

THE CALL OF GOD - PART II

Exodus 3:11-4:17

Background:

How do you respond to the Call of God?

You likely remember what that looked like at salvation. Maybe God had been calling you, and you were trying to resist – unwilling to let go of sin, throwing up questions – but eventually you realized you cannot resist irresistible grace. What of a calling to serve? Maybe you responded to God about doubts you had, and those many unknown variables. But in time, the perfect patience of God gave way to your eventual submission. Yes, we often try to resist with questions (often many questions) when faced with the Call of God in our lives. That is precisely what we will see with Moses this week as we continue our study in Exodus. I am sure you'll be both challenged, and encouraged, as we study Exodus 3:11-4:17.

Call to Worship: Psalm 3

Scripture Reading: John 8:48-59

Lord's Table: John 6:53-60, 35-36.

Feeding on Jesus. Holding fast to Him. Focused in, not distracted. Celebrating the memory of all He has done on our behalf.

Introduction:

Last week we looked at the opening verses of Exodus chapter three, the second book of the Bible, and noted four elements in the 'Call of God'.

1. The 'Call of God' always begins with GOD'S PREPARATION.

God prepares the one He calls. The preparation includes 'testing' and 'time'. For Moses this time of preparation meant forty years of 'tending sheep', forty years of tending another person's sheep. But Moses was not caught up in cement during these years. It was not a time of paralysis for Moses. Moses was 'busy doing' in these forty years, being 'faithful' for these forty years, doing the 'work of God', shepherding for Jethro, his father-in-law.

Exodus: 3:1

"Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God." (NASB)

2. The 'Call of God' is initiated by GOD'S PRESENTATION.

Exodus 3:2-4

"And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, 'I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.' When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush, and said, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am'." (NASB)

God 'presents' Himself to Moses as the 'Angel of the Lord', a manifestation, in a 'burning bush' that is not consumed. It was further noted:

a) The Call was 'initiated' by God. God comes to Moses, not the other way around. When God 'calls' He 'initiates' and comes to us.

b) The Call was 'no different' from other calls in Scriptures. It was God who 'initiated' the calls to Gideon, Samuel, the Apostles, the Prophets, for example. He met them where they were at, doing other things at the time, farming, fishing, and one was even sleeping. This is similar to how He calls us into service, into ministry. And like we are at 'salvation', we are 'spiritually' in death, an unresponsive state, 'sleeping', but then God 'initiates' a new relationship for us with Him through Christ.

Ephesians 2:1,4-5

"AND you were dead in your trespasses and sins ...

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved);" (NASB)

3. God's Call involves GOD'S PLACEMENT.

When God calls, He calls us closer to Himself, and He calls us into a place of holiness. He calls us to be holy, and He sets us apart. This is not creating distance, but rather is the clearing away of, 'removing' of, the things that are in the way, the things that impede the 'intimacy' of the new relationship. Remove the 'sandals'. Remove even good things, when they interfere with the intimacy.

Exodus 3:5-6

"Then He said, 'Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' He said also, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." (NASB)

Holiness is the proximity to the presence of God. The 'call' brings us closer to Him. It 'calls' us to be holy, to be fully devoted to Him. It 'calls' us into 'intimacy' with Him.

Hebrews 12:1-2

"THEREFORE, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses sounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (NASB)

4. The Call of God is action upon GOD'S PROMISE.

Exodus 3:7-10

"And the LORD said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. And now behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.'" (NASB)

God's Promise is made by way of 'Promise fulfillment'. God reminds Moses of 'the promise' given to Abraham. This 'call to Moses' is God, fulfilling 'the promise' He made to Abraham. The 'promise made to Abraham' was the motivation behind this 'call to Moses'.

Genesis 15:13-16

"And God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve and afterward they will come out with many possessions. And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete'." (NASB)

Genesis 15:6

"Then he (Abram) believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." (NASB)

God had promised Abram many descendants, and shared what would become of them. And Abraham believed the promise of God. And now God was acting on that promise. God 'promised', and now God 'calls'. Verse ten is the action of God on that promise.

