

EXODUS 3:16 – 4:17

THE DELIVERER IS CALLED BUT WON'T ACCEPT THE CHARGES

The final draft of the Emancipation Proclamation was taken to Abraham Lincoln at noon on January 1, 1863. Twice the president picked up his pen to sign it, and twice he laid it down. Turning to Secretary of State William Seward, he said, “I have been shaking hands since 9:00 this morning, and my right arm is almost paralyzed. If my name ever goes into history, it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it. If my hand trembles when I sign the proclamation, all who examine the document hereafter will say, ‘He hesitated.’” The president then took up the pen again and slowly but firmly wrote, “Abraham Lincoln.”

That historic act endeared Lincoln to the world as the Great Emancipator.

Abraham Lincoln was one of the greatest presidents of all time. But he was still hesitant about signing something that would change the fabric of a nation even though he knew it was the right thing to do. If anyone ever rocked a boat it was Abraham Lincoln.

Hesitancy is defined as reluctance. In turn, reluctance is defined as hesitancy. They both speak of someone waiting, for various reasons to do something they feel they really ought to do; namely for fear of the possible outcome.

That is where we will find Moses today. We looked at Moses two weeks ago as a man going through an identity crisis. We will find him in that state yet again. We will see a man that has been lulled into a sense of mediocrity and tedium. **For forty years God had used the tedium of being a shepherd, the mundane nature of the job, as well**

as the stereotypes of the profession to bring Moses to a place of humility in order that he can be used of God to deliver His people and fulfill His covenant promise to Abraham.

Well, in chapter three God is calling Moses to his destiny. God will shock him out of his humdrum life and nearly drag him kicking and screaming into the pages history. Moses is now hesitant to go back to Egypt. God has told him that He will be with him, but Moses still has some excuse cards left to throw. **How many of us have used these same excuses when it came to doing God's will in for our lives?**

Let's look at Exodus chapter three, beginning with verse 16.

16 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; 17 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." ' 18 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. ' 19 But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand. 20 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. 21 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. 22 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."

The Overall Game Plan

God's plan was for Moses to first go and speak to the elders of Israel

and tell them that God was going to deliver them so they could return to the Promised Land. Once they were on board Moses was to confront Pharaoh and tell him that they wanted to go into the desert for three days to worship. God knew Pharaoh would reject the request. God knows the end from the beginning. God told Moses that Pharaoh would go down swinging. This was going to be a fight.

God also let Moses know how He was going to finance the trip and the founding of this new nation. The Egyptians would pay them to leave. They would plunder the riches of the Egyptians without having to take anything by force. Now that's a plan.

Chapter Four

1 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.'"

2 So the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod."

3 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. 4 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), 5 "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."

6 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. 7 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. 8 "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. 9 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."

Last week Moses asked, “Who am I?” and “Who are you?” This week we see him offer up three more excuses.

The first excuse is – “What if they don’t believe me when I say that you have spoken to me?”

God simply asked Moses what was in his hand. Moses had a shepherd’s staff. This was the tool he had been carrying for 40 years now. What Moses had in his hand was enough. He didn’t need anything else. When Moses balked last week, God told him that He would be with him. That should have been enough. Now God is sending Moses with the tool he is most accustomed – a staff. Moses ordinary staff AND the power of God render the staff miraculous. God empowering us makes us capable of accomplishing our mission. **So many times our lives and our actions and not so much our words that speak for us. This is why it is so important that we walk the walk and not just talk the talk.**

10 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.”

11 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? 12 Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”

This is not true and of course God knows it. We read in Acts chapter seven that Moses was mighty in word and in deed. We also know that he was educated in the best schools of Egypt. **This is just an excuse and it is ramping up to something else but God is patient with Moses just as He is with us when we offer up excuses.**

God responded by asking Moses who made the mouth of man. God made it so He should know whether or not Moses was capable of performing the assigned task. Once again God told Moses that He would be with him.

And once again this is all we really need to know. I hear this from people from time to time. I am not a good speaker or I am not a people person. **You don't have to be a good speaker to talk to people. Moreover, you just really have to be concerned. Passion for people and being passionate about God are all that is really required.** When you care, it is amazing what you can do and we should all care about the lost. **God has told us to go and make disciples and therefore He is with us in that endeavor. That is all we need and it is all we need to know.**

13 But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send."

14 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He 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. 15 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. 16 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. 17 And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs."

Now Moses offers up the last card in his deck. He is out of excuses and now the truth comes out. **In reality, Moses is just plain unwilling to go. He is happy where he is. He has established a comfort zone and doesn't want to get out of it.**

We also see God's response change. Now He is mad! Moses excuses have finally manifested in rebellion.

I once worked for a very large aircraft manufacturer. There were many people there that didn't have much of a work ethic. They had a list of excuses as long as your arm for why they couldn't get their work done on time. **In my frustration, I asked a supervisor how he could deal with that stuff day in and day out. His answer – you just keep taking away the excuses.**

That is what God is doing here. Once again, God knows the end from the beginning. **God knew Moses didn't really want to go, but He had to take Moses through all of his excuses so that he could see his own rebellion.** If God had said, "Oh, alright, I'll find someone else better suited for the job" then **Moses would have forever been unfulfilled and in rebellion.** His life would have been a mess. I believe this sort of thing is a source for many people's depression. They live in their excuses and if they are not challenged they meander about in a life of unfulfilled mediocrity. God doesn't want that for us. **You will never be as miserable as you are when you put off God's will for your own and are allowed to wallow in that state.**

God supplied Moses with his brother Aaron. But as we shall see, Aaron is not always an asset. **One of the ways God chastens us is to give us what we want.** Aaron will show himself to be a liability later on in the story.

God has a plan for this world and for your life. God wants to include you in His plans. We can truly feel inadequate. That is to be expected. The truth is that we are inadequate without God. **God uses inadequate people.**

27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

1 Corinthians 1:27

And that is the point. God is the one that is to be glorified. It is His name that is to be lifted up. Moses had all that he needed in his hand as long as God was with him. All Moses needed was to be willing. All he had to be was available.

Richard Ellsworth Day said this:

"It would be no surprise, if a study of secret causes were undertaken, to find that every golden era in human history proceeds from the DEVOTION and PASSION of ONE SINGLE INDIVIDUAL...THERE ARE NO BONA FIDE MASS MOVEMENTS, it just looks that way! At the center column there is always ONE MAN WHO KNOWS GOD, AND KNOWS WHERE HE IS GOING!" (Filled With The Spirit, p.20).

In this case that man is Moses. We all have the potential to reach people around us if we are willing. If we are available God wants to use us and include us in His plans. He wants to reward us for these things in Heaven. What we have is enough when it is given to God and our wills are submitted to Him.

(Chuck and Kaye Smith)

Moses just had to be willing. God wasn't angry until Moses was just plain unwilling to go. God used what Moses had in his hand. What he didn't have, God supplied him. When God got angry, Moses had reached the point of rebellion.

Moses is being pushed by God. And He, Moses, is showing reluctance. We have all been there at some point in time. These things, unfortunately are a given in our lives. But what we see is how God's grace moves us along, reasoning with us in order to move us into His will. We see God being patient, at least until the point of rebellion, at which time He has to get a little stern. But in the bigger picture, we are looking at 40 years of God's moving before He has to become stern. **God is gracious, long-suffering, (patient) as He deals with us. He wanted what was best for Moses as He (God) prepared him for his part in God's plan. And He wants the same for us.**

Thank you God for your grace!