

Exodus 6:1-7:5¹

Final Preparations

A broken spirit

Dog pounds are full of them.

You walk past their cages.

They look at you, waiting to see whether kindness or the rod awaits them

If you come too close, their tails go between their legs.

They flinch.

Sometimes they involuntarily urinate or simply cower.

They are dogs whose spirits have been broken.

And they are an extremely sorrowful sight.

But dogs are not the only ones.

Perhaps you have met humans with a broken spirit.

Sometimes they have been brutalised by other humans.

Sometimes they have simply been beaten into submission by life's experiences.

But they show many of the same signs.

Their eyes are full of sadness.

Life has become a colourless, hopeless shade of grey for them.

They want to cry, but can't.

¹ Note that this version of the sermon uses the TEV translation of the Bible.

They want to yell out for help, but are convinced that no one will hear and that no one cares.

Mechanically and hopelessly they wake to each day with a feeling of dread.

Another day is to be faced.

And that day will be like the day before.

There is no escape, no delivery, no rescue, no hope.

A broken spirit in a dog is deeply sad.

A broken spirit in a person is terrifying.

Such people see no escape, no alternative, and no light at the end of the tunnel.

Well, this is the situation that Israel finds itself in Exodus 6.

In Exodus 6:9, the writer of Exodus tells us that God's words of encouragement and hope come to a people who can no longer hear.

They are beyond crying out to God.

They are beyond listening to God.

They are bound in discouragement.

They can no longer hear the sound of hope or expect deliverance.

Their situation of slavery and cruel bondage has made them people of broken spirit.

Exodus 6:1-7:5

The context (Chapter 5)

With this in mind, let's remember last week's passage.

In chapter 5 we saw Moses make his first real effort with Pharaoh.

We saw him fall flat on his face.

We saw the hardship increase on his people.

And we saw the ferocity of Pharaoh in full swing.

And we saw Moses and Aaron being blamed for the situation by their fellow Israelites.

But what we didn't see was God.

He seemed to be absent.

And so the chapter ended with Moses levelling an accusation.

He has not delivered.

Instead, he has brought increased trouble on his people.

I am Yahweh (6:1-10)

It is this accusation that lies behind Exodus 6.

Where God is very absent in Exodus 5, he is very present in Exodus 6.

Let's see what he has to say.

The first thing to notice is the constant mention of who is speaking.

The words 'I am the Lord', or 'I am Yahweh' occur in verses 2, 6, 7, 8, 29, 30.

In verses 2 to 5 we have him telling his people that he is the Lord, the God of the covenant.

In verses 6-8 we hear: 'I am Yahweh YOUR God' and 'I am Yahweh, the God who delivers.'

In verse 28 and 7:5 God describes himself as the Lord, the speaking and acting God.

It is a magnificent response to the accusation of Moses.

God is the God of Israel.

He is the God of covenant.

He is the God of his word.

He is the God of all the earth.

He is the God who rescues and delivers.

The second thing to notice is that the Lord has a goal for his activity.

That goal is that Israel comes to know him in a way they previously had not.

Verses 2-5 tell us that previously God had made himself known to Israel in some way.

However, they did not quite know his full nature.

God had not revealed the fullness of his nature to them.

They knew him by name, but they did not know exactly what that name meant.

Now he tells them that something is going to happen that will mean that Israel will know God as their God, as the God who is a deliverer.

He will be the God of the Exodus.

He will be known as the God who brought them out from under the yoke of the Egyptians...

The God who gave them the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Ready for Yahweh (6:11-27; 7:6-7)

But let's now take a look at verses 11-27 and 7:6-7.

The first thing I want you to notice here is the references to Israel and Moses and Aaron.

How are they described?

Well, the genealogy in verses 11 to 27 tells us that they are people of great pedigree.

They are descended from Jacob and Levi.

But the passage tells us something more than that.

The passage tells us that they are old men now – 7:7 tells us that Aaron is 83 years old and that Moses is 80 years old.

Can you see the point?

