace, O Lord, to learn the lessons of Your Exodus. Help us, we pray, to see Christ in this Exodus. Help us, we pray, to see Christ in this Exodus. Help us to respond in faith and obedience to this Exodus. All this we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

In God's providence this is a very good passage to come to immediately prior to our missions conference. Because in this passage in which the Lord reveals somewhat of His plan, perhaps to a greater degree than before to Moses, we have some very definite lessons for us, as we seek to support God's work of mission, and as we seek to be involved in the work of world missions. Of course, the applications are even broader than that, and I think you'll see that as we work through the passage together.

The passage outlines fairly easily in three parts. There's that introductory section in 10 through 13, in which God comes again to Moses and to Aaron to encourage them after their second consecutive discouragement. Not only have the foremen rejected them, but now the people have rejected God's glorious overtures of grace, and at precisely that moment, a moment of great, perhaps disconsolation on the part of Moses and Aaron, God comes again in verses 10 through 13, and He gives them orders to go right back into the fray of things. Then, we have one of those commercials in the middle of the passage. You know, more after this, but first a message from our sponsors. In verses 14 through 27 we have a genealogy given to us. Now to everybody else in the world that would make no sense, but to Southerners surely, surely that makes sense, before you go any further to tell a little bit about the family background of this boy, Moses. "Son, where do you come from?" And that's precisely what we're told in verses 14 through 27. Then, we come back to it again. God picks up reminding us where we were in 10 through 13. He picks up in verse 28 through 30 reiterating the transaction that had already occurred between Himself and Moses and then in verse 1 of chapter 7. And by the way, from 6:28 to 7:7 in the third section of the text, beginning in verse 1, He begins to tell us five specific responses to Moses' questions. And then we see how faithfully Moses and Aaron responded to God's word. Let's look at the passage then.

I. Moses is sent on his original mission despite the real discouragements attending his initial ministry.

First, look at verses 10 through 13 of Exodus, chapter 6. In the face of failure and rejection. And let's not candy coat it, that's precisely what Moses was facing. Failure and rejection. The foremen had now rejected his message. Though the elders had originally embraced his message, it's clear that the people as a whole are very dubious about Moses and Aaron. They had faced failure and rejection now in their very initial ministry to the people of God in Egypt. But after that substantial encourage that God have given, to immediately face discouragement again by telling the people of God that good news, and then immediately having that rejection. Surely that had absolutely flattened Moses. And in the face of that failure and rejection, God orders Moses right back to his mission. "Back to your post, son. Back to your post, Moses. Back into the fray." That's what we see in verses 10 through 17. Moses is sent on his original mission, despite the real

discouragements that attended his original ministry.

Now we're already seeing something of how this passage applies to our responsibilities in world missions. Let's hold on to that thought for a few moments, and walk through the passage. In verse 10, in the wake of Israel's rejection of those glorious words of comfort, where God explained His name, the meaning of it, the significance of it to Moses, and explained that He was going to display Himself, reveal Himself in ways that transcended anything that any of the greatest of the patriarchs had ever experienced of Him, in the wake of the rejection of Israel, of those words, the Lord still sends Moses on His errand. What matters is that Moses obey God. It doesn't seem to make sense. I'm going to show you that that there are numerous places in the Old Testament where it doesn't seem to make sense for the prophets of God to go on the errand that God sends them on. And yet it's important for Moses to do so. And in fact this passage, especially at the end when we get to verses 28 to 30 stresses that Moses and Aaron were faithful to do just that.

