

**Exodus 6:1-7:13 (1984 NIV)**  
***The LORD is Our Help & Hope***

**Introduction**

A few words by way of recall of the Exodus account up Chapter 5:

- God had sent Moses back to Egypt to deliver His enslaved people.
- God also sent Aaron to meet Moses somewhere in the desert.
- Moses told him everything the Lord had said to him, including making Aaron his spokesman.
- They brought the message of God to the elders of Israel who received that message with gladness.
- Moses with Aaron as his spokesman went to Pharaoh for the first time and said, "The Lord commands you to let His people go into the desert to worship Him" (5:1).
- But Pharaoh rejected Moses' message and in fact made the life of the Hebrew slaves much, much worse.
- He told his men, "These lazy bums tried to get their big brother to tell me to let them go into the desert to worship their God. They must be too free. Give them no straws but demand the same number of bricks from them each day!"
- Their backbreaking labour and hostility of the slave drivers drove the elders of Israel now to go to Pharaoh and ask him for relief, but Pharaoh flatly rejected them.
- So, they came to Moses and Aaron and threw rotten eggs at them saying, "You said God will get Pharaoh to let us go into the desert to worship Him. But now our lives are much harder than before. It is like doing three days work all in one day. What have you done to us?!"
- Their actual words in 5:21 are—"May the LORD look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

Imagine, you did your level best to do what you were told to do for the good of other people. But somehow, the good that was supposed to happen did not happen. Instead, the opposite worst case scenario came on. And these people use your face as their practice target for their rotten eggs. How would you feel? Helpless, hopeless, useless, discouraged ...

This was how Moses and even Aaron were feeling in our passage today. In fact, Moses was so troubled by this that he forgot his real role. He forgot that God alone, and not him, would secure the release of the Israelites. He was merely the tool by which God had chosen to do His work.

After the initial joy of being accepted by the people of Israel as their leader, Moses immediately suffered two back-to-back setbacks that led him once

again crushed in his confidence and certainty in what God had commissioned him.

In today's passage, we will see Moses in his helplessness and hopelessness. But we want to look deeper at how God graciously dealt with Moses in his difficult time. In his helplessness, God was reassuring Moses that ...

### **I. God is always helping us do what is right when others keep complaining what is wrong (6:1-12).**

6:1-12 tells us that Moses was discouraged by the grumbling of the Israelites.

When the Israelites charged Moses and Aaron for bringing increased hardship upon them (5:21), these were Moses' words to God in 5:22-23 - "Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."

If Moses was expecting an apology from God, he would be sorely disappointed. Instead in 6:1-8, the Lord reiterated His faithfulness to His promises to Israelites from the time of Abraham. He then sent Moses again to the Israelites with the same message of deliverance. But 6:9 says: "Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor." No surprise.

And so Moses was about to call it quit in 6:12 – "If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?"

Now, when you look at 6:13-27 carefully in your Bible, there seems to be a disruption to the flow of the storyline so far. These verses talk about the genealogy of Moses and Aaron. Why this sudden switch to focus on Moses' family line when the storyline all along is about Moses' mission back in Egypt?

I believe this so-called disruption in 6:13-27 serves as an intentional attempt to highlight Moses' very ordinary pedigree. Whenever we talk of Moses, we often talk of him as a former prince of Egypt who gave up his royal privileges to defend the cause of justice. As a result, he turned from a royalty to a refugee, fleeing and hiding in the desert for 40 years before God called him back to Egypt to carry out a mission of delivering His people.

Moses' family line in 6:13-27 shows us that he actually came from very humble roots. He was not a descendant of Reuben who's Jacob's firstborn son, but of Levi who's Jacob's third son. And Levi was a man so evil that Jacob denied him an inheritance and cursed his descendants to scatter (Gen 49:5-8). Moses was also only the second son of Amram who was a descendant of Levi. The honour of being the first son of Amram belonged to Aaron.

The simple point is that Moses, the man with whom God so freely conversed, had really few credentials according to his biological Hebrew heritage, not his adopted Egyptian upbringing. So 6:13-27 seems to caution us not to hero-worship Moses by showing us the humble roots of Moses through his family line. This reinforces the truth that God often uses the weak as His instruments to accomplish great works for Himself.

And after this family line disruption in 6:13-27, we come back to the main storyline where 6:10-12 is repeated in 6:28-30.

6:10-12 – Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country.” But Moses said to the LORD, “If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?”

6:28-30 - Now when the LORD spoke to Moses in Egypt, he said to him, “I am the LORD. Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I tell you.” But Moses said to the LORD, “Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?”

