

The God who is rejected Exodus 5:1-6:12

Do you remember the song, *Things can only get better*?

“You can walk my path
You can wear my shoes
Learn to talk like me and be an angel too
But maybe you ain't never gonna feel this way
You ain't never gonna know me, but I know you
I'm singing it now
Things can only get better
Can only get better if we see it through”

Some songs have associations for us.

Things can only get better. I associate that with the national election that took place in 1997. I had recently arrived in London. After 18 years of Tory Government there was a new young leader capturing the imagination of the country. A young Tony Blair. Their genius advertising team picked *Things can only get better* as the anthem. It was a brilliant piece of marketing and communication. Instantly connecting with the mood of a country.

This optimistic mood must have been felt by the people of God and their leaders at the beginning of **Exodus chapter 5**.

Much oppression. God had not just stepped in but he had promised to rescue them and bring them into a new place where they would be his treasured people.

I can imagine that the Israelites and Moses their leader would have connected straight away with D:Ream's classic *Things can only get better*. What could possibly go wrong?

Let's find out. Look at verse 1. **Read verses 1 and 2**.

It starts well. Moses and Aaron arrive with utter confidence into the throne room of one of the most powerful men in the ancient world. That's not a small thing.

Imagine what it would feel like to be ushered into the White House to see the President of the United States. Or the Kremlin to meet the President. Or even 10 Downing Street to meet the Prime Minister 😊

Would you hold your nerve? Moses was courageous. Clarity and confidence were not absent from his speech.

But Pharaoh's **response** was devastating. Verse 2. **Read verse 2**.

Who is the LORD that I should obey him? I do not know the LORD.

He believes in lots of gods. Who is this new one? The LORD? What right does he have to tell him what to do? What power does he have at his disposal to knock me off my perch and release you people from under my thumb?

These are some of the **key questions** of this chapter.

You may have similar questions today. You might consider yourself spiritual. Or agnostic. Or atheist. You hear the promises and demands of Jesus – who is he that he has the right to tell me what to do?

You may never have said it as clearly and as loudly as Pharaoh – you may be more of a **closed book** than this ancient ruler. He wore his rebellious spirit on his sleeve. Many of us are less clear about our self-rule and protest against God's true governance over our lives.

What is the answer? Who is the LORD that we and Pharaoh should obey him?

Moses gives a very flimsy answer in verse 3. To which Pharaoh responds with a powerful blow. Verse 4. **Read verses 4-9**.

Then we read of how this *harsh* and *hostile* policy was implemented by the Egyptian slave masters.

Does this opposition to God's rescue plan come as a surprise to you? Where are the fireworks? All we see is the fury of Pharaoh? How does this confrontation between the God of Israel and the ruler of Egypt impact our view of God?

Opposition to God's rescue plans is not unusual in the Bible and yet there are many Christians who struggle to have a place for it in their plans.

- The opposition to Jesus
- The opposition to the apostles
- The opposition mentioned in the rest of the New Testament
- The opposition throughout church history
- The opposition around the world
- The opposition we face to gospel advance

How do we deal with it? I don't want you to lower your view of God but I want us to have a bigger view of who God is.

A God who is so perfectly powerful that he normally uses opposition as part of his gospel advance.

Making decisions. Guidance. The best gospel decision isn't necessarily the easiest. Great decisions often have very stiff doors.

Why does God do it like this?

- He reveals our hearts. Do we really trust him?
- We learn to trust him.
- He reveals the true heart of our false rulers. We can then appreciate the tyranny of those who rule us.

The key question is: **how should we respond to the opposition?**

Let me show you a **couple** of wrong responses.

First, the Israelite overseers ignored their God (Vs 15-21)

We find out what they do in verse 15. **Read verses 15-16.**

Two things to point out.

They go to Pharaoh. The **NIV** says, they appealed to him. Literally they cried out to him. This is the language of **Exodus 2:23**. But there they cried out to God. Why not cry out to him here? Do they not believe he can help them?

We want to be **a prayerful people**. Once a month in our Growth Groups we have a prayer focus.

They keep on referring to themselves as servants of Pharaoh. That's not their fundamental identity. They God is not the King of Israel. They are not provided for by him but by the LORD.

How does Pharaoh respond? Verse 17. **Read verses 17 and 18.**

Isn't this the common response from the false lords we serve? Whether that's the idol of work or family or sport or...They tire us out. They exhaust us. They are not compassionate.

Only the LORD can provide what we need and we need to turn to him.

How did God's people respond to the opposition? The Israelite overseers ignored their God.

Second, Moses complained against his God (Vs 22-23)

Look at verse 22. **Read verses 22 and 23.**

He returned to the LORD. But not to ask for more strengthen or more wisdom or more courage. But to whinge and complain. How often we do the very same thing when we encounter opposition to our gospel plans.

But there is an alternative to **persistent complaining**. Do you know what it is? **Patient commitment**.

Believing that God's promises are true and that our powerful God is always working to see his perfect plans accomplished in his perfect time. **Which means...**

- Keep evangelising
- Keep inviting
- Don't lose your urgency
- Keep standing up for **God's words** and **God's ways** in a country that is against them

One more response and that's from the God of Israel. We see this in **6:1-12**.

Third, God confirms his promise (6:1-12)

These are incredibly encouraging words.

- **Verse 1.** The promise repeated
- **Verses 2 and 3.** The LORD will define by his actions what his name means
- **Verses 4 and 5.** Covenant.
- **Verses 6-8** God defines more of what the LORD means. Notice how verse 6 starts and verse 8 ends – I am the LORD.
 - Rescue
 - Redeem
 - Judgement
 - People
 - Place

The temptation is to end here but I need to end by showing you how God's people responded. Look at verse 9. **Read verses 9-12.**

The heart of the people and their leaders was full of doubt and discouragement. We are no different

That's why we need the LORD to change our hearts

We need to fight the nonsense that our kids are told as they grow up. That internally we are good, and nice and strong and brave. Many Christians buy into this. Internally, we are rebels, weak scared, and enslaved.

But we follow the LORD. The LORD who can change our hearts.

In conclusion

Can things can only get better? Ultimately yes. But there will probably be opposition and setbacks to gospel advance. But it is the LORD we serve and his promised plans will always be accomplished according to his perfect timing.

Let's pray.