

## **EXODUS 5:10-23 (GATHERING STUBBLE TO MAKE BRICK)**

Introduction: You've heard the sermon verses read out loud. Now ask yourself, "Is Israel yet ready to be delivered from bondage?" Why did God include these verses in this passage? Yes, it tells us what happened, but in relation to many other things which surely happened during the same time-frame, they're probably less important.

Certain people have been mentioned in these verses and yet they will never be mentioned again in the Bible. Certain words have been used - work, stubble, brick, and so on. Sometimes, different Hebrew words are described the same way in English.

We miss a lot in translations, not because translators do a crummy job, but because they aren't thinking about pictures of other things. They are thinking about the meaning of individual words. If I translate "job," "work," "chore," and "task" into Japanese, I might use the same Japanese word simply because it's how I want to convey what I am saying.

However, my wife, who spent many years translating both Japanese into English, and English into Japanese, for various governments, might choose to be more specific, or maybe not. Translators do what they can to provide the best meaning of something as they perceive it.

In the case of Bible passages, there are often multiple words which are translated into one English word. Further, there are many individual words which are translated in many different ways based on the context. But even context can be subjective.

Because of this, there are a multitude of possible interpretations of individual passages and so, as the King James Version translators noted in their own preface, a "variety of Translations is profitable for the finding out of the sense of the Scriptures."

In other words, study every translation you can, study the originals if possible, and then study some more. Find yourself approved by searching out what God intends for you to see in His word. One way you can do that is to read acceptable commentaries.

Another is to attend in-depth Bible studies. And a third way is to attend the Superior word and listen to sermons which probe the depths of whatever passage is being looked at. And then after doing this, check what you have been taught. Charlie Garrett may be completely wrong in his analysis.

Text Verse: Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O Lord,  
And teach out of Your law. Psalm 94:12

As we started a moment ago, I asked, "Is Israel yet ready to be delivered from bondage?" The answer is, "No, not yet." The Lord is waiting to deliver Israel, watching as they continue to work making brick. And what is even more important is that they are working to make brick with stubble.

What is this picturing? Why did God include this in his word? Sit back and pay attention... If you doze off, please no snoring! And we will continue to see Israel being prepared for deliverance from Egypt. In the future, Israel will be building a temple once again. At that time, they will be striving to please God by following the law.

Are these two accounts connected? If so, how? The answer is to be found in God's superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Insufficient Deeds (verses 10-14)**

**10 And the taskmasters of the people and their officers went out and spoke to the people, saying, "Thus says Pharaoh: 'I will not give you straw.**

The word went out from Pharaoh and those who received it have now, in turn, passed that word on to the laborers. What was said has been amended a bit though. In verse 7, Pharaoh said, "You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves."

However, the taskmasters and officers equate the orders of Pharaoh to them as a direct statement to the people, "I will not give you straw." In this is a contrast to how Pharaoh handled the words of Moses and Aaron, from our last sermon. He said they spoke false words when they quoted the word of the Lord.

And so a distinction is made between how the words of the Lord, and the words of Pharaoh, are treated in this chapter. This is especially notable because the officers mentioned in this verse are Hebrews, not Egyptians. They have seen the Lord's word called false and yet they ascribe weight and importance to the words of Pharaoh which were spoken to them.

**11 Go, get yourselves straw where you can find it; yet none of your work will be reduced.'"**

The speakers continue to amend the words of Pharaoh, ascribing the words spoken to them as having been spoken directly to the people. This might seem unimportant, but it's not. I take care of a mall on Siesta Key. A homeless guy sleeps behind the mall from time to time.

He doesn't do anything wrong. and he keeps an eye on things, so I don't bother him. However, if one of the owners said to me, "You aren't allowed to let that guy sleep back there anymore," would it have more weight for me to say to him, "The owners said you can't sleep here anymore," or "I can't let you sleep here anymore."

Obviously the first carries the most weight. If Pharaoh has spoken directly to the people, then unless they want even more trouble, they will comply with the words of Pharaoh. Further, what will come about in the chapters ahead will have much more significance for them.

