

“When Things Don’t Work Out”  
Exodus 5:15-23  
(Preached at Trinity, November 5, 2006)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As this chapter opens we finally come to the anticipated moment as Moses and Aaron come into the presence of Pharaoh. Without hesitation they deliver the message of God: **Exodus 5:1** – “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.”
2. Pharaoh’s answer to God’s reveals his heart: **Exodus 5:2** – “Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey his voice” Pharaoh has no intention of obeying God.  
“I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.”
3. Not only does he not let Israel go, he greatly increases their burden. **Exodus 5:7-9** – “Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. <sup>8</sup> And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish *ought* thereof: for they *be* idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go *and* sacrifice to our God. Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words.”
4. Soon the Hebrew officers in charge of overseeing the work were being beaten because it was impossible to maintain the same level of production.
5. You can imagine the feeling of the slaves. Moses and Aaron had come to them declaring the good news of their deliverance. **Exodus 4:31** – “And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.”
6. There must have been a feeling of excitement and expectation. Freedom was at hand. Not only did freedom not come, their condition went from bad to worse. They came to Moses and Aaron and in great accusatory tone they exclaimed, “May God judge you for what you have done!” **Exodus 5:21** – “And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.”
7. Moses and Aaron then came before God – “Why did you even send us. Since we came to Pharaoh it has gone from bad to worse. We’ve done exactly as you commanded and nothing good has come from it.” **Exodus 5:22-23** – “And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why *is* it *that* thou hast sent me? <sup>23</sup> For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.”

8. Moses had done precisely what God had told him to do. He might have been hesitant at the beginning, but now he whole heartedly throws himself into his task. He boldly stands before Pharaoh and delivers the message God had told him to bring. He fulfilled all of his duty, and it seemed like it was all for nothing.  
“Why is it that thou hast sent me?”
9. We’ve all experienced times when we stand firm in our commitment to obedience and service to God and it doesn’t work out the way we expected. Sometimes doing the right thing actually seems to make things worse.
- A man exposes corruption in his company and is labeled as a troublemaker and passed over for a promotion.
  - A lady refuses to work on Sundays and is soon laid off.
  - A pastor refuses to compromise doctrinal truth and members begin to leave.
  - A high school student commits to remaining a virgin and is ridiculed by her classmates.
10. Of all the adversity we face in this life, these are the most difficult to receive. Like Moses, we may be tempted to question God. “I have been faithful to your commands and have stood firm upon the truth of your Word. Why have you not blessed me for my faithfulness?”
- I. God Works in His Time according to His purposes
- A. God is omniscient
1. God is outside of time as He orders every event in time
  2. God ordained every event before He created the world
  3. Everything is happening right on schedule
- B. Moses didn’t understand God’s timetable  
**Exodus 5:23** – “For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.”
1. God *was* delivering His people – He *was* doing what He said He would do. But God was doing it according to His purposes – God was on time with His program.
  2. Moses needed to learn to wait upon God.
- C. This is true in all of life
1. Every farmer knows he has to wait upon God’s ordained timetable. A crop rushed and planted too early may be lost to a late frost.
  2. Every surgeon knows that his patient will need time to heal. Too much activity may actually slow the process.
- D. We need to patiently wait upon God  
**Psalms 46:10** – “Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”
1. I’ve been praying for the mates of my children since they were born. They are somewhere in the world right now. I am waiting upon God’s timing.
  2. When I left my pastorate and spent five years painting it seemed like it would never end. Now I see that God was right on time.
  3. Waiting upon God demands patience  
Your trials may last a long time – still you must trust and wait  
**James 1:2-4** – “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

4. Waiting upon God does not deny expectancy but we wait with confidence, patience, and contentment.

**1 Peter 5:6** – "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"

"In due time" = in His time

## II. God's Ways are Not Our Ways

**Isaiah 55:8-9** – "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. <sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

