*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 15 - 20

*Exodus Chapters Five and Six*

**Monday, June 15 Exodus 5:1-5**

*“I don’t know the Lord”*

 Moses returns to Egypt and is now ready to carry out the task that God has specifically chosen for him. One might expect a quick, decisive end to Pharaoh’s enslavement of God’s people, but this is not what happens. Things will get worse before they get better. Moses and Aaron appear before Pharaoh and proclaim: “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says.” They are declaring themselves to be God’s ambassadors, and is so doing put plainly before Pharaoh that any disregard of their message is nothing less than a disregard of God himself.

 Pharaoh’s hard heart is clearly demonstrated in the first words he utters: “Who is the Lord? I don’t know the Lord.” Pharaoh is not claiming ignorance of the God of the Hebrews. Rather, he is making it clear that he neither respects this God nor any messages that Moses and Aaron may be bringing him from their God. He is, with disastrous consequences for himself and his nation, positioning himself to do battle with this so-called “God of Israel.” Moses persists, but Pharaoh remains uninterested: “I’m a busy man. You’re wasting my time. Now, get back to work.”

*Those who reject you, Lord, reject us also for we are your ambassadors. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 16 Exodus 5:6-14**

*“Load them down with more work”*

 On the very same day that Moses and Aaron bring God’s message to Pharaoh that he is to let God’s people go, Pharaoh gives a command that counters the divine command. Rather than letting them go, he is going to make them work harder by forcing them to gather their own straw with which to makes bricks without reducing the required quota of bricks. This is no random decree, but one calculated to drive a wedge between Moses and the people.

 The people seem to have found a glimmer of hope in Moses’ promise of deliverance. To discredit the message, Pharaoh demonizes the messenger by calling Moses a liar (verse 9). Moreover, he discredits the people by characterizing their complaint as the result of laziness (verse 8) while, in actuality, they are crying out because of their slavery. Yet it is precisely their cry that their God has heard and that moves him to action. By belittling the Israelites’ pain and suffering, Pharaoh is positioning himself even further into direct conflict with the God who cares about his people.

*The enemies of your people, Lord, are enemies of you. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 17 Exodus 5:15-21**

*“They confronted Moses and Aaron”*

 The Israelite foremen, who are responsible for making sure the daily quota of bricks does not diminish even when straw is not being provided, are beaten by their Egyptian slave drives. They go to Pharaoh, thinking, perhaps, that some mistake has been made. They say, in effect, “Why are you beating us? Your people are the ones who have stopped supplying us with straw.” Pharaoh not only refuses to respond to the logic of their complaint but he mocks them as well, repeating his earlier accusation of laziness.

 Pharaoh has not only made their work harder by providing no straw, but he also rubs salt in their wounds by accusing them of bringing their own problems on themselves. Pharaoh is not a neutral figure, but opposes the Israelites and their God and acts accordingly. For now, Pharaoh’s strategy of disparaging Moses’ reputation among the people is working. The foremen leave Pharaoh’s presence and turn on Moses and Aaron, pronouncing a curse of judgement on them. God’s messenger is perilously close to seeing his entire mission evaporate before his eyes.

*When the world turns against us, Lord, may we not turn against one another. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 15 - 20

*Exodus Chapters Five and Six*

**Thursday, June 18 Exodus 5:22 – 6:12**

*“Now you will see what I will do”*

 Moses is seemingly at the end of his rope. He is exasperated. After the dual defeat of the previous verses (both Pharaoh and the Israelites want nothing to do with him), he returns to the Lord and asks why he has brought this evil on the people. In effect, Moses is calling into question God’s character. God said he was planning to bring the Israelites out of Egypt with Moses as his chosen vessel to bring it about. For now, however, things seem to be skidding out of control, and Moses concludes that God is actually bringing trouble on them.

 God responds: “Now you will see what I will do.” We have already seen what Moses has done. We have also seen what Pharaoh has done. Now it is God’s turn to act. God recalls three prominent elements of their previous conversation: (1) I am Yahweh (see 3:14; (2) I am the God of the patriarchs (see 3:6, 15-17); and, (3) I have heard your complaint (see 3:7). Armed with this reaffirmation of God’s character and his presence with Moses and the Israelites, Moses is sent back to the Israelites and to Pharaoh.

*You are our God, Lord, the One who delivers us from evil. Amen.*

**Friday, June 19 Exodus 6:13-27**

*“These are the ancestors . . .”*

 At this point in the story we are given a genealogy of Moses and Aaron. What is it doing here, especially since it seems to disrupt the flow of the narrative. The genealogy is important for several reasons. First, it establishes the pedigree of Aaron. Immediately before and after the genealogy, Moses makes the point to God that he, Moses, is a “clumsy speaker.” In response, God has appointed Aaron as Moses’ spokesperson, and the genealogy legitimizes Aaron’s leadership role within Israel as a worthy partner of Moses.

 Second, the genealogy connects current events with the past as it extends back to the patriarchal period, highlighting the ancient purposefulness of God and his plan to redeem Israel. It also points to the future, ending with Phineas, the grandson of Aaron, who himself will become a highly regarded figure during the people of God’s move toward and into the Promised Land. Thirdly, the genealogy moves from the sons of Jacob, who form the twelve tribes of Israel, to the one son, Levi, whose ancestors will be appointed by God to serve as Israel’s priests.

*Partnership in ministry, Lord, strengthens and encourages us. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 20 Exodus 6:28 – 7:7**

 *“Pay close attention”*

 God gives Moses a preview of coming attractions. Moses and Aaron are to go to Pharaoh and demand the Israelites’ release, but God will make Pharaoh resistant to complying with this request. Instead, he will use this as an opportunity to show Egypt his might. The focus of Exodus is God! He is now poised to do a great thing for Israel. He promised the patriarchs he would, and he will not allow his honor to be trampled by Pharaoh. Rather, he will overpower this “mighty” nation and its godlike king, and by doing so will leave no doubt that it is he who fights the battle.

 The God of Israel is in control. Despite apparent setbacks, the game plan has not changed. Moses and the Israelites may be panicking, but the outcome is never in doubt. Moses and Aaron should understand the recurring setbacks they experience by Pharaoh’s repeated refusals as being well within the parameters of God’s plan of deliverance. Perhaps the great irony of all this, as we will see later, is that whereas Egypt learns that God is in control, it is Israel, the people whom God came to deliver, who are so slow to understand what God has done.

*You are doing what you promise, Lord, even when we don’t see it. Amen.*