

JANUARY 27

Exodus 4:1-5:21

Exodus 4

I wasn't there, but my feeling from this whole exchange is that Moses is trying to get out of following God due to self pity. He was ready when he was 40, but now he's an old man and just throwing up excuses. God is merciful and patient with him, but even God gets ticked off.

Vs. 1-9 When you look at these two signs, what point do you think God was trying to make? It seems to me that both things were feared. Moses ran from the snake and leprosy was a visible, incurable disease. God had control over these.

The water turning into blood would actually be the first of the plagues. Water becoming blood would also be the second and third bowls of judgment in the final plagues in Revelation 16:3-7. If you see why God does it there, you will understand why God does it here.

Vs. 10-17 Moses was a highly educated man and had been groomed to be the Pharaoh of Egypt. I think this is a little self pity and poor self esteem shining through here.

V. 11 This is a very famous and very provocative verse. The Lord actually takes the responsibility for disabilities and birth defects. It is interesting that we have the book of Job so that we can grapple with this. I think of Paul's disability. Even if a disability can be traced to natural causes, it is still allowed by the Lord. And then there are Jesus' words to His disciples in John 9:1-3, *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."*

Vs. 13-14 Moses objects and God gets mad.

Vs. 15-17 Aaron was not "plan B." Aaron was already on his way to meet Moses. Apparently they knew each other even though Moses was raised in the palace. It appears that it was always God's plan to bring them together and have them face the Pharaoh together. For Moses' sake, God would let Aaron do the talking, but that really didn't last long. As we'll see later, it wasn't that God was mad at Moses for his fears or feelings of inferiority, but rather for his rebellion and resistance to God's plan. I think Moses is still feeling that God should have gone with his plan back when he was 40.

As disciples we talk ourselves out of working in the harvest because of our fears or sense of inadequacy. We knock on a door and hope no one is home. We drive out to the place where we're doing our work, looking for excuses to get out of making contacts. I hate it when I do that. I recognize it for what it is and go back and knock on a few doors just to spite myself.

Vs. 18-20 It is probably good to have a map of the area to get an idea of what is happening here. If you are interested, look at this link.

http://www.bible-history.com/maps/route_exodus.html

When Moses ran from Egypt, he traveled east-south-east, completely across the Sinai Peninsula, east of the northern point of the Gulf of Aqaba into the land of Midian. No wonder the Egyptians never found him. God is speaking to Moses at Mt. Sinai (Mt. Horeb, same place). After talking to God, Moses leaves Mt. Sinai and goes back north along the gulf and then east into Midian. There he says good-bye to his father-in-law. He gathers his wife and sons and heads back to Mt. Sinai. Jethro is a nice guy. We'll see him again.

V. 19 Notice how gentle and encouraging God is being with Moses. Do some of the words here ring a bell? Read Matthew 2:20.

Vs. 21-23 Isn't it interesting that God keeps encouraging Moses, telling him what is going to happen and that in the end He will win? This was to keep Moses going when it began to get rough. Isn't this exactly what the Lord does for us if we live close to Him in His Word? It shouldn't be news to us that there is opposition and that things will keep getting worse in the world. But we know that working in the harvest and following Jesus is going to pay off and that God is going to win.

God has already spoken to Aaron, and he is on the way to meet Moses at Sinai.

Vs. 24-26 Back at the motel there is this strange thing going on. My take on it is that Moses told Zipporah that Gershom had to be circumcised. She put her foot down and said no son of hers would be turned into a "girlie-man." Moses didn't press the issue until he got a deep and hard sickness in the inn. It was obvious to both Moses and Zipporah that God was doing this to Moses and that it was because of the circumcision issue. In God's ironic sense of humor, Moses is now too sick to do the cutting, so this very, very mad mother grabs the knife and goes after Gershom, who has never seen his mother this crazy, with a knife in her hand, made out of sharp stone. How sharp does stone get? I can't imagine it gets sharp enough for this purpose. She doesn't care. She'd use a car key if she had one. Anyway, she finishes and expresses words of adoration to Moses as she wipes the bloody foreskin against his feet. Although the operation had nothing to do with his vocal chords, Gershom is unable to speak for weeks. (I wasn't there so some of this might not be completely accurate.)