- A. Moses was thinking according to a man
  1. He delivered the message of God, "Let my people go." This means Pharaoh was supposed to let them go. NOW.
  2. God doesn't always do things the way we think He should. The fact is, God usually works in ways we would never conceive of.
- B. We have to remember, all of this world is under the absolute rule of Divine Providence who rules with absolute power
  1. God controls the actions of all men from the greatest to the least  
**Proverbs 21:1** – "The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.  
**Proverbs 16:9** – "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.
  2. All men are under God's sovereign dominion  
**1 Samuel 2:6-8** – "The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. <sup>7</sup> The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. <sup>8</sup> He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set *them* among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them."
  3. No man shall ever do anything to you that God has not directed. No plan of God can be thwarted. No one can reverse it. God does as He pleases.
- C. God had reasons for the delay – reasons Moses could not see or understand
  1. When God said to Pharaoh, "Let My people go!" Pharaoh really had no choice but to let them go. But God would allow him time to repent. What Moses saw as God renegeing on His promise was actually a wonderful mercy upon Pharaoh.
  2. If Israel was to occupy Canaan they would have to learn to trust God. What Moses saw as God renegeing on His promise was actually God teaching His people to trust Him.
- D. Are you wise enough to instruct God?  
**1 Corinthians 2:16** – "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?"  
**Romans 11:33-34** – "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! <sup>34</sup> For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"
  1. Things may not be working out the way you planned, but they are working out exactly the way God planned.

2. God works in our lives at different times in different ways  
We must trust Him.

### III. God Does All Things For His Own Glory

**Romans 11:33-36** – “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! <sup>34</sup> For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? <sup>35</sup> Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? <sup>36</sup> For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

- A. Moses failed to recognize God’s chief purpose for His delay  
**Romans 9:17** – “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.”
  1. God was about to demonstrate His power that all the world might behold and marvel.
  2. God does all things for His own name’s sake  
**Ephesians 1:11** – “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:”
- B. God is working in your life that He might receive glory
  1. Remember, you deserve nothing from God
  2. You have no rights before God
  3. God has the right to all things – He has the right to do all things. He is God

### IV. God Works All Things for Our Good – **Romans 8:28**

- A. God is working in us mighty changes upon our hearts and minds
  1. He is teaching us contentment
    - a. Our satisfaction is in Christ  
The man who has found Christ has found everything
    - b. God affirms this to us by removing everything else
    - c. God is teaching us to be satisfied in spite of external circumstances  
**Philippians 4:11-13** – “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”
  2. God is teaching us that He is faithful
    - a. God has continually proved Himself faithful in your life  
**Deuteronomy 7:9** – “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;”

- b. God often sends adversity to increase our confidence in Him  
Over and over God proves Himself faithful  
**1 Peter 1:7** – “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”
- 3. He is affirming in our hearts that we belong to Him. Suffering is testimony to our conversion
  - a. All of our God’s children are brought through the fires of adversity
  - b. Jesus told us to rejoice when others persecute us  
**Matthew 5:10-12** – “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
<sup>11</sup> Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”
- 4. God is continually humbling us – He is causing us to die to self.
  - 1. He is conforming us to Christ.  
**Romans 8:29** – “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*”
  - 2. We are so full of ourselves – self-sufficient, self-satisfied.  
That is why we are so indignant when things don’t go the way we think they should.
  - 3. God is bringing us to the point of saying, “I have done the right thing and I have suffered for it, but God is worth it.”

#### Conclusion:

- 1. How are you to respond when you take a stand for God’s glory and it costs you? It causes difficulty.
  - a. Understand that it is not something unusual. It is normal for the Christian life.  
We should expect it.  
**John 16:33** – “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”
  - b. We are to continue steadfastly  
We must never allow persecution to cause us to retreat  
Luther declared boldly, “Here I stand, I can do none other.”
  - c. We must never stop living for God’s glory. We must be people of principle – and that will often lead to hardship  
Paul’s life was a great example of one that persevered in spite of the hardships that resulted from his faithfulness to Christ  
In spite of these difficulties Paul could say at the end of his life  
**2 Timothy 4:7** – “I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:”

2. We can rest assured that Christ will ultimately deliver us from every trial and every persecution, every difficulty – in His own time; even if it means laying down our life. Nothing shall be able to separate us from His love.

**2 Timothy 3:10-11** – “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.”

**Psalm 34:19** – “Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”