



Exodus 4:29-5:23

# MAKING THINGS WORSE

*When we see our hopes blasted, our plans miscarry, our efforts do more harm than good, whilst we are discredited and blamed, pursued with the taunts and hate of those for whom we were willing to lay down our lives, we may preserve an outward calm; but there will be a heartbreak underneath. The noblest part in us will wither, as corn blasted by an east wind, unless we are able to pour out our whole complaint before God. The agony of soul through which Moses passed must have been as death to him. He died to his self-esteem. He died to his kingdom-building. He died to pride in his miracles. He died to the enthusiasm of his people. He died to everything that a popular leader loves. As he lay there on the ground alone before God, wishing himself back in Midian, and thinking himself hardly used, he was falling as a corn of wheat into the ground to die, no longer to abide alone, but to bear much fruit.*

—F. B. Meyer (1847-1929)

Moses is a picture of all of God's servants. We struggle to surrender our will to God's will. Then when we do, things seem to go awry. We may encounter success, but this is soon followed by failure. We may experience applause, but this is soon followed by what feels like a slap in the face. Moses goes through all of this in Exodus 4-5.

- A Moses wrestles with God (4:1-28)
- B Moses is received by the Israelites (4:29-31)
  - C Pharaoh rejects Moses' appeal (5:1-5)
  - D The Israelites suffer even more (5:6-14)
  - C Pharaoh rejects the Israelites' appeal (5:15-19)
- B Moses is rejected by the Israelites (5:20-21)
- A Moses wrestles with God (5:22-23)

## THE INITIAL \_\_\_\_\_ (4:29-31)

- Moses and Aaron gather the leaders of the people.
- Moses and Aaron speak God's Word and perform His signs.
- The leaders (and the people) believe and worship the Lord.

## THE PAINFUL \_\_\_\_\_ (5:1-19)

- Moses and Aaron confront Pharaoh with their demand.

*Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness!" (5:1)*

*No man ever gets beside God who has not first been beside himself, knocked out of his wits about the mess he has made of things.*

—Oswald Chambers

**Believe.** Heb., *aman*, "to trust; to lean upon, build upon, rely upon."

**Bowed their heads.** Heb., *qadad*, "to bow the body or the head."

**Worshipped.** Heb., *shachah*, "to bow down; to prostrate oneself."

*The almost arrogant confidence of his approach is as deliberate as it is dramatic. It graphically presents a Moses euphoric over the quick success of his presentation to the Israelites.* —John Durham

*Moses adopted an authoritarian approach, alienating Pharaoh with incomprehensible talk and laying down an absolute demand.*

—J. Alec Motyer

*Moses and Aaron appear to modify God's original words (3:18). Their message comes across as a blunt demand rather than a polite request.* —T. Desmond Alexander

1. The wrong \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The wrong \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The wrong \_\_\_\_\_.

- Pharaoh sarcastically and arrogantly rejects their demand.

*“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.” (5:2)*

- Moses and Aaron restate their demand as more of a request.

*“The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days’ journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.” (5:3)*

- Pharaoh rejects the request and doubles the people’s workload.

1. A heartless \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A ruthless \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A hopeless \_\_\_\_\_.

### THE HATEFUL \_\_\_\_\_ (5:20-21)

- Moses and Aaron are standing there to offer their support.
- Moses and Aaron are cursed by the leaders (and the people).

### THE SPIRITUAL \_\_\_\_\_ (5:22-23)

- Moses questions God’s \_\_\_\_\_.
- Moses questions God’s \_\_\_\_\_.
- Moses questions God’s \_\_\_\_\_.

### FOUR KEY PRINCIPLES FROM EXODUS 5

1. Our successes are failures if they lead us to greater pride.
2. We must evaluate our expectations in the light of God’s Word.
3. Don’t live for the applause of the crowd. It is always short-lived.
4. Our failures are successes if they lead us to greater humility.

*Plainly, from his whole approach to Pharaoh, bouncing into his royal presence, Moses had not listened with close attention to what the Lord had said and had not taken the predicted heart-hardening seriously [3:19, 4:21].*

—J. Alec Motyer

*A right of audience with a monarch was in the traditional legal system of much of the ancient world. Kings were seen as expected to be available to the lowliest and greatest alike.*

—Douglas K. Stuart

*A manuscript dating to the time of the ancient pharaohs indicates that Egyptian slaves were sometimes given time off to worship their gods.*

—Philip Ryken

*The totalitarian government seeks to keep the people under control by giving them more to do.*

—J. L. Mackay

*Mudbricks were made from Nile alluvium, a conglomerate of clay and sand... Straw was added to prevent a brick from falling apart as it dried... In Ex. 5:14 the supervisors were beaten first, and then questioned. In the Egyptian mindset, one could guarantee questions would be answered truthfully only after a severe beating.*

—David A. Falk

*The brickmaker is dirtier than vines or pigs from treading in his mud. His clothes are stiff with clay; his leather belt is going to ruin... His sides ache, since he must be outside in a treacherous wind. His arms are destroyed with technical work. What he eats is the bread of his fingers, and he washes himself only once a season. He is simply wretched through and through.*

—The Satire of the Trades  
Egyptian text from the 19<sup>th</sup> cent. BC