In essence, the words of Pharaoh to the Hebrew people will be pitted against the words of the Lord, which the Hebrew people have already been made aware of. In the short term, the situation will be trying, the people will question the ability of Yehovah to accomplish what He has spoken, and the people will suffer more.

However, in the long run, the people will see the contrast between the two more clearly. This same truth will be seen in the end times when the word of the Lord, the Holy Bible, will be pitted against the threats of the antichrist. The people will be able to look back on its record, match that up what their own eyes and experiences behold, and they will understand that the Lord is true to His word.

**12 So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.**

The Hebrew here says l'qoshesh qash la'taben - literally, "to gather stubble for the straw." The word for "straw" is teben. It is something useful and which generally has purpose, even for feeding animals.

Qash on the other hand is something left behind, like stubble or chaff. As the reapers in the fields cut the grain, they would leave behind any stalks. In the place where grain was threshed and winnowed, they would leave piles of the chaff that was separated from the grain. The chaff, or qash, had no value at all.

The Hebrews went anywhere to look for anything left over that they could use for binding of the mud in the brick-making process. Without straw being provided, they were left to use whatever came their way, even what was considered worthless to the field workers. This shows desperation and a tiresome search as the words "throughout all the land of Egypt" imply.

Not only did they have to make bricks, but they had to spend time traveling on foot looking for the stubble. They would have to bring it back and chop it to the right size for brick-making. Then they would have to make the bricks at the full measure they previously made. The next day, they would get up and start again.

**13 And the taskmasters forced them to hurry, saying, "Fulfill your work, your daily quota, as when there was straw."**

There has been a standard demanded in the past and it is expected to continue regardless of the situation. The term "daily quota" comes from the Hebrew term yom b'yommow - daily by day. It's an idiom implying a set portion for the given day, thus a quota.

They are being asked to fulfill this quota, just as when there was straw, but there is none. Instead, there is only qash - stubble. This word, qash, is used 16 times in the Bible and it is always used to indicate something worthless. It may be a person, or a thing, but it is as chaff which is swept away in the wind. An example of this is found in Isaiah 33 -

“Now I will rise,” says the Lord;  
“Now I will be exalted,  
Now I will lift Myself up.  
11 You shall conceive chaff,  
You shall bring forth stubble;  
Your breath, as fire, shall devour you. Isaiah 33:10, 11

The taskmasters are known as nogeshim. They would tirelessly drive the Hebrews on a good day, and so how much more when things weren't going well. As we will see, they were brutal in their attitude and actions, demanding what was expected at any cost.

The word for "work" here is maaseh. It implies either a deed done or a thing made. It is a word used to describe the work of man as well as the accomplishments of God. In this verse here, it is speaking of human effort for its accomplishment.

And so a contrast can be seen between the efforts of man in order to please Pharaoh which is insufficient, and the work of God which will destroy Pharaoh. The people have placed their works above reliance on Yehovah and they are suffering because of it. However, they will also see the Lord prevail with their own eyes.

If you can see what is being relayed, the Hebrews have been under the authority of Pharaoh, who pictures the end-times anti-Christ. He has been a harsh taskmaster. They have now been told that they would be delivered by the Lord and at first they believed.

However, their burdens have only increased. And their burdens have increased with qash, stubble. What they are working with is useless and incapable of delivering them.

The picture is that of the people of Israel. They have been in exile and under the authority and influence of Satan. They have worked and accomplished deeds in their religious life. Deeds are always insufficient to save, but deeds are what Judaism is all about.

Now, in the end times, the Lord has called them back to the land and is preparing to deliver them from the authority and bondage of the devil. But until they trust the Lord completely, they will only suffer more.

The temple will be rebuilt, sacrifices will be made, the law will be reinstated - Daniel 9 shows us this specifically. Their deeds will increase as they conduct sacrifices and offerings in the rebuilt temple which is coming. But this will be ineffective to save them. They will be qash, stubble. We're given these stories to show us what has occurred, but what is yet to come as well.