Exodus 3:10

"THEREFORE, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." (NASB)

And so, GOD HAS CALLED MOSES. God has spoken 'initially', clearly, and directly. God has laid out the call, and except for verse four, when Moses answers to the call of his name, there has been silence from Moses the family man.

Exodus 3:4b

"God called to him from the midst of the bush, and said, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am'." (NASB)

But now Moses is about to speak. So, how will Moses, the Midian exile, the family man, the veteran shepherd, respond? As it turns out, Moses is about to go on an extended 'protest'. He

puts forth five protests of prolonged resistance to 'God's Call' on his life. And each of Moses' five protests reveal something about the 'Call of God' in our lives.

The Five Protests from Moses:

V GOD'S PRESENCE (vv 11-12)

Exodus 3:11-12

"But Moses said to God, 'Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt? And He said, 'Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt you shall worship God at this mountain.'" (NASB)

1. Moses' protest: 'Who am I? Who am I that I should go and do this?'

This is not Moses saying, 'Who, me?' with a smirk. His protest is not false humility. No. These words from Moses are a real, genuine, protest. We know this because God cannot abide the proud.

James 4:6b

"GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." (NASB)

Proverbs 3:34

"Though He scoffs at the scoffers, Yet He gives grace to the afflicted." (NASB)

Psalms 138:6

"For though the LORD is exalted,
Yet He regards the lowly;
But the haughty He knows from afar." (NASB)

God opposes the proud. The proud cannot be used by God for His purposes because they are not in line with His character. The God who seeks His own glory, does not abide the arrogance of others. Thus we know that Moses' protest is not a protest rooted in self pride. Though he protests, he protests humbly, and with an honest 'self assessment' of himself. He looks at his circumstances and protests. Who am I, God? I am but a 'lowly' shepherd. I have been away from the courts of Egypt for forty years. How could I possibly bring the people from bondage?

How could I 'dare' to go against the mighty pharaoh? This is a humble cry of protest. He feels unqualified, unprepared. But God has 'called' him, therefore Moses is ready.

God's response to Moses' protest:

God states simply, 'I will be with you'. 'Certainly, "I will be with you'. You will have my presence with you. The call of God is always accompanied by, and fortified by, the PRESENCE OF GOD. The Creator of heaven and earth is with you. What other assurance is necessary?

This is God's promise. When He calls us He will be present with us on the journey, while working the task, and through our days. We see evidence of this repeatedly in Scripture.

The Lord assured Jacob, for example, who was called, that He would be with him, and Jacob knew this was so.

Genesis 31:3-5

"Then the LORD said to Jacob, 'Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you'. So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, and said to them, 'I see your father's attitude, that it is not friendly toward me as formerly, but the God of my father has been with me.'" (NASB)

And we see it again in the commissioning of Joshua.

Deuteronomy 31:23

"Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, 'Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you'." (NASB)

Like Moses, Gideon protested at the time of his being called, stating what he saw as viable reasons why he could not complete the task he was being called to. Yet God assures Gideon that He will be with him.

Judges 6:14-16

"And the LORD looked at him and said, 'Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?' And he said to Him, 'O LORD, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my

father's house.' But the LORD said to him, 'Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man'. (NASB)

We find that even when Jesus gave His final Commission to the Apostles, that there were some that doubted, and needed to be reassured.

Matthew 28:16-20

"But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'." (NASB)

Moses is assured by God that He will be there with him. Though Moses' coming entourage, including his brother Aaron, will eventually fail Moses later in Exodus, God does not fail him.

When God calls, He doesn't call you alone. No. He confirms that He is with you. 'I will be with you' now, and 'I will be with you' then with Pharaoh, and then I will be with you in the future.

Exodus 3:12

"And He said, 'Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.'" (NASB)

And it all comes to pass.

God always is calling, and His 'presence' is throughout every detail of that call, and GOD ALWAYS REMAINS WITH THOSE WHOM HE HAS CALLED!

