

Exodus 4:24-6:27: Overcoming Discouragement

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Exodus / Exodus 4:24–6:27

Introduction

- Challenging days in ministry - Hurricane Katrina, the anonymous letter, thousands of difficult conversations, Covid... changing plans, people upset about masks, etc. We weren't taking the threat seriously enough, or we were taking it way too seriously. Trying to do the right thing, and you get ridiculed. Serving the Lord is hard.
- It's not only pastors that experience the hardships of serving the Lord. You do too. Serving Jesus is supposed to be the most joyous way you can live your life! And, there is much joy in serving Jesus. Brings me much joy to see people come to faith, disciples, living on His mission. Brings me much joy to preach, lead God's people, etc.
- BUT... serving Jesus can also be very discouraging. Sometimes, when you do the right thing and try to honor the Lord, it seems like it makes life worse, not better. Sometimes, the people you are trying to minister to oppose you. Sometimes, the enemy attacks you intensely when you're trying to serve the Lord, and it seems overwhelming.
- How do you overcome ministry discouragement? How should you respond when you've obeyed the Lord, and life seems to get worse and not better?
- This morning, two ways to respond when you are discouraged.

Be ready to identify the source of your discouragement.

- After being away from Egypt for 40 years, Moses told by God to return to Egypt and confront Pharaoh. Moses hesitated, but God assured Moses. Moses was God's man for the task.
- 4:24-26 - Weird passage. God almost puts Moses to death? Put to death the man who he called to go to Egypt? [Gen. 17:10-14](#): circumcision the sign of the covenant that God made with His people. Moses had failed to honor the Lord by circumcising his son. Someone not circumcised to be "cut off." How could Moses lead God's people if not willing to circumcise his son?
- Zipporah intervenes and cuts her son's foreskin. Lots of unknowns. We don't know how Zipporah knew what to do, or why Moses didn't circumcise his son. We don't know if Zipporah spoke to Moses in love or anger. We do know this woman stepped in and saved Moses' life. She obeyed where Moses didn't. In some ways, her life points to Jesus, the One who obeys for us and brings us into God's covenant family. ("Touched" same word used later in [Exodus 12](#) when the blood of the lamb "touched" the doorposts. Moses, and Israel, saved by blood - a sacrifice.)
- vs. 27-30 - Moses meets Aaron in the wilderness, and they assemble the Hebrew elders. Aaron speaks, Moses performs the signs (4:1-9). The people believe! God had heard their cry! Hope had come to Egypt!
- vs. 1-3 - Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh. Imagine the fear and anticipation. God had sent them, yet they were standing in front of the most powerful man on earth who had enslaved their people. Would God be faithful to deliver? "Let my people go so they may hold a festival..."
- Pharaoh: "Who is the Lord?... I don't know the Lord... I will not let Israel go..." This is NOT how it's supposed to go. The Lord promised that He

would rescue His people from Pharaoh, yet Pharaoh stands in opposition. (God already told Moses he would harden Pharaoh's heart - 4:21)

- What Moses and Israel don't know - God at work. He's setting up a show down where He is going to answer Pharaoh's question, "Who is the Lord" with the plagues. The plagues will be an emphatic answer to that question.
- Pharaoh's increasingly hostile: "If you want to go worship, you have too much time on your hands." Pharaoh makes the Israelites lives even more difficult: no longer supplies straw for the brick making. The Hebrews have to get straw for themselves, and they have to make the same number of bricks. Pharaoh accuses the people of being slackers. They need heavier work (5:6-9).
- Word goes out through the land of the harder work (vs. 10-14). Israelite foremen are overwhelmed and go to Pharaoh. "We can't do it, and we're being beaten!" Pharaoh calls them slackers and sends them back to work.
- The foremen confront Moses. They turn on Moses! "May the Lord judge you. You have made us stink before Pharaoh."
- vs. 22-23. Moses cries out before God. "Why did you ever send me? I did what you asked and it has caused trouble. You have not rescued your people at all."
- You can understand Moses' discouragement. This is NOT how the story is supposed to go. You've been there. You've tried to do the right thing, lived by God's will, and it didn't go the way you thought it would. It made your life harder, not better.
- You need to be ready to identify the source of your discouragement.
- **Discouragement may surround you, but it does not come from God.**

- The source of your discouragement you feel could be the pressure you feel to perform and take the weight of accomplishing God's work on your own rather than trusting God to work in His way in His time.
- You feel the pressure from people who don't know the Lord, who don't want to hear about your God. It's your boss at work who you want to witness to, but he could care less about your faith. He just wants you to perform on your job. Or, it's your grown children who you just want to know the Lord, but they're tired of you nagging them about their faith. It's discouraging. You're trying, but they're not getting it.
- You feel the pressure from people who know God. The pressure of believers who say things like, "If you were a real Christian you would..." serve more, give more, be at church more. Or, "you let us down because you didn't..." You try to live up to their standard, but it's not working.
- You feel the pressure from yourself. "In order to be a good Christian I must..." Never miss a quiet time, be there for everyone whenever they need me, be the perfect parent, spouse, serve at the church nonstop, etc.
- You feel the pressure from God. (Moses did - "If we don't go, God will smite us... 5:3 - When did God tell Moses that?) Sometimes you feel like God is demanding too much from you. It's discouraging.
- **Discouragement may surround you, but God is not demanding your performance.** Likely discouraged because you feel like you don't measure up - you feel the pressure to perform, to live up to everyone's expectations, to get the job done, to do all the right things. Feel the pressure to perform for God. "God is not pleased with me because I didn't pray yesterday." Or, "God is not pleased with me because I haven't seen my boss come to Christ yet." However, God is not looking at you and saying, "perform." His will is NOT contingent on your performance. God is simply asking you to be faithful and obedient.

Live with patient perseverance as you do what's most important.

- Moses is discouraged, but God reassures ([Exodus 6](#)). Remember, this is going to be a long road to victory because God is doing something bigger than Moses can imagine. God not only going to rescue the Hebrews, He is going to show Pharaoh and the Egyptians that He is the true God, and every other god is a mere idol (point of the plagues).
- God reaffirms His promises to Moses - no need for Moses to worry. God would do what He promised.
- vs. 2 - "I am the LORD" a reminder that He is the God who is... The mission not contingent upon Moses, or you, it's contingent upon the work of the Great I Am.
- vs. 3 - "Not known by the name 'Yahweh.'" When Moses wrote Genesis, he used the word "Yahweh" to identify the God of Israel. However, Moses and Israel are going to know Yahweh in a way that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not because they would see the salvation of God in a way that God promised to Abraham. They would see God give them the Promised Land. They would see God as the God who is able to fulfill all of His promises.
- vs. 5 - God has not forgotten His covenant He has remembered. When God remembers, He acts (2:24).
- vs. 6 -9 - 7 "I will's"... God WILL be faithful to Israel. Imagine Moses' relief that God had not brought him back to Egypt to go before Pharaoh and fail. God would have His way with Pharaoh just like God will have His way with everyone who opposes Him. Moses goes back to the people, but they did not listen to him (vs. 9). But... there would come a day that they would believe because God would be faithful to His promises. In God's time, He would work in such a miraculous way that there would be no way that God raised up Moses to be the deliverer of

His people. Moses had the promise of God, and Moses needed to patiently persevere as he waited on the Lord.

- Vs. 10 - After Moses had been rejected by Pharaoh, God gives Moses the same instruction: “Go tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go.” Thus far, it may have been a discouraging road for Moses, but God’s plan had not changed. Moses had an important task: to speak to Pharaoh on behalf of God’s people. It didn’t matter if no one else believed. Moses had a call of God on his life, and Moses had the promises of God on his side.
- The chapter ends with a genealogy - so future generations could trace the roots of their leaders. Moses and Aaron came from Israel - from within the people of God, God raised up deliverers to build a great nation ([Gen. 12](#)). Ultimately, God raised up Jesus from Israel to be the greatest deliverer.
- [Exodus 6](#) - a reminder that obeying God is not easy, but God is faithful. Wait on the Lord and do what’s most important.
- Easy to focus on all the pressure and think you have to perform for God and others... When you just need to continue to focus on what’s important. When following God seems discouraging:
- **Chill out.** You don’t have to give in to all the pressure. God is good and faithful. You don’t have to be overcome by the discouragement.
- **Focus on your relationship with Jesus.** Ultimately, that’s what God is after: a relationship with you. God revealed Himself to Moses so that Moses might be in relationship with Him. By the end of Exodus, Moses has a unique, intimate relationship with God. That’s what God wants for you. What are you doing right now to cultivate your relationship with Jesus? What are the holy habits you are building that are helping you grow in intimacy with Jesus?
- **Just do what God says.** Obey. Be faithful. All the stuff you are consumed by will sort itself out. Focus on being the follower of Jesus

God has called you to be and trust that God is at work to accomplish through you exactly what He wants to accomplish.

- Four questions when you are discouraged:
 - **What do holy habits do I need to cultivate?** Prayer? Bible study? Fellowship with believers?
 - **What promises of God do I need to remember?** That He will ever leave you nor forsake you? That's He's faithful to finish the work He started in you?
 - **What Scripture do I need to memorize?** A powerful way to overcome discouragement - to have God's Word in your heart that you can recall when discouraged. [Romans 8:31-39](#)? [Philippians 1:6](#)? [Psalm 23](#)?
 - **Who can I talk to?** What faithful follower of Jesus will remind me that God is faithful, and that I need to keep my focus? Who can you call at 3 a.m.?
 - Discouraged? Look to Jesus. He has already been faithful to fulfill His promise to you. Jesus was the One who should have been discouraged - He came to His own, yet His own did not receive Him ([John 1:11](#)). (Sounds like Moses.) Yet, Jesus faithful to run to His Father (solitary times of prayer and fasting) and faithful to do His Father's will (not my will but your will be done). Jesus knew the mission - redemption - an exodus - bringing us out of the slavery of sin and death to give us life. In your discouragement, look to Jesus who died and rose for you because He loves you. This morning, if you have not experienced His redemption, turn to Him by faith and repent of your sins.