The Lord desires faith from His people concerning His provision. He desires trust that He is capable of saving. But until He receives it, the people will suffer more. And yet, His glory will be multiplied when their deliverance comes.

**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?"**

These officers are Hebrews, not Egyptians. They are those who were responsible for counting the daily tally of bricks and making the reports on labor practices. They are placed between the harsh taskmasters and their own people.

Now they are facing the consequences of that position. The Egyptians are accusing them of not being responsible over the laborers, thus they are blaming them directly for missing the quota. The Hebrew here is much more expressive than our translations. It actually says, "yesterday, third, both yesterday and today."

It's a way of saying, "In the past you did this, but now it's not happening." The officers are being accused of increasing negligence which then results in their being beaten. The scholars Jamieson-Faucett-Brown note in their commentary that -

"The mode of beating was by the offender being laid flat on the ground and generally held by the hands and feet while the chastisement was administered" [Wilkinson]. (De 25:2). A picture representing the Hebrews on a brick field, exactly as described in this chapter, was found in an Egyptian tomb at Thebes."

The beatings would have been unpleasant in the extreme and a source of even greater consternation for the laborers because the officers wouldn't want to face this a second time. Thus the burdens on the people would only increase yet again.

This type of treatment by Hebrews against their own people isn't unique. Something similar is found in the book of Nehemiah when the wealthier people exacted usury against the poorer Hebrew people. This is found in Nehemiah 5 -

"And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. 2 For there were those who said, 'We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live.'

3 There were also some who said, 'We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine.'

4 There were also those who said, 'We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. 5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards.'" Nehemiah 5:1-5

What we are evaluating here is the process of making brick. It's the same word, *lavan*, used in the construction of the Tower of Babel. In all, as a verb, it is used eight times in Scripture to indicate one of two things - making brick, or purification of people.

The three times it is used for brick are in the Tower of Babel account and this account. The other five times are concerning purifying from sin and uncleanness - several times it is referring to the end times, something this account is picturing.

Here in Exodus, they are using stubble to make brick and it isn't working. It is a picture of works-based salvation which can never purify a person. They have not yet learned to trust the Lord. Remember, the rapture of the church has already been pictured back in Chapter 3. This then is pointing to Israel and the end times.

The officers are picturing the spiritual leaders of Israel who are under the authority of the antichrist, pictured by Pharaoh. This will become more evident in the verses ahead.

What works can I do to build a tower to heaven?

With what effort can I reach from here to God?

My life is already tainted, like bread filled with leaven

And in my walk, it is an unholy path which I trod

Purge me from on high and I will be pure

Wash me with the blood of my Lord Jesus

Then I know that my eternal fate is sure

He has done such marvelous things for us

No longer will I work to earn my way to heaven

Through Christ I am purified, bread purged of its leaven

## **II. Servants of Whom? (verses 15-19)**

**15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Why are you dealing thus with your servants?"**

Even though these officers are Hebrews, they had access to Pharaoh. This may sound less than believable, but according to the writings of Herodotus, "Egyptian monarchs were accessible to all. It was a part of their duty to hear complaints

personally; and they, for the most part, devoted to this employment the earlier hours of each day." (Ellicott)

With this type of freedom to petition Pharaoh himself, they do just that, questioning why such strict and firm standards have been levied upon them. The people have been given an impossible set of demands, the taskmasters have been given the authority to enforce the standards, and the Hebrew officers are stuck between the two, beaten for something they didn't initiate and have no control over.

In their words, they identify themselves as servants of Pharaoh. Because of this, they want to know why he would treat them in this way. Their words imply that they have been obedient to their master and yet have been treated unfairly by him.

This then is a picture of those Jewish leaders who have made an alliance with the antichrist. They will think that they will be safe from the troubles of the common people, but they will find out it isn't so. All of this is picturing what is coming upon the people of Israel, just as Jesus warned in the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24.

