

“The Ego of God”  
Exodus 6:1 – 7:7  
April 3, 2005  
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The text of Scripture we look at today is in the midst of a story that we began 2 ½ months ago and will not finish for a few weeks to come.

Before the death and resurrection of Jesus this story was the greatest story ever told.

The Israelite deliverance from Egypt is referred to in nearly every book of the OT.

It was the sine qua non of their very existence as a people.

Periodically throughout the lives of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God promised them a future with many descendants and a land of their own.

But God also said that before the promise was fulfilled the people would live in slavery in Egypt for 400 years.

Most of you remember the beginning of the story, in Genesis, when Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob was betrayed by his own brothers and sold as a slave and ended up in Egypt.

Eventually, famine in Canaan forced the brothers of Joseph and their families to likewise seek asylum in Egypt.

There they grew in number until, perceived as a threat by the Egyptians, they were enslaved.

The slavery became more and more onerous as the years wore on.

So God called Moses to be his spokesman to deliver the people from their slavery and lead them to the land that had been promised so many years before.

The only problem was that the rulers of Egypt were not about to let their cheap labor disappear. And so the Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go. **But God was not to be refused!**

Please stand for the reading of God’s Word.

Exodus 6:1 - 7:17

In Isaiah 55:11 God said, My Word “will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

May it be so today in our ears and hearts.

Pray

I have quite obviously, but with reluctance, left out of the reading, the genealogy in the latter part of chapter 6.

You will see that the author inserted this partial “family tree” in a way that interrupts the story line.

Central in the genealogy is Aaron, his ancestors and his descendants.

This and a number of other indicators in the text suggest it is inserted to give legitimacy to Aaron’s role in the events of Exodus.

Because of time, I will not detail it for you but notice that both in the genealogy and in the commentary on it, the two leaders, in very unusual fashion, are mentioned in reverse order (not “Moses and Aaron” but “Aaron and Moses”) apparently to emphasize and legitimize Aaron’s role.

Exodus 6:20, 26 “Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, who bore him **Aaron and Moses**.  
Exodus 6:26 “It was this same **Aaron and Moses** to whom the LORD said, “Bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions.”

Coming back to the main story line we find Moses frustrated and discouraged.

In Chapter 5 we learned that Moses went to Pharaoh the first time and got “shot down” royally.

To the request by Moses to let the people go, Pharaoh said, Exodus 5:2 “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.”

And in reaction Pharaoh made things even worse for the enslaved Israelites.

And so we see in our text today that God comes again to Moses and tells him to tell the Israelite people of the freedom that will soon be theirs.

But the people are so discouraged they can’t hear.

Then God commands Moses to go again to Pharaoh and demand the release of the people.

But Moses is so discouraged that he says, Exodus 6:12 “If the **Israelites** will not listen to me, why would **Pharaoh** listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?”

I don't want to be too hard on Moses, since I can't imagine how I would have responded in his situation, but I would say that he isn't very creative – isn't this the same excuse he's been using all along?

It seems that Moses has no self-confidence.

He had had the experience of the burning bush and God speaking to him out of it.

He had had the experience of the shepherd's staff turning into a snake and then back into a staff.

He went to Egypt and met with the Elders of Israel and got them all excited about being freed from slavery.

They all bowed down and worshipped God together in anticipation.

Moses was “on a roll.”

He then went to Pharaoh, made his demands in God's name and....  
Nothing!

No, not “nothing”, he got blindsided – now it was worse for the slaves than before he went.

No wonder Moses said, “If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?”

“God, I don't have what it takes.

Have you ever felt that?

Kent Hughes is the pastor of College Church in Wheaton, Illinois.

Many years ago (and I'm certain many times since) he was discouraged.

He had worked so hard but his church didn't grow in spite of the fact that another evangelical church across town grew rapidly.

Years later in his book Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome Hughes recalled that earlier time and remembered his feelings:

“The ministry is asking too much of me. How can I go on giving all that I have without seeing results, especially when others are (seeing results)? Those who really make it in the ministry are those with exceptional gifts. If I had a great personality, or natural charisma, if I had a celebrity status, a deep resonant voice, a merciless executive ability...I could make it to the top. Where is God in all of this? Just look at the great preachers today. Their success seems to have little to do with God’s Spirit; they’re just superior people! God has called me to do something he hasn’t given me the gifts to accomplish.” (Kent Hughes, Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome in Ryken 199-200)

Most of you won’t identify with Hughes’ circumstances but you can with his discouragement.

