

**My Deliverer is Coming** Exodus 4:18-31 bible-sermons.org March 21, 2010

Moses had just given God every excuse he could think of, and God answered everyone. What Moses didn't realize was that God picks imperfect people. Noah was a drunk; Job went bankrupt; Abraham was too old; Isaac was a daydreamer; Jacob was a liar; Leah was ugly; Joseph was abused; Gideon was afraid; Sampson was a long haired womanizer; Rahab was a prostitute; Jeremiah and Timothy were too young; David had an affair and was a murderer; Elijah was suicidal; Jonah ran from God; Naomi was a widow; John the Baptist ate bugs; Peter denied Christ; the disciples fell asleep while praying; Martha worried about everything; The Samaritan woman was divorced, more than once; Zaccheus was too small; Paul was too religious; Timothy had an ulcer...AND Lazarus was dead! **So what's your excuse!** (1Corinthians 1:26-29)

Maybe if Moses had come a bit later in Biblical history he would have realized that if you don't want the job, just tell God how qualified you are. Our excuses just encourage God to use us so He can display His power. The real danger is in telling God, "No!" Moses tried when he said, "Send someone else." That will incur the anger of the Lord and cause us problems as God deals with our unwillingness. But finally after God saying He would do it all and give Moses a helper, Moses agreed.

**18 Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."** Moses apparently didn't have the faith to tell Jethro what he was really doing. I can't blame him. Would you have said, "I'm going to Egypt to single handedly deliver my people, with God's help of course." God sized tasks are hard to explain. It takes faith to present them to others.

Moses did the courteous thing and asked leave of his employer, father-in-law, who was also the priest of Midian. Just because God directs us to do something doesn't mean we can leave common courtesy behind. Moses showed us how to put God first but be courteous and thoughtful as well. (2Corinthians 6:3)

**19 And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead."** The LORD again addressed Moses' fears and ordered him to go. It seems like this verse may have been added because Moses was stalling. God already sent him once. (Exodus 3:16) Sometimes we know what the Lord is asking but we keep stalling, excusing ourselves by saying it is not yet God's timing. How patient of God to address our concerns and to not give up on sending us.

**20 So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.** Now he has more than one son. This is important to what follows. He took what is now

**Commented [Paul Wall1]:** 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (ESV)

26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

**Commented [Paul Wall2]:** 2 Corinthians 6:3 (ESV)

3 We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry,

**Commented [Paul Wall3]:** Exodus 3:16 (ESV)

16 Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt,

called, "the staff of God." It was once his staff, but now it is God's. I think we can apply that to our own gifts and possessions. If we give them to God, they are no longer our own.

**21** And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. God is preparing Moses' heart for the rejection he would face so that he does not prematurely give up. We'll discuss the hardening of Pharaoh's heart when we get into the plagues.

**22** Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, **23** and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.' " This is the first time that God refers to Israel as His firstborn son. Moses now knows that God is going to give Pharaoh a choice of either releasing the Hebrews or losing his son. God is letting Pharaoh know the seriousness of His relationship with the Hebrews. The pharaohs had been killing God's son. That's a dangerous thing to do. (Zechariah 2:8) If this Pharaoh would not let them go, he would reap what he has sown. (Job 2:8)

The New Covenant has so many parallels to what is happening here. As the firstborn son, Israel failed to represent God to the world. Jesus, a member of that firstborn son, Israel, did faithfully represent God throughout His life as God's only begotten son. His sacrifice in our place makes it possible for us to be sons of God. (Romans 8:29; Galatians 3:26) Look how serious God is about liberating His sons and daughters! We see in God's intense desire to deliver the Israelites, the same intensity to deliver us through the cross of Calvary. (1John 4:9-10)

The next part of the story is a very enigmatic portion of Scripture. I'll give you my interpretation with the warning that commentators are all over the place with this one. We may have to wait till heaven to get the full and certain meaning.

**24** At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. **25** Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" **26** So he let him alone. It was then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision. The covenant of circumcision was made with Abraham, Moses' ancestor. (Genesis 17:10) All the descendants of Abraham were to be marked in this way. It was a symbol of their special relationship with God indicating that their hearts were sensitive to Him. (Deuteronomy 10:16)

Apparently, the Reuel side of the family did not follow the ritual. Moses knew that when he returned, if he was going to say he was in a special relationship with God, he and his sons would have to bear the mark that his family bore as a sign of covenant.