By the way, how old do you think Gershom was? At any age no one would want anyone to do this to them, especially not your mother. Moses fled Egypt when he was 40 and probably met Zipporah and married in the next year. Now, Moses is 80. Gershom is somewhere in his mid to late 30s. Poor guy.

Interestingly, Gershom's age may be a clue that the Levites were exempt from God's punishment later, when He had all the men of Israel over 20 die in the wilderness. The Levites were not included in the spies and it isn't mentioned that any Levites, or Gershom, died because of the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea.

Vs. 27-31 The meeting with Aaron and Moses seems to indicate that they had had a close relationship before Moses left Egypt. In a very abbreviated form, their meeting with the elders of Israel is mentioned and for now all was well. It is interesting that we see them worshipping God here and thanking God for His answer to their prayer. That will be short lived. This should teach us something.

Exodus 5:1-21

Vs. 1-5 This is Moses' initial meeting with Pharaoh. Moses would have been known in the palace, even after a 40-year absence. Notice that Pharaoh already has a hard heart. This isn't God's doing. It is Pharaoh's natural arrogance. They had plenty of gods in Egypt.

Vs. 6-19 Pharaoh knocked the worship right out of the people.

Vs. 20-21 There is nothing worshipful about this.

There are lots of interesting things in these verses, but for me vs. 20-21 are important for us as disciples. Following Jesus in the harvest means going against the flow. Leading people to trust Christ or to live as disciples will create opposition. A disciple is not better than his master. If men persecuted Jesus, they will persecute us too. When opposition comes and life gets hard, it tests our devotion to Christ, simply to follow and trust His working and care. That is exactly what is happening here. Even with the signs they had seen from Moses, their hardship stripped away their faith. They would rather be silent and live like slaves, although they are God's people, than deal with the wrath of unbelieving men.

A disciple is devoted to Jesus. Jesus' salvation and love and grace overwhelm our vision and our desire for life on earth. His truth frees our hearts to give our lives as He did, to make disciples in a lost, dying world.

Matthew 18:1-22

One note in this entire section is that you see Jesus using two illustrations that He has used or will use in a different context. This adds a fuller sense of Jesus as a teacher. As Jesus taught, He preached the same sermons from town to town and He probably had some stories or illustrations that He used again and again. Here, for the second time in Matthew, He uses the "eye-hand" illustration in a slightly different way. Also, He uses the lost sheep story in this context.

So, how do you connect these paragraphs? Don't give yourself a headache, but do try to make sense of how these four paragraphs flow together in Jesus' thought.

There is a jumble of thoughts in the context that might help thinking about the paragraphs: the truth-suppressing teaching of the Pharisees, the thought that one disciple is better than another (comparison and degrees of worth), humility, pride, etc.

Vs. 1-4 Notice what launches Jesus into this lesson to His disciples. In using the child as an example, He told the disciples that they would need to turn (change, repent) and become like a child in terms of humility.

Vs. 5-9 The statement of vs. 5-6 moves Jesus to give the caution of vs. 7-9. For their mission in the harvest, the disciples could not tolerate pride. They had to extend God's love and respect to the lowest of the low. If anything kept them proud, they were to get rid of it. The work in the harvest, taking Jesus' love and work to the lost is that important. And, if we are proud, we'll make proud disciples.

Vs. 10-14 This definitely puts a priority on reaching children.

Jesus is saying that humility and simplicity of faith are the goal. Anything that complicates us, our motives, our focus, our purpose in life, gets in the way of faith. Faith in following Christ must be first. Age, intelligence and education are not factors if a person has true faith. So, what is the warning all about? What causes one of these little ones to stumble or sin? Pharisaic expectations applied to faith? Unbiblical religious requirements? These beliefs hamstring the faith of a lot of people in Israel. And the same happens today. Some groups call a lot of things "sin" that are not sin and make obtaining God's love something that is based on our performance.

But loose or liberal teaching does the same thing. God does care if we follow His Word and obedience really does have an effect on our lives. Look at the life of Jacob. Then there is very

loose theology that says you'd have to be a fool to think that God created the world in six 24-hour days or that He did it all without evolution.

