

---

## Prayers

### To God

*Kneel down to pray, and use the Lord's prayer as a basis for your praise and worship*

### For myself

Weekly theme: Personal faith

I will praise You, O Lord, for You rescued me from the depths and You did not let my enemies rejoice over me. I called out to You for help, and You healed me; You turned my weeping into dancing, and You took away my mourning and clothed me with joy. So my heart will sing Your praise and not be silent, O Lord my God, and I will give You thanks for ever more. AMEN

### For others

*Pray for those who struggle with wanting to die, whether for psychological reasons or because of dire illness, or as a result of great tragedy. Pray for those who work with the suicidal, for example, the Samaritans.*

---

## Meditation

What language is on your lips today?  
Is it the language of love?  
Can you face all people, everywhere,  
Whenever, whoever and however they are,  
And speak to them of love?

Speak love, by smiling, by laughing and crying,  
Speak love, by forgiving and mending broken hearts.

Speak love, by connecting the old with the young,  
Speak love, by sharing between rich and poor.

Speak love, by letting yourself go in the Spirit,  
Speak love, by being a new creature in Jesus.

Speak love, by accepting others for who they are,  
Speak love, by sharing the good news of Christ..

What is the language on your lips today?  
Let love in your heart be your reason to speak,  
And may Christ be your message and joy.

---

## Bible Passage

### Exodus 6:2-13

<sup>2</sup> God also said to Moses:

***"I am the LORD. <sup>3</sup> I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but I did not make myself known to them by my name 'The LORD'. <sup>4</sup> I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land where they lived as aliens. <sup>5</sup> I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians hold enslaved, and I have remembered my covenant.***

***<sup>6</sup> "Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from the burdens of the Egyptians and set you free from your slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup> I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who has released you from the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup> I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you as your possession. I am the LORD.'"***

<sup>9</sup> Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen to him because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery.

<sup>10</sup> So the LORD said to Moses,

***<sup>11</sup> 'Go and tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to allow the Israelites to leave his land.'***

<sup>12</sup> But Moses said to the LORD,

***'If the Israelites would not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, when I am such a poor speaker?'***

<sup>13</sup> The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron about the Israelites and Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He gave them orders to bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.

---

## Review

After all that happened in chapter 5, Moses and the people of Israel were entitled to be gloomy. Their first attempt to confront Pharaoh had been thoroughly unsuccessful. If we look at what happened dispassionately, we can suggest that Moses had not done any of the signs and wonders before Pharaoh that God had given him, as instructed (4:17). However, as with so many great stories of the Old Testament, the release of the Israelites from slavery was not going to be simple. Much more was yet to come.

In their misery at the extra burdens placed on the people by their taskmasters, the people had become angry with Moses for getting them into this difficulty (5:21), and their faith in God was compromised. Moses then complained to God about what had happened, because it was nothing like what had been anticipated (5:22f.). But God was not silent; He was indeed present with His people and powerful to save, but neither Moses nor the people perceived what was happening. So it was time for God to reveal Himself yet again to Moses. Today's passage of Scripture therefore contains the story of God's remarkable further revelation of Himself to Moses (6:3-5), which reinforces His previous revelation (3:13-15), and He adds to this His specific promise of salvation to the people of Israel (6:6-8). It then describes the two

things that stood in the way of God's work; these were Israel's lack of faith in God and Moses' personal inadequacy and doubt that God could use him. But we are left with the firm impression that despite all the problems, God was not going to let His people down or fail to fulfil His promises.

The first half of God's speech here in this passage (6:2-4) begins with words which repeat the great revelation Moses had received earlier; '*I am the LORD ...*' (6:2, 3:14). This, together with the explicit connection between the Lord and the forefathers '*Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*' (3:16, 6:3), became a formula of words that expressed the faith of Israel, found throughout the Bible (Exodus 3:16, 4:4, 6:3,8, 1 Kings 18:36 2 Chron 30:6 etc.). However, the point here is more subtle. God had indeed appeared to Israel's forefathers and established His covenant with them, a relationship guaranteeing God's care and protection providing Israel remained obedient to Him (Gen 22:15-19). But the Lord says here that He did not reveal '*His name*' (6:3) to these forefathers; the revelation of God's name given to Moses was new, and proof of God's intent. God was doing something new in the midst of His people, and he wanted them to appreciate this.

As you read this you may be puzzled, because if you read through Genesis 12-21, you will read a number of stories of Abraham in which God is referred to as '*the LORD*' (Genesis 12:8, 15:7 etc.). So why does God say that His name had not been revealed earlier? However, there is a difference between the name '*the Lord*' spoken of by the forefathers and the new revelation given to Moses at the '*burning bush*' (3:13-15). There, God spoke to Him to reveal a special form of the Hebrew word for '*the Lord*', which is translated '*I am*' (3:14), a new name emphasising God's power to act and do His will. As God makes it clear, he is intent on doing the work of salvation (6:5); under His covenant, He has promised to save His people when they need His help. He is not passive but active, and this is what He will do.