**16 There is no straw given to your servants, and they say to us, 'Make brick!' And indeed your servants are beaten, but the fault is in your own people."**

The words of this verse are obvious, and commentary is seemingly unnecessary, but there are actually three ways of looking at it. The word "own" as in "your own people" isn't in the original. The Hebrew says, v'khatat ammekha - "and fault your people."

In this wording, it can mean that the officers are saying that the fault is in the Hebrews who aren't doing their job, so why are they being beaten? They have

identified themselves as servants of Pharaoh, and so they are being beaten even though they are faithful to him, and so they feel what has happened isn't their fault.

The second option is that they are speaking of the taskmasters who are between them and Pharaoh and who have been beating them. There is no straw and yet the same quotas are demanded. Because this is impossible, their beatings are unjustified and the fault is in the taskmasters for beating Pharaoh's own servants.

The third option is that the Hebrew has an error in it. The scholars at Cambridge say, "The text cannot be right: not only is the Heb. ungrammatical, but the fault was not in the people, but in the king."

And so they note that by adding a single letter into the Hebrew, the text will read as several other manuscripts, like the Greek Old Testament, which basically says that Pharaoh is committing a wrong against his own subjects.

I believe it is the first option and that it speaks of the Israelites. These scribes have identified themselves as servants of Pharaoh, and therefore they have placed themselves in contrast to the Hebrews under them. If they said the fault was in the taskmasters, it would imply that the fault was in Pharaoh because he gave the orders. It's unlikely that they would chance this.

The unusual wording is probably why the Greek translation was changed. They may have seen the difficulty and not wanted to leave open the option that the Hebrew people were somehow at fault. But I think that is what is being said. They are blaming their own Hebrew people in order to avoid punishment.

It is convenient to say the Hebrew is wrong, but it is also unnecessary. What we are seeing is a picture of something else. Leaving the Hebrew alone does allow for

clarity. The word for "brick" in this verse is the noun form of what was used above. It is levanah. This word is used just 11 times in the Bible.

Again, it is used in the erection of the Tower of Babel and in the Exodus story. The other times it is used, it is always in a negative connotation which is dealing with the sinful workings of the people. In one, it is specifically speaking of the buildings which had fallen during the Lord's judgment. That is in Isaiah 9 -

"The bricks have fallen down,  
But we will rebuild with hewn stones;  
The sycamores are cut down,  
But we will replace them with cedars.'  
11 Therefore the Lord shall set up  
The adversaries of Rezin against him,  
And spur his enemies on,  
12 The Syrians before and the Philistines behind;  
And they shall devour Israel with an open mouth." Isaiah 9:10-12

Everything about these unique words shows us a contrast between faith in the Lord, which brings in a right relationship with Him, and man's ineffective works which put up a barrier between man and Him. These Hebrew leaders are following the sinful path in Exodus and they picture the sinful leaders of Israel in the future.

**17 But he said, "You are idle! Idle! Therefore you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.'**

Repeating and even doubling his comment from verse 8 about the Hebrews, Pharaoh proclaims that they are idle and therefore they desire to go and sacrifice

to Yehovah. It is known that idleness was considered one of the worst sins in Egyptian society.

So much so that they would actually post epitaphs on tombstones which disclaimed any idleness in their lives because it was believed by them that idleness was a reason for condemnation at the final judgment.

For Pharaoh to use this term in the superlative way that he has by repeating it twice, shows his utter disdain for both the Hebrews and the God whom they desire to serve. He is literally taunting them from his throne, challenging them to do anything about the decision he has rendered.

What he is doing is equating their religious desire with idleness rather than as complimentary to it. But people who are diligent in proper religion are more often than not diligent in work too. This is particularly true with the worship of the true God who fashioned man to be diligent in all of his affairs.

Because of their familiarity with the notion of idleness being a damnable sin, he was challenging them even further, both in their eyes and in the eyes of the Egyptian people in general. He has truly proven himself to be a ruthless tyrant to the people of God.

