

Exodus 3:1-6, 10-14

Sept. 27, 2020

Hebrews 11:23-29

Walk by Faith: Moses

For we live by faith, not by sight, 2 Corinthians 5:7. That is the key verse for this series of messages about walking in faith. When the Bible speaks of faith it's more than a way of thinking, or a feeling, or even an assurance of salvation lodged in the heart. When the Bible speaks of faith it includes action.

To walk by faith is to respond to God's call to follow Him. Ever since humanity's fall from the original perfection of creation, God has been calling people to return to Him in whom is life eternal. The call is to walk with Him and to be His voice to call others. Moses is considered the premier prophet of Israel. Like other prophets of the O. T. he was so thoroughly attuned to God's voice that He was able to speak for God. He walked with God through all challenges and circumstances.

From Privilege to Poverty

Moses was born into a slave family in Egypt where the Hebrews had been in bondage for generations. The king of Egypt had decreed that all male Hebrew babies were to be killed for he was afraid of their growing population. Moses was spared because his mother hid him for three months, then put him in a reed basket and pushed him into the Nile River. [Don't let your worries get the best of you. Remember, Moses started out as a basket case.] He was found by Pharaoh's daughter. He became a member of the royal family. You can read all this in Exodus chapters 1-2.

One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. ***Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand, Ex. 2: 11-12.*** For this Moses was banished. He became a fugitive and outcast from Egypt where his people were still held as slaves. **Moses went from the royal palace to desert waste.** How great was his fall!

The young Moses was sure that he was the one to deliver the Hebrews, and so in his own strength and spirit he began to right the wrongs. But within a short time, God allowed him to be driven to discouragement and exile by the Egyptian authorities. Have you ever found yourself discouraged that the life you believed you were living for God, and the action you were taking in His service, was suddenly brought to a halt? God sent Moses into the desert to tend goats for decades and to learn to walk in the spirit of God. Moses thought he could deliver his people, but he had not yet been trained and disciplined by God.

Some of you know that Oswald Chambers is my favorite devotional writer. His classic *My Utmost For His Highest* still inspires me. I like what he says about Moses' experience: sometimes we get a vision of God and believe we have a very clear understanding of what God wants, and we start doing the thing. Then comes a crash, a discouragement that feels like decades in the desert. When we've become thoroughly discouraged God comes back and revives the call. **When we have become more attuned to God we will understand that "I AM" is calling;** just as Moses finally realized when he saw the burning bush. We must learn that our well-intentioned efforts on God's

behalf are of no use when they haven't been commissioned by God Himself. We start out with our vision of doing something for God – “This is what God wants me to do” – but we have not got into God's stride. If you are going through a time of discouragement, God may well be preparing you for something greater ahead. Walk closer to God, get into His stride.¹

God's Call Revived

While working for his father-in-law as a goat herder, Moses came upon a burning bush. *There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up ... God called to him out of the bush... Exodus 3:2-3.* Now when's the last time God has spoken to you from a burning bush? When's the last time you saw a burning bush? [That might not be so hard in California these days!] I had a preaching professor in seminary who said, “There's a burning bush in every field, for those who have eyes to see it.” **God uses all kinds of things, unusual or mundane, to get our attention.** It can be a tragedy, or an illness, or great confusion or discouragement. God does not visit these things upon us but can use them to speak to us. Unfortunately, too many people tune Him out, caught up in their own misfortune and bitterness or tuned only to the voices of unredeemed human cultures.

After wandering for decades, searching for his purpose and meaning, Moses was ready to hear the voice of God. *“I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.”* His response to God opened up his mission and purpose. Indeed, Moses would free his people but not by his own means, rather by the means of God. Now he was ready to walk by faith, trusting God to show him each step of the way.

Readiness for God's call means a right relationship with God and a knowledge of where you are. Most of us are so busy telling God where we want to go that we don't hear His call. When Jesus Christ is ascendant in our lives we will be ready to respond “Here I am.” **Readiness means we are ready to do the most insignificant thing or the biggest thing for God.** Jesus expects to do with us as His Father did with him. He will put us where He needs us, in exhilarating duties or ordinary tasks, because we are in union with Him as He is in union with the Father.² Are you ready for God's call to be revived in your life?

