
EXODUS 6:6-9

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

"Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the Lord.' So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage." ~Exodus 6:6-9

Even though Moses spoke the exact words of the Lord to the people of Israel—promising them deliverance from their taskmasters—the people “*did not listen*.” Sometimes it is nearly impossible to hear even when the words are exactly what we need to hear. In this case, the words from the Lord did not even involve any sort of correction; no statements regarding the people having done something for which they needed to repent. God was simply saying, “Fear not, I am going to rescue you.”

Apparently, the people of God were “short of spirit” (despondent); their impoverished conditions had bred an impatient hopelessness in their hearts. Unless they could see immediate relief from their bondage, they did not want to hear anything from anyone. Like bodies forced for too long into cramped and awkward postures, they had grown stiff and sore in their minds and souls; they did not have the vitality or the patience to embrace any empty-seeming words.

“Fix our circumstances now, or keep quiet. What do you know about our bondage? You don’t understand our situation. Easy for you to talk, you do not have to live here.” These are the responses of despondent people to counsel brought from the Lord. I can so easily see myself in those responses. Recently, a trusted friend and pastor tried to point out an area of bondage in my life, and more importantly, a way out of that bondage. He urged me to take a few simple steps—like, “going to Pharaoh.” I tried to tell him that what he ‘saw’ wasn’t my problem. My troubles came from another area (person). My friend wouldn’t change his counsel.

I kept trying to get him to counsel me according to what I thought was the real situation: I wanted my counselor to follow my counsel—to embrace my impatience of spirit. When the counsel did not change to my satisfaction, I was tempted to disregard it. I could not hear what he was telling me; his solution did not seem to fit with my problem. I wanted to dismiss it as wrong counsel. But I knew this man well. He had a track record of credibility in my life—years of faithful, insightful, and life-giving counsel in my life.

I understood the principle of submission: not a blind, mindless *I'll-do-anything-you-say* subservience, but a willing, patient *I'll-really-consider-whatever-you-say* decision, not to dismiss too quickly the thoughts shared by a trusted, loving leader in my life.

The more that I meditated on what he was telling me, the more I began to see things in my life that: 1) were absolutely poisoning my soul, and 2) had been hidden from my sight. Like I do with a good piece of hard candy, I “sucked” on my friend’s counsel for several days, and as I did, the Lord in His mercy opened my eyes to the real points of captivity in my soul.

When I am in severe straights, when my bondage has enveloped areas of my life for a long time, it can be very difficult to hear words from the Lord. Rather than disregarding counsel that doesn’t seem to adequately address my cruel circumstances, I want to give it a second chance. Sadly, many sincere believers who do not have trusted authorities in their lives go through life evaluating counsel they receive, merely on the basis of whether or not it seems to answer their problems *right now*.

I take two lessons from this scripture: one for myself, as a reminder for my own spiritual well-being, and the other to keep in mind when I am trying to help people who are struggling and appear to remain *stuck* in their bondage.