**Commented [Paul Wall4]:** Zechariah 2:8 (ESV)  
8 For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye:

**Commented [Paul Wall5]:** Job 4:8 (NIV)  
8 As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.

**Commented [Paul Wall6]:** Romans 8:29 (NIV)  
29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

**Commented [Paul Wall7]:** Galatians 3:26 (NIV)  
26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,

**Commented [Paul Wall8]:** 1 John 4:9-10 (NIV)  
9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.  
10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

**Commented [Paul Wall9]:** Genesis 17:10 (NIV)  
10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

**Commented [Paul Wall10]:** Deuteronomy 10:16 (ESV)  
16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

My guess is that Zipporah was reluctant to allow Moses to carry out the surgery because of the suffering the child would endure. What mother wants to hear their child scream in pain? I think they had been having an ongoing argument, and Moses was giving in to his wife's demand that their youngest son not be circumcised. Apparently the other son was already circumcised for "son" here is singular. That former experience may have so upset Zipporah that she said, "Never again!"

It sounds as if Moses became ill and was about to die if their son was not circumcised. Perhaps God used this to force Zipporah to do what she would not allow Moses to do to her son, to circumcise him. She thought she had to, to save Moses' life. She called Moses a bloody husband because of the demand that her sons be circumcised.

Why was circumcision such a big deal? Listen to what God told Abraham in regards to circumcision. <sup>14</sup> *Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.*" Genesis 17:14 (ESV)

If Moses came to lead God's people out of bondage and to deliver the Law to them but personally could be disobedient to the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendents, how could he ever deliver the Law to them? How could he expect them to live in accord with the Law while he justified disobedience? How could he lead the nation when he did not have his house in order? This became a New Testament requirement for elders, that they lead their family to follow God. (1 Timothy 3:4-5) If Moses could not exert his authority in his home, how could he exert his God given authority over the nation?

The lesson is a timeless truth. When God calls us to service and promises His presence, the first step is our own personal obedience to God. He calls us to clean up our act before we go out to call others to follow. He touched Isaiah's lips with the coal from the altar before he could be sent to deliver a message to people of unclean lips. (Isaiah 6:5-7)

If we are going to speak to a people of sensuality and lust, we better examine our own behavior first. If we want to speak to others about a relationship with Jesus, we'd better be taking time for our relationship with Him. We can ask others to go where we have not gone, but it will carry very little weight of conviction. The power comes when we are living examples of our message. (Philippians 4:9)

Jesus told the crowds to listen to the Pharisee's message, but not to follow their example because they didn't live what they preached. (Matthew 23:2-3) This would have been true of Moses had he gone into Egypt to set the nation free

**Commented [Paul Wall11]:** 1 Timothy 3:4-5 (ESV)  
4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,  
5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

**Commented [Paul Wall12]:** Isaiah 6:5-7 (ESV)  
5 And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"  
6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.  
7 And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

**Commented [Paul Wall13]:** Philippians 4:9 (ESV)  
9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

**Commented [Paul Wall14]:** Matthew 23:2-4 (ESV)  
2 "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat,  
3 so practice and observe whatever they tell you— but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice.  
4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger."

while he was in denial about keeping the covenant God made with Abraham that promised them freedom and a land of their own.

*<sup>27</sup> The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him.* I find it interesting that Moses went back to the mountain of God before he went to Egypt. It was probably on his route to Egypt, and he may have wanted to share the experience with his family.

Was he looking for one more encounter? If he was, the encounter came in a different form. It came as the confirmation through Aaron's visit. (Exodus 4:14) God had told Moses that Aaron would be sent to help him, and now, here he was just as God had said.

We never see a repeat of the burning bush in Scripture. God seems to delight in different expressions so that we don't neatly box Him up and write a book on the seven signs of a true manifestation of God. You might address the generalities, but the specifics are unique every time.

I call this visit by Aaron a double confirmation. Sometimes we believe we have God's leading, but then someone comes along with the same message and confirms that we heard correctly. Like the signs, Aaron was a confirmation that Moses was not crazy, but that he really heard from God. What are the chances that the brother you haven't seen for 40 years shows up right after God tells you he's on his way to help you? When God confirms a call like that, we should sit up and take notice.

*<sup>28</sup> And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him to do.* A faithful messenger speaks what God has spoken and shows what God has shown him or her. We'll see later that when Moses' tries to speak and act on his own, he is severely penalized. (Numbers 20:12) Jesus told his followers, "If you love me, you will obey my commands." (John 14:21) Moses is now in the obedient servant mode and that means that God can work powerfully through him.