VI GOD'S PREMINENCE: (vv13-22)

Exodus 3:13

"Then Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you." Now they may say to me, 'What is His name? What shall I say to them'?" (NASB)

2. Moses' Protest: Moses is doubting his reception with the people. How will the Israelites receive him? He has concerns. They will have questions. How will I answer them? If I do this, they will ask who sent me? They will question His very name. What will I say?

But Moses is missing the BIG PICTURE. God calls who He knows. And up to this point God has been closely known to His people. Abraham knew Him, Isaac knew Him, and Jacob knew Him. God has been intimately known by those before Moses, known well. Yet Moses needs this powerful reminder of who it is that is visiting.

Exodus 3:6

"He said also, 'I am the God your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." (NASB)

So what has happened? More than four hundred years have passed since the time of Jacob, and the Israelites have been under pagan rule, in an Egyptian world of polytheistic belief (many gods), pantheistic belief (god in everything), and synergistic belief (the blending together of belief systems). The powerful Egyptian influence over the many years may well have had its effect on the Hebrews.

So, perhaps Moses reveals where the people are at now. Would Israel still know God? What has happened from Jacob to Moses? What has happened to God's preeminence in their lives over these many years? Is He still the ONE HOLY GOD, superior, surpassing all others, or have they forgotten their God? Lots could have happened in four hundred years of foreign influence. Likely there has been a loss of knowledge about the true God, and a loss of His presence in their lives.

God's response to Moses' protest:

God simply, and emphatically, states HIS PREEMINENCE, 'I AM WHO I AM'. And then He addresses Moses' concerns.

Exodus 3:14

"And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; And He said, ' Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you'." (NASB)

God is declaring His 'preeminence'. He speaks the words in 'first person' grammatically. These are words that come from the verb TO BE, 'BEING'. "I AM WHO I AM". Moses, you will tell Israel 'that 'I AM' has sent me to you.' Moses was seeking a name by which to tell Israel whose authority he was coming to them by. (God's answer is, upon thought, most complex and creative.) From the statement "I AM WHO I AM" God formed a name, the divine name, 'YAHWEH', (YHWH), HE, (Later: JEHOVAH). I am the God who brings all things into being. (He is the God that will make a nation from the escaped slaves of Egypt.) I AM. I WAS. I WILL BE. The point of the name is so that God's people will be reminded of their 'preeminent' God, that He is THE ONLY GOD, and has always been so, contrary to their Egyptian surroundings, and that His existence has not changed. He remains, the God of their fathers. 'I AM HE WHO IS', I am the self existent ONE, the 'I AM'. This sets God apart from other gods, He is, He exists, and revealing His name implies 'relationship' with the people, intimacy with them.

The 19th Century commentator, Bush, makes this comment on 'THE GREAT I AM':

"The title "I AM" properly denotes the underived, eternal, and unchangeable existence of the great being to whom it is applied, carrying in it also the implication that He, in distinction from all others, is, The One and Only True God, the God who really is, while all the pretended deities of the Egyptians and other nations were a vanity, a non entity, and a lie."

'I AM HE WHO IS'. This is the nature of Israel's God. He is, because there is no other. He has not changed in these four hundred years. Nor will He change moving forward. He remains the "I AM". No other name is important. No other name is so fitting. He is the verb of 'BEING'. HE IS, GOD ALONE!

Israel does not need an introduction to God. Israel needs a reminder. Israel is not meeting God for the first time. No. He is 'the God of their fathers'. God provides a point of reference for them by naming Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the ever faithful God. He has remembered them, He has seen them, He has heard their cries. He is the God who is ever present with His people.

Exodus 3:15-16

"And God, furthermore, said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, "The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is My name forever, and this is My memorial name to all generations.' 'Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'The

LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt'." (NASB)

Your fathers knew me. And I made them 'a promise'. And 'I AM' will keep that promise, and will deliver you to the 'promised land'.

Exodus 3:17

"So I (God) said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey." (NASB)

And so God notes His 'preeminence' in the lives of the Hebrew people. He lays out for Moses what he needs to say, and how the situation will pan out. He assures Moses that He, the great 'I AM', will be with them, active in the encounter with Pharaoh.