Now in verses 11 and 12 we can understand Moses' objection. "Lord, why are you sending me? I've spoken to the foremen. They've rejected me. I've spoken to Pharaoh once. He's rejected me. I've spoken Your most recent glorious words to the people of God. They have rejected me. Lord, three strikes — I'm out. And now you want me to go to Pharaoh to declare Your plan once more?" Moses, in fact, uses striking words to express himself. Look at the end of verse 12. "How then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech." Those of you with your Hebrew testaments open know that literally it says, "I am uncircumcised in my lips." Now that may be an interesting way of saying that 'he doesn't speak very skillfully.' More likely, however, it is a moral reflection on Moses' part about himself. You will remember back in Exodus, chapter 4, verses 24 through 26 that Moses had failed to obey God's command to be circumcised, or perhaps, to circumcise Gershom. Whatever the case is, Moses was guilty of breaking God's commands. He was sensing very acutely at that time his own moral failings, as God sought to destroy him on the way. And so Moses may be here saying this: "Lord, my body may be circumcised, and Gersom's body may be circumcised, but You know that I'm a man, I'm sinful, I'm unworthy for this. How will Pharaoh listen to such a man?" The rendering *unskilled in speech* may well mean uncircumcised lips and look back to that incident. And in rejoinder to this objection, in verse 13, without any further discussion, God simply says, "Back to work." You and Aaron go to the sons of Israel and to Pharaoh, and you take them My words.

In our work of evangelism, in our calling to the work of missions, God's people are responsible to obey His word. To obey His command, not to produce fruit, not to pull off the results. That's God's business. The reaction of the people of God, the reaction of Pharaoh does not matter. God sends Moses into the fray. Now this is a very important theme in the book of Exodus. Turn back to Exodus 4, verse 1. In Exodus 4, verse 1, Moses had already raised the issue, "What if they

will not believe me or listen to what I say?" Now interestingly, that's a question for Moses both with regard to his people and to Pharaoh. The answer in both cases is, "Let me give you a clue Moses, neither of them are going to listen to you. Pharaoh is going to say, "I don't know the Lord. Who is He?" And the people of Israel because of the burdens of Pharaoh are going to say, "Moses, you are the root of all our problems."" So the answer to the question is, "What if they don't believe me?" Well, let me tell you ahead of time Moses, they're not. Do it anyway. Look at how this continues.

Turn forward to chapter 7, verse 4. Notice how God puts it here. "When Pharaoh will not listen to you, then I will lay my hand on Egypt." God, in the passage we're going to study later, just tells Moses, "Moses, the point for you going is not that you're going to convince Pharaoh. Let Me just tell you ahead of time, you're not." Not if, but when he doesn't listen to you, then I'm going to do something else. But you're part of the plan. Turn forward to chapter 11, verse 9. Notice again this is after ten plagues. Ten plagues. "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders will be multiplied in the land of Egypt.'" Moses' function is not, in this case, to be the instrument whereby God gains the victory. God, Himself, stresses to Moses that He will gain the victory. Moses is only called to be faithful. Moses' task is important to God doing what He intends to do. Don't misunderstand me. God gives Moses a very important task. It is very important in the witness that God is going to raise to Himself in Egypt and in Israel. But it will not be Moses' persuasive words, nor Aaron, his spokesman's, persuasive words that bring about this victory. God Himself will bring about this victory. God's people are responsible simply to obey. God's responsibility, God's business is the fruits or the results. And that's not just the case in the life of Moses. It's the case of the lives of so many prophets in the Old Testament.

Very briefly, let me ask you to turn forward to Jeremiah, chapter 7. Now what would you do if this were God's commission to you? Jeremiah, chapter 7, verse 27, this is the Lord of Hosts speaking to Jeremiah: "You shall speak all these words to them. But they will not listen to you. And you shall call to them, but they will not answer you." The Lord over and over to Jeremiah explained to him that He was going to send him as a prophet to Israel, and Israel wasn't going to listen to him. Now what would you say to that? Well, that doesn't make sense. Why are you doing that? God has a reason. But Jeremiah wasn't going to be instrument of the people of Israel listening. Turn forward again to the book of Ezekiel. First in Ezekiel 3, God said the same thing to Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 3, this great passage where God tells Ezekiel to eat the scroll of His word, and Ezekiel said it was like honey to his mouth. Look at what He says in verse 5. "Ezekiel, you are being sent to a people of unintelligible speech or a difficult language with the house of Israel. I'm not sending you to foreigners, I'm sending you to people who speak your language and you speak their language, nor to many peoples of unintelligible speech or difficult language whose words you cannot understand. But I have sent them to you who should listen to you; yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me." You

