

## Challenge of Godliness (Exodus Chapter 5)

I In any contest between God and Man, God will win. (For most believers, this statement should be a self-evident truth. No one who has ever read the First Chapter of Genesis, or the last five Chapters of Job, would expect to demand anything from God and walk away unscathed. Challenging God about anything is probably the most foolish thing men design to do. Pharaoh, however, did not know God, or know these things about God. Nevertheless, men of our time, who should know better, are just as foolish as Pharaoh was.)

A For about 90 years, secular western education has been atheistic. (Beginning in 1920 John Dewey, professor of education at Columbia University, declared unequivocally that God was dead. His philosophy has guided western educational policies ever since, and Korean educational policies since about 1998. The disciples of John Dewey became the leaders in American schools after World War Two, and the misguided victims of educational policies derived from secular humanism created, over the next 50 years, the youth which you see coming to Korea to teach English now, unable as they are to articulate a coherent declarative sentence, or to spell it or to punctuate it correctly. These policies have changed Korean schools too. In the days when boys went to one school and girls went to another, when schools enforced regulations about uniforms and haircuts, and adhered to strict attendance policies, no teenagers were arrested for vandalism and larceny, far fewer of them smoked or drank, and parents did not impoverish themselves by giving their kids the latest- most fashionable clothing and the newest and most up-to-date electronic toys, so they could have what all their friends had and not feel left-out of a group. Such —and worse!— are the results of humanistic attempts to replace God with schools, as our moral authority.)

B The existence of God is independent of human acknowledgement of Him. (God has always allowed men to exercise free will and ignore Him if they chose,

and He will continue to do so. God is no more threatened by Dewey's influence than He was by Pharaoh's. Our Heavenly Father Who is One Eternal Spirit neither died because Dewey pronounced Him dead, nor suffered some Divine identity crisis because Pharaoh questioned His Authority; and just as Judgment Day for Pharaoh was soon to arrive, so it shall for us all. Romans 14:11 tells us *Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess*, and in Revelation 1:7 we see, *every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him*. Can we not imagine the dread that will surely be growing in the hearts of liberals, whose pleas of *have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* (Matthew 7:22) are all met with *Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you* (verse 23)... and can you imagine the desperate attempts to think of something more to say, by the souls a little further back in line? They shall indeed meet, and be judged by, the God Whose moral authority they rejected during their lives, and there will be no appeal from that Final Judgment. The time to honor God as our Lord and Jesus as our Savior is now, when our service might still inspire other people to react —either well or badly.)

II Time we dedicate to God takes time away from worldly pursuits. (Our first thought is likely to be, well, that would be a good thing. Then when we start prioritizing the worldly pursuits that distract us from godliness, and try to decide which to eliminate and which to continue to indulge, are we not likely to give up in despair, thinking something like, How can God forbid something that everyone (except possibly our pastor) does, and most of the time, too? Will God, in His mercy, not make an exception for someone (like me) who tries so hard to do the right thing most of the time? Our humanism is instructed by our educational experiences, to reject —or at least to evade— God's moral authority with excuses that sound good to us. So in the end, just as Pharaoh thought that making the

Israelites gather their own straw for brick-making was a good way to control them, we start thinking that a little T.V. now and then, or an occasional evening at a movie theater or singing room, (or pool hall or soju bang?) is a good way to balance social activity and moral responsibility.)

A The construction industry of Egypt depended on slave labor. (Israelite and other slaves produced the bricks of which Pharaoh's treasure cities at Pithom and Raamses were built. Any interruption of that production could create an economic crisis with consequences that reached much further than a simple construction delay. Also, a 3-day disruption in the slave-labor supply could quite possibly spread to other sectors of the economy, making a real crisis in the social order. So the only way forward for Pharaoh was the continuation of failed government policies that were designed to secure the position of the ruling dynasty. Does this sound familiar, from contemporary news accounts of government policy planning?)

B (It does sound remarkably familiar, especially with respect to government policies that have failed.) Institutions depend on clients to legitimize their existence. (What would be the point, after all, in maintaining public schools at government expense, if people were free to teach their children at home or in their churches instead of sending them to the government school? So the government imposes compulsory attendance laws, to keep the schools full, keep teachers employed, and most importantly, to keep the channel open, by which the next generation can be indoctrinated with the principles of secular humanism, by which yet another generation is persuaded of the need to continue the same failed policies. Or, regarding Exodus Chapter Five, how could Pharaoh justify keeping so many people in bondage, except by claiming that their freedom would become a threat to national security? And how can he make the threat appear real, without the apparent economic need for the continuation of slavery? In other words, the clients of the government policies were the slaves, and the presence of the slaves

justified the government policies. This, for those who can understand it, is another symbol of how a nation-state has replaced Pharaoh as Repressor of God's people. )

C (How? Or, why is this important?) One very plain example is that The Fourth Commandment tells us to keep the Sabbath Day Holy, and God meant, all day long. (Granted, the Biblical Sabbath was Saturday. It began at sundown on Friday and continued until sundown Saturday. So when Jesus rose from the dead on the First Day of the week, the calendar would have read *Sunday*. Because of the Resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week, we call Sunday "The Lord's Day", and ever since the first Lord's Day, Christians have met together to pray and worship God on Sunday. It is only fair to point out that in all *other* respects, the Seventh Day Adventists are no different from other Bible believing Christians. The only difference from us is that they use Saturday as their Sabbath, as was the Biblical model. The point is that the Sabbath Day is all day long, not only the few hours we spend together in church. The Sabbath should include all of the time before we come for church, and all of the time after we leave it, and so it is important that our activities on Sunday are, simply, rest and worship. We may be quite sure that God will forgive us for using Sunday for our Sabbath instead of Saturday, but we may be equally sure that He is offended by anything that pollutes the holiness of the Sabbath. Let us be more careful, then, about what we do, and say, and with whom, and for whom and for what, we use our time on Sundays. Now how many people do you know who separate themselves entirely from their secular vocations and their worldly entertainments for the sake of godliness on Sunday? Or, how many stores and game rooms and hagwons do you think would be open on Sundays, if everyone spent Sundays resting and worshipping God?)

III Life is likely to be harder, not easier, for sincere Christians. (Let's look at this from Moses' point of view for a moment. The Israelites have been praying for God to help them for quite some time. Moses returned to Egypt to lead them to the

Promised Land. Moses and Aaron have persuaded the Elders that God is really going to help them. Moses knows that Pharaoh will be harder to persuade; but now he must contend with unhappy Israelites too. They are willing and ready to leave Egypt; they are not willing to suffer more abuse before they go.)

A In the Bible story, God's demand was met with immediate rejection and repression. Not only does Pharaoh tell Moses that they cannot leave, he proceeds to tell the slave drivers to drive the slaves even harder. The Israelite foremen are beaten, and they complain, but to no avail. Whom shall they blame? Moses appears to be the reason for their new problems, so they turn on him. Is that not human nature? We choose leaders or join groups because of what we think has happened, or what we think will happen. Then when reality falls short of our expectations, we tend to turn against the leader or the group very easily. Let us recognize then, that problems of leadership are often problems of follower-ship; that is, they are problems that arise from disparate expectations and realities. But we must keep our Biblical perspective here. God chose Moses, Moses did not choose himself. Pharaoh's refusal was a rejection of God, not of Moses. So was that of the Israelites, but they didn't see it that way. They saw their expectation of immediate release from slavery evaporate as soon as Moses went to Pharaoh; they saw the increase of their own misery as a result, and they saw Moses and Aaron, standing by like spectators, watching it all unfold. So Moses, and many Christian leaders too, must deal with the realities that follow unrealistic expectations, in addition to fighting the spiritual battles against Pharaoh, or his contemporary equivalents.)