Exodus 3:18

"And they will pay heed to what you say; and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt, and you will say to him (Pharaoh), 'The LORD the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God'." (NASB)

So, Moses is reassured that the elders will back him, yet the Lord knows that the king will not let the people go with this request. It will take the hand of God, 'I AM' doing His miracles, and 'I AM' influencing the Egyptians before they will be allowed to go. Ultimately, 'I AM' works out that Israel shall plunder the Egyptians. By His outstretched hand, He will give favour to them in the eyes of the Egyptians, so that the mightiest of peoples at that time will hand over their goods to the Israelites.

Exodus 3:19-22

"But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. So I will stretch out My hand, and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go. And I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. But every woman shall ask of her neighbor and the woman who lives in her house,

articles of silver and articles of gold, and for clothing; and you will put them on your sons and daughters. Thus you will plunder the Egyptians." (NASB)

This is 'GOD ALONE'. This is 'I AM', the THE PREEMINENT GOD, making the way.

VII GOD'S POWER: (vv 4:1-9)

Exodus 4:1

"THEN Moses answered and said, 'What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you'.'" (NASB)

3. Moses' Protest: 'What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say?'

What if they should suggest that 'The LORD' has not appeared to 'me'? Moses now considers the question of authority. Will the people want proof that God has sent him?

How relevant is this, for we also have trouble with authority. From an early age we question, 'Says who?' It is an enduring issue. People resist authority, and people resist God. God's people, today (the Church), and God's people then (Israel), 'resisting' the authority of God and His ways, 'in rebellion' against God's ways, 'reframing' how to live the Christian life, the 'holy' life, redefining Truth to make it more palatable. We have an 'allergy' to authority. We are rebellious in attitude. People are seen leaving the Church. Why? They do not like something. It is not their preference, not their opinion. There is likewise rebellion against husbands, elders, those structures that God has put in place. And there is rebellion against the Word, the Ancient Truths, deconstructing Christianity, redefining how to live for the Lord.

God's Response to Moses' Protest:

Though we should not need proof, and signs and wonders, and in fact, Moses does not actually ask for proof, but he has pronounced his concerns, and in His grace, God provides Moses with three signs to provide authentication, should the people not believe him. The first sign involves a staff being turned into a real serpent; the second, a hand in the cloak turning leprous and then being restored; and thirdly, should they still not believe, water would turn to blood.

Exodus 4:2-5

"And the LORD said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' And he said, 'A staff.' Then He said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent: and Moses fled from it. But the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail' --- so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand --- 'that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you'." (NASB)

Exodus 4:6-7

"And the LORD furthermore said to him, 'Now put your hand into your bosom.' So he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold his hand was leprous like snow. Then He said, 'Put your hand into your bosom again,' So he put his hand into his bosom again; and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh." (NASB)

Exodus 4:8-9

"And it shall come about that if they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign. But it shall be that if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground." (NASB)

Thus the Lord does what man cannot do. He demonstrates three 'supernatural' signs. These powerfully given demonstrations are important. They suspend the 'fixed laws of nature. He does this to demonstrate and validate the authority of the messenger. He does this showing that this is the consistency of God. He has not changed. I am the same God calling you, Moses, the same God that called Abram. With this, God has built a point of reference.

God does similar actions, that is, demonstrating with powerful signs/miracles, at other times, thus again validating the messenger. Such demonstrations are given/done, for specific reasons, and at specific times. We note such examples with Elijah and Elisha, and also with the ministries of the Apostles in the Gospels and Acts. Lepers are healed, the dead are awakened or raised, the sick are healed, food is multiplied miraculously. God's power and authority are made clear. But it is not given all the time, no, only in rare instances, for we are meant to live by 'faith', not by signs.