Returning to the main storyline in vv. 28-30, Moses argued with the Lord when he was told to go tell Pharaoh again to let the people go. He said he spoke with faltering lips, literally, with “uncircumcised lips”.

Moses viewed himself as one with uncircumcised lips. If someone is uncircumcised it means they were not prepared; they’re not fit for the Lord’s service. Moses himself found that out the hard way back in Ex 4:24 when on his way back to Egypt, he had left his firstborn son (Gershom) uncircumcised, and the Lord almost took Moses’ life in judgment upon him. To be uncircumcised is to be unfit and unprepared for service in the hands of God. And that is what Moses was saying here about his lips. He’s saying they’re not fit for God’s service. And the negative response of the people of God in 6:9 is an evidence of his uselessness. If he could not get an enslaved people to listen to God’s word through him, how then could he get the great Pharaoh to listen?

Moses was complaining to God about other people not listening, when the truth is, he himself wasn’t listening to God as well. He had totally misunderstood God’s call on his life. He seemed to think that it was his job to make Pharaoh agree with God or to make Israel agree with God. He laboured under the impression that it was his responsibility to secure the right outcome for his mission.

Let’s read again what exactly God told Moses:

6:6 – “Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.’”

6:7 – “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.”

6:8 – “And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.’ ”

These are the words of God to Moses. Now, if Moses had listened carefully, who would be doing all the wonderful things that were supposed to be done to the people of Israel? It is God Himself. Moses is just a tool in His hand.

So it is really God's work to open blind eyes and deaf ears. Our work is to proclaim the Word of the Lord as we hear it from Him. So Moses was reluctant to obey because he thought he was supposed to do what only God could do. No wonder he argued with God. He was reluctant because he was discouraged by two things—i) the people refused to listen to God's word through him, and they even blamed him for their predicament; ii) the mistaken thought that he was to do that which only God Himself could do.

It is not our task to make other people believe and obey God's word. This is the work of God. Moses would have to learn, as we all must, that God will do God's work in God's way and in God's time. Our task is to be a willing instrument in the hand of God. And so without realizing it himself, Moses was also not listening to what God was telling him. He was discouraged by how the people rejected God's word through him. And this made him reluctant to appear again before Pharaoh. Once bitten, twice shy!

A discouraged Moses was not listening to God and became reluctant to do what the Lord had commissioned him to do. He forgot that he was just God's hand instrument. When the people refused to listen to what God had to say to them through him, they were in reality not rejecting him, but rejecting God Himself.

God wants us to be true to what He wants us to say and do what He wants us to do. That's our God-given responsibility. And we let God do the work of convicting by His Holy Spirit in the people whom He has called us to serve by our words and actions. We don't play God in their lives, but we let God be God in their lives. This philosophy of ministry will help us not to be discouraged when people seem to be rejecting or slow in responding to our ministry to them.

It is easy to complain and point finger when things are not what we want them to be. The people said, “Moses, look what you have done. You talked to Pharaoh and now he demands that we make bricks without giving us straws. Our lives are more miserable than before. It's all your fault!” Words that lack grace can be discouraging to those trying to be true to what God is saying and

doing through them. So let's season our words with grace and encouragement as we serve the Lord together with our best.

Someone has said: "A minute of encouragement at a time of failure is more precious than an hour of praise after success."

Moses came before Pharaoh and said, "The LORD sent me to tell you to let His people go." Pharaoh's reply was a loud "NO!" Not only that, Pharaoh increased the hardship of the Israelites. Then Moses came to the people of Israel to reiterate God's promise to deliver them. And they called him a big "BLUFF!" It's not easy to take when you have experienced two major back-to-back rejections.

However, God came to Moses again and called him to tell Pharaoh the same message another time. Moses, tired and discouraged by this time, said: "My lips are unclean to speak your holy words. Why would Pharaoh listen to me?"

When Moses was about to give up on his mission, God was not ready to give up on His missionary. God wanted Moses to keep trusting and obeying with Him as his help and hope.

God is always helping us do what is right when others keep complaining what is wrong.

Do you ever feel discouraged in your life? I do. We can feel discouraged anywhere—home, school, office, and even church.

Here are a few things I am trying to put into practice consistently whenever I sense I am feeling tired and discouraged:

- Be aware of my body signals and rest my body whenever I can.
- Reorganize my life priorities so that I will do first things first. Otherwise, everything seems important and urgent.
- Ask God to be my help—discouragement is a choice and I ask God to help me choose to be strong in Him.