B We tend to think that working on Sunday will increase our efficiency during the rest of the week. (Perhaps you can think of other unrealistic expectations and false hopes; but this one will illustrate the point well enough. We want to get a head start on next week, or we need to catch up some things we neglected during the previous week. So we rob God of His honor on the Sabbath, and wonder why

He doesn't share more of His wealth with us during the rest of the week. Similarly, students who neglect school work for foolishness during the week try to catch up on their studying on Sundays, and then wonder why God doesn't help them score better on tests at school. Sincere Christians frequently wonder how to balance the demands of their social (and vocational) environment against the Fourth Commandment and other examples of godliness, forgetting, until they read the Bible prayerfully, that God will not compromise with them concerning worldliness in any form. In other words, the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land begins with rejection of Egypt and Egyptian-ness in favor of godliness. We must reject it and we must leave it behind. We cannot go forward until we do. Now the moving forward is also a moving away, away from what is comfortable and familiar, into what is unfamiliar, and maybe even uncomfortable. So let us ask whether the Promised Land (of Heaven) is worth our sacrificing worldliness to enter it? Especially when the worldliness we indulge interferes so much with our prayerful reading of the Bible, which is the only way by which we can gain any solace from God in our misery?)

C God can give us all the success we need during six days, if we rest and worship Him on the Seventh. (The operative word in this promise is "need". God knows our needs, and He has promised to take care of us. He did not promise that we will all be as wealthy as we want to be, no matter what illusory vanity the liberals inspire with their Prosperity Gospel. If we do God's work, in His Way, He will make it—that is, His Work—succeed. For us, as a church, that means delivering the Gospel message to unbelievers faithfully, and without the program-centric addendums with which the Gospel is so commonly perverted by so-called evangelists in the institutional churches. God's Work is also that we edify one another—that is, build up one another, in love, in the Spirit of Christ, rather than indulging the face-saving sanctimony falsely called worship by the contemporary church. For Moses, and Aaron, that meant ignoring the obstructionism of the

foremen *and* following God's Word precisely in their confrontations with Pharaoh. Success then, for us, is measured by our spiritual growth, *in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (2 Peter 3:18), not in sizes of congregations or bank accounts. For Moses, success was to be measured in the Glory of God as revealed to Pharaoh and the Children of Israel, not in hours and minutes until the Exodus would begin. For the Children of Israel, success would be measured by how thoroughly they evacuated from Egypt, with their minds and hearts, as well as with their bodies. We see then, that God measures our successes or failures by a different standard than we normally use. Let us learn to convert our units of measure to His Standards —of holiness and righteousness!)

IV Sincere believers should expect meddlesome busybodies to impede the Holy Spirit as He works in our lives. (Meddlesome busybodies are, by definition, people who intrude into our affairs with unsolicited advice about alternative agendas. We all know some of them: they are the people who tell us what they think even before we ask; they have impressive sounding plans which they are sure would work if we only tried doing things their way; they know of other people or groups that could work even better if we co-operated with them to accomplish mutual goals. People like that don't care what damage they do to our group, as long as theirs looks good on the platform for a dedication service. We all know the problems of that nature that we have left behind; we might not realize that Moses faced the same problem in the foremen, at the end of Chapter Five.)

A Israelite foremen began opposing Moses almost immediately. (In one respect it is unfair to blame them too much for being rude to Moses and Aaron; after all it was the foremen who were beaten when the slaves failed to meet their production quotas. Yet we *can* find cause to blame them, and the meddlesome busybodies in our lives, too. Just as the group leaders in big organizations want the chief (the senior pastor, for example) to be pleased with their group's size,

and just as a franchise manager wants the district manager to be happy with his sales figures, these foremen wanted the slave drivers to be happy (and then kind and gentle) with them. They sought desperately for approval by Pharaoh, as businessmen and church group leaders also strive to make their products and programs look good in the eyes of others. All semblance of godliness is often sacrificed in pursuit of personal success. So then it is their nature to resent things or people that strip away the masks by which they hide truth about themselves, or otherwise impede *their* success. May God deliver us from the spirit of Egypt!)