**18 Therefore go now and work; for no straw shall be given you, yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks.”**

Curiously, this a different word for "work" than the previous one of verse 13. There it was maaseh, here it is abad. It is the same word that the officers used concerning themselves when they said they were his servants. It is also the same word that Moses was told to speak to Pharaoh in Exodus 4:23 -

"So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me."

He is telling them to work in his service rather than work for, or serve, the Lord. Again, he is exalting himself above the Lord in his words to these officers.

**19 And the officers of the children of Israel saw that they were in trouble after it was said, "You shall not reduce any bricks from your daily quota."**

This is the fifth and last time that the term "officers" will be applied to these men who have been working for Pharaoh. They now perceive that there is no substantial difference between them and the other Hebrews in his eyes.

They also perceive that they are in trouble because of their standing. For any infractions, they will be held accountable. Their status and positions reckon them as Hebrew first and officers of Pharaoh secondly. Because of this, they will elevate their frustrations in a new direction.

Lord, give us leaders who will be faithful to You

Keep us from one who would sell his own soul

We wish to follow You in all that we do

Keep us from those who are under the devil's control

May our lives be dedicated to You, pure and undefiled

Let our works be of faith, pleasing and right

In the past You have upon us smiled

Let that be so now and forever, acceptable in Your sight

Hear and be attentive to our prayers to You

Be pleased with our lives, O God, in all that we do

### **III. The Time of Jacob's Trouble (verses 20-23)**

**20 Then, as they came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them.**

It is not a chance meeting, but one planned by Moses and Aaron. They had already been told that Israel would not be allowed to go out to conduct a sacrifice to the Lord. They had also surely seen what additional conditions had been levied on the people, and they would have known of the treatment of the officers.

If their hopes were that the officers would have met with more success than they had, their hopes were in vain. Deliverance may come, but it won't come from those who claimed to be servants of Pharaoh. And in fact, those supposed servants had only been rebuked in the process of petitioning.

**21 And they said to them, "Let the Lord look on you and judge,**

The irony of the words of these men is palpable. To say Yehovah alekhem v'yishpot - "Yehovah look on you and judge" means that they are calling on Yehovah. And yet, it is Moses who had come from the Lord, declared to them the name of Yehovah, and had given proof of his commission by Him.

The very fact that they complain to Moses while complaining about the matter which was initiated by Yehovah implies that they have absolutely no confidence in

the Lord. They are the words of those who pay lip-service to Him while ignoring the very words of the Lord they pay lip-service to.

It is no different than people who very rarely or never step into a church in their life and yet they love to quote "Jesus says to not judge" whenever a Christian says something that offends their sensibilities. They heap insults upon God's people while all the time their actions show that they are servants of the devil.

All we need to do is look around the world at any time in history and the land is filled with such troublemakers. They were there for Moses to contend with, they are there today, and they will be there in the end times challenging the two witnesses who stand and accuse the world, prophesying the word of the Lord to closed minds and hard hearts.

**21 (con't) because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants,**

The Hebrew here says, "you have made our smell to stink in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants." We use similar terms in English, but the Hebrew has more force than most of our idioms. There is an incongruity between "smell" and "eyes" which gives the notion of the entire face welling up in disgust.

It is as if the smell is so bad that the eyes start to run from it. And the smell they mention will permeate the entire house of Pharaoh because they include the term "in the eyes of his servants." Suddenly, they are speaking of the servants of Pharaoh as if they are not included in that distinction, even though they had just moments before made the claim that they were.

The Hebrew people, including those Hebrews who had previously been distanced from them by an arm's length, are all lumped together into one basket. It is a

pattern which has repeated time and again throughout history and will occur again in the end times.

**21 (con't) to put a sword in their hand to kill us.”**

The meaning is obvious. They are accusing Moses of bringing them to the point of destruction because he has meddled in their affairs. They were safe and secure and suddenly they are facing the same calamity that all of their people had previously faced.