Like Moses, if you are tired and discouraged because you have tried your best yet nothing happens, listen to God's word for you in Joshua 1:9 – "... Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Put in another way - *"I AM always your help and hope. My promise of courage is not for the strong, but for the tired and discouraged ones who are still trusting and obeying me."*

We now move on to look at Moses' 2<sup>nd</sup> encounter with Pharaoh and how God continued to be his help and hope in his confrontation with unbelieving defiance. In his hopelessness, God was reassuring Moses that ...

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## **II. There is no hopeless situation but only people who have lost hope in God (7:1-13).**

7:1-13 tells us that Moses was challenged by the hardened defiance of Pharaoh (7:1-13).

God gave Moses and Aaron His instructions in 7:1-2. They're to go and repeat the call of God to Pharaoh to release the people of Israel from bondage.

7:1 – Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet.”

The impact of God making Moses like God to Pharaoh is significant. Pharaoh had considered himself to be a god. Therefore, by making Moses like God to Pharaoh, the Lord was essentially challenging Pharaoh's arrogance like this: “Do you a mere human ruler dare to make yourself a god? I the Almighty Himself will now make Moses, a human refugee, to be like God to you, and fight you as an equal.”

7:3-4 - God says that He “will harden Pharaoh's heart and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you.”

We too may often find God like this. He first makes it easy and then He makes it hard. He reassured Moses that Aaron would help him as his prophet (messenger of God). And next He dropped the bomb—Pharaoh would have no interest in listening to him at all. But God had it all planned out. Pharaoh's eventual obedience would point to his submission not to the command of man, but to the command of God.

When Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh with the message from God, they also had to perform an authenticating miracle. So they cast Aaron's staff on the ground, it turned into a snake. The word for “snake” here actually means “monstrous reptile”. This was the same sign that God had given them back in Chapter 4 that had so impressed the elders of Israel.

But in 7:11-12, it's quite clear that Pharaoh was not at all impressed. His wise men and magicians could also perform the same miracle ... and even many times over, resulting in the ground being covered with monstrous snakes. By the way, the ancient pharaohs of Egypt had used the giant cobra as their emblem of power. So we see here a giant confrontation between two powers—God's divine power vs. the pagan power of Pharaoh.

But then, watch what happened in 7:12 - “Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.” Aaron's staff (snake) swallowed up the staffs (snakes) of Pharaoh's court. It's a dramatic, crystal clear picture of the victory of the power of God over all and every counterfeit. The message to Pharaoh is this: “The Lord reigns and those who

stand against Him will face His judgment. If Pharaoh would challenge the Lord, he would surely lose.”

So we see how God enabled Moses to defeat Pharaoh in such a mighty way as to leave no doubt who the winner was. Unlike Pharaoh who depended on the limited power of his wise men and magicians, Moses depended on the almighty power of God, and handed a resounding defeat to Pharaoh on his own home ground. And this was only a prelude to more embarrassing times for Pharaoh as God through Moses humiliated him with the 10 plagues, demonstrating that the Lord God could control all things that even nature itself had to obey Him.

And yet 7:13 reads: “Yet Pharaoh’s heart became hard and he would not listen to them as the Lord has said.” If Moses would not do what God was telling him, it was because of his discouragement. Now, if Pharaoh would not do what God was telling him, it was because of his hardened defiance against God. So we see here a rebellious man who had already determined early to defy God, and God would later gave him up to his own stubborn will and way so that he would face the consequences of his own wickedness.

God is not only in the business of softening hard, stony hearts. He isn’t only in the business of plucking from destruction sinners and bringing them into His saving mercy. He is also in the business of giving up those who have defiantly, determinedly and unrepentantly rebel and sin against Him to their own wickedness and to face His wrath one day. This is the most solemn truth in this passage—there comes a time when God will not bail defiant sinners out of their determined sinfulness anymore.

God would still be just and righteous in the judgment of Egypt and Pharaoh, as well as in the deliverance of Israel. Those who persistently resist Him may well find themselves hardened and incapable of responding to God’s grace and mercy when next they hear it. It is never safe to say, “Not yet; not now” to the call of God to come to Him.

If you who are not yet believers in Jesus Christ, do not walk away from here today without wanting to hear and know about God’s offer of forgiveness, cleansing of sin, and eternal life to you in Jesus Christ. We invite you to let us share with you after the service about God’s plan of saving you from sin and death in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

A defiant Pharaoh was not listening to God who had confronted him through Moses and Aaron, but became rebellious and hardened in heart. But that is of no consequence. God was determined that Pharaoh would learn to surrender and submit to Him after suffering 10 devastating plagues (Ex 7-11).

For hard nuts like Pharaoh, let God crack them in His own hard way. So God determined that Pharaoh would learn to surrender and submit to Him through

a powerful experience of His wrath and judgment such that he had no other choice but to bend down and low to God.

Here we are reminded that the hearts of men and women; the hearts of everyone in this room, are held in the hand of a sovereign God. And so every trial; every affliction; every difficulty that comes our way is not outside of His purpose, not beyond His control.

God was telling Moses: “No, no, Pharaoh’s heart is my business, Moses. His heart is in my hand. Your task is to speak my words to Pharaoh; my task is to deal with his heart.”

Moses was tired and discouraged, yet he pressed on when the Lord called him to say the same words to Pharaoh again. But he was challenged again by the hardened defiance of Pharaoh. Tough job! Hard life!

So we learn two simple things: i) doing the work that God has called us requires perseverance as it is often not a walk in the park—those that God has called us to reach out may not always welcome us with open hearts, but with open defiance; ii) but God is always at work and holds every situation and every person in His sovereign hand.

There is no hopeless situation but only people who have lost hope in God.

The story is told that the school system in a large city in the US had a programme to help children keep up with their school work during stays in the city’s hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the programme received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child. She took the child’s name and room number and talked briefly with the child’s regular class teacher. “We’re studying nouns and adverbs in his class now,” the regular teacher said, “and I’d be grateful if you could help him understand them so he doesn’t fall too far behind.”

The hospital programme teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain. Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, “I’ve been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs.” When she left she felt she hadn’t accomplished much.

But the next day, a nurse asked her, “What did you do to that boy?” The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. “No, no,” said the nurse. “You don’t know what I mean. We’ve been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He’s fighting back, responding to treatment. It’s as though he’s decided to live.”

Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a



simple realization. He expressed it this way: “They wouldn’t send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?”

(Bits & Pieces, July 1991)

If you feel that you are hopelessly stuck in a situation. Remember, the LORD is our divine Teacher in life and faith. He is real. He is with us. He is in sovereign control. He does not want us to wallow in hopelessness. And if we believe this, there is every reason for us to be hopeful even if everything seems hopeless. Let’s go to Him. Let’s stay the course with Him. Let Him break down any stubborn attitude of unbelief or disobedience in us. Only then will we see a breakthrough ... out of hopelessness and into a new journey of hope with Him and in Him.

Just as the Lord would say to Moses when he was challenged by the open defiance of Pharaoh, He would use the words of Paul to remind us today in 1 Tim 4:10 – “That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.”

Put in another way: *“I AM always your help and hope. Your sacred business is to be faithful to the task that I have given you. Other people’s response to me as Saviour and Lord is MY sovereign business.”*

## Conclusion

God is our source of help and hope. This tremendous truth can bring comfort to all His people:

- To the father trying to raise a godly child in an ungodly world
- To the worker who has to make a stand on unethical practices in the office
- To the slower student who finds the pace too pressurizing and competitive
- To the newly married couple who finds it difficult to balance individual work and time together
- To the Christian who lives in a society that is increasingly redefining moral boundaries

All can find help and hope in God because His desire is to do His greatest works when things are at their worst.

We simply must recognize our own insufficiency and put our faith in God. Through Him and Him alone victory comes—“if God is with us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).

As we go about doing the work God has assigned us, we can take heart in the fact that the work He has for us is in reality work He has ordained for Himself.

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We are simply the tools through which He has chosen to accomplish these tasks. We need only to trust and obey, believing that He will deliver us, even in the most desperate of circumstances.

A 13-year-old boy who had been declared brain dead by doctors in Alabama, USA, regained consciousness the day before doctors were scheduled to pull his life support.

Trenton McKinley had suffered severe brain trauma after a small trailer he was playing in flipped over and hit his head.

After the accident, Trenton was rushed to an Alabama hospital with seven skull fractures and later declared brain dead.

His parents later decided to donate Trenton's organs to save five other children, but the day before doctors were supposed to take Trenton off life support, he regained consciousness.

The teen then continued to improve and was said to be "getting stronger every day". In fact, it was reported that he had been walking, talking, reading and doing mathematics, according to his mother.

Trenton said, "There's no other explanation but God. There's no other way that I could have come back."

(<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/brain-dead-boy-wakes-up-a-day-before-doctors-set-to-pull-life-10213204>)

Indeed, God will make a way where there seems to be no way. We don't read this kind of miraculous happening every time and every day. This is because the Almighty God determines in His sovereignty when and how this kind of happening would come. But because the Almighty can do the humanly impossible, He is then to be our source of help and hope in our times of adversities. The greater the adversity, the sweeter it is when His help comes to restore our hope.

*Let's fix our eyes on the Sovereign God who is always our help and hope in all circumstances. Amen!*