*<sup>29</sup> Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. <sup>30</sup> Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people.* Aaron begins as the spokesman just as Moses had requested and as God had promised, but watch as the story progresses how Moses gains confidence in God's ability regardless of his own inabilities. (Exodus 10:25) They faithfully conveyed to the people what God had spoken and the signs that were given.

Imagine the awe the Hebrews must have felt as they watched and listened. They knew the promise God had given Abraham to set them free after 400 years, and

**Commented [Paul Wall15]:** Exodus 4:14 (ESV)  
14 Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart."

**Commented [Paul Wall16]:** Numbers 20:12 (ESV)  
12 And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them."

**Commented [Paul Wall17]:** John 14:21 (ESV)  
21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

**Commented [Paul Wall18]:** Exodus 10:25 (ESV)  
25 But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God."

it was now 430! (Genesis 15:13; Exodus 12:40-41) They were probably on the verge of giving up on the promise ever being fulfilled when Moses and Aaron came with hope. God had not forgotten.

The rod becoming a snake declared that the real authority was in God's hands not Pharaoh's. The leprous hand cleansed said that God could afflict and He could make well. (Isaiah 45:7) Though they had been afflicted, God could restore them from what was considered an incurable condition.

The last sign challenged them to look to God as their source of living water, not the Nile. (Jeremiah 2:13) Though the Egyptians saw the Nile as the giver of life, God was the true Giver of Life. The blood poured out on the ground reminded them God could not forget the covenant he made with their forefather Abraham. (Genesis 15:10) They were powerful signs with powerful messages.

*<sup>31</sup> And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.* Revival! Hope is restored. Worship is renewed. The message of God has been spoken and received. The people believe that God sees, hears, remembers, and knows! They are not abandoned. (Exodus 3:7)

The phrase, "the Lord had visited the people of Israel" doesn't mean that He ever left them. It means that He was about to fulfill His promises in a tangible way. He had seen their affliction from the beginning, but now they have let go of their doubts that He did not see. They believe He is who He had declared Himself to be to Hagar, the God who sees. (Genesis 16:13) Doubts and fears were released and had been replaced with hope and courage.

This is a pattern throughout history. This is definitely His story. We get bogged down in this fallen world. We wonder if God sees. Does He remember the promises in His word? Does He really know what I am going through? Faith is displaced by doubts and fears. Our focus turns to the trials and pain in our life.

Then God sends us a messenger. It may be the Word that comes to life as we read it. It may be from the lips of a brother or sister in Christ. It may be a word on Christian radio, and we believe. We let go of the doubt and fear and we grasp hold of hope and courage. We are renewed and excited that God is going to act. We know the Lord has visited us and seen our affliction, and we bow our heads in reverent worship.

Oh how He loves you and me. We wonder why He loves us, how He could love us, and then we remember, it is because His firstborn died for our sins. He set us free from slavery to sin and from the despair and hopelessness of unbelief. (Galatians 5:1)

**Commented [Paul Wall19]:** Genesis 15:13 (NIV) 13 Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.

**Commented [Paul Wall20]:** Exodus 12:40-41 (NIV) 40 Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. 41 At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt.

**Commented [Paul Wall21]:** Isaiah 45:7 (NIV) 7 I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

**Commented [Paul Wall22]:** Jeremiah 2:13 (NIV) 13 "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

**Commented [Paul Wall23]:** Genesis 15:10 (NIV) 10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.

**Commented [Paul Wall24]:** Exodus 3:7 (NIV) 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.

**Commented [Paul Wall25]:** Genesis 16:13 (NIV) 13 She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

**Commented [Paul Wall26]:** Galatians 5:1 (NIV) 1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Let us remember this morning the many times the Lord has come and visited us and made us know He has seen our affliction. If you are in that place this morning, listen and believe, and together let us all bow our heads in reverent worship of our God who has remembered His promises and come and redeemed us. He has kept His promise to bless the world through the seed of Abraham in Christ Jesus. (Genesis 22:18)

#### Questions

- 1 What good is an excuse for not serving God?
- 2 Why did Moses ask Jethro for permission?
- 3 Why didn't he tell Jethro the truth?
- 4 Who is God's firstborn? What was the threat to Pharaoh?
- 5 What happened at the Inn?
- 6 Why was it important? Gen 17:14 Application?
- 7 What did Aaron's arrival mean?
- 8 How would the Hebrews have felt upon seeing the signs?

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**Commented [Paul Wall27]:** Genesis 22:18 (ESV) 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."