These men are hardly young warriors.

They are not ideal candidates for leading a rescue attempt from one of the world's greatest nations.

More than that, verses 12 and 30 tell us that Moses is a poor speaker.

He is hardly the man you would expect to get a hearing from Pharaoh, let alone be a deliverer.

The second thing I want you to notice is the enormous repetition of the word 'I' by God.

[Read through verses 1-8, emphasising the 'I's.]

This a passage full of God, isn't it.

And the force of it is clear.

After all, think about where we are now.

We have Pharaoh at his greatest.

We have the Israelites at their lowest.

We have Moses and Aaron at their weakest.

In other words, we have a situation tailor made for Yahweh.

For when evil is at its greatest...

When his people are at their lowest...

When his spokespeople are at their weakest...

THEN Yahweh can be Yahweh.

Yahweh can be Yahweh, Yahweh, the gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

And yet, he can also be Yahweh, Yahweh, the one who does not leave the guilty unpunished.

Listen to Hannah praise Yahweh in 1 Samuel 2.

Listen to what she says about him.

¹Hannah prayed:

“The LORD has filled my heart with joy; how happy I am because of what he has done!

I laugh at my enemies; how joyful I am because God has helped me!

²*“No one is holy like the LORD; there is none like him, no protector like our God.*

³*Stop your loud boasting; silence your proud words.*

For the LORD is a God who knows, and he judges all that people do.

⁴*The bows of strong soldiers are broken, but the weak grow strong.*

⁵*The people who once were well fed now hire themselves out to get food, but the hungry are hungry no more.*

The childless wife has borne seven children, but the mother of many is left with none.

⁶*The LORD kills and restores to life; he sends people to the world of the dead and brings them back again.*

⁷*He makes some poor and others rich; he humbles some and makes others great.*

⁸*He lifts the poor from the dust and raises the needy from their misery.*

He makes them companions of princes and puts them in places of honour.

The foundations of the earth belong to the LORD; on them he has built the world.

⁹*“He protects the lives of his faithful people, but the wicked disappear in darkness; a man does not triumph by his own strength.*

¹⁰*The LORD’s enemies will be destroyed; he will thunder against them from heaven.*

The LORD will judge the whole world;

Can you see what I’m saying?

God is being crystal clear in this passage.

He is saying that situations like this are made for him.

These are situations where it can be seen that he is Yahweh.

I am Yahweh (6:28-7:5)

With this in mind, let's take a brief look at verses 6:28-7:5.

Do you remember hearing 6:7?

Do you remember how God said that his goal was that Israel come to know him as their deliverer?

Well, God has another goal as well.

His other goal is that the Egyptians come to know Yahweh as God.

Last week we heard Pharaoh say that he did not know Yahweh.

Well, at the end of God's activity he and all Egypt will know who Yahweh is.

And the means for them coming to know this are exactly the same as for Israel.

They will come to know by God stretching his hand against Egypt and bringing the Israelites out of Egypt.

Listen to 7:5:

⁵The Egyptians will then know that I am the LORD, when I raise my hand against them and bring the Israelites out of their country."

Reflecting the passage

I am Yahweh

I've just skimmed through this passage.

There is heaps of material in it but my aim has been to help us get to the centre of the passage.

I hope you've grasped what is going on.

You see, in this passage we meet Yahweh.

And we meet him in the sort of situation that he loves.

It is the sort of situation when he can be seen for who he is.

And who is he?

He is the God who made the world...

The one who made humans to live in dependence upon him...

The one who wants human existence to be filled with himself rather than ourselves.

And so, when God finds a situation when people have nowhere else to go but to him, he is in his element.

When he finds a situation where people are arrogantly shaking their fist at his rule over the world and are dominating and oppressing the helpless, then he is in his element.

He is Yahweh, the help of the helpless.

He is Yahweh, the one who loves to rescue those broken in spirit.

He is Yahweh, the God who loves giving the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit.

Who loves comforting those who mourn.

Who loves causing the meek to inherit the earth.

