

God Calls Moses, Moses Argues with God

Exodus 3-4

I. The Potter and the Clay

A. Last Time: Moses Tried His Own Way

B. God's Ways NOT Our Ways

1. Moses had all the credentials

- a. worldly wisdom
- b. worldly power, position, influence
- c. worldly accomplishments
- d. worldly skills

2. God's school: the desert!!

- a. God must wean us from the world before He can use us

A.W. Pink: "The heart must be separated, the spirit divorced from the world, if progress is to be made in spiritual things. 'The hand of man can never mould a vessel fit for the Master's use.' The One who is to use the vessel can alone prepare it."

- b. desert a place of purification, humbling, refinement

3. God's timetable: forty years!!!

- a. nowadays, instant graduation to leadership in the church
- b. standard relatively low, time table very quick
- c. God's work in Moses could not take place overnight
- d. God allowed Israel to groan under severe suffering for two more generations!!!

C. Moses' Specifics

1. Totally humbled... didn't even have a flock of his own!!!
2. Horeb: a mountain range... Mt. Sinai a mountain within that range

II. The Burning Bush

Exodus 3:2-3 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight— why the bush does not burn up."

A. God Knows How to Attract Us, Allure Us, Pique our Interest

1. "Irresistible Grace"... better "effectual grace"

2. God's knows what's in our hearts
- B. The "Angel of the Lord"
 1. Called "Lord" and "God" later in the account
 2. Other "Angel of the Lord" passages
- C. Spiritual Symbolism of the Burning Bush
 1. Vision of Glory for Moses at beginning of ministry
 2. Spiritually: burning bush symbolizes God's grace
 - a. fire represents God's holiness, judgment against sin
 - b. BUT bush is not consumed!!
 3. Bush a THORNY bush

Hebrew *ceneh* represents a thorny bush

Thorns represent curse of God

4. Bush also represents resurrection

vs. 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac

5. Burning bush symbolizes Israel's trials in Egypt
6. Bush also symbolizes Israel's lowliness and humility... not a mighty cedar of Lebanon
7. Thornbush symbolize Israel's fruitlessness
8. YET fire in the bush symbolizes God's determination to DWELL among His people gloriously

III. The LORD: Our Holy, Compassionate Covenant-Keeping God

vs. 5-10 Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. 7 The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey— the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

- A. God's Holiness

vs. 5 *Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."*

1. Sandals represents Moses' daily life, walk in this sinful world
2. Christ and the footwashing

John 13:8-10 *No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" 10 Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."*

3. God's Holiness Produces Fear and Trembling

vs. 7 *At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.*

Isaiah 6:3-5 *And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."*

Ezekiel 1:28 *Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.*

Basic principle: Service to God begins with a recognition of His perfect holiness, and of our sinfulness and unworthiness

Until we come face to face with God's holiness and our sinfulness, we are useless to God

B. God's Covenant-Keeping Faithfulness

vs. 6 *Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."*

1. God clearly identifies Himself with the patriarchs
2. This is God saying, "I am the covenant-keeping God!!"

The time had come for God to keep His promise to Abraham

Acts 7:17 *"As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased."*

3. Also, God a God of relationships

C. God's Compassion

vs. 7-8 *The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about*

their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians

Exodus 2:23-25 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. 24 God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. 25 So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

God is not up there in heaven spinning His celestial orbs and turning the gears of His impersonal sovereign plan... God knows very well and with great passion the suffering of His people... it is no small thing to God when He must afflict His people with great suffering.

D. God's Sovereign Grace

vs. 8-9 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey-- the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.

1. God's grace: lavishing on Israel, a stiff-necked people, such incredible and personal concern
2. Sacrificing other nations so they can have the Promised Land
3. ALSO note the SOVEREIGN grace... not "if's", no "perhaps", no "maybes"

God will personally accomplish this Exodus

"I have come down to rescue them..."

What God sets out to do He will most certainly do!!!

"I have come down to bring them up out of that land"

"I have come down to bring them into a good and spacious land."

NOTE: God's absolute sovereignty... no power in the universe can stop this from happening!!

Isaiah 14:26-27 This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. 27 For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

AND YET...

E. God's Commission

vs. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

1. God uses HUMAN agents to accomplish His sovereign plan

NOTE:

God's sovereignty and human activity go hand in hand

God says "I will come down"

Then God says "I am sending you..."

