

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FACE (SPIRITUAL) OPPOSITION

*4* <sup>27</sup>Jehovah said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him at the mountain of God and he kissed him. <sup>28</sup>Then Moses told Aaron everything Jehovah had sent him to say; he also told him about all the miraculous signs with which he had been given a charge. <sup>29</sup>Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. <sup>30</sup>Aaron spoke all the words that Jehovah had spoken to Moses and he performed the signs in the sight of the people—<sup>31</sup>and the people believed. When they heard that Jehovah had visited the children of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped.

*5* Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what Jehovah, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go, so that they may hold a feast for me in the wilderness." <sup>2</sup>But Pharaoh said, "Who is Jehovah, that I should pay attention to his voice and let Israel go? I do not know Jehovah; and furthermore, I will not let Israel go."

<sup>3</sup>Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. We request that you allow us to make a three-day journey into the wilderness and offer a sacrifice to Jehovah our God, or else he may strike us with pestilence or with the sword." <sup>4</sup>But the king of Egypt said to them, "Why are you, Moses and Aaron, keeping the people from their work? Get back to your labors!" <sup>5</sup>Then Pharaoh said, "Look! The people of the land are now numerous, and you cause them to cease from their labors!" <sup>6</sup>That same day Pharaoh gave this command to the taskmasters appointed over the people and to their foremen, <sup>7</sup>"You shall no longer supply the people with straw for making bricks as you have up until now. Let them go and gather straw for themselves!" <sup>8</sup>But you shall still require them to make the same number of bricks as they have been making. You shall not reduce the quota, for they are lazy; that is why they are crying out, Let us go and offer a sacrifice to our God. <sup>9</sup>Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies."

<sup>10</sup>So the taskmasters in charge of the people, together with the foremen, went out and spoke to the people. They told them, "This is what Pharaoh says: I will no longer supply you with straw. <sup>11</sup>Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your quota will not at all be reduced." <sup>12</sup>So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use as straw. <sup>13</sup>And the taskmasters kept pressing them, saying, "Supply the quota required of you for each day, just as when you had straw!" <sup>14</sup>And the Israelite foremen, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had appointed over the people, were beaten and the demand was made of them, "Why have you not met your quota of bricks either yesterday or today, as you had in the past?"

<sup>15</sup>Then the Israelite foremen went and appealed to Pharaoh, saying, "Why are you treating your servants like this? <sup>16</sup>Your servants are given no straw, but yet they tell us, Make bricks! And look, your servants are beaten, but the fault lies with your own people." <sup>17</sup>But he said to them, "You are lazy! You are lazy! That is why you say, Let us go and offer a sacrifice to Jehovah. <sup>18</sup>Now go and work! You will be given no straw, yet you must deliver the same number of bricks!" <sup>19</sup>Then the Israelite foremen realized that they were in a difficult position when they were told, "You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day." <sup>20</sup>When they left Pharaoh, they met

*Moses and Aaron who were standing there waiting for them. <sup>21</sup>The foremen said to them, "May Jehovah look upon you and judge you! You have made us odious in Pharaoh's sight and in the sight of his servants, so as to put a sword in their hand to kill us!"*

*<sup>22</sup>Then Moses returned to Jehovah and said, "Lord, why have you dealt harshly with your people? Why have you sent me? <sup>23</sup>Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has been hostile towards this people, and you have not delivered your people at all." **6** Then Jehovah said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; because of my strong hand he will let them go; indeed, because of my strong hand he will drive them out of his land." <sup>2</sup>God spoke to Moses and told him, "I am Jehovah. <sup>3</sup>I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but I did not make myself known to them by my name Jehovah. <sup>4</sup>And I have also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land where they lived as sojourners. <sup>5</sup>Furthermore, I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians are holding in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant. <sup>6</sup>Therefore, say to the children of Israel, I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. <sup>7</sup>And I will take you to be my people and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out from under the burden of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you as an inheritance. I am Jehovah." <sup>9</sup>So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses because of the anguish of their spirit and because of their cruel bondage.*

*<sup>10</sup>Then Jehovah said to Moses, <sup>11</sup>"Go in and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the children of Israel depart from his land." <sup>12</sup>But Moses spoke in the presence of Jehovah, saying, "See, the children of Israel have not listened to me; why then will Pharaoh listen to me? I am a man with "uncircumcised lips!" <sup>13</sup>Then Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron and he gave them a charge concerning the children of Israel and concerning Pharaoh king of Egypt—a charge to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. (Ex. 4:27-6:13)*

## **Introduction**

Vince De Paul was the manager of a rock band, until he met Christ. When he told an acquaintance about his conversion, the man offered Vince a timely insight: "Vince, Satan cannot get you back, but he will do whatever he can to attack you." That sound spiritual counsel helped prepare Vince to face what lay ahead and to comprehend what was happening.

