**The Gospel According to Moses**

**Lessons on Following Christ from Moses**

**Exodus 4:18-31**

March 28, 2021

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We are in a Sermon Series called the Gospel According to Moses, looking at the book of Exodus. We have been looking at the call of Moses. God patiently brings Moses along to convince him to say yes to God. So in the end, God sends Moses and Aaron to Egypt. Today we look at Moses as he heads to Egypt. Along the way we see some lessons Moses had to learn about following God when he said yes to God. My Big Idea is that God has lessons for us to learn whenever we say yes to Him.

**The First Step is often the Hardest (4:18-20)**

Moses goes back to his father in law Jethro to ask permission to go to Egypt. Moses respects him as the patriarch of the family, especially since he is taking Jethro’s daughter and grandchildren away. Jethro says yes even though it is difficult, he may never see his daughter or grandchildren again. You may not appreciate this if you don’t have children. There are few things more difficult than letting your children go. There might be some here who could learn from Moses and Jethro. It is good, even wise, to talk to your parents or in-laws before making major life decisions. Children, be careful how you leave and how you treat your parents. Parents, bless your children as they grow up and leave. That does not mean you bless everything they do, that is bad parenting. But when they are following the Lord and are making good decisions, bless them even if it is difficult for you. The first step is often the hardest and Moses is taking the first step in obedience to his call.

**God’s Plan is for His Glory not our Ease or Comfort (4:21-23)**

Moses heads to Egypt with his family and his staff. God tells him, the three signs I gave you so to that Israel would believe you and follow you, I want you perform those signs for Pharoah too. But Moses, Pharoah won’t listen, and he won’t let the people go because I will harden his heart. I wonder what Moses thought. God calls him to this impossible task and then tells him that he is going to be extremely difficult. In the bible, God often calls his people to do seemingly impossible tasks in which he promises meager results. For instance, God called Isaiah to be a prophet and his preaching will harden hearts, making their hearts dull and ears deaf to his words (6:8-10). Who wants that kind of ministry? That sort of mission trip? We specialize in sending you to people who will not listen.

God promises Moses that it is going to be hard and painful failure before Israel is delivered. God hardening Pharaoh’s heart is a major theme in Exodus. It is important that we look at it carefully. Fortunately the phrase is repeated at least eighteen times, so we will have plenty of opportunities. Here is what I want to say today. First, God is not doing something to Pharoah that is not already in his heart. Pharaoh already refuses to acknowledge the Lord. Secondly, God acts to harden in a way that humanity is still responsible. I think the apostle Paul in the New Testament helps us here when, speaking of sinful humanity, he says God gave them up to the sinful desires of their hearts and their sinful ways of thinking (Rom 1:24,26, 28). Rejecting God leads him to turning humanity over to their hard hearts. Third, this is not just a description but a prediction of what is going to happen (5:2, 7:3-4).

The Exodus was motivated by God’s mercy and justice. It was motivated by his love and compassion on one hand and by God’s hatred for injustice and evil on the other. But over it all, the Exodus was God’s plan to make His glory known to the nations in a spectacular display of divine power as we will see. God’s plan was for His glory, not for Moses’ ease or comfort.

**There is no Excuse for Compromise (4:24-26)**

Now we have one of those strange and difficult passages that is helpful to understand by stepping back and zooming out. The text has been talking about God’s son, Israel, and then Pharaoh’s son, who will be killed if he does not let Israel go. And now we are looking at Moses’ son. Genesis tells us that God gave circumcision to Abraham as a sign of belonging to the covenant. If you do not receive this sign of circumcision, you are to be cut off from Israel for breaking the covenant (Gen 17:10-14). Moses ignored the sign of the covenant, compromising for some reason. God is warning Moses, you had better rectify this or this trip to Egypt is going to be cut short. Fortunately, Zipporah understands the seriousness of the situation, so she circumcised her son and threw his foreskin at Moses’ feet (25). God takes compromise. God’s anger is kindled again with Moses because the Exodus was for a man with a speech in pediment but for someone with an obedience impediment. The fruit of the Spirit is always more important than the gifts of the Spirit. We are broken and sinful people but that is no excuse for living in sin. The weakness God loves to use is the weakness of ability or skill, the weakness of a broken history or tarnished past. Be careful about rationalizing your sin, I’ll just keep on drinking too much, watching porn, and treating my wife like I’m a big oaf, etc. Your sinful tendencies are no excuse for compromise because God not only loves to forgive us of our sin he also loves to empower us to overcome our sin. There is never a good excuse to compromise.

**Don’t Waste Energy with Worry or Fear (4:27-31)**

Remember how anxious and fearful Moses was in chapter three? They won’t listen or believe me. I will fail. God responds, tell them I am the God of your fathers who will lead you out of the land of bondage and into the land of plenty. But what if they don’t believe me. I will give you three signs so they will believe you. But I can’t speak well. I made your mouth. God, just send someone else. No but I well send Aaron with you. Jesus said many years later “Which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life”? The doctor never comes in and says, You know what? There is nothing we can do. Just worry. Worrying is living out a fearful future before it gets here. You run through your mind all the bad things that could happen. Yet most of the time, it’s not nearly as bad as you feared.

Now notice what happens at the end of chapter four. Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord (4:28) then Moses and Aaron gathered together all the elders of Israel (4:30) and the people believed (4:31). Wouldn’t you know it? Things happen just as God has said. Moses, like all of us, are learning lessons in the school of discipleship as we follow God. Discipleship is God is refining and shaping us as we follow Christ, learning that God can be trusted. He who began a good work in you will complete it. We all are a work in progress that he promises to complete. Don’t waste your time and energy worrying about your future, trust God.

Life Group Questions:

1. Summarize Exodus 4:18-31 in your own words.
2. Why was it so had for Moses to take God at his word and obey his call?
3. Where do you struggle believing God?
4. Why is the first step in following God in something new often the hardest?
5. Do you seek advice from others when making major life decisions?
6. Tell us of a recent example?
7. Why does God call us to do things that are hard with little to no success?
8. How do you understand God hardening Pharaoh’s heart?
9. Why did God make such a big deal about compromising on circumcision?
10. How does compromise work its way into our hearts and lives?
11. What things do you worry about? How do you deal with it?
12. What does this teach us about following Jesus?
13. How is God asking you to respond to this passage?