F. God's Timing

*vs. 10 So **NOW**, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."*

All of the centuries of waiting is finally over... every moment in Egypt has been weighed out by the wise plan of God

Even including the forty years of Moses' wandering in the desert!!

BUT NOW, the time has finally come

Galatians 4:4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law

God's sense of timing is His own... no amount of human suffering and anguish can change His mind

YET He is so compassionate for His people as they go through it

Also note, Moses had had his own sense of timing, and it had been wrong

Acts 7:25 Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not.

A.W. Pink:

"Our business is not to seek to hurry God but to wait on Him and to wait for Him. For many long years had the groans and cries of the distressed Hebrews gone up but the heavens were silent." Only now was God's timing complete!

IV. Moses Argues With God, God Prepares Moses

vs. 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

vs. 13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

Exodus 4:1 Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'?"

Exodus 4:10 Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."

Exodus 4:13-14 But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it." 14 Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses

A. Moses's "Preparation" Did Not Completely Prepare Him

Man-centered focus

Fear

Unbelief

Excuse-making

Disobedience

B. Moses Still had a Long Way to Go

C. The Rest of the Chapter: God Patiently Working with Moses

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

Very predictable human response: focus on personal capabilities

Human sin is ALWAYS "me-centered"... what can I do? What can I NOT do?

So much of sanctification is become God-focused, God-centered: What can God do? What can God NOT do?

12 And God said, "I will be with you.

NOTE: Moses asks "Who am I?" God answers in effect, "Who you are is irrelevant! The issue is 'Who am I?!?!'"

American education: goal is "SELF-ESTEEM"

True sanctification: goal is "GOD-ESTEEM"

American educational system responds to Moses: "O Moses, you ought to think much more highly of yourself! You would be amazed at all you can do if you truly put your mind to it! You need to **believe in yourself**, and just see all that you can do!"

God has nothing to say on that matter... throughout this whole interaction!! The fact is Moses' capabilities are totally insufficient for the matter at hand! Only God alone can do this great work!

12 And God said, "I will be with you.

Again, what is impossible if God is with us?? If He stands at our side and gives us strength, nothing will be impossible for us!!!

And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

The sign that God is with Moses will be when the Exodus is completely accomplished... then they will all know that God alone could have done this... when they worship God at that mountain, not one person will be falling on their face to acknowledge Moses' greatness!!

13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

This is Moses' next query, and it is eminently reasonable, though the train of the narrative clearly implies it is more of Moses's efforts to evade responsibility

The question, however, is much more to the point! What is God's Name?! It is for the sake of that Name that God will do this great deed!!

Exodus 9:16 But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

2 Samuel 7:23 And who is like your people Israel-- the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt?

NIV Exodus 6:2 God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD.

Exodus 6:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."

2 God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD.

6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD."

28 Now when the LORD spoke to Moses in Egypt,

29 he said to him, "I am the LORD. Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything I tell you."

30 But Moses said to the LORD, "Since I speak with faltering lips, why would Pharaoh listen to me?"

NIV Exodus 7:5 And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it."

Exodus 20:2-3 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

In all of this God's constant desire to is reveal His name and His glory to the whole world through Israel, for the salvation of the nations

Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

God's timeless and eternal answer: I AM

14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the 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, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

This is the covenant name of God YHVH... Yahweh, Jehovah

This is also the name of Christ:

John 6:35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 10:7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep....whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:36 'I am God's Son'

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

John 13:13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am.

John 13:19 *"I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.*

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

John 15:5 *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

John 8:58 *"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"*

This is essential to our salvation:

NIV John 8:24 *I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am (the one I claim to be), you will indeed die in your sins."*

KJV John 8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.

NAS John 8:24 "I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you shall die in your sins."

RSV John 8:24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am *he*."

The rest of chapter 3: God demonstrates to Moses His power, foreknowledge and sovereignty

16 *"Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers— the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob— appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt.*

17 *And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites— a land flowing with milk and honey.'*

- The wisdom of God... Moses to work through the elders of Israel
- Order and delegated authority in everything God does

18 *"The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.'*

19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him.