What God showed Kent Hughes, and what he will show us through Moses experience, is that it is not about Kent, you, Moses or me.

It is about God!

I recognize that such a statement is often made today –  
“It’s not about me but about Jesus.”

But what does it mean?

In the text, so that we don’t lose track of the story line, the author states Moses’ excuse before the insertion of the genealogy and repeats it after.

Exodus 6:**10-12** Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country.”<sup>2</sup> 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?”

Exodus 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?”

And then we see God’s response in 7:1-5.

- “Moses, I want you to start thinking more positively!”
- “I have this guy I know who has some tapes on personal success that I want you to listen to.”
- “Moses, I want you to understand that you have it in you, you just need to get up and get going again.”

Is that what God says? It sounds silly doesn’t it?

What does he say?

First of all he reminds Moses that he is not responsible to make anything happen, he is just responsible to obey.

Implied in that is that the power is not in Moses' natural ability or any lack of power in Moses' inability but the power is God's.

And secondly, God reminds Moses that the purpose behind all of this activity is not to advance Moses' career or even first of all for the deliverance and happiness of the people of Israel, but the purpose behind it all is the glory of God.

It's as if before going any further with Moses and Aaron, God asks them to step back and get the big picture.

"Moses, you are discouraged and wanting to quit, and the people are all discouraged and reacting **because you and they don't understand what is going on here.**"

"So first of all, I want you to understand, Moses, that this is not about your natural abilities.

- "I will make you like God to the Pharaoh.
- "Right now you are nothing to him, he could squash you like a bug.
- "He thinks he is a god incarnate – the son of the Sun-God Ra.
- "But I am going to work in ways that will make him realize he is dealing with a god that is greater than he is and greater than the Egyptian gods.
- "What I am commanding you to do Moses is **simply to say what I tell you to say.**

Three times or more Moses objects to being God's spokesman.

Three times or more God reminds Moses that all Moses must do is say what God says.

Moses will not bring about the purposes of God by his eloquence but God will bring about his purposes through Moses.

Speaking to the same idea, the Apostle Paul, to the Corinthians, said he did not come in persuasive speech but in the power of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 2:4

In fact, to make certain that the Pharaoh and Moses and the people would know it was the true God who was acting, God said he was going to retard the process by hardening the Pharaoh's heart so he would not listen to Moses.

God was going to make it so hard everyone would know it was humanly impossible.

Then God was going to heap up miracles and signs for everyone to witness.

And then he was going to lay his hand on Egypt with such fearful judgment that absolutely no one could miss the point – God had done it.

The more Moses' efforts "failed" the clearer it would eventually be that it was all God.

The more stubborn Pharaoh became the clearer it would eventually be that it was all God.

It was not the eloquence of Aaron or the magic of Moses or the eventual faint heart of Pharaoh.

God was about to cause an event in human history, the Exodus, that would demonstrate for 1500 years, better than anything else, that He is God.

As I said earlier, nearly every book of the OT points back to this event – the emancipation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery.

And that emancipation commenced in the Passover sacrifice of a lamb in each home.

And this became the defining moment of the people of Israel.

What they couldn't know but we now do is that that event was **pointing forward** to the greatest event in human history – the death and resurrection of the ultimate Passover-Lamb, Jesus.

And that Jesus-event became the defining moment of **all** humanity for all history.

Let's go back to Moses in Egypt.

God is about to do something so big, so much bigger than Moses, bigger than the Pharaoh, and so much bigger than a couple million Hebrews that Moses' ability or inability hardly factors in.

"Moses, just obey!" "I'll do it all."

Do you realize that today God is working in the midst of every detail of history in the same way.

What appears to us to be threatening, impossible, and getting worse not better is fully within the sovereign and benevolent control of God.

He will prove to us that it is not what we are doing but what he is doing that matters most – we are just to obey.

I haven't reminded you yet what it is that God is doing, but know that all Scripture attests to the intentional and powerful intervention of God in our histories.

God is doing it!

As it is sometimes tritely said, "God doesn't need our ability, just our availability."

It does not depend on our competence but on our faithfulness.

And now to second issue this text addresses – What is God doing in all of this?

As I said earlier, God reminds Moses that the purpose behind all of this activity is not to advance Moses' career or even first of all for the deliverance and happiness of the people of Israel, but the purpose behind it all is the glory of God.

I want you to see two passages again that clearly set forth God's purpose in all of this.

Exodus 6:6-8 "I am the LORD, and... I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup> 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...**"

Exodus 7:3-5 “But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, <sup>4</sup> he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. <sup>5</sup> And **the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD** when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it.”

In our shortsightedness, it is very easy to begin to assume that God is there to make our lives easier, to keep bad things from happening, and to insure that we're happy.

Do you see how easy it is for us to hear, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life” and get God's purposes all twisted around in our understanding?

Apparently Moses began to think that the ultimate purpose of God in Egypt was to free the Israelites.

And so when Pharaoh said “No,” Moses thought all was lost. When his own people accused him and rejected him, he was angry and discouraged – he even accused God of failing them.

Yes, God was going to deliver them from slavery but that was not the ultimate goal.

The goal that was above that goal was the demonstration of the glory of God – everyone will know that I am the LORD!

- That's why God created the heavens above – Psalm 19:1 “The heavens declare the glory of God.”
- That's why the Scriptures were given – In that same Psalm (19:7-10), the other way the glory of God is displayed is in the Law of God.
- That's why Jesus came - Hebrews 1:1-3 “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son... The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being...”

Or as the Apostle John said, it, John 1:14 “We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

- And that is why Jesus said John 17:3 “Now this is eternal life: that they may **know you, the only true God**, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

This might be a good time to mention the title I gave to this sermon.  
“The Ego of God”

Because of our **own** proud bent, when we hear that God does everything for his own glory, it is tempting for us to wonder (never out loud) “Is God an egotist?”

Is God so preoccupied with himself that he just can't get enough praise?

When we read Isaiah 43:6-7 “Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth--everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory...” do we think he set the whole universe up so that he would get kudos for eternity?

When we read Hebrews 13:15 “Let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise” do we have the sense that like some self-centered child, God needs our attention OR that he will be displeased if we don't say enough good things about him?

Like some pagan worshipper who brings vegetables or flowers to appease the gods, do we bring our songs and words to meet some need in God to be glorified?

Are we trying to flatter God?

God wants the Egyptians, the Israelites, and the world to know him.  
God wants us to KNOW him because only then do we have true value.

The word “glory” in reference to God in both the Hebrew and Greek speaks of the perfect worthiness and awesomeness of God.

Now this next statement is very important: **God already has all the glory he can ever have.**

You and I can add nothing to the glory of God.

God didn't become more glorious when he created the universe.

He has always been and always will be infinite in his perfections.

We don't and can't add or detract from the glory, the worth, and the awesomeness of God.

Here's another very important statement: **Nothing has any intrinsic value apart from its relationship to God.**

All creation, including humanity, exists because of the creative love of God.

And we only have value as we reflect the glory of God, because everything begins with, exists and ends with God.

The tragedy for the human race, in the sin of Adam and our sin, was that mankind moved away from God – we stopped living in the kind of relationship with God that reflects his glory.

And when we did so, and do so today, we cease being fully the creatures we were meant to be.

We cease having value and we become fit for destruction.

The heavens declare the glory of God – they don't create the glory, they reflect it.

Human beings are made in the image of God and our value is in reflecting his glory.

In a difficult but precise quote an Eastern Orthodox theologian, by the name of Petro Bilaniuk, has written,

“The intrinsic (essential nature of the) glory of God is his holiness, goodness, beauty and all the other attributes. (The true goal of all creation is the extrinsic glory of God - the reflection and manifestation, through creatures, of the intrinsic (essential nature) and substantial (true) glory that is God himself.) Therefore God necessarily ordered all things to his extrinsic glory. Consequently the intrinsic perfection of any creature is in reality the extrinsic glory of God.” (Petro Bilaniuk quoted in

Bloesch, [God the Almighty](#) 127 and paraphrased by GLN)

The butterfly reflects the glory of God when it flits in all its beauty from one flower to another.

The tree reflects the glory of God when it grows strong and tall and shades the earth.

They don't add to God's glory of creativity and benevolence, they reflect it.

Thus only when reflecting the glory of God are we most human, most what we were created to be and most fulfilled as human beings.

That is why the Westminster Catechism begins with, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

This is not due to some selfish need of God's.

This is the loving desire of God for us – he knows that we will continue to destroy ourselves until we reflect his glory.

We were created to be mirrors and mirrors are worthless unless they are reflecting.

The more beautiful is the source, the more beautiful the reflection.

Again, please note we don't add to God's glory, we simply reflect it.

So why does God want the world to KNOW him?

Is it for God's good? No!