know, with Ezekiel you've got to wondering, "Well, okay, Lord, what's the purpose here?" You know, it gets even more dramatic in Ezekiel. Turn to Ezekiel 37. In Ezekiel 37, and by this time I think Ezekiel has learned his lesson, so when God asks him the question, he just sort of throws it back at God. God, in Ezekiel 37:1, shows Ezekiel this valley of literally dry bones. Dead people, and there's no flesh left on them. It's just a valley of bones out in the desert. And He asks him this in verse 3. Ezekiel 37:3. "'Son of man can these bones live?' And I answered, 'Oh, Lord, you know.'" He's learned, hasn't he? "You know." What does He say for him to do next? He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'Oh dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.'"

Now friends that makes no sense. That's evangelism. It makes no sense. How is it that you can tell somebody who's spiritually dead, and they can hear anything you say? It is not that you are convincing, it's not that you're persistent, it's not that you're well trained, it's not any of that. It's when the Spirit of God decides to move, He moves. God calls us to be faithful. He will decide when to bring the return, when to bring the fruit, how much, where, how many? God calls us to faithfulness. You know it's the same way with William Carey. William Carey was in India, I think, for seven years without a single convert. In the seventh year there was the shock when all their printing, his entire translation of the Bible into Sanskrit, was burned down; nothing left, nothing saved. For Carey it was something like fifteen years worth of work never recovered. He had written, not just a lexicon, but a grammar for the language. It had never existed before. He had done it to help him translate the word of God. All lost. Carey is scratching his head at this point. Lord, I gave up everything to come here. What's going on? It's very interesting that it was the word that everything had been lost that got back to a Baptist minister in London named Andrew Fuller. And the people of God began to pray for missions in England like they had never, ever prayed before. And that began a new era in Carey's ministry. What was the result? Within a few months, one man was converted. But Carey said when that happened, "He's only one man, but a continent will follow him." God works in His time in His own way. He calls us to faithfulness. We should look for faithful men and women. It is not theirs to determine the results of their ministry. We should look for faithful men and women. If they have one convert, praise God. If they have a thousand converts, praise God. That's not to their credit. It's to His. We should look for faithful men and women. First point.

II. God had been planning for Israel's deliverance and deliverer for generations.

Let's move to the second. Here we see the genealogy. We can't do justice to this genealogy tonight. But let me hit a few high points. This genealogy of Aaron and Moses in verses 14 through 27 is given. It's reviewed in order to identify Aaron and Moses precisely for us, and, of course, for later generations of Israelites who wouldn't know them personally; who wouldn't be under their ministry in the

wilderness, and to establish their priestly descent. There's a great deal of detail given about the sons of Aaron and about the various classes of Levites who are assigned different jobs later on in the Tabernacle and then in the Temple. This genealogy may not make sense to us, but it's perfectly normal in Semitic literature to interrupt a story and say, "Now let me give you some background on these folks." And I say, that makes perfect sense to us in the South. My wife, while she was in seminary here in Jackson before we were married, decided that she would like to have a little bit of a part-time job, just to get away from the crush of studies and the routine of the week, just a little part-time job. So she goes to The Paper Place. Okay? She just wants to be a register clerk. She's not applying for assistant auper manager of WorldCom, you understand? This is a store clerk at The Paper Place. She sits down, the first thing the owner says is, "Now, honey, who are your parents?" And, of course, she really had to back up there because she wasn't from Jackson, she wasn't from Mississippi. They didn't have a clue who her parents where. But she went back and gave him the genealogy. That's a very Southern thing to do. Who do you come from, son? Who are your folks? Oh, I know them. That's what happening here. God is giving a precise identification of Aaron and Moses to the children of Israel.