Because they are Hebrews, they are identified with the Hebrews. They cannot change who they are anymore than a leopard can change his spots. Esther was informed of exactly this when Mordecai spoke to her about their impending doom -

“Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther 4:13, 14

And so, in realizing their plight, they heap reproaches upon the Lord's designee over them. Jesus faced this as well and they nailed him to a cross. In fact, in Acts 7 Stephen spoke to the leaders of Israel about numerous such instances in their history, constantly following the same disobedient pattern.

Moses received no gratitude at this time, but as Jamieson-Faucett-Brown notes -

"...as the greatest darkness is immediately before the dawn, so the people of God are often plunged into the deepest affliction when on the eve of their deliverance; and so it was in this case." Jamieson-Faucett-Brown

## **22 So Moses returned to the Lord**

It is unknown just what these words mean. There is no explanation of them and there is no hint to offer expanded guesswork. And so all we can do is speculate. Later we find out that the Lord spoke to him in Egypt. Did he have a spot picked out to meet the Lord, or did he simply prostrate himself because of his troubled heart?

Whatever the case is, the old adage "A praying heart never lacks a praying place" rings true. The Lord is there for His people and their petitions do not go unheard. And so Moses returned to the Lord.

**22 (con't) and said, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me?"**

Some scholars find these words impetuous, others might say he is lacking faith or irreverent. Augustine took a different stand and said that, "These are not words of contumacy or indignation, but of inquiry and prayer."

But there is more than this. There is a heartfelt desire being spoken of by Moses here to know the depths of the wisdom of God concerning a matter which involves a seeming hand of discipline when it appears it should be a hand of comfort.

This type of comment to the Lord is not at all uncommon in the Bible. It's found in the books of the law, the books wisdom, the prophets, and even in the New Testament. In Psalm 74 and from the hand of Asaph we read this -

"O God, why have You cast us off forever?  
Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?  
2 Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old,  
The tribe of Your inheritance, which You have redeemed—" Psalm 74:1

Rather than simply saying that the Lord has brought trouble on the people, in a more literal sense, Moses' question to the Lord asks why He has afflicted the people with evil?

He has already been told twice that he should expect Pharaoh to not respond favorably towards his petitions, but what he didn't expect was that there would be evil consequences towards Israel in the process.

Just like the psalmist, he wanted to understand the process and not just the outcome. But this tells us that there is more involved than just the story of Moses delivering Israel from Egypt. If it were only that, the Lord would have surely told him that things would get worse for the people before they got better.

Or, he would have surely kept harm from coming upon the Israelites while He accomplished His work. But neither of those things have occurred. Because of this, we can know that what is recorded here is an appeal for faith for all times, as well as being a picture of the end times.

Job understood this as he pronounced his great affirmation that God is sovereign and that he would serve him through both blessing and adversity. And the Bible is asking us to follow the same path. If the world spirals out of control before the rapture of the church, we are to hold fast to the sure promises of God despite the troubles.

And Israel will be asked to do the same through the tribulation as well. We're asked to have faith and to be faithful, even when we don't understand the troubles which seem to come from the hand of the Lord Himself.

**\*23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all.\***

Moses expected deliverance, but he didn't expect Pharaoh's evil treatment of the people in the process. And these words clarify what he said in the previous verse when he asked, "why have You brought trouble on this people?"

The evil was actively brought on by Pharaoh, but was passively allowed by the Lord. The Lord is never the cause of evil, and if He does cause something which we perceive as evil, then we have misperceived what has happened. Moses understood this and so his questions are probing and specific.

In Hebrew his words are v'hatzel lo hitzalta - "and delivering no delivered." The words indicate that what was started is left uncompleted despite the evil which Pharaoh has brought upon Israel. Rather than an abundance of accusations and a snippy attitude, his words are frank and filled with perplexed curiosity.

And this is the way we should conduct ourselves as we speak to the Lord about those things which trouble us. We can't hide the obvious and so there is no point in ignoring it. And yet, we lack the full picture and so there is no point in being

wordy or demanding. In what is a good parallel thought to complement how Moses has addressed the issues on his heart to the Lord, we can look to words from Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes -

"Do not be rash with your mouth,  
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.  
For God is in heaven, and you on earth;  
Therefore let your words be few." Ecclesiastes 5:2

The verses today are filled with hints of other things, they picture what is coming in the future, and they show us once again that God is not pleased with human effort in an attempt to be reconciled to Him. The religious leaders of Israel will find this out someday.

