

Exodus
March 25, 2007
Chapter 4

I. Background

Moses has fled to Midian. A broken man, he rebuilds his life becoming content in it. However, God is not done with Him. After living in the household of a Priest for 40 years, God draws him to His holy mountain. There God tells Moses who He is and who Moses is.

II. Objection #3

Ex 4:1-9

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

2 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." **6** 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." NIV

- Verse 1 Another objection. Again, the objection is not unreasonable given that the Israelites will likely ask him this question. While the LORD responds positively, we start to see Moses' objections piling higher and higher.
- Verse 4 Notice how God uses the staff, a symbol of Moses' shepherd year. God is able to use us where we are, despite how weak we think that are. Strangely, the staff represents Moses' failure and God's power at the same time.
- Verse 6 Notice now God uses Moses' hand...again building on what Moses has.
- Verse 9 This is the first plague, indicating that God will give additional miracles.

Question: What do you have that God wants to use? Do you have really good reasons not to use your talents for Him, even though you might feel that He is calling you to use them?

III. Objection #4...Is this getting monotonous?

Ex 4:10-12

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."

11 The LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? **12** Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." NIV

Verse 11 Deuteronomy is a series of sermons by Moses, and one of the most eloquent parts of the OT. "Slow of speech and tongue" is literally "heavy of speech and heavy of tongue."

Verse 12 Again, God answers Him positively. If God makes the mouth, how can Moses say that he is inadequate if God backs him?

Verse 11-12 What are the implications of these verses to the handicapped? To Moses? To us?

IV. Objection #5

Ex 4:13-17

13 But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

14 Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. **15** You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. **16** He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. **17** But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it." NIV

Verse 13 Finally, Moses allows the truth to escape his mouth.

Verse 14 If God was angry, why did He let Moses live? Did God know that Moses would respond this way? If so, why did He get angry?

Verse 14 "Aaron the Levite" implies that he was more than a simple Levite.

Verse 17 Aaron will be the mouthpiece (with Moses), but Moses needs his staff and God's miracles.

Discussion Point: The LORD becomes angry with Moses, but is still willing the work with him. There is something fantastic about the creator and lord of the universe being willing to work with us despite our weakness (Moses' first four objections) and even our outright disobedience (Moses' last objection). We should not tempt God by disobeying, but knowing that even if we do, even if we make Him angry, He is still willing to work with us. Incredible!!!!

V. Good Byes

Ex 4:18-20

18 Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Let me go back to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive."

Jethro said, "Go, and I wish you well."

19 Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead." 20 So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.

NIV

Verse 18 Although 80 years old, he goes back to Jethro, as head of the household, to ask for permission to leave. This was not another attempt to avoid going, but the correct thing to do since Moses is under Jethro's authority.

VI. Pharaoh's Hard Heart

Ex 4:21

21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. NIV

We see mention of Pharaoh's heart being hardened about 15 times in Exodus. Most of the time the LORD does it, but sometimes Pharaoh does it himself. How does the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart? We are not told. We are told, though, that Pharaoh is responsible for his own actions. See the next two verses. Why would God want to harden his heart?

VII. Ramifications of Not Following God

Ex 4:22-23

22 Then say to Pharaoh, "This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, 23 and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'" NIV

Verse 22 We see that Israel is God's "firstborn son."

Verse 23 God will protect His son to the point of killing Pharaoh's son. This is the tenth and final of the judgments on Egypt. Pharaoh has ample opportunity to follow God, but chooses not to do so.

Ex 4:24-26

24 At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met [Moses] and was about to kill him. 25 But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched [Moses'] feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said. 26 So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.)

NIV

This passage confuses commentary writers, and there is no general agreement on its exact translation or full interpretation. The Hebrew text is somewhat confusing; for example, English versions want to add "Moses" to it even though his name is not in the Hebrew. The "he" in the text might refer to the son.

My take is that Moses has to follow God fully. If Pharaoh does not follow God, then his son is forfeit. God will not treat Moses differently. Apparently the unnamed son has not been circumcised. Circumcision is the sign of being an Israelite. Moses is to lead the Israelites, but still is not fully content to be one himself. He did not want to go back to the Israelites in Egypt; this is another indication of his reluctance. He has a choice to follow God fully...or to receive God's judgment too. (Note: "Feet" is probably euphemistic for the genital area.)

We do not see Zipporah and Moses' children again until Chapter 18 when Jethro joins the Israelites in the wilderness. Did she go back to Midian at this point?

VIII. A Positive Return

Ex 4:27-31

27 The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him. 28 Then Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and also about all the miraculous signs he had commanded him to perform. 29 Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, 30 and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, 31 and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

NIV

- Verse 27 Here we see that Aaron had been sent earlier to see Moses. Presumably, this is the mountain of the burning bush. Aaron had probably been called before Moses since it would have taken some time for Aaron to get there. With his son circumcised, Moses is now ready to meet another Israelite.
- Verse 29 Aaron the Levite was probably a man of power within the Israelite community, probably an elder. Otherwise, he would probably not have been able to travel to meet Moses. His influence would have helped in gathering together the elders.
- Verse 31 These guys seem happy now, but by the end of the next chapter, they will be very unhappy.

IX. Next Time

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going!" How do we react when we are doing right, and the world falls in on our heads? When the world falls, why is it particularly important that we follow God all the more closely? Strangely, when these conditions come, we will always have (what we think are) really good reasons to rationalize running ahead of God and therefore not following Him fully.