But, similarly, we again see God demonstrating His supernatural power in the book of Kings, for a purpose. "Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel ... and he reigned two years over Israel. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord." I Kings 22:51a,52a (NASB) This king served Baal and worshiped him, just as his parents had before him. This provoked the Lord to anger. (I Kings 22:53) Then came the day that Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber, and he became ill, and sent 'messengers' to inquire, not of the Lord God, but of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether he would recover from his illness. (II Kings 1:2b) But God has had enough of this king, and sends Elijah to meet these 'messengers' en route, and to inquire why they are seeking out Baal-zebub, as though Israel had no God. (II Kings 1:3b) And so Elijah delivers 'God's answer' to Ahaziah's inquiry.

II Kings 1:4

"Now therefore thus says the LORD. You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die. Then Elijah departed." (NASB)

And so the messengers return to Ahaziah,

II Kings 1:6

"And they said to him, 'A man came up to meet us and said to us, "Go, return to the king who sent you and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die'." (NASB)

Ahaziah determines that his 'messengers' were met by Elijah, the prophet, whom his family knew well, but hated. (I Kings 21:20) He proceeds to send men to encourage Elijah to come down to him, but God uses the situation to show that it is He who is the 'powerful and only God', and to demonstrate and validate the authority of His messenger, Elijah. Elijah's message from God was about to be lived out, and God was about to send fire from Heaven to demonstrate His power and authority.

II Kings 1:9-17b

"Then the king sent to him (Elijah) a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him, and behold, he was sitting on the top of the hill. And he said to him, 'O man of God, the king says, "Come down".' And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, 'If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.' Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. So he again sent to

him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said to him, 'O man of God, thus says the king, "Come down quickly".' And Elijah answered and said to them, 'If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.' Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. So he again sent the captain of a third fifty, with his fifty. When the third captain of fifty went up, he came and bowed down on his knees before Elijah, and begged him and said to him, 'O man of God, please let my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. Behold, fire came down from heaven, and consumed the first two captains of fifty with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight.' And the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, 'Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.' So he arose and went down with him to the king. Then he said to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron --- is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word? --- therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die". So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken.'" (NASB)

Such miraculous 'signs' were given/done for the purpose of a specific 'demonstration'. This was true in the Old Testament, and also in the New Testament. The Apostles, for example, performed rare signs, for specific purposes, demonstrating that they were indeed 'true Apostles' who had been given God's power.

II Corinthians 12:11-12

"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though there are many, are one body, so also is Christ." (NASB)

But such power is not given all the time. No. We are meant to live by 'FAITH', not by 'signs'. We must therefore be 'careful' about saying, 'God, give me a sign'. While it may seem innocent to do so, DEMANDS FOR SIGNS can be the result of a heart problem. These can range anywhere from consumer entertainment ('wow me') right through to the most serious problems of UNBELIEF. Wanting 'signs' is wanting 'a show'. It is the 'foolishness' of the world. God's call for today is for a different time, and God's power in our lives today is not like that which was given to Moses. Paul addresses this concern in his first letter to the Corinthians, drawing their focus to Christ Alone.

I Corinthians 1:9,12-13,17-18,22-24

"God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul', and 'I of Apollos', and 'I of Cephas', and 'I of Christ'. Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void. For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews, a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (NASB)

To the saved, 'those called', the power of God is the 'Living Word' which changes lives. Christ, the power of God, the Word of God: If you are called, you have the Word of God in your hands, and you have Christ Himself. CHRIST IS THE POWER OF GOD, IN THE CALL OF GOD.

VIII GOD'S PROVISION: (vv 4:10-12)

Exodus 4:10-12

"Then Moses said to the LORD, 'Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since Thou has spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' And the LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.'" (NASB)

God has now responded to three protests from Moses, but Moses is not finished yet.

4. Moses' Protest: 'I am not eloquent.' 'I am slow of speech and tongue.'

Moses may have had a speech impediment, or may have been a quiet man, not the talking type, yet we see from his protests that he surely is 'quite able to talk', and he becomes quite clear in his 'writings'. The fact is, Moses was raised in Egypt, and had lived there for forty years. Who else was better equipped to speak in Egypt? He was more 'qualified' than anyone. He was raised up for this time. God's 'Providence' has prepared Moses for this task, at this time, and therefore, Moses's protest does not fit. But for Moses, the mounting thought of returning to the court of Egypt, of going into the presence of the Pharaoh, becomes

overwhelming to him, and he protests, 'I do not have royal eloquence'. I am not made for this. I am but a shepherd.