If the Lord told Moses in advance what was coming, or if these things didn't happen, then the specific words which have been used wouldn't have been included in the account. Work, stubble, officer, brick, and so on, have all been used in specific ways to show us not just a story of the past, but a story of what is coming in the future.

Moses didn't understand because his life and circumstances were being used to show us that future. And these things are starting to come to pass in our own lives! Israel must learn that instead of working deeds of the law, that it is faith in the Lord that brings harmony and reconciliation between God and man.

Anything else, no matter how seemingly good to human eyes, is mere stubble. No matter how much stubble we find, it will never be sufficient to make enough bricks to get to heaven.

Let us turn away from pleasing the devil in our attempts to please God. Instead, let us please God through the work of His Son which was given for that purpose. If

you've never understood why you need Jesus and you'd like to call out to Him to save you today, give me another moment to explain how you can do just that...

Closing Verse: "...to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

7 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,  
And whose sins are covered;

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.'" Romans 4:5-8

Next Week: Exodus 6:1-13 (I Will Rescue and Redeem) (16th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Gathering Stubble to Make Brick

And the taskmasters of the people and their officers

Went out and spoke to the people they saw

Saying, "Thus says Pharaoh:

'I will not give you straw

Go, get yourselves straw where you can find it

Yet none of your work will be reduced, not a little bit

So the people were scattered abroad

Throughout all of Egypt the land

To gather stubble instead of straw  
With whatever they could fill their hand  
And the taskmasters forced them to hurry  
Saying, "Fulfill your work, your daily quota  
As when there was straw the full tally  
And make sure it's not less, even one iota

Also the officers of the children of Israel  
Whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had over them set  
Were beaten and were asked to tell  
Why at the end of the day things weren't accomplished yet  
"Why have you not fulfilled your task  
In making brick both yesterday and today, as before?"  
This is the question that we ask  
Why can't you even up the daily score

Then the officers of the children  
Of Israel came and cried out in a fuss  
To Pharaoh, saying to him then  
"Why are you dealing with your servants thus?  
There is no straw given to your servants  
And to us, 'Make brick!' they say  
And indeed your servants are beaten  
But the fault is in your own people, this we convey

But he said, "You are idle! Idle! This his word  
Therefore to me you say  
'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord  
So that from your work you can get away  
Therefore go now and work  
For no straw shall be given you  
Yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks  
This is what I order and what you shall do

And the officers of the children of Israel  
Saw that they were in trouble, more than an iota  
After it was said to them what Pharaoh did tell  
"You shall not reduce any bricks from your daily quota  
Then, as they came out from Pharaoh  
They met Moses and Aaron in the way  
Who stood there to meet them  
To see what occurred with them that day  
And they said to them without just warrant  
"Let the Lord look on you and judge  
Because you have made us abhorrent  
In the sight of Pharaoh, to us he bears a grudge  
And in the sight of his servants, it's a bitter pill  
To put a sword in their hand in order us to kill  
So Moses returned to the Lord

And said in a manner speaking frankly  
“Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people?  
Why is it You have sent me?  
For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name  
He has evil to this people done  
Neither have You delivered Your people at all  
They are still dwelling here under Egypt's sun  
God is patiently waiting to deliver Israel  
He has a plan and it will come about as it should  
This is a truth which the Bible does tell  
In the end, all that the Lord does is good

God allows us to make brick if we choose  
And even brick with crummy stubble  
And he lets us direct the path of our own shoes  
Even if it gets us in a bit of trouble  
But the good news is Christ, whom He has sent  
In Him there is freedom from all trials  
And with Him our eternity will be spent  
When we call out to Him our future is guaranteed smiles  
Praise You O God for our precious Lord Jesus  
Who has certainly done all things wondrously for us

Hallelujah and Amen...