Who cannot help revealing himself to the pure in heart.

And who loves rescuing such people from those who persecute them.

He is Yahweh, the God of grace and mercy.

This is the God we know so well from the New Testament.

Take a look at Ephesians 2:1-10.

I want you to listen to Ephesians 2:1-10 with me.

I've put it on the back of the outline so that you can follow it with me.

Let me read it to you.

And as I do, I want you to ask what similarity there is between this passage and Exodus 6.

[Read passage]

I wonder if you spotted the similarity?

Did you notice that Ephesians 2 talks about a situation where there is a powerful enemy of God (verse 2).

It is a passage where we are weak and unable to save ourselves.

It is a passage full of God.

You see, what we see happen when God saves us is clearly the work of Yahweh, the God who revealed himself in Exodus.

The God who acted in Exodus is the God who would inevitably act to save the world.

For the world and us were in bondage because of sin and the devil.

And we were in a hopeless situation.

And such situations are tailor-made for Yahweh.

And so he sent his Son into the world to do another Exodus.

To defeat the enemies of God.

And to rescue the helpless.

On being God

However, I don't want to finish on that note.

Instead, I want you to come back with me to Exodus 7:1.

I want you to read with me what God says to Moses:

¹The LORD said, "I am going to make you like God to the king, and your brother Aaron will speak to him as your prophet.

The original language actually says it much stronger.

It says:

See, I have made you God to Pharaoh.

You can understand what God is saying, can't you?

God is telling Moses that he will function like God in relation to Pharaoh.

He will be in the position of God insofar as Pharaoh is concerned.

Pharaoh may never see God.

He may never hear God speak directly to him.

But he will see Moses.

And through Moses, Pharaoh will be confronted with God.

He will hear God speak.

He will watch God act.

Now, although the language used here is strong, the idea being conveyed is as old as the creation itself.

You see, when God created the earth in Genesis 1 he made Adam and Eve in his image.

That is, he made them his representatives in the world.

They were made to rule the world under God's rule.

They were to be God to the world, exercising God's rule as God himself would exercise it.

As we know, Adam and Eve dismally failed in fulfilling their charter.

They did not rule under God's rule.

Instead, they chose to rule on their own.

Nevertheless, the principal is there from the beginning.

Various people in the Old Testament are understood to act as God toward the world they live in.

Of course, we Christians know that Jesus was God actually and also in function.

Not only was he truly God, he lived in the world as God's representative.

He functioned as God in the world.

He functioned as God in relation to the world.

Adam and Moses are therefore prototypes of Christ.

They look forward to Jesus.

However, there is another principle that comes to the fore here, isn't there?

After all, as God's people we too function as God toward the world.

God has placed us in the world to be his representatives.

And many people will never see God.

They will never hear God speak to them.

But they will see us.

And through us, the people we live and work with will be confronted with God.

They will hear God speak.

They will watch God act.

You see, in many ways it is true to say that we are the only God that many people in our world will ever see.

It is not that we are actually God.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Nevertheless, we will often find ourselves in the position of God in relation to the world.

Through us God will speak to the world.

Through us God will act in the world.

Through us he will judge.

And through us he will exercise mercy.

This is a sober truth.

So...

If we are God's people we have an enormous responsibility.

We are as God to our friends in the workplace and on the factory floor.

We are as God to the boss we work for.

We are God to the world outside of Christ.

We are part of God's process in bringing that world back to God.

And we are part of God's process in bringing the word of God and the acts of God to that world.

We reflect God's image to a world in which that image has been corrupted by sin.

You see, if people know that we are believers in Jesus, that we represent Jesus, then we may be the only God they get to hear or see.

They may not see the real God.

They may not hear the real God speak.

They may never hear his word to them.

But they do see and hear us.

And so we are to act and speak so that God's power and love are seen.

We are to speak and act in such a way that they know that there is another way – a God-fearing way, a God-filled way.

We, like Moses, are God to the world, so that the world might know that there is a Yahweh and there is his Son, Jesus Christ.