

## El Shaddai

Exodus 5:22 - 6:9

The nation of Israel is at a bad place. They are in Egypt, enslaved as brick-makers. Moses has returned to Egypt, having been called by God to bring the people up out of Egypt, but his first encounter with Pharaoh wasn't so successful.

Ex. 5:1. "Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.' "2 And Pharaoh said, "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."

Even worse, Pharaoh determined to make their work harder, with a selfish and mean-spirited wickedness.

Ex. 5:4 "Then the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get back to your labor." 5 And Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor!" 6 So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying, 7 "You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. 8 And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it. For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' 9 Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words."

The cruelty was unspeakable.

Ex. 5:14. "Also the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today, as before?"

I drew a parallel to that experience with the awareness that we live in a fallen world. And we will be afflicted as well. It is our common experience as Christians.

Phil.1:29 "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."

Even more startling, Paul writes,

Col. 1:24 "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church."

Just think of those words, "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions." Nothing is lacking, of course, with respect to our redemption. Nothing else was needed for you and I to be saved. But what is lacking, what is not yet completed, are those sufferings which we endure in fellowship and union with Christ. We suffer with him; we are united with him in his sufferings. And that suffering will not be completed until Jesus returns in triumph. So you and I live in a fallen world in which our lives are to be characterized by, among other things, suffering.

Now, where we last left the people of Israel is where we often find the people of Israel. And where we often find ourselves, too. Complaining. Grumbling.

Ex. 5:20 "Then, as they came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them. 21 And they said to them, "Let the LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us."

So now what? What comes next? Maybe a lecture about grumbling? Well, we do find those rebukes in Scripture, but not here. Instead, here, God gives an encouraging answer. With

what we might call bravado, the answer is in essence this, “Just you wait to see what I will do to Pharaoh!” Just you wait!

So God responded to the complaints of his people with a declaration of his own power.

## **I. GOD WILL DEMONSTRATE HIS POWER THROUGH PHARAOH.**

v.1

In the big picture, that’s what this book is all about—the whole book. God’s power. And that is immensely practical and personal, isn’t it? We have all sorts of experiences in our lives that prove how little power we actually have as human beings. All sorts of humbling, humiliating sufferings, that leave us exasperated in our distress.

So here is the key point in dealing with that exasperation,

### **A. Our suffering takes place in the context of God’s power.**

Now, some people take a view of God that seeks to absolve him of any connection with our sufferings. And they stress, as do many agnostics and atheists, that they will not and can not worship a god who would allow such suffering. So they stake out their intellectual commitments as an atheist would. But you are still left with the problems! No god in the picture, but plenty of suffering. In other words, they have no answers.

Others, often well-intentioned Christians, think that God works all the good things in our lives but is not part of any of the hard things. But that causes all sorts of problems, doesn’t it? How can you worship a god who says he loves you but can’t do anything to help you when you are in trouble? Not much of a god there, is it?

So what should we say about God and our suffering. To answer that question with this illustration from the life of the nation of Israel, “Just you wait to see what I will do to Pharaoh.” I will show my power. And, in fact, I raised him up for that very purpose! That’s what God says.

Rom. 9:17 “For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” Therefore, he has mercy on whom he wills, and whom he will he hardens.”

And what is the broader picture, the broader purpose? What is God doing?

Rom. 9:22 “What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory?”

What if? In other words, “He has!” God used Pharaoh so that God could display his own power. And he does it to make the riches of his glory known in the redemption and salvation of his covenant people. That is the comprehensive summary of the whole book of Exodus. God is making his power known in such a way as to reveal his plan and purpose of salvation for those whom he loves.

And I suggest to you that that is of utmost practical benefit. No matter what you might be enduring in this life, God will display his power in such a way as to exalt his glory and accomplish his purpose. “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.”

That is the solution to our complaints and our grumbling.

“Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.”

### **B. The context of God’s power answers our complaints.**

Moses articulates the complaint very clearly.

5:22-23

“Why, God?” That’s not always a healthy question to ask, but here it is here. And God answers it. “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.” Moses, of course, was in a tight spot with the people, and they didn’t accept the answer God gave them through Moses at first.

v.9

It was just too much for them, and we shall soon see more of God’s power in the form of the ten plagues, but for now, let’s make God’s answer sufficient. Let’s make it sufficient for your life. It is sufficient that God is powerful, and that he will accomplish all his holy will in all the circumstances of your life. That is your strength, and it is sufficient for whatever weakness you might experience.

So let’s look more deeply into God’s answer, because there is more than just power. There is so much more than mere bravado. God’s answer is so much more personal and so much more intimate. We come back to that wonderful, marvelous name which God uses for himself, the word often translated into English as LORD, with capital letters. It is the Hebrew name Yahweh, or sometimes, Jehovah. And as we saw in chapter 3, this is God’s covenant name. It is the name that represents his covenant faithfulness to redeem his people and rescue them from the land of slavery. It is the name very simply, “I am.” So it is that,

## **II. GOD WILL DEMONSTRATE HIS COVENANT COVENANT FAITHFULNESS THROUGH PHARAOH.**

Remember,

Ex. 3:13 “Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14 And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.’” 15 Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’”

So today we read,

v.2-3

The first name, God Almighty, is a description and definition of power. The Hebrew is “El Shaddai.” El being the word for God and shaddai meaning to conquer, to assault or destroy in a military context. The God of power, the conquering God. God the Great. God Almighty. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew that name. But now, a new name. Yahweh. “I am.” “I am who I am.” It is the name of,

### **A. God’s eternal and self-existent glory.**

And just to emphasize the importance of this name, let me remind you how thoroughly Jesus embodies this name in himself. “I am the bread of life.” “I am the light of the world.” “I am the door.” “I am the good shepherd.” “I am the resurrection.” “I am the way, the truth and the life.” “I am the true vine.” And in John 8, we read very simply,

John 8:56 “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

The eternal, self-existent glory of God. Unlike you, and unlike me. That is the God who would redeem his people. That is the God who saves his people. That is the God who shows himself through these encounters with Pharaoh. That is the God who became flesh and dwelt among us as a man. That is the God who alone is sufficient to give you life and to sustain your life, here in this world and in the world to come.