The list itself reflects the genealogical order of Genesis, chapter 46, verses 8 through 10. Now, just a few things about some of the things that are told us in this passage. First of all, look at verse 15. Here we are told explicitly that Shaul was the son of the Canaanite woman. Now you don't get that detail elsewhere in the genealogy. You have to understand that Moses has stuck that in there so that you will recognize that one of his forbearers had violated a very important command of God, a command that would become increasingly import while the children of Israel were in Egypt and would actually be codified in the law of Moses. Don't intermarry with pagans. It's a warning, a timely warning. Israel, to some extent, had been protected from that while in Egypt. The Egyptians didn't want to have anything to do with them. Now they were going to face a real problem with Canaanite inner marriage because they were going where? The land of Canaan. Verse 16. Dates are given in the genealogy of Levi in order to provide you a chronology of the Exodus. If you work out the dates and such it makes perfect sense with the 430 years of captivity.

Notice in verse 20 that Amram is married to his paternal aunt. This, too, is against the law of Moses. Moses again is emphasizing there are some skeletons in my closet. Jochebed, forbearer of Moses, verse 20, means the Lord is glory. The Lord is waiting. The Lord is heavy. Is her name a portent of the fact that the God of Israel will make heavy the heart of Pharaoh. At any rate, this genealogy traces the line of the two seeds forward. In this case, the line of the seed of woman through Levi and down to Moses, and places him, reminding us again where he came from, his background, and where the sons of Aaron would fit in the ministry of the tabernacle and temple.

III. God will show that He is the LORD in the exodus.

Third section. Verses 28 through 7:7. Here we see the renewal of God's calling and the recounting of this plan that He would have. Here, God tells Moses that He will show that He is the Lord in the Exodus. In verses 28 through 30, the previous encounter that we've already seen in verses 10 through 13 is recapitulated. This is not bad editing by a redactor. This is genealogy-interrupt-story, we recapitulate a little bit to bring you back up the speed again, and now we pick up with God's response. God's response begins in verse 1. Notice in verses 1 through 5, and you can use those verses as your outline, a five-part response to Moses. Response 1 in verse 1; response 2 in verse 2; response 3 in verse 3; response 4 in verse 4; response 5 in verse 5. First, God tells Moses that He is going to make him as a god in the eyes of Pharaoh. The way it's phrased in the original is even more striking. It's not given as a simile or metaphor. There's no *like* or *as* in it. It's *I will make you as a god to Pharaoh*. Pharaoh, the leader of Egypt, thought of himself as a god. His people thought of him as a god. God is saying to Moses, "Moses, I'm going to make you superior to Pharaoh." How important that confidence would be for Moses to go again and again into the presence of the leader of Egypt who certainly had the capacity of killing him. I'm going to make you superior to the leader of Egypt.

Secondly, God says, "Moses, Aaron is going to be your spokesman. Literally, Aaron is going to be your prophet. He's going to speak to Pharaoh for you Moses, and you are going to speak precisely what I have commanded you to speak." Though Moses will be as a god to Pharaoh, Moses is not God. And the words that he is speaking are not his words, they are the one true God's words. They will speak precisely what God has told them to speak. But isn't it interesting that this concession to Moses, because of his own doubting about his abilities, this concession on God's part to give him Aaron to be his spokesman, actually serves in God's providence to enhance Moses' stature. I mean, this guy's important enough that he's got a spokesman when he comes into Pharaoh's presence. Have you heard the story about the Pope. There are all sort of permutations about this. You know, the Pope is in a car one day. He's always wanted to drive a fast car. He asked the driver, the chauffeur, could I drive the car? He gets in the car, he goes a hundred miles an hour, a policeman pulls him over. The policeman walks up to the car, the Pope rolls down the window, policeman leans in, it's the Pope. The policeman says, "Excuse me one moment." He walks back to the patrol car, picks up his radio, and he says, "We got somebody very important here. I mean, I don't know who he is but the Pope is his chauffeur." That's precisely what is happening here. Moses' stature is being increased in the eyes of Pharaoh because he's got a spokesman when he comes into his presence. Aaron serves as his prophet, so exalted has God made Moses to be.