B Deliverance will be all the more welcome after increased oppression. (We have seen that God intends to perform many signs and wonders, to demonstrate His Divine Power to the Egyptians and to the Children of Israel. Could God not do everything at once, and all in the same night? No doubt that would have made life easier for the foremen; but making their lives easy was not God's purpose. People have a remarkable ability to adjust, even to hardships. When things go badly, we complain, but we adjust. We often become so comfortable with our adjustments that we scarcely notice the inconveniences that required them anymore. People who live in foreign countries for a long time either make such adjustments or succumb to culture shock. Now the Children of Israel had had 400 years to adjust to Egypt. They had had over 40 years to adjust to the rigors of slavery. In time, they would have forgotten how to be Hebrews and either assimilated into the new order or died of fatigue, at least so hoped Pharaoh. Then along came Moses with his message of Redemption, and hope revived. Pharaoh cannot allow their hope to blossom and expect to maintain his position at the top of the social order too. His new orders, that the slaves gather their own straw, will also become part of God's plans. The Children of Israel will later celebrate their deliverance from Egypt, in part because of the odious conditions they left behind; and some of them will forget how bad things were and long to return. God will use this, too, to show

them both the fierceness of His Wrath and the uniqueness of His mercy.)

C Some busybodies think they are serving God too. (Before we leave these foremen (and their contemporary church equivalents) to their historical and prophetic fates, we should note that the foremen still thought of themselves as Hebrews, and the busybodies in churches still think of themselves as Christians. We raise this point because the foremen went to Pharaoh to protest his unfair treatment of all the Hebrew slaves. Their own mistreatment was only the catalyst. They may have thought that they were actually doing a service to God, by trying to ease the burden on His people. What a profound parallel! There are surely workers in contemporary churches who think that they are doing God a big favor by making institutional churches look better by adding warm bodies to empty pews, and incidentally, improving their own ecclesiastical positions at the same time. The foremen, and their modern counterparts in the churches, have missed the point about what God wants. God wanted the Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt, not the continuation of their servitude; and God wants our separation from worldliness, not our accommodation of it in the name of evangelism. In fact, activities that do not challenge unbelievers to repent sin and convert to Faith in Christ are not evangelistic at all; and self-serving hypocrisy is not evangelism.)

V In any challenge men might raise against God, men will lose. (Our educational experiences prepare us with the intellectual tools to challenge the moral authority of God; but sadly, church experiences do not prepare us to answer the challenge. This is due largely to the fact that government schools have also trained the leadership of the churches in the principles of secular humanism. We began by saying that God will win and men will lose, in any challenge to the authority of God; and Divine authority is by no means diminished if God invests it, for a time, in a man, i.e., Moses. The Children of Israel will perform the Will of God, and the schemes of Pharaoh will be frustrated. For us, then, the lesson is that the Church

also will perform the Will of God, and it will not be church if it does not; and furthermore, the Children of God will be the instruments of the Will of God, whether they are members of an institutional church or not. We will surrender our individual lives to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, which means that we will mark and maintain a difference between godliness and worldliness *in our own lives*, even if our lives in this world are harder because of the difference. Humanism in us will lose the battle against godliness in us, precisely because we, with our free will, choose to live godly. Moses made that choice, and spent the rest of his life trying to help the Children of Israel make it. Those who made the Will of God their will as well—only two of them, as we shall see—survived the Exodus and entered Canaan.)

A God's Will for us is to evangelize unbelievers and edify believers. (We will bring His Will to fruition only by separating ourselves from the egyptian-ness of the secular culture around us and following God's Word faithfully. We can do this in co-operation and fellowship with anyone who will co-operate with us to achieve it; but we must not compromise about the Will of God for our church or for ourselves as individuals, so that some contemporary equivalent to the Hebrew foremen can have an easier and more comfortable position, in the limelight of approval from the other *egyptians* in institutional churches.)

B Chapters 6-12 show us how Pharaoh lost his challenge to God. (For every miracle that Moses performed as a sign of God's Power, Pharaoh could produce a counterfeit, by which he persuaded himself that he was every bit equal to God. God hardened his heart with that delusion, until the Angel of Death took away the firstborn child from every home in Egypt. Only the Blood of the Passover Lamb protected the Children of Israel, in the Land of Goshen, and only the Blood of the Lamb of God will protect us, when all that is ungodly, unholy, unrighteous, will perish. May God help us to prepare for that Day, by increasing of our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.)