

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



The Promise and the Plan

KEY PASSAGE: Exodus 3:10-14 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Exodus 4:16; 6:1; 7:1-6 | Psalm 103:19
Proverbs 3:5-6 | Acts 2:21 | Romans 9:17 | Philippians 4:19 | Hebrews 10:23, 36; 13:5

► SUMMARY

We must be careful not to confuse God's goodness with our expectations of Him.

For instance, some people think that accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior will make their lives better and easier. But when hardships come, they are disappointed. Others may claim a promise in Scripture, but it seems like God hasn't kept His Word if it isn't fulfilled as they expected. However, God is always good, and His promises are always true. When we can't understand what He is doing, we can still trust who He is.

► SERMON POINTS

When Moses encountered God in a burning bush, he was stunned by what he saw and heard, but he obeyed. He went to Egypt and told Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go free, but the outcome was not what he expected. Pharaoh responded by adding to their workload and increasing their difficulties.

We've probably all experienced something similar. We obey God, yet trouble and suffering soon follow. Then we start thinking we've done something wrong or accuse God of being unfaithful. Neither reaction is the right solution. Instead, we should look beyond the immediate circumstances.

Remember God's promises.

- **Hebrews 10:23** "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." We must hold tight to Christ, recognizing that we have not been promised life without trouble.

- **Hebrews 10:36** "For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised." Salvation makes our earthly life better in many ways, but there will be times when we must endure hardship.
- **Hebrews 13:5** "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." The Lord promises to be with us through our trials.

God gave Moses some very specific promises. He said Pharaoh would drive the people out of the land (Ex. 6:1), but He also said that He would harden Pharaoh's heart against letting them go so that He could multiply His signs and wonders in the land (Ex. 7:3). The promise was sure, but apparently the means would not be easy.

Realize that God works with a big picture in mind.

Since Moses couldn't see God's perspective, he may have wondered how hardening Pharaoh's heart could possibly fit with setting the Israelites free. However, he knew that the Lord's name was I AM. The God who eternally exists in the past, present, and future was the one who could use Pharaoh's hard heart to set the Hebrew people free, even though it would temporarily cause them greater suffering. They needed to look beyond the immediate circumstances and trust God to work out the big picture for their ultimate good, and so do we.

Know that God is working to accomplish His purpose when we don't see it or understand it.

The Lord promised to rescue the Israelites from Egypt, but His purpose reached beyond His people. "The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst"

(Ex. 7:5). Yet even this was not the end of God's purpose. His ultimate goal was to bring forth a Jewish nation through whom Jesus Christ the Savior and Redeemer would come.

Moses couldn't foresee all that God had in mind, and neither can we. But if we'll trust Him even when we don't understand what He is doing, He will strengthen our faith.

Trust God to keep His promise.

Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us not to rely on our own understanding but to trust the Lord with all our hearts. This is exactly what Moses had to do as well. The foundation for his trust was God's words spoken to him, and today we have the completed written Word of God as the basis for our trust and security. Everything else we possess could vanish, but God's Word stands forever and will never change. Every promise is guaranteed by Him.

Remember that God is the Sovereign of the universe, and everything is within His power.

"The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all" (Ps. 103:19). This means that He has the power and right to rule over everything. Pharaoh was no match for Him, nor could he do anything to Moses because the Lord was with him.

The sovereign Ruler of all is also with us through the Holy Spirit. Every event in our lives is under His control, and He is always working to accomplish His perfect will in and through us.

Recognize that God oftentimes has an unexpected plan to meet our needs.

Pharaoh was a proud king who dominated the Hebrews and ruled over all Egypt, but God was the one who put him in that position. "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth" (Rom. 9:17).

It took the death of his son in the last plague to convince Pharaoh to let God's people go. He never became a believer, but the demonstration of God's power over him became known throughout the world. Still today, Jews celebrate Passover and their redemption from slavery in Egypt.

Like the Hebrews who couldn't see God's redemption until it was accomplished, we can't always see what God is doing through the difficult times in our lives. Yet in even our most painful situations, He is teaching us to trust Him and to believe that He is working for our good.

Know that God is never late with His deliverance.

We may pray for a long time without receiving an answer and go through trying and painful circumstances, wondering why God doesn't rescue us, but He is never late by His perfect time standard.

The children of Israel may have wondered why God waited 400 years before setting them free from slavery. However, during those long years, Joseph's extended family became a great multitude. In His perfect time, the Lord revealed Himself to them and demonstrated His mighty power and love by miraculously delivering them out of Egypt to become a great nation.

This is the same all-powerful God whom we trust for our salvation. He has given us His Word, and every promise is sure. Throughout the storms of life, we can know that we are eternally secure in our Savior who loves and cares for us.

► RESPONSE

- Have your expectations of God led to misunderstandings about His nature or care for you? How would a biblical understanding of the Lord help you get through the times when you don't understand what He is doing?
- How has the story of God's interactions with Moses and the deliverance of Israel helped you better understand how He works in your own life?

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