In the second half of God's speech, He tells Moses to inform to the Israelites so they are ready for what lies ahead. If Israel did anything God told them it would be an act of faith, but wanted their cooperation not their opposition (6:6,7). As a whole, the paragraph contains a further summary of God's promises together with the signs and wonders that he promised to do for His people, but there is one very important feature.

God says in verse 6 that He will '*redeem*' His people. Now we may well be familiar with such language today but this was the first time God said this to His people; it is the first occurrence of the important word '*redeem*' within the Bible. The word '*redeem*' means that God will not just '*save*' His people, He will do something to '*buy them back*'; it means to pay a certain amount to get something back. This is the first time the Bible speaks of God as so involved with His people that He is willing to give up something of His own in order to save them. This is a vital feature of God's saving work as done through Jesus Christ, God's own Son, given up for our redemption so that we might be saved.

Then in the last part of His speech, God declares to Israel, '*I will take you as my people*' (6:7) and says he will give them a land in which to live. The people of the day found it hard to take this message in because it was deeper than they could take in at that time, and '*because of their broken spirit ...*' (6:9). But this promise of God was not just for those who heard it first time; it was for later generations, so that they could understand what God had done for them. It is worth us remembering this, because God may well speak to us now to say something not just to us, but to those who come after us. He wants His people to be able to look back on events and understand them from His perspective.

As we read the final verses of this passage, we can almost feel the weight of the bondage in which the people of God were held (6:9,12). However, it seems that Israel's lack of faith had affected even Moses, because he reiterates one of his main fears. We read earlier that Moses was concerned about his inability to '*speak*' (4:10), and this had been a source of difficulty in the relationship between Moses and the Lord (4:14f.). However, it did not stop the Lord continuing to plan ahead for the work He was about to do. Moses was not alone; he

was accompanied by his brother Aaron, and the two were instructed by the Lord together about what would happen next (4:13). When we read about Moses' difficulties we can understand that he was worried about his personal difficulties; we would feel the same. But nothing was going to stand in the way of God achieving His purposes.

---

## Going Deeper

### **Further Comments**

The names of God and the mention of 'covenant' are two examples of how this passage makes connections between the time of Moses and the forefathers. It is important to see how this works and how it may have helped the people of Israel. As we look further at this text, there are also lessons to be learned about how Moses handles this stage of the work that God had commissioned him to do.

#### **God's revelation to Moses (and Aaron)**

God addressed Moses at the beginning of this passage with the same name that had been revealed to him on the Mountain of God; 'I am the Lord' (3:15,16). This name in Hebrew is JHWH, and is what we now recognise as the holy name of God, a name not pronounced in Hebrew, but substituted by the word 'Lord'. God then said that He appeared to the forefathers as 'God Almighty' (Hebrew - 'El Shaddai'), a name that was indeed well used (Gen 17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14 etc), but if you read through Genesis, you will find that the two names of God, 'El' and 'JHWH' are used most of the time. What therefore can this passage mean when it says that there is a distinction between the two, and that JHWH is a new revelation to Moses?

It is best to remember that the stories of Genesis were recorded not by the people who experienced them, but by those who came later. Whoever wrote Genesis, whether it was Moses (as suggested in the New Testament, e.g. Matt 19:7, Mark 12:19) or someone later, it would have been natural for them to write using the name of God they knew, JHWH. This much explains the use of the word in Genesis, including the stories of the forefathers. Now, if you look at the covenant as it is revealed in Genesis, you will find that it climaxes in chapter 17, where God concludes the covenant agreements revealed over the previous chapters with the sign of circumcision (Gen 17:9f.) It is in this passage that God reveals his name to Abraham as 'El Shaddai', or God Almighty (Gen 17:1). For this reason, it is indeed entirely new for God to reveal Himself as 'JHWH' alongside a confirmation of the covenant (6:4).

In this revelation, Moses received the covenant promise largely as a promise of land (6:4). This connection was first made in Genesis 13 when Abraham surveyed the whole land of Canaan (Gen 13:14-17), but another important passage which links with the Exodus story comes in Genesis 15, where God prophesied the enslavement of His people and their eventual deliverance:

*<sup>13</sup> Then the LORD said to Abram, 'Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; <sup>14</sup> but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.*

When God spoke to Moses about hearing the groans of the people and remembering His covenant (6:5), he was declaring that he was about to fulfil this prophecy, previously given to Abraham, and passed down amongst the Israelites along with their stories of the forefathers.

