

bush league (part 2)

exodus 3.14-4.17

We're going to look at the rest of the Moses' conversation with the burning bush today, starting in Exodus 3 verse 14.

Last week we saw how Moses' preparation for becoming the deliverer of Israel had culminated there in the wilderness as a shepherd over his father-in-law's flock and how the Lord appeared to him as a burning bush. We talked about how the Lord responds to people who seek Him and how He loves to explain His plan for the callings He places on our lives.

Now we're at the point in the story where the Lord lays out the details of His plan for rescuing the Children of Israel and Moses tries as hard as he can to push back and side step what God was asking him to do, but, as we referenced at the end of our last study, once we belong to Jesus, the Lord doesn't really take 'no' for an answer.

Now, for Moses this revelation from God is very detailed and very specific. We don't always get that kind of clarity in our lives, but there's still a lot we can learn about the Lord from what He says here.

Pick up where we left off in the middle of verse 14:

Exodus 3.14b-17 - And [the Lord] said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' " Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.' Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, "I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt; and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey." ' "

This is what's interesting to me: when I think of the Exodus, I think of the action, the emancipation of God's people, being brought out of their slavery. But, while God was sending Moses with power and a plan of action to untie the bonds of Egypt, He was also sending Moses with the Word of God to deliver to the people. The message was as significant in God's explanation to Moses as the plan of action was. Notice he said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel." He says that twice. Then in verse 16 God says, "gather the elders...and say to them...". In a moment we're going to see that God tells Moses to go say specific things to Pharaoh.

The Word is as important as the action. You know, even though it happens a lot in movements or churches or Christian schools, we don't have to get tripped up when it comes to pairing God's Word with compassionate action. The Bible makes it very clear. You don't abandon the

oppressed and afflicted, you must help them with real acts of compassion, but you also don't abandon sound doctrine and the teaching of the Word of God. The Lord was sending Moses to deliver the Israelites from their slavery, but it was just as important for him to deliver the message God had given him. The Lord says again and again that Moses needed to deliver His Word to the people and to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, so that they could understand who God was and what He was doing. They were both significant and necessary in the work that the Lord was going to accomplish.

Exodus 3.18-22 - Then they will heed your voice; and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.' But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed. But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

Here the Lord gives Moses a glimpse into the future so that he can prepare himself for what will seem like a big setback in the plan. Prophecy gives us a context for what's going on in our lives. Whether it's Biblical prophecy which explains that overarching story and trends of human history, or when it's the prophecy of the things God has told you in your own life, they help us put the situational wins and losses in perspective. Especially when it comes to serving God and doing the ministry. In whatever calling God has placed on your life, at some point He's going to give you a heads up of what His plan is so that you can have something to cling to in times of discouragement and so that you can stay stirred up in times of spiritual success. So pay attention to the prophecies of the Lord.

Exodus 4.1-3 - Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.' "

So the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?"

He said, "A rod."

And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it.

Now we get to see some of God's longsuffering in action as Moses kicks hard against what he's being asked to do.

We also get a chance to see some of God's methods. The sign of the rod shows us that God will use what you've got. Whether it's a shepherd's staff or a few clay pots for olive oil or just your own two feet, God can use whatever you have for His purposes.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't ever seek to add tools or skills to our spiritual lives, but the Lord certainly isn't hampered if we don't all have a MDiv from a seminary. In fact, the Bible proves that God is ready to work through what you've got in your hands right now if you're ready to put them in His charge. He can take 5 loaves and 2 fish and feed thousands if He wants.

Exodus 4.4-5 - Then the Lord said to Moses, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail” (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), “that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”

Notice what Moses did and remember this snake scene for something we’ll see in a few moments.

Exodus 4.6-12 - Furthermore the Lord said to him, “Now put your hand in your bosom.” And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. And He said, “Put your hand in your bosom again.” So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh. “Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land.”

Then Moses said to the Lord, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”

So the Lord said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”

These are pretty unusual signs that God was using, but there are a couple of very important ideas we can pull out of them.

The first is that God has power and control over every aspect of our existence. The sign of the snake shows His control over nature as well as the dangers we face in our service to Him.

The sign of the leprous hand shows that He has control over our health and our lives here on the earth. He’s numbered our days and will sustain us according to His will.

The sign of the water turning to blood shows that He has control over the battlefield He’s sending us to. He has power over the situation, including things we have no control over.

And the issue of Moses’ lack of eloquence shows that God has power greater than our weakness. In fact, He delights in showing His strength *through* our weaknesses.

All of those things, all those interferences, God supersedes with power and might and ability. And so we must drive into our minds the understanding that we do not have to be afraid to live the Christian life. If we’re pursuing God and doing what He’s asked us to do, there’s nothing for us to be afraid of. No danger or weakness or sickness or opposition has any real power over us because God is with us and He is in control, He is working together all things for good for those who love Him and are called to serve Him.

The other takeaway from these miraculous signs is that the Lord has many methods of ministry. He’s not a one-trick pony. He gave Moses many layers and avenues to go and preach to the

people of Israel. He gave Moses things to say, things to do, in a variety of ways *AND* the Lord promised to also be working behind the scenes to make things happen.

Exodus 4.13-14a - But he said, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.” So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses.

Here’s the problem - Moses was just plain disobeying. Moses was a meek guy, but this wasn’t the humility talking, it was unwillingness. We know that because the text says that the Lord gets angry with Moses.

Obviously we’ve already seen God in this book displaying an incredible amount of grace and longsuffering, so if Moses was resisting out of humble innocence, the Lord wouldn’t be upset with Him, as we see with Mary when the angel appears to her.

The truth is, Moses had a problem with partial obedience. That’s comforting to me, because we all have that struggle. But as you track through Moses life you see that there are a number of significant times when he chose not to obey what God asked him to do. You see it with the murder of the Egyptian. The Lord had forbidden murder all the way back to Cain and Abel, but formally under the covenant with Noah. You see it here, we’ll see it coming up when it comes to following the ritual of circumcision and later in his life when God asks him to speak to the rock, rather than strike it.

For a variety of reasons from time to time Moses decided to not fully obey the Lord, and this is one of those times.

Remember verse 4 and 5 with the snake? God asks Moses to pick it up by the tail. By all human reasoning that is a stupid, foolish thing to do, but Moses didn’t hesitate. He did just what God asked him. But now when it’s time to be sent, Moses says, ‘No way! Not me!’

We’ve got to be careful about this. Because we’ve all got areas where we’re more sensitive or more fearful or things that seem too hard to obey. We become like Meatloaf, saying, “I would do anything for God, but I won’t do *that!*”

The exhortation for us is that through our actions and attitudes today we’re either going to be obeying the Lord or not obeying Him. And, depending on how we live our lives, we have the potential to grieve the Holy Spirit today. And we don’t want that. None of us want that, because it stalls the growth that the Lord is trying to cultivate in our lives. According to the Bible, the way we *please* God today is to walk by faith, praising the Lord, offering up our lives as a living sacrifice and putting others before ourselves.

Exodus 4.14b-17 - and [the Lord] said: “Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God. And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.”

The Lord came up with an interesting solution. Since Moses said he wasn't fit to speak to Pharaoh, he'd have to whisper everything to Aaron, who would then parrot it to whoever they were speaking to. Not only would this be a little bit ridiculous, on one level it would make everything take twice as long.

When we resist the Lord, He's not going to take no for an answer. He's going to stick with us and teach us and show us what to do, but a lot of what He wants to do for us is going to take much longer than if we just walked faithfully with Him. And I don't think any of us want to look back on our lives and say, "Yep, I slowed God's plan for my life down to a crawl!" We want the Lord to work in our lives and do things through us. We want Him to build testimonies and grow gifts in us. And He wants that too, so we just need to go where He tells us to go so we can get to those things.

Today, God wants to call each of us to some action. He's given us opportunity to preach and to do. And, as we saw in the first half of this encounter, part of what the Lord wants to do for us today is sanctify us and reveal Himself to us as we seek Him and submit to what He says.

We're to listen and trust and then obey. Then we'll be the man for the job and we'll walk in God's power so that nothing can stand against us.