

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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Pharaoh Ignores God's Call

Exodus 5:1-9, 22 – 6:1

Key Verse: Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness" (Exodus 5:1).

I was five years old, and I had the greatest kite ever flown, at least in my eyes. You see, for my fifth birthday, my dad gave me a homemade kite. He made it with his own hands, from balsa wood, newsprint paper without the print, and a tail made from swatches of Mom's leftover sewing fabric. Best of all, Dad had stenciled on the kite in large letters my name, MIKE.

We flew my new kite together, just the two of us, on a windy hill outside town. It was the best birthday ever! I treasure that memory on this Father's Day of 2009, and I treasure the love of a father now gone to be with our Lord in heaven. I also am reminded of a truth about kites and about life: "Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it" (Winston Churchill).

That is true about life and true when it comes to obeying God's call on our lives. Moses made this discovery when, having surrendered to God's call at the burning bush, he went to Pharaoh and said, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness'" (Ex. 5:1). Pharaoh was unimpressed: "Who is the Lord, that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go" (Ex. 5:2).

Things went downhill from that point. Pharaoh ordered that the Hebrews should start making their bricks without the normal supply of straw. Instead of moving toward freedom, their slavery had become even more unbearable.

Here is the point for us who are Christ followers: Often, when we take steps to answer God's call, things get worse before they get better. In fact, "Quite often the absence of immediate success is the mark of a genuine call" (Bruce Larson, *My Creator, My Friend*, p. 63, Word 1986).

The Bible gives us at least two reasons why following God's call won't always lead to smooth sailing. First, *we live in a world that does not submit to God's authority or to the Lordship of Christ*. "All that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever" (1 John 2:16-17).

Second, *following God's call often involves us in spiritual warfare*. "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

When Moses faced Pharaoh's rejection of God's authority, he became discouraged and asked God: "Why did you ever send me? Since I first came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has mistreated this people, and you have done nothing at all to deliver your people" (Ex. 5:22).

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh: Indeed, by a mighty hand he will let them go; by a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land'" (Ex. 6:1).

As Christ followers, we should not expect that obeying our Lord's call will always be easy. It will be joyful and supremely worthwhile, but it will not always be easy. Yet, if we will persevere, we will see God deliver us with his "mighty hand"! We live in a world that is not a friend to grace. We face an adversary, Satan, that opposes Christ and those who follow Him. But we must never forget, "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Following Christ and obeying his call on our lives—sometimes it means going *against the wind*. But let us never forget, "Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it"!

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