It is because one aspect of his perfect glory is that he loves!

Since the "fall" of man in Adam in Genesis 3, God has been in the process of restoring his creation.

His patience is seen in his actions generation after generation to demonstrate his glory so that everyone will know that he is the LORD.

So that we may be restored to that relationship with him wherein is life.

The death and resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate expression of the Glory of God ("that they may know")

Philippians 2:10-11 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

It is advisable to know that the glory of God will be reflected both in redemption and in judgment.

**Every** knee will bow... and **every** tongue confess.”

Some will bow only in judgment but many others will bow in adoration as part of the redeemed.

Judgment will reflect the glory of the holiness of God.

Redemption will reflect the glory of the mercy and grace of God.

The Apostle Paul this in Romans 9:

Romans 9:22-23 “What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power (glory) known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction? (And) what if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy?

Hell is not only the place of divine judgment it is also the logical and natural consequence of the worthlessness of everything apart from God.

In our text today God speaks of revealing his glory this way:

Exodus 6:6-7 “I will **redeem** you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of **judgment** (against Egypt)... **Then you will know that I am the LORD your God,**

Exodus 7:5 “And **the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD** when I stretch out my hand against Egypt (**judgment**) and bring the Israelites out of it (**redemption**).”

But while God will ultimately demonstrate his glory even in judgment, the Apostle John makes it abundantly clear that is not his goal at the moment.

John 3:16-18 ““For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.”

And so theologian Donald Bloesch writes, “The divine purpose in creation and redemption is not to procure glory for either the Father or the Son but to communicate and manifest (his) eternal glory to the whole of creation. The **goal** is the transfiguration of the cosmos (the redemption of the universe); the **motivation** is self-giving love that proceeds out of a heart of boundless compassion. God’s loving acts redound to his glory, but they proceed out of his own free decision to share the goodness of his being. He has no need to go out of himself to create and redeem, for he already possesses creative love within himself. He already shares his bountiful capacity to love within the fellowship of the persons of the Trinity. He is not metaphysically bound to go out of himself to create, but he wills to do so out of inexplicable love that (reflects) his glory but does not make him more (glorious). (Bloesch, 127)

To Moses, to the people of Israel, and to us God is saying the circumstances may seem impossible, they may be painful, resolution may take far longer than you thought necessary, but understand this:

“I am making myself known; I am communicating my glory in judgment and mercy.

“And I am doing so that you may know me because only in relationship with me, only by reflecting my glory, will you be fully human.

And so finally we see that it is all about God.

But in that it is also about us because God chooses out of his infinite compassion to allow us to live in relationship with him reflecting, radiating, and sharing in his glory.

That’s why Jesus said, “I have come that they might have life,” and “This is life that they may know the only true God...”

AMEN

Other quotes and comments:

“God loves us not in order to give himself greater glory, but he glorifies himself in the act of self-giving love... Through his love he communicates his glory, but he does not seek to gain glory by loving, for glory already belongs to him. As mortals we cannot add to the glory of God because God is not deficient in any perfection. We cannot contribute to God’s enrichment but the fullness of his glory and perfection can be reflected in our lives – in our words and acts.” (Bloesch, 127)

“Yahweh is concerned to bring Pharaoh to an experiential knowledge of God’s powerful presence, not of Moses’ truthfulness or Aaron’s eloquence.” (John Dunham, Exodus, 87)

“Thus Yahweh is orchestrating, in a combination of opposing and unlikely forces, a deliverance that will above all be a proof of his active presence. A reluctant Moses, an unbelieving Pharaoh, a crushed and dispirited Israel, a proud and ruling Egyptian people, a non-nation against the greatest of nations, are brought together, and the opposites are set still more firmly in their respective ways, so that the proof of Yahweh’s presence, which is to turn everything upside down, may be established irrevocably.” (John Dunham, 87)

God is creating an impasse to demonstrate his immensity.

The relationship of God’s glory and our good:

The glory of God (his worthiness and awesomeness), which is the result of his holiness, wisdom, power and love, is demonstrated in his works (creation, providence, sovereignty, and judgment) and most clearly in his Son.

Nature and humanity are not the source of glory but witnesses to the glory of God.

“God glorifies himself by revealing and communicating his power and mercy. Barth put it so well: ‘God stands in need of nothing else. He has full satisfaction in Himself. Nothing else can remotely satisfy him. Yet he satisfies Himself by showing and manifesting and communicating himself as the One who is.’” (Bloesch, God the Almighty, 126)