



CONFRONTATION

God displays His power, reminding all that He alone is worthy of worship.

EXODUS 7:1-13

Let's be honest. We like being in control and calling the shots. We may even have our own ideas about how God should work in a specific situation. We are not questioning His power, but perhaps we question His wisdom or willingness to act. It boils down to us being stubborn and unwilling to allow God to be God.

Think about a time when you let your stubbornness get the best of you. How did that experience open the door for you to learn about God and His power?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

EXODUS 5:1–10:29

Christians affirm that God is all powerful and is able to perfectly accomplish His will. The biblical writers often propose the rhetorical question, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” (see Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:27). Ironically, we often treat God’s omnipotence as hypothetical. While most of us do not question God’s power explicitly, many times we live our day-to-day lives that way.

In Exodus 5–10 we enter into the saga of Israel’s slavery under Pharaoh. It is important to remember that the Egyptians viewed Pharaoh as the divine offspring of their sun god, and they believed he became the god of the afterlife upon his death. In other words, Pharaoh was a false god waging war against the God of Israel. In this narrative, Pharaoh was not only hostile to God’s people but also hostile to the one true God. At every turn, Pharaoh used his power to oppose God’s purposes for His people. In the end, however, the God of Israel was the only one standing as the true sovereign God over all creation.

After the call of Moses (Ex. 3–4), Moses confronted Pharaoh for the first time about releasing God’s people (5:1). The response of Pharaoh was swift and decisive: “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go” (5:2). Moses’ initial confrontation with Pharaoh resulted in the increased oppression and suffering of God’s people (5:6-18).

Moses was confused by the results of this first encounter with Pharaoh (5:22-23), but God assured him that He would grant His people freedom regardless of the consequences of this first confrontation (6:1). God then did a very gracious thing for Moses—He reminded him that He is the covenant-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (6:8). God reminded Moses that there is a larger, redemptive story—God’s plan to make a people for Himself. No man, not even Pharaoh, would be able to hinder God’s purpose and power.

Moses again protested that Pharaoh would not listen to him since he spoke poorly (6:30; see also 4:10; 6:12). God answered Moses’ objection by sending Aaron to speak His words as mediated through Moses (7:1-2). Moses and Aaron again confronted Pharaoh and showed him the sign of turning Aaron’s staff into a serpent. But when

the Egyptian sorcerers did the same with their staffs, Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go (7:6-13).

God then sent a series of plagues on the Egyptians (7:14–10:19). Several times Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go, but when each plague ended, he refused to free the people. The plagues punished Egypt, showed the powerlessness of its gods, and demonstrated God’s sovereignty.

Notice the directives given to Moses by God in Exodus 7:1-13. What does the simplicity of the directives indicate about the nature of obedience? Identify the words and phrases that point to God’s purposes in Moses’ confronting Pharaoh. What do these purposes reveal about God?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

STRATEGY EXPLAINED (EX. 7:1-5)

¹ And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. ² Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. ³ And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴ But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵ And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

VERSES 1-2

God clearly laid out His strategy for bringing about His purposes in saving His people. There are three reminders of God’s promises from earlier conversations that fortified Moses and Aaron in their calling and confidence.



First, God reminded Moses that He had provided **Aaron** to function as a **prophet** before Pharaoh (see 4:14-16). Designating Aaron as a prophet was a concession to Moses' perceived disadvantage based on his own poor speaking abilities (see 4:10; 6:30). While Aaron was the spokesperson, Moses clearly played the primary role in this confrontation since he was to be **a god to Pharaoh**. Moses was to fulfill his role as God's mediator or representative. This was to counter not only Moses' doubt but also Pharaoh's belief that he himself was a god. This was a reminder that God was in control.

How would God's providing Aaron as a spokesperson bolster Moses' confidence? How does the promise of Christ's presence bolster our confidence to share the gospel?

VERSE 3

Next, God again declared that He would **harden Pharaoh's heart** (see 4:21). It is important to note that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is described in various ways throughout Exodus. At times, the biblical text refers to God's hardening Pharaoh's heart (9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10); Pharaoh's hardening his own heart (8:15,32); and Pharaoh's heart being hardened without identifying the cause (7:22; 8:19; 9:7,35). All of these statements must be considered together for every act of Pharaoh's disobedience.

It seems reasonable to conclude that throughout the narrative Pharaoh is in opposition to God; therefore, God's hardening of his heart is only confirmation of the course that Pharaoh is on already. If we believe that God is all powerful, by implication we must also affirm that God uses even those who resist His will to accomplish His purposes. We see this in the New Testament with Herod and Pilate (see Acts 2:23). One of the scariest ways that God gives us over to judgment is by giving us our hearts' desires. When someone repeatedly refuses God's will, their hearts become harder and harder toward Him.

How do you see people hardening their hearts toward God today? How does what you see compare with Pharaoh's hardened heart?

VERSES 4-5

Lastly, God proclaimed once again that He would bring Israel out of Egypt by His mighty hand (see 3:19-20). The “I will” statements of this passage are a reminder that God is the One doing the work. Remember that Pharaoh had asked, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD” (5:2). Pharaoh’s question revealed his disdain and his intent to usurp and undermine the God of Israel.