When a well-known music trade magazine learned about his conversion and his departure from the rock scene, they mockingly labeled him as a "Jesus freak." Seeking new employment, Vince found no one interested in hiring a former rock band manager. When a series of lawsuits were filed against the band they included Vince's name, he had to sell his home to pay off his share of the financial obligation. From living a life of glamour, wealth and luxury, Vince was reduced to working odd

jobs to provide for his family. But Vince was able to see the spiritual dimension to his plight and, consequently, looked to his heavenly Father for the grace to get through his ordeal (*POWER*, 6/16/91.)

As Christians we need to recognize the spiritual dimension to the opposition or conflict or problem we are facing, and be enabled to cope and to conquer by means of the spiritual provisions supplied by Christ. This is the lesson we learn from Moses in this passage of Exodus: Because we are faced with spiritual opposition, we must rely upon spiritual measures.

## **I. When You Face (Spiritual) Opposition, Resort to God in Prayer**

Together Moses and Aaron come to the people of Israel and report to them what the LORD is about to do. They perform the confirming signs He had given them, and the people believed (Ex. 4:31.) Moses and Aaron then proceed to gain an audience with Pharaoh. They inform him of the LORD's command, *"Let my people go, so that they may hold a feast for me in the wilderness"* (Ex.5:1.)

Now they encounter opposition. At this point their progress is ground to a halt, they are faced with a substantial roadblock, and everything is thrown into reverse. Pharaoh does not acknowledge the LORD, he refuses to let the people go, and he insists on increasing their burden.

Consider the response of the Israelites to this unexpected and disheartening turn of events, their response to this opposition. The leaders of Israel went and cried to Pharaoh; they appealed to him for mercy and understanding—but he rejected their pleas (Ex. 5:15.) Those leaders of Israel actually curse Moses and Aaron: *"May Jehovah look upon you and judge you!"* (Ex. 5:21.)

In contrast, consider Moses' response to this opposition. He returned to the LORD and prayed (Ex. 5:22-23.) Consider the prayer Moses addressed to the LORD. There is a bold questioning of God: *"LORD, why have you dealt harshly with your people? Why have you sent me?"* (Ex. 5:22.)

Dare we question God? Dare we seek answers and explanations concerning His dealing with us? When you consider the prayer of Moses, and other prayers in Scripture, you find that the answer to be, Yes. The Psalmist cries out to the LORD, *"Why, O Jehovah, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?"* (Psl.10:1.) Again, we hear the Psalmist bring his complaint before God: *"How long, O Jehovah? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? <sup>2</sup>How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?"* (Psl. 13:1-2.) Then there is the prophet Habakkuk's prayer: *"How long, O Jehovah, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save? <sup>3</sup>Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.* (Hab. 1:2-3.) Finally, we find recorded in Scripture the cry of the Lord Jesus

uttered from the cross of Calvary: *“At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ (which, being interpreted, means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’)”* (Mk. 15:34.)

It is completely legitimate for you, as a child of God in Christ Jesus, to voice your questions, to honestly seek to know the mind of your heavenly Father, especially when what you presently see does not seem to correspond with the promises or the character or the will of God. Such was the case with Moses. In Exodus 3:7-8 we find the Lord’s promise: *“Jehovah said, ‘I have certainly seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard them crying out because of their taskmasters. I know their sorrows. <sup>8</sup>I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey”* But then comes the report, *“Pharaoh gave this command to the taskmasters appointed over the people and to their foremen ...<sup>9</sup>‘Make the work harder for the men”* (Ex. 5:6,9.)

But, when we approach the LORD with our questions, we must approach Him in a manner and spirit that is befitting a child of God approaching the heavenly Father who is also the sovereign God of all the earth. We should approach our heavenly Father with steadfast unwavering faith: *“Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge”* (Psl. 62:8.) We must approach our heavenly Father with a humble, reverent spirit, remembering whom we are addressing: *“Abraham responded and said, ‘Behold now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the LORD, I who am nothing more than dust and ashes”* (Gen. 18:27.) We must approach our heavenly Father with a readiness to wait upon Him and accept **His** answer: *“I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will give to me”* (Hab. 2:1.)

When you face (spiritual) opposition, resort to God in prayer.

What a friend we have in Jesus.  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,  
Oh, what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
(Joseph M. Scriven)

## **II. When You Face (Spiritual) Opposition, Rely upon God’s Word**

God promises to employ His awesome power on behalf of His people: *“Then Jehovah said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; because of my strong hand he will let them go; indeed, because of my strong hand he will drive them out of his land”* (Ex. 6:1.) In the days ahead Moses would witness all of

nature rising up against Pharaoh, at the command of God, until the mighty Egyptian empire was brought to its knees in defeat.

The LORD points us forward to the day when He will employ His almighty power: *“the day of the LORD will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will disappear with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed by being burned up, and the earth together with the works that are in it will be exposed. ... <sup>13</sup>But, according to his promise, we are watching for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness resides”* (2 Pet. 3:10,13.)