Walking With Others

Walking by faith Moses led the Hebrews to freedom and then on a journey of destiny: a return to the land promised to Abraham. Moses had to learn to walk with God – that's one thing. Walking with others can be the real challenge. He most definitely had to walk by faith in His mission to free the Israelites from slavery. He confronted Pharaoh ... that took some courage, was God really with him? He called down the plagues – could he be sure God would do it? He led a vacillating people to freedom: **By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night, Ex. 13:2.** What kind of gps was that? No doubt there were those who shouted at Moses, “Are you sure this is the right way?” They weren't taking the main highway.

When Pharaoh's army came after them they cried out to Moses: **Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ... It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!** Exodus 14:10-14. God's answer came to Moses: **Then the LORD said to Moses, Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground,** Ex. 14:15-16. Which took **more courage:** to trust God or to face the anger and accusations of the Israelites? That is the challenge for all leaders.

They had witnessed God's actions on their behalf, but still they did not trust. In their hunger the Israelites complained to Moses: **If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death,** Ex. 16:3. God answered them by providing manna, "bread from heaven," and quail for their meat (Ex. 14). God was also teaching them spiritual lessons: to trust Him for their sustenance. We are reminded of God's promises in Jesus: **...For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ... Jesus declared, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry ...** John 6:33-34.

Then they grumbled about water. Again, they accused Moses of leading them into destruction. Moses asked why they distrusted God as he cried out to the Lord for help. The Lord told him to strike the rock, which he did, and out poured a stream of water (Ex. 17).

Standing by a well Jesus said: **... whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life,** John 4:14. The deeper our faith well the sweeter the water.

You'd think these experiences would be enough to instill great faith in the Israelites, but you'd be wrong. Even later in the journey (and can you imagine how many were crying, "Are we there yet?"), as Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments: **When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."** Moses said to the people, **"Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning,"** Ex. 20:18-20. But soon afterwards there was disobedience among them.

Very few Christians consciously disobey God, they simply ignore Him. When we ignore someone isn't it a sign we do not love and respect that person? Didn't Jesus say, **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments?"** John 14:15. That's why the people said, "You speak to us, but don't let God speak with us, lest we die." Why are people, why are any of us, terrified that God should speak to us? Because we know that if God does speak, either the thing must be done, or we must tell God we will not do it. If it is only the servant of God speaking to us we can easily say, "Well, you may be a man or woman of God, but that's just your own idea." Have I humiliated God by being treated as one of His own children all the while I have been ignoring Him? Once we do hear and respond to Him we will be ashamed of all the times we did not.³⁴

Becoming too comfortable with the values of the world will spell doom for your walk with God. Faith in God will often put you at odds with the morality of unredeemed human culture. In this world we must train our hearts and minds to accept that we must focus our faith beyond what we see around us and even today's problems, so that we may "see" where God is taking us, and then take steps in that direction.

Your Walk of Faith

The example of Moses is lifted up, by Jews and Christians alike, because he is an example of faith in God... faith leading to actions. Read his story in the Bible, he wasn't especially holy and pure, he was tempted and sometimes fell, just like us. The point is **Moses responded to God and made effort to walk by faith.** Led by Moses, the Israelites passed through their own spiritual wilderness while going through a literal desert. They needed to become attuned to God's ways so that they could walk with Him and serve His purposes. Have you been through a spiritual wilderness lately? If not, perhaps you have more to learn of the Lord in your life. Sometimes it takes decades. **These are the days for God to speak to you.** Are you willing to take a step of faith when He calls you?

People still ask Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Moses faced those questions in himself. He trusted God to show the way. Do you ask yourself these questions? Every person wants to fulfill a purpose bigger than himself – to know why he/she is on earth and what it is they are to do. Our present-day Western civilization seems to have no agreed-upon answer to the question of life's purpose. We have much to live with but little to live for. **A closer walk with God will reveal your purpose...**

God is calling you... I don't have a formula for you to follow: 1,2,3 and you're walking closely with God – but the disciplines of worship, Bible study, prayer can open the door. It's like I said a couple of weeks ago about being a witness to Christ in the workplace: it really starts with making real in your own life the heart and soul preparation that Jesus can do in you. It's all about a living relationship with our heavenly Father, whom we know in Jesus. Then it is a matter of making up your mind and heart to stay attuned as He walks beside you.

Jesus said, **... surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age, Matt. 28:20.**

¹ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*, Oct. 13.

² Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*, April 8.

³ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*, Feb. 12.