God’s plan did not depend on Pharaoh’s cooperation. Pharaoh might refuse to obey God, but he could never prevent God from delivering His people. Neither Pharaoh nor his army could stop God from accomplishing His will. Soon enough, Pharaoh would know who God was when the plagues were unleashed against Egypt. God had revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush (3:14-15), but soon all of Egypt would clearly know He was the one true God through His self-revealing mighty acts (see 8:10,22; 9:14,29; 11:7). In the same way, all of the earth will one day know that He is the one true God (Phil. 2:9-11).

KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

God is working in this world so all will recognize His power and sovereign rule. There are times when we minister to people with hardened hearts and times when our own hearts become hardened with sin. But the power of God revealed in Jesus Christ can break through the hardest of hearts. Just as God equipped and empowered Moses and Aaron, He will do the same for you to be a faithful witness. His mighty acts in history should be a reminder to us that He can do far more than we even ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20).



BIBLE SKILL: *Read, reflect on, and react to a Bible verse.*

Read this week’s memory verse, Exodus 6:7. Read it aloud, placing emphasis on the nouns. Read it aloud a second time, placing emphasis on the verbs. What emotions are appealed to in this verse? What emotions did you experience as you read the verse aloud? How should the reality of this verse impact how you worship?

.....

.....

.....

SIMPLE OBEDIENCE (EX. 7:6-7)

⁶ And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they. ⁷ And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.

VERSES 6-7

Moses and Aaron fully obeyed God’s directions, doing exactly what they were told. Note that Moses and Aaron were both senior citizens! Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three. Their advanced age reminds us that it is never too late to be used by God. It is never too late for God’s power to be manifest through our faithful living. Moses and Aaron did not make excuses; they ***did as the LORD commanded them.*** Regardless of our weaknesses and inabilities, God can and will work through us when we faithfully live according to what He has commanded. In other words, when we are weak, God is strong (2 Cor. 12:9-11).

God’s power is made most evident when we are weak.

Believers demonstrate faith in God through simple acts of obedience. We often shy away from God’s work because of excuses or perceived weaknesses. But the example of Moses and Aaron in this passage reminds us that God’s power is made most evident when we are weak. With confidence in our all-powerful God, we are called to live just as God has commanded us.

What attitudes toward God do you see demonstrated by Moses and Aaron's obedience? How are their attitudes toward God in opposition to the attitude seen in Pharaoh?

SIGNS AND WONDERS (EX. 7:8-13)

⁸ And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
⁹ When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. ¹⁰ And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. ¹¹ Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. ¹² For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. ¹³ And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

VERSES 8-12

Exodus 7:8-13 narrates the initial sign of turning Aaron's staff into a serpent. This is the first sign that Moses and Aaron demonstrated to Pharaoh before the ten plagues were unleashed on Egypt and the instructions were given to the Israelites (7:14–13:16).

This is the first of three instances where ***the magicians of Egypt*** see the sign that Aaron performs and then do the same by their secret arts (see 7:22; 8:7). The Egyptian magicians functioned as mystical priests in the service of the Egyptian gods. The text does not provide any explanation for the means by which these magicians performed their signs, but it is clear that Aaron's staff ***swallowed up their rods***, indicating God's supreme power over the magic of man.

VERSE 13

Just as God had foretold, Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses, beginning the cycle of miraculous plagues followed by Pharaoh's refusals (7:14–10:29). The water in the Nile River turned to blood. Then frogs, gnats, and flies overran the land. One plague caused the



death of livestock. Another brought boils, while another was a plague of deadly hail. Still another brought swarms of locusts, and then a plague of darkness covered Egypt.

Moses announced each plague, and each arrived and departed exactly as he stated. As the plagues progressed, they became more devastating. Several times Pharaoh promised to let the Israelites go but then refused to free the people when each plague ended.

The Ten Plagues

- *Water to blood (Ex. 7:14-25)*
- *Frogs (Ex. 8:1-15)*
- *Gnats/Mosquitoes (Ex. 8:16-19)*
- *Flies (Ex. 8:20-32)*
- *Death of the cattle (Ex. 9:1-7)*
- *Boils (Ex. 9:8-12)*
- *Hail (Ex. 9:13-35)*
- *Locusts (Ex. 10:1-20)*
- *Darkness (Ex. 10:21-29)*
- *Death of the firstborn (Ex. 11:1-12:30)*

How does Pharaoh's repeatedly going back on his word mirror characteristics of false repentance? What is the difference between false repentance and true repentance?

While Pharaoh's hard-hearted, evil rule over Israel was characterized by slavery and death, the good God of Israel desired to lead His people to life. While Pharaoh desired to keep the Israelites in his land to live under his rule, God used His infinitely greater power to deliver them to His land to live under His rule. The God of Israel not only showed His supremacy in the triumph of Aaron's staff but also in each subsequent plague sign.

While God normally holds chaos at bay, in this instance He stepped aside and allowed chaos to plague His enemy. In the end, God brought judgment to Pharaoh and Egypt.

IN MY CONTEXT

- God is working in this world so all will recognize His power and sovereign rule.
- Believers acknowledge God’s sovereignty through simple acts of obedience.
- Everyone who sees evidence of God’s power and presence yet does not respond in faith is without excuse.

Identify the fears and excuses that get in the way of your living on mission with God. What has God provided to you that overcomes those fears and excuses? What simple act can you do this week to demonstrate obedience to God?

List some of the powers of this world that hold people in captivity and keep them in the dark about Christ. Discuss with your group actions the group can take to point people to the greater power of God. What actions can be taken now?

Reflect on Exodus 6:7. Take time to praise God for the ways He has displayed His power in your life. Memorize this verse this week.

Prayer Needs

