

Introduction

1. When God appeared to Moses at the burning bush, He revealed His plan to deliver Israel from their bondage:
 - a. His plan for Israel (READ 3:7-8)
 - b. His plan for Moses (READ 3:10-12)
 - c. His plan for Pharaoh and Egypt (READ 3:19-20)
2. As we learned last week in chapter 5, Moses and Aaron obeyed God's command and took His message to Pharaoh, but things didn't go as they expected:
 - a. They were met with opposition from the Pharaoh
 - b. He retaliated against them by increasing the suffering of Israel
 - c. And, as a result, Israel rebuked Moses and blamed him for their increased suffering, and Moses in turn blamed God and accused Him of not doing what He promised
3. If the story ended there it would rather tragic, but as we come to our passage today, we see how God responded to their doubt and discouragement:
 - a. He reminded them of His sovereignty and faithfulness (6:1-9)
 - b. He reminded them of the task He had given them (6:10-13, 28-30)

A. In the midst of their discouragement and doubt, God reminded them of His sovereignty and faithfulness (6:1-9)

1. There's some interesting repetition in this passage of two phrases and they help us frame and understand the narrative:
 - a. One phrase is "**I will**" and it's repeated eight times in this passage and reveals what God will do to Pharaoh and what He will do for Israel
 - b. The second phrase is "**I am the LORD (Yahweh)**" which occurs five times and not only reflects His omnipotence and sovereignty but His faithfulness and presence with Israel
2. God began His response to Moses by reminding Him of what He would do to Pharaoh (6:1):
 - a. Back in 3:19-20 (READ), God told Moses that Pharaoh would only let Israel go under compulsion and that He would stretch out His hand and strike Egypt
 - b. It appears Moses may have forgotten the part about "**under compulsion**" because when Pharaoh refused after just the first visit he got discouraged (NOTE: a few months have likely passed)
 - c. So, look at how God responded (READ 6:1): "**Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh..."**":

- 1) Pharaoh had behaved exactly as expected and was only going to let Israel go under compulsion (6;1b): **“for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land”**
 - 2) And, what Moses was about to see God do was what He said He would do back in 3:20: **“so I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go.”**
- d. In essence, what we see here is a declaration of God’s sovereignty—even though it didn’t happen immediately, Pharaoh would ultimately let God’s people go and would do it only after being compelled by God’s outstretched hand
3. After reminding Moses of what He would do to Pharaoh, He reminded him of what He would do for Israel (READ 6:2-9):
 - a. As I mentioned in our Exodus 3:13-15 there’s quite a bit of debate over when God first revealed His name as Yahweh, in part because of what 6:2-3 says:
 - 1) Many believe that God first revealed His name to Moses at the burning bush and His name Yahweh was not known prior to that, including by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - 2) However, the book of Genesis reveals that they knew God by name, as did many others before them:
 - a) Abraham, Isaac and Jacob:
 - God specifically introduced Himself to Abraham and Jacob as **“Yahweh”** (Genesis 15:7; 18:14; Genesis 28:13)
 - Abraham and Isaac both **“called upon the name of Yahweh”** (Genesis 12:8; 26:25)
 - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all used God’s name when speaking to Him and about Him (Genesis 15:2, 8; 22:14; 24:7; 26:22; 30:30; 32:9)
 - b) Others before them:
 - Eve referred to God as **“Yahweh”** (Genesis 4:1)
 - After Seth was born, **“men began to call upon the name of Yahweh”** (Genesis 4:26); not just call upon God, but call upon His **“name”**
 - Noah referred to God by the name Yahweh (Genesis 9:26)
 - 3) So, this poses a challenge on how to interpret 6:2-3:
 - a) One proposal is that God didn’t reveal His name prior to the burning bush but Moses simply used the name Yahweh anyway when he wrote Genesis (doubtful)
 - b) Another proposal is what’s reflected in the NIV and it’s the idea that the patriarchs and others were familiar with the name Yahweh, but God hadn’t made Himself **“fully known”** to them in that name:
 - 1) NIV: **“I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself fully known to them”**