- God's foreknowledge: 1) The elders will listen to you!!! 2) Pharaoh will not listen to you
- NOTE: God's call frequently makes absolutely no sense to human logic
- "I am sending you to Pharaoh to persuade him, but he will not listen to you!!" So why go? Because God says so
- God knows Pharaoh completely, and has raised Him up for the very purpose of displaying His power and glory through Him
- Some kings are weak and compliant... this one was arrogant and stubborn

20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

- Again, God's sovereignty!! "Your arm's too short to box with God!"
- Pharaoh only understands pure display of power... I will give him such a display of power that the final message will be unmistakable
- "Wonders" = miracles... the full array of signs God had in mind
- God uses signs and wonders to prove that He is active in a situation and to compel faith, worship, and obedience

21 "And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed.

22 Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians."

- Final display of God's sovereignty: "I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward you!"
- God actually controls the reputation of the Israelites in order to accomplish His purposes
- Question: why didn't God make Pharaoh favorably disposed towards Israel?? It was not His will!! He wanted to put His mighty power on display!!!
- Smaller point: Israel had toiled for centuries for no reward... the plundering was their wages, for **"a worker is worth his wages"**

Chapter 4: Moses Continues to Argue with God

Exodus 4:1 Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'?"

- Bald-faced unbelief!!! God had already told Moses that the elders of Israel WOULD believe him!
- How patient is God with our unbelief and how merciful to use us anyway!!
- Moses motivated by fear here, seeking to dodge his responsibility

A. The Three Signs and Wonders of Moses

1. These were the first miracles ever recorded in the Bible
2. Given to soothe Moses' unbelief

B. The First Sign: The Staff into a Serpent

vs. 2-5 Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied. 3 The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. 4 Then the LORD said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. 5 "This," said the LORD, "is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers— the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob— has appeared to you."

A.W. Pink: some lessons from this first sign

1) Practical

- Rod stands for support... that on which someone leans or relies
- Rod in hand meant all was well... represented God's support of Moses

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

- Lesson: supporting, protecting grace of God for Moses personally... when he kept close to God, God would support him fully
- BUT: let him cast away confidence in Yahweh, he would find himself helpless before the Devil, that ancient serpent
- Thus did Moses run away in terror
- The simple lesson: secret for overcoming Satan is total reliance on God alone

2) Doctrinal

- Rod represents governmental power and authority

Psalm 2:9 You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

- Casting down of the rod represents God casting down earthly government to Satanic rulers... the "beast of the earth" of Revelation 13
- Moses grasping it again is the power of human government transformed into godly rule by a godly leader
- Moses ruled Israel by the laws of God, transforming the rod of government into a support for the people

3) Evidential

- Very practically, the sign endowed Moses with authority and gave him persuasive skill to win over his people
- This sign established in Moses the very call of God which the people had never seen
- His ability to change the rod into a serpent and back again was a clear sign that God was with Moses

4) Evangelical

- Moses fled before the serpent to signify also the powerlessness of a single sinner before the power of Satan
- Israel was also in bondage at this time, powerless to change their situation
- Moses was God's mediator, and only with his authority could he stand before the power of the devil and win the victory
- Moses' power over the devil was shown in his ability to grasp the tail and hold it
- This is ultimately a symbol of Christ Himself, our mediator

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus

5) Historical

- Three stages to the sign: 1) the rod held in Moses' hand; 2) the rod cast down and changed to a snake; 3) the snake seized by the tail and transformed back to a rod
- This corresponds to three stages of Israel's history: 1) call of Abraham until they entered Egypt (Israel had been held, miraculously supported by God, until they had attained a position of rule over Egypt through Joseph); 2) Israel had been cast down into bondage under the power of the devil in Egypt; 3) Israel would soon be taken back up again into the hand of God

6) Dispensational

- Future history of Israel also in view...
- For twenty-five centuries, Israel has been trampled under by Gentile domination
- But in the future, Christ will rule all nations with a rod of iron

Psalm 2:7-9 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

7) Typical

Psalm 110:1-2 Of David. A psalm. The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." 2 The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.

- Ultimately, Christ will rule all nations
- But in His first advent here, He was cast down and became a curse for us

Galatians 3:10-13 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." 11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

John 3:14-16 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The Second Sign

4:6-9 Then the LORD said, "Put your hand inside your cloak." So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was leprous, like snow.

7 "Now put it back into your cloak," he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh.

8 Then the LORD said, "If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first miraculous sign, they may believe the second.

9 But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground."