

## Bricks Without Straw

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For hundreds of years the people of Israel were crying out to God to free them from the yoke of Egyptian slavery. And whom does He send as an answer to their pleas and petitions? A former murderer and his silver-tongued speaking brother!

- Frankly, would you trust a fellow to lead you into freedom, who, based on his CV, should have actually been locked up in jail? This chap would have no chance at all in our societies, I'm sure. But this is exactly what I love about God and what gives me hope for my own future: He tends to accomplish the most with those we would label as unqualified outcasts (which, incidentally, doesn't justify the murder). The reason? Because God looks at the heart and not at nice suits, PhDs, master degrees, diplomas and worldly success.

So Exodus 5 starts with Moses and Aaron obediently demanding Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go (V 1), but the Egyptian sovereign can't see any reason why he should obey a God he doesn't even know (V 2). And M & A's explanations and prophetic warnings (V 3) don't help either, cause Pharaoh's mind is completely consumed by the loss of cheap labor an Israelite exodus would mean (V 4-5).

- Nothing has changed, has it? Even today those in charge of worldly enterprises are keen on acquiring or holding onto exploitative cheap labor and rarely have any regard for God's commands.

Pharaoh's consequent response is very harsh as he increases the labor burden for the Israelites the very same day (V 6-14). From now on they have to produce the same quota of bricks without the necessary straw provided. In fact, from this day on they have to gather it themselves, too, and are also beaten up on top of it. Of course, this rasping treatment of the labor force doesn't sit well with the Israelite foremen, so they complain to the Egyptian king (V 15-16). The monarch however doesn't turn out to be as lenient as they thought (V 17-18), so they vent their frustration and anger at M & A (V 19-21).

- How is that for a start? Not only does God send a former murderer to deliver from slavery who, despite his persuasive brother's assistance, fails to convince Pharaoh of the divine plans and instructions. But the reaction caused is so bad that the Israelite leaders wonder whether these two oaks are really sent by God Most High or rather Egyptian under-cover agents, setting the Hebrew people up to be killed. And I wonder. How would we react in a similar situation today where we cry out for God to intervene and all we see is things getting worse? It just occurs to me that even what I do (trying to get the Lord's message across on how to get free from world economic slavery) must look to many like I lost it completely, as those following God's instructions frequently find themselves straight away in a situation worse than before ...

Because things don't work out the way he anticipates, Moses goes back to the Lord (a good thing) and complains about God's orders (a bad thing) (V 22-23). Patient as our Creator is, He explains what is to come in more detail (Exodus 6:1-8), and although M tries to bring these really good news across to his folks, they don't believe him anymore (V 9). How much less would the pagan emperor, M suspects, and reminds the Lord of his inadequacy for the task as he is to go to the king and demand the Hebrew's release again (V 10-12).

- This is probably something we all have to learn: If God gives us a task, He expects us to go about it undeterred, even if His own people question our motive. And I believe, He expects us to see it through, even if it means "bricks without straw" as an immediate reaction. We also should be encouraged to pursue our calling and not shrink back in fear of inadequacy as God has given us everything we need to fulfill the next step and has authorized and anointed us to make use of those gifts and talents.