- 2) In other words, they knew the name Yahweh but didn't understand all that it represented in regard to God's character and actions
- c) A final option, which I favor, involves translating the second half of the verse as an interrogative (rhetorical question):
- 1) The verse would then read, "**I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Yahweh did I not make myself known?**"
 - First proposed by OT Hebrew linguist Francis Andersen but others like Hebrew scholar Walter Kaiser favor it; OT scholar Douglas Stuart mentions it as a possible translation in his commentary on Exodus (He's the author of "How to read the bible for all it's worth")
 - The primary argument made by some against this translation is that questions in Hebrew are generally indicated by an interrogative particle which doesn't exist in this verse
 - However, there are many examples of questions in the OT that don't have the interrogative particle (ex. Num 23:19; 2Sa 23:5; 2Ki 5:26)
 - 2) If the verse is understood this way (as a rhetorical question), then God was essentially saying that He appeared to the patriarch's as the same all powerful omnipotent God that pharaoh would soon experience, but that He also made Himself known to them by His name revealing that He was a personal, faithful God who would be with them
 - "**God Almighty**" is a title rather than a name and God introduced Himself to both Abraham and Jacob in this way (Genesis 17:1; 35:11), and Isaac and Jacob both referred to God as God Almighty (Genesis 28:3; 43:14; 48:3)
 - But, it's clear throughout the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stories that they also knew Him by His name which suggests a more intimate knowledge and relationship with Him
 - 3) This fits naturally with what He then said in v. 4 because Yahweh is the name tied to the covenant and in v. 4 God said He "**also established**" His covenant with them (RE-READ 6:4)
- b. It was because of this covenant, and God's faithfulness to the patriarchs, that God promised Israel what He would do for them:
- 1) He does this in seven "**I will**" statements (READ inline below):
 - a) "**I will bring you out...**" (6:6)
 - b) "**I will deliver you from their bondage...**" (6:6)
 - c) "**I will also redeem you...**" (6:6)

- d) **“I will take you for My people...”** (6:7)
- e) **“I will be your God...”** (6:7)
- f) **“I will bring you to the land...”** (6:8)
- g) **“I will give it to you as a possession...”** (6:8)

2) Notice the number of times he repeats **“I am Yahweh”** to stress the nature of His faithfulness and presence with them (3x; v. 6, 7, 8)—He would be to them a faithful covenant keeping God and be with them just as He was Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

4. Takeaway: when things don’t work out the way we think or hope they should and we’re facing discouragement, we should remember that God is not only an all-powerful God but a faithful God (READ Ephesians 3:13-21)

B. In the midst of their discouragement and doubt, God reminded them of the task He had given them (READ 6:9-13)

1. When Moses reported to Israel what God said, they refused to accept it because of their **“despondency and cruel bondage”**:
 - a. Despondency refers to the loss of hope or courage and is often defined as a loss of spirit
 - b. This is reflected in the Hebrew which reads **“because of their shortness of spirit”**
 - c. In other words, we might say their spirits had been broken because of the severe labor that had been inflicted upon them
2. It appears this further discouraged Moses and caused him to continue to doubt:
 - a. Back in 5:22 he accused God of bringing harm to His people and not doing anything to deliver them
 - b. Now, when God commanded Him to go back to Pharaoh, Moses responded (6:12): **“Behold the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me”**
 - c. He even repeated his former excuse (6:12b): **“for I am unskilled in speech”** (lit. of uncircumcised lips)
3. It’s important to note God’s response to this: in essence, He reminded Moses and Aaron of the task He had given them (RE-READ 6:13):
 - a. This seems to be a pattern with God because He did the same thing with Elijah when He was discouraged (READ 1 Kings 19:15-18)
 - b. He did the same thing with Gideon (READ Judges 6:25-27)
4. Takeaway: I think there are three things we can take away from this:

- a. The first is that we can't let our doubt or discouragement stop us from doing what God has called us to do; when Moses, Gideon and Elijah faced doubt and discouragement God reminded them of the tasks He'd give them
- b. The second is that God doesn't expect us to do it alone:
 - 1) Five times in this passage God repeated "**I am Yahweh**" which was a reminder that as the great "I am" He would be with them; He even repeated this a sixth time to Moses in 6:29 (READ)
 - 2) Isn't this what Jesus promised us when He said, "**and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age**" and when He said He would send us the Holy Spirit who would abide with us and be in us (John 14:17)?
- b. Finally, doing what God has called us to do when we are discouraged or doubting is an act of faith:
 - 1) We know it was for Moses because the author of Hebrews told us so (READ Hebrews 11:23-29)
 - 2) It's the same for us because as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:7, "**we walk by faith and not by sight**"