#### **The message to the people**

The people of Israel had already heard from Moses that God intended to deliver them from slavery, however, and were suffering from the fact that this was not happening. Moses was instructed by the Lord to tell them again that he would do this, and their patience and faith was sorely tested. We cannot know what individual Israelites thought about this, because Scripture does not say; but we do know that the people as a whole were so oppressed they could not receive the message (6:9). Despite this, God's promise that He would take the Israelites as His people was a precious and loving promise, and although it was not received by the people at the time, it certainly meant a great deal to those who looked back on what happened and recorded the story as we now have it.

Within this passage (6:6-8), there is a marvellous collection of promises grouped together: God's love for His people, His redemption, His judgement and His great power. These promises are placed alongside the repeated promise to bring the people into a new land for their own 'possession' (6:8). From this, we can begin to see more about the way God's plan of salvation was designed to work in the world. However, God placed these great themes together in a prophetic word to Moses in order to give him the confidence to press on with the immediate task of saving the people, and the force of what God said is also shown by the repeated phrase 'I will', at least six times in verses 6 to 8.

### ***Moses keeps going***

We can well imagine that it was hard for Moses to deliver this message to the people, particularly when they rejected it (6:9). Their 'spirit' was broken because of what had happened, but God knew all about this, and was working at the solution to the Israelites woes even though they did not know it. To us, quite naturally, a 'broken spirit' seems to be a severe condition, whether of an individual or of a nation, but to God, it is sometimes the right place for people to be if they are to depend wholly upon Him for their salvation and deliverance; and this is the case here.

Previously, when Moses had been called, God had gradually introduced him to the idea that he had to confront Pharaoh and demand the release of the Israelites, and it is was a message Moses was reluctant to deliver. Eventually the argument between God and Moses forced God to give him Aaron as a help and a spokesperson (4:14f.). God, however, continued to speak directly to Moses with the same call to speak to Pharaoh and deliver His people, and Moses could not escape this fundamental obligation God had placed upon his life, despite the pain and anguish all around, and the bitterness of the Israelite foremen (5:20f.).

Some see within the last two verses of this passage an echo of the argument between Moses and God about whether or not Moses could speak properly or well, but the general picture in this passage is of Moses being obedient and delivering the messages given him. Now that the Israelites refused to believe him, he had reason to complain to the Lord that he was no good at speaking! (6:12). It is my opinion that Moses spoke to the Lord at this point with resigned confession rather than objection. This is confirmed by the last verse, in which Moses and Aaron obediently received instructions from the Lord about the battle that lay ahead (6:13).

---

## **Discipleship**

### ***Application***

***God reveals more and more about Himself***

When God reveals Himself to us, He frequently does so in a way which gradually builds up our understanding of Him and His work. Throughout the Bible, in particular the Old Testament, we can see how God revealed more and more about Himself to the people of Israel; and there were occasions, particularly during the time of the forefathers, of Moses and the Exodus, of David and Solomon, and of the prophets in later times, when God revealed significantly more about Himself than at other times. These events stand out in the Bible, and pave the way for our complete understanding of God in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, although we now have full access to God through Jesus, none of us knows everything about God. It is the general experience of Christian people that we know God through faith in Jesus, but our detailed knowledge of Him is something that grows with time. None of us can fully see Him in His glory, but if we are spiritually awake and alert, then God will show progressively more of Himself to us, and we will also come to know more about Jesus as the years go by.

### ***Defeat before victory***

The latter part of our text today continues with the oppressive feel of defeat, but it is a defeat before victory. The people of Israel were clearly very low and 'broken' in spirit, but this was the true starting point for God to do what He needed, and most of us have experienced the general truth of life that we often have to fall low before we can rise. The people of Israel needed to receive God's help before they could be liberated, but Moses, as the leader God had chosen, had to maintain his faith however low he felt, in order to be the means whereby God could do the work of salvation for His people. Such is the task of true godly leadership.

### ***Ideas for what to do***

- What names do you use to address God, especially when praying in private? What do you know about these names and what they mean? Remember that in the Bible every name has meaning, so look up some of the names; 'Almighty God', 'the Lord', 'Christ', and more.
- What holds you back from doing what the Lord requires? Pray about this and ask the Lord to remove those blockages of faith that stop you being effective in your work for the Kingdom.

### ***Questions (for use in groups)***

1. Read through the passage and look at all the promises God gave His people. Which of them have appeared in Exodus before, and which have not?
2. What kind of oppression produces a 'broken spirit' today? Is there anything in this passage which can give someone who has a broken spirit some hope?
3. If God is constantly revealing more of Himself to us, can we ever say that what we know about Him is sufficient for our lives?

---

## **Final Prayer**

Lord Jesus, You bless us with laughter and with love, with enthusiasm and joy. Help us use these great gifts knowing that they come from You, and You will use them in us for Your good purposes as well as making them a blessing to us. Thank You Lord Jesus, AMEN