This name is the one which has direct reference to God's covenant faithfulness as well, the name by which he will be remembered throughout all generations. This is the name that has immediate reference to the promises God has made in the covenant, especially the promise of land. And so we read,

v.4

v.8

Notice again how the promised land is connected to God's name, Yahweh. As we study through this book, and as you read the whole of the Old Testament, the land becomes the focal point of all of God's covenant promises. The land comes to represent our eternal inheritance. It is a familiar image that runs through the whole Bible, God's covenant promise.

### **B. The blessing of land.**

1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

And so the land, the promised land of Canaan, will represent the land of heaven. The land of the new heavens and the new earth. The land of our eternal glory, the city of God, the new Jerusalem. That's the blessing God has promised. That's the

inheritance we will receive in eternity. And God is promising all of that way back in Exodus 6.

Ultimately, this promise of the Old Covenant would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and we who believe in him and trust in him are the recipients of the promise. Now remember the context from last time. The people of God are grumbling in the midst of all the troubles and afflictions of this world. And God says, "I will give you the blessing of the land I promised."

v.4

So it is that God promises that eternal blessing to his people today as well. To you and to me, who believe in Jesus. And despite all the evidences of our mortality, that inheritance is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." So the apostle Paul is able to say,

Rom. 8:18 "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

That's the focus you need when you are tempted to complain. That's the focus you need when you feel like grumbling under the affliction of this evil age. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

So take heart, and be of good courage. God is faithful.

One more thing. One more thing that God has to demonstrate through Pharaoh. His power, yes. His covenant faithful, yes. But all of that in the most broad context of redemption. All of this is about the redemption of God's people. All of this is about God's plan of salvation, what he will do to establish a people for his own special treasure.

### **III. GOD WILL DEMONSTRATE HIS PLAN OF REDEMPTION THROUGH PHARAOH.**

Thus, v.6

That's the answer to their complaint. That's always God's answer. I will bring you out from the land of slavery. I will redeem you. I will save you. And as well come to in just a moment, "I will be your God and you will be my people." And God arranges all of this to demonstrate his work do accomplish just that.

Let's begin with his motive. It is a glorious place to begin. Why does God do this? Why does God redeem his people? What is the motive? That's easy to answer.

v.5

"I have heard the groaning..." That's the impulse.

#### **A. The motive of compassion.**

God redeems his people because he was moved by their suffering.

Ex. 2:23 "During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob."

There it is again. God heard their groaning. And my goal here is to help you realize how deeply God has loved you in Christ. This is not a dry doctrinal exposition, but a revelation of God's love. And this understanding of God should drive you to worship him more fervently, more passionately, more exuberantly. God has heard your groaning, and promises an eternal glory that far outweighs any and all of your present sufferings. Simply put, "I have remembered my covenant."

And so we come to that great word in verse 6, redemption.

v.6

#### **B. The meaning of redemption.**

This is a picture of our salvation. A type of the work of redemption which Jesus accomplished. God's great work of salvation is played out in the figures and types of the Old Testament, in the life of the nation of Israel as the people of God. And what did God do? What is redemption?

Well, that easy. God rescued his people out of Egypt. More explicitly,

v.6

"I will bring you out from under the burdens..." I will deliver you from slavery..." "I will redeem you." I will rescue you from bondage. That's salvation.

To put that same idea in the language of spiritual reality, in the language of New Testament, we read,

Col. 1:3 "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

That's redemption. By faith in Jesus Christ, we are transferred from one kingdom to another. We are rescued from the bondage of sin and Satan. We are freed from the curse of the law. We are redeemed by the blood of the lamb. So that we can obtain a new and glorious identity as God's people.

v.7

#### **C. The identity of God's people.**

God makes us to be his people. He takes us to be his people. And he declares himself to be our God.

Now, why is that important? What are the practical applications? First, your mind. Understanding. Understanding your future, so that you can deal with your present. Understanding your future glory, pictured by that land of Canaan, so that you can endure making bricks without straw.

Then, understanding the nature of your salvation. Understanding what God has done for you in Christ. Understanding the nature of the forgiveness of your sins. Understanding the freedom from bondage to sin that is yours in Christ.

Then, understanding your identity. “I will be your God. You will be my people.” That gives you an identity outside yourself. Something greater than yourself to live for. Frees you from the slavery of selfishness.

Then, understanding all of that so that you can worship him appropriately. That’s the greatest goal, and I want you to sense that. That you live your life not grumbling with the people of Israel, but singing God’s praise for this great redemption he has promised. Blessed be the God, the LORD. Blessed be Jesus, the one who claims that name for himself, “I am.”

Blessed be the God who says to you, in Christ, “You will be my people, and I will be your God.” That’s the nature of our worship. We come to sing his praise, as he demonstrates to us his power, his covenant faithfulness, and his own plan for our redemption. People of God, delight yourself in the God who has redeemed you by the precious blood of the lamb.