Third. Verse 3. God tells Moses again. And this fits into just what we have been talking about. About our not being responsible for the response. God tells Moses

again that He will make Pharaoh's heart stubborn and unyielding. This theme of God making Pharaoh's heart hard or hardening Pharaoh's heart is repeated over and over in the passage. The word used here is different than the word used in some of the other places. This word doesn't mean, he made his heart heavy, it means literally that he *made his heart to be stubborn*. Now there's some irony here because we've already been told that Pharaoh was a stubborn man. He was stubborn in response to Moses' overture to give the people relief to go worship and because of that stubbornness, we've already been told in this passage, he made the work of the people of God harder. So you have this irony of the sovereign God making a stubborn man's heart stubborn. He confirms him in his unyielding, unrepentant spirit. God's sovereignty, you see, is displayed in that He is the one who determines the state of heart of the god of Egypt.

Fourthly. God tells Moses that He will bring out His people with awesome judgments against Egypt. It's so important for Moses to understand that the way God's plan is going to work is not this. Okay, Moses goes in, Aaron goes in, we do a bang up job, Pharaoh listens to us, people get free. That's not how it works. Moses goes in, Aaron goes in. We're faithful, we're obedient, we're steadfast, we persevere. We say every word that God tells us to do, we do everything that God tells us to do, nothing happens. Hmm, would that be your plan of mission? That's God plan of mission, friends. You do everything He tells you to do, you say everything that He tells you to do, and nothing happens until He is ready for something to happen. It's not going to be Moses, it's not going to be Aaron, and it is certainly not going to be Pharaoh that will bring the children out of Egypt. It's going to be God who's going to do judgments Himself. He will bring the children of Israel out of Egypt. And then finally, all of this leads up to the culmination.

Verse 5, the fifth thing that God says to Moses. Then, "Even Egypt will come to know that I am the Lord." Now friends, that's very important. Turn back to Exodus, chapter 5, verse 2. Moses in the presence of Pharaoh. "I come here in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel." Response of Pharaoh. "I don't even know who the Lord is?" Guess what, Pharaoh, you're about to. The purpose of missions is to glorify God, to glorify Him amongst those who believe, to glorify Him amongst those who do not believe, whom He will draw to Himself, that's His business. Our job is to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. that's what we do in missions. We glorify God. It's His business how He will be glorified, because at the end every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that He has the name that is above every name. They'll do it willingly or unwillingly. It's His business who does it willingly and who does it unwillingly. It's our business to glorify the name. Moses, your job is to speak the word because My name is going to be known amongst the Egyptians. The easy way or the hard way. But whichever way it's going to be, it is going to be known.

We're told, by the way, if you'll look at verses 6 and 7, that Moses and Aaron are to speak God's own words, not their own, and they do so faithfully. And we're told in verse 7 that Moses and Aaron began this ministry at what would have been

the end of a normal lifespan in their day. Remember Moses in Psalm 90? "The years of our days are three score years and ten. And yet if by strength they come to four score years, yet are they that labor in sorrow, and we pass away, and we are gone." The years of our days are seventy years, and if by strength and mercy God gives us eighty years, well then that's a bonus. God exalts His glory and His sovereignty by beginning the ministry of Aaron and Moses to Pharaoh when normal folk would be thinking about the ends of their lives, and He strengthens Moses for the past. God calls Moses and us to faithfulness and obedience. He'll handle the rest. He's sovereign. Our job is to glorify Him. Let's pray.

Father, You are sovereign, and You make a mockery of the kinds of this earth and the suppose gods of this world. It's our privilege to tell Your story to the nations. Burn into us the vision of Your glory, and give us an inescapable desire to tell it to everyone, to everything that has life and breath. We ask it through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

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