God's Response to Moses' Protest:

God, the Creator of man, He who wove together Moses' mouth, deserves a hearing. He reminds Moses, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" (Exodus 4:11)

Moses, I am the Creator. I AM He who made you, and made your mouth, and crafted it specifically for My purposes. I made the mouth, and I will supply the speech. I will be with your mouth, Moses. I will teach your mouth what to say. Therefore, Moses, you have NO EXCUSE!

How often do our own protests echo those of Moses? How often do we say, I cannot do that. I am not made for that. But this is nonsense. If we are called, whether to ministry or salvation, YOU HAVE BEEN PROVIDED FOR BY GOD! Therefore, say yes, and obey.

IX GOD'S PATIENCE: (vv 4:13-17)

Exodus 4:13-17

"But he said, 'Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever Thou wilt.' Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, 'Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. And you are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do. Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and it shall come about that he shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be as God to him. And you shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs'." (NASB)

5. Moses' Protest: 'Please send someone else.' Moses is feeling desperation. Lord, send anyone but me!

How many times have we said no to God along the way? How many times have we been called to a service, a ministry, to salvation, but we say NO. I am not made for that. I need more

information. I need more evidence. I need to clean up my life before I do that. Sigh. More time, Lord. I am just not ready for that.

But when the Lord calls, we are to let go, and obey. The call is clear, yet you remain defiant. Your excuses are used up, but still you still say No.

When you say NO, then God's anger is stirred, and this was true in the case of Moses.

God's Response to Moses' Protest:

"The anger of the LORD burned against Moses." (Exodus 4:14a)

When You Say No to God:

A) You Kindle God's Anger.

Moses caused God's anger to 'burn' against him. He brought this upon himself. And this is terrifying, for God has warned us not to test God.

Deuteronomy 6:16a

"You shall not put the LORD your God to the test." (NASB)

B) You Miss an Opportunity.

God's plan will not be thwarted. What He wills will surely come to pass. He will simply choose another to complete the task. Moses had expressed protest after protest, and not joy in the opportunity. God thereby calls Aaron instead, and notes that Aaron will be glad.

Exodus 4:14b

"Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart." (NASB)

C) In The End, God's Will will Happen in Your Life.

In the end, God always gets His Way. He will override our wills. And so to Moses' terminal resistance, God did not allow him to get out of the opportunity. He was not allowed to stay on in Midian as the shepherd. No. God simply stated, 'I will teach you both.'

Exodus 4:15

"And you are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do."

If we are saved, born again, God's sovereign ways will be accomplished. He gets His way in our lives. And when we look back, thankfully so. His plans come to pass; we just bring along the scars. Moses, like us, made so many excuses. We are selfish, impatient, and often refuse to let go. BUT GOD IS PATIENT WHEN HE CALLS.

I Timothy 1:16

"And for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." (NASB)

Thus is the testimony of Paul to Timothy. GOD WILL DEMONSTRATE HIS PATIENCE by Way of His Son JESUS CHRIST.

THE CALL OF GOD IN OUR LIVES:

All the elements of 'The Call' are found in Christ, the Son of God. In Christ, all is 'provided for'. Only by Christ.

I Corinthians 1:30

"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, ' LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD. "

* God's Call is the PRESENCE of Christ.

John 14:23

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.'" (NASB)

- * God's Call is God's PREEMINENCE and Christ's PREEMINENCE.

John 8:58

"And Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.'" (NASB)

- * God's Call is the POWER of Christ.

Ephesians 1:19-20 (that you may know...)

"what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places," (NASB)

- * God's Call is Christ's PROVISION.

Philippians 4:13

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (NASB)

- * God's Call is Christ's PATIENCE.

II Peter 3:9

"The LORD is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (NASB)

Benediction: The ongoing enduring life call of God upon our lives:

Philippians 3:14

"I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God Christ Jesus." (NASB)