

The Trial of Faith and the King's Defiance

Exodus 5:1-23

It's a beautiful thing when we decide to step out in obedience to what the Lord has put on our hearts. We expect that because we're doing "God's work," the red carpet is going to roll out and everything will be "peaches and cream." But as we look at Exodus chapter five, we see that often the exact opposite happens.

Moses and Aaron finally go before Pharaoh. They bring the word of the Lord: *"Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness'"* (Exodus 5:1). Now, notice Pharaoh's response. It's the height of human pride. He says, *"Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go"* (Exodus 5:2).

Pharaoh essentially says, "Who does this Jehovah think He is? I'm the king of the world's superpower. I don't know Him, and I'm not lifting a finger for Him." Well, as we're going to see in the coming chapters, he's about to get a very personal introduction to the Living God.

When Things Get Worse Before They Get Better

Instead of a "yes," Pharaoh turns up the heat. He decides the people are "idle"—they have too much time on their hands to think about God. So he stops providing straw for the bricks but demands the same daily quota. If you've ever felt like you've taken one step forward with the Lord and two steps back in your circumstances, you can relate to the children of Israel here.

Archeology actually backs this up in a fascinating way. In the ruins of the ancient city of Pithom, excavators found that the lower layers of brick have plenty of straw. As you move up the walls, the straw becomes sparse and uneven. In the top layers, there is no straw at all—only bits of stubble and roots. It's a silent, stony testimony to the truth of this Word.

When the pressure mounted, the people didn't praise God; they turned on Moses. And Moses, being human just like us, turned to the Lord and said, *"Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me?"* (Exodus 5:22).

The Enemy's Strategy: Discouragement

You see, the moment you commit to serving the Lord, or the moment you decide to really walk with Him, Satan will do his best to hinder you. He uses discouragement, he uses "vain words," and he uses the pressure of the world to make you question your calling. He wants you to think, *"If God were in this, why is it so hard?"*

I remember years of ministry where I felt just like Moses. I was ready to turn in my resignation to God. I thought, "Lord, I'm tired of the hassles and the heartaches." But it's often in that place of total brokenness—where we realize we can't do it in our own strength—that God begins to move. If God has called you, stick with it. Don't let the initial "no" from the world keep you from the "yes" of God.

Practical Application

- **Expect Opposition:** Don't be surprised by the "Pharaohs" in your life when you start seeking God. Resistance is often a sign that you're headed in the right direction.
- **Eyes on the Promise, Not the Quota:** The Israelites looked at the bricks; Moses had to learn to look at the Lord. When the "quota" of your life feels impossible, remember that God is the one who delivers, not your own effort.

A Challenge for the Believer

Are you ready to quit because things are difficult? Don't let the enemy's tactics of "more work and less straw" stop your worship. The Lord allowed this trial not to destroy Israel, but to show them His power. Stand firm in your calling today, even if the "bricks" are piling up.

An Invitation to New Life

Maybe you're like Pharaoh today, asking, *"Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?"* You don't have to wait for the "plagues" of life to find out who He is. We serve a God who loved you so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth.

Jesus didn't just give us a set of rules; He gave us His life. He shed His precious blood on the cross to pay for every sin you've ever committed. And three days later, He rose from the dead! That resurrection declares to the whole world that He is God, He is the Savior, and He is Lord. You don't have to be a slave to the "bricks and mortar" of this world anymore. You can be free. If you will turn from your way and put your trust in Him, He will give you a new heart and a new life today.