These are all crazy arguments on both the conservative and the liberal sides, and those with very simple faith stumble when all of this is laid on them as "truth."

Earlier, the "eye-hand" warning was applied to doing something we like, that is doing us harm. It was personal. Here, it has something to do with our influence, or modeling, or leadership toward others. In the New Testament letters you find the writers fighting against two extremes that cause stumbling: traditionalism (Galatians and Hebrews) and liberty (1 Corinthians and Romans 14). In both cases, faith in following Christ in the harvest is destroyed. Paul had the right approach in 1 Corinthians 9:19ff. Jesus says that if what you are doing causes someone to stumble in their faith or growth in Christ as a disciple, get rid of it.

Funny how Jesus brings this section back to the focus on salvation. In the immediate context you would have to say that it is important to God that we work to save children, whereas most ministry is focused on adults. It is still true that most people come to Christ between ages 5-16. Go Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF)!

Vs. 15-20 Jesus has mentioned "sinning" and "offense," so it is logical that He would answer the question, "What do we do if we find a brother doing stuff that is wrong?" Having given a warning about making others sin or stumble, Jesus is now going to give a warning about how to confront sin.

V. 15 This process is for personal offense between individuals. For an offense against a group, the confrontation should begin with representatives of that group.

Vs. 16-17 Notice that this is a command. We should use this order. Obviously, as with anything, there are exceptions to the rule; for example, a rape victim is not required to have a personal meeting with her attacker before calling the cops.

Vs. 18-20 The church has spiritual authority. The offending person might not agree with this spiritual authority and just leave to go to another church, but Jesus is saying that this particular group of believers has the authority to make a judgment and God will consider it binding. Look at 1 Corinthians 5.

Vs. 21-22 This question by Peter will be completely answered tomorrow in the parable that Jesus tells. What Jesus is saying here is a command. I'd add this qualifier. First, repentance is necessary in what Jesus is saying. Second, although we are to forgive 70x7 when they ask for forgiveness, if someone has sexually abused a child, or stolen \$10,000 from you, forgiving doesn't mean entrusting them with the care of children or giving them another \$10,000. There is a difference between forgiveness, and restitution, rebuilding trust and restoring a relationship. I've learned to be cautious around people who try to push forgiveness too far too quickly. In that case, it is usually for them to save face. It is not meant to take away the burden they have placed on someone else by sinning against them.

Psalm 22:19-31

Vs. 19-24 David had already been saved from danger. Even as he was calling out here, he anticipated deliverance and giving praise to God for saving him.

Vs. 25-26 God is the source of praise and satisfaction. I find the word *forever* very interesting. I wonder if David knew that those who sought the Lord would be with Him forever.

Vs. 27-28 David surely had the promise to Abraham in mind. All the nations would be blessed by the child of promise.

Vs. 29-31 Not only would all people bow to worship God, but David knew that this worship would also continue into future generations.

There's a lot of "salvation" and declaration going on in this portion of the psalm. What a great way to end a psalm that begins with the foreshadowing of the afflictions that Jesus suffered. From those afflictions came deliverance and the declaration to the world that the Lord is to be sought and praised.

In a sense it is the same for us as disciples. When we value our salvation, and when we see how He saves us from danger as we work in the harvest, it moves us to give greater and more confident declaration of salvation and praise of God to others.

Proverbs 5:15-21

Ok, who says obeying God is all work!?

There is a lot of wisdom here and safety for the married man. Do this with the intensity of vs. 18 and 19, and the other verses of warning will be just that, warnings. How else do you say it? Men should make their relationship with their wife their greatest passion and hobby. If men will lead and take the time necessary, there is a satisfaction here for both that goes to the soul and makes that thing that happens at the end seem trivial and anticlimactic. But that's all I'll say or I'll lose my PG-13 rating.

But here too, Solomon, like us, got distracted with all his work and hobbies, and became attracted to sensuality in other women, many of them, I'm sure, putting on a wild show so they could become part of his city of wives. But that one woman who really loved him, with whom the need of his soul would be satisfied, the one he wrote about in Song of Solomon, got lost....and so did he. Obeying God is the way to life and health.