The LORD points us back to previous displays of His almighty power:

*And when Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. <sup>51</sup>At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. <sup>52</sup>The tombs broke open and many holy people who had died were raised to life. <sup>53</sup>They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. <sup>54</sup>When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”* (Matt. 27:50-54)

*There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the LORD came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. <sup>4</sup>The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; he has risen, just as he said ...”* (Matt. 28:2-6a)

The LORD exhorts us to rely upon His almighty power, which He will dispense on our behalf: *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”* (Psl. 46:1.) We may take confidence from the testimony of the Apostle Paul: “[the Lord Jesus] *said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’*” (2 Cor. 12:9a.) Again, he testifies, *“everyone deserted me ... <sup>17</sup>But the Lord stood at my side and strengthened me”* (2 Tim.4:16-17.)

God assures us that He is the covenant-keeping God who is ever faithful to His people. God spoke to Moses and told him, *“I am Jehovah”* (6:2); *“I have ... established My covenant with them”* (6:4); *“I have remembered My covenant”* (6:5); *“I am Jehovah”* (6:8.) Based upon His covenantal faithfulness, the LORD instructs Moses, *“Therefore, say to the children of Israel, I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians”* (6:6); *“I will take you to be my people and I will be your God”* (6:7); *“I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you as an inheritance. I am Jehovah”* (6:8). The LORD's message may be summarized as follows: I am your



covenant God, therefore, I will act on your behalf to fulfill My promises to you. In the New Testament we hear the Lord Jesus renew His covenantal promises:

*“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* (Lk. 12:32)

*“Do not let your heart be troubled; trust in God, trust in me also. <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me; so that where I am, you may be also”* (Jn. 14:1-3)

God promises His people that they shall know that He is the LORD their God: *“I will take you to be my people and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am Jehovah your God”* (Ex. 6:7.) Here is the promise that God’s people shall know with understanding and personal experience that He is the true and living God and that He is our God. Note the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ made to His disciples: *“On that day* (the day of Christ’s return) *you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you”* (Jn. 14:20.) By way of example, consider the experience of a Russian Christian: While imprisoned in a Siberian prison camp for his Christian faith, he experienced a foretaste of the great and blessed truth of which our Lord Jesus speaks in John 14:20, he felt the presence of God and an indescribable union with Him.

When you face (spiritual) opposition, rely upon God’s Word. He promises that He will employ His almighty power, He will be faithful to His covenant, and we will know him as our God.

### **III. When You Face (Spiritual) Opposition, Request a Charge from God**

When Moses brings this message from God to the people of Israel, they did not listen, *“because of the anguish of their spirit and because of their cruel bondage”*—literally, *“because of shortness of spirit and cruel bondage”* (Ex. 6:9.) In other words, they were spiritually fatigued and overwhelmed by the oppression of their Egyptian overlords.

The unbelief and spiritual lethargy of the people had an adverse effect on Moses. When the LORD instructs him to return to Pharaoh and demand the release of the people from their bondage, Moses raises the objection: *“If Israel will not listen to me, surely Pharaoh will not listen”* (Ex. 6:12.)

What does the LORD now do?

*“Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron and he gave them a charge concerning the children of Israel and concerning Pharaoh king of Egypt—[a charge] to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt”* (Ex. 6:13.) The LORD re-commissioned

His servants, this time charging them with divine power and authority to accomplish His will and fulfill His purpose.

When you face (spiritual) opposition, you may need to request a charge from God. When you sink into the depths of Israel's spiritual despondency and unbelief: when you allow yourself to become intimidated and overwhelmed by the world around you, when you lose heart and hope and nerve, when your spiritual life shrivels up and barely clings to the tree like the last leaf in autumn, at such times, request a divine charge from the LORD to enable you to carry out your God-given calling and carry on with your God-given responsibilities.

When you imitate Moses in his attitude of defeat and his desire to resign from his divine commission: when you lose your zeal for serving Christ, when your love for Christ grows cold, when you grow weary in the task God has assigned to you, when you lose sight of the purpose and the goal of the Christian life, when you want to retire from the conflict and give up the struggle against the sinful nature and the devil and the world, at such times, request a divine charge from the LORD to enable you to carry out your God-given calling and carry on with your God-given responsibilities.

In such times as these, our prayer needs to be that of the Psalmist: *"I am laid low in the dust; revive me according to your word"* (Psl. 119:25.) Furthermore, we should turn the Psalmist's question into a prayer: *"Will you not revive us again, so that your people may rejoice in you?"* (Psl. 85:6.)

## **Conclusion**

When you encounter (spiritual) opposition to your Christian faith, ...to your Christian life, ...to the accomplishing of the will of God, you need to know where to turn and what to do. Let us learn from the example of Moses and the way the LORD dealt with him:

- Resort to God in prayer
- Rely upon the Word of God
- Request a divine charge from God