

Exodus 4

Read Exodus 4:1-9: Moses is a reluctant witness, but it is not all bad. If I am committed to push forward into an uncertain activity I need all of the details to formulate a plan...just to have some level of peace of mind. I have to visualize some kind of a plan. Moses gets a plan A, B and C. God shows him how to use his new powers to turn his stick into a snake, and then back into a stick. Secondly, God shows Moses how to give himself leprosy and then heal it. Leprosy would strike fear into anyone. Thirdly, Moses was given the ability to turn water into blood.

These are not random signs and powers. Everything in the Old Testament points to Our heavenly Father and the finished work of Christ. The rod that turns into a snake is a pattern of correction used by God. Satan is symbolized as a serpent. We have free choices; but there are consequences. The rod for any shepherd is used for correction. The scriptures tell us to chasten our children with inanimate objects and never fear our hand. God also tells us that it is a strange act for him to discipline his children, but he is committed to get it done for their well-being.

⁷ And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸ but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12)

He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly. (Proverbs 13:24)

¹⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily. ¹⁷ Also I will make justice the measuring line, And righteousness the plummet; The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, And the waters will overflow the hiding place. ¹⁸ Your covenant with death will be annulled, And your agreement with Sheol will not stand;..... For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon— That He may do His work, His awesome work, And bring to pass His act, His unusual act. (Isaiah 28 various verses)

The snake/Satan has been created and used by God since creation. It is his intention to kill, steal and destroy. God is always 10 chess moves ahead, constantly turning the tables for his own glory.

But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. (Genesis 50:20)

Satan probably thought that the cross was the ultimate victory; but it was the ultimate defeat. This *reversal of fortune* concept is much like the Apostle Paul, who once was among the most committed anti-Christians. He was ultimately used to actually build the church. Understanding how this works is a gamechanger for the believer. We really do not have to sweat the problems of crime, foreign nations, drugs, etc... We only have to focus on God. These *bad actors* are all agents of correction, just like the Devil. Jesus created the Devil for his purposes. God controls him like an unwitting German Shepherd guard dog on a leash. He wants to kill, but he is restrained. Job describes the defined boundaries and behaviors that are permitted for demonic activities. Lucifer has to show up and answer to God on appointed reporting dates. When the church is done being built, Satan and his associates will be sent into the eternal Lake of Fire. You could think of our tempters as catalysts in a reaction. They more-rapidly draw out tendencies that lie within us. God is controlling everything down to our sub-atomic particles. Nothing is random or unfitting; since all things work for the good for those who are called by God. Many of the Old Testament characters serve a dual purpose. They describe the immediate situation, while alluding to something bigger than themselves.

“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. ⁶I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ⁷Yet he does not mean so, Nor does his heart think so; But it is in his heart to destroy, And cut off not a few nations..... ¹²Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks.” ¹³For he says: “By the strength of my hand I have done it, And by my wisdom, for I am prudent; Also I have removed the boundaries of the people, And have robbed their treasuries; So I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.... Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him who saws with it? As if a rod could wield itself against those who lift it up,.... (Isaiah 10 various)

The second sign given to Moses (the leprous hand) symbolizes sin. Leprosy's effect on a person is to make them numb to feeling. We begin dying inside. We become ugly to others. It alienates us from our loved ones. When we sin, we afflict our conscience to the point where we knowingly try to shut off the nagging u-turn warnings. Sin causes us to harden and stop feeling empathy for our effect on others. We become like *dead men walking* zombies. Leprosy is extremely contagious. Any leper needed to be isolated to avoid ultimately bringing death to his whole town. When we sin, it spreads to others like wildfire. It permeates our health and life outside and inside.

Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. ² So they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it. ³ (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)..... ⁴ Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. ⁵ Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. ⁶ Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. ⁷ Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. ⁸ I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?" ⁹ So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed. ¹⁰ And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper. (Numbers 12)

Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints. ⁶ From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment. (Isaiah 1)

Being around sinners quickly clings to you and infects you.

²⁷ Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever." And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow. (2 Kings 5)

The third sign that God gave to Moses as his sign was being able to turn the Nile River into blood. The Nile was their main idol. The Egyptians worshipped this river as the source of life. God is in the business of killing our idols and showing us that they are imaginary constructs in our minds. The Nile brought almost all of

their income; but it would represent red ink and a stink when God turned it to blood.

Read Exodus 4:10-20: Moses was a great man who uniquely spoke to God face to face. He was also the humblest man (except Jesus). Like many other biblical greats, Moses also showcases man's limitations. He became extremely frustrated with 40 years' worth of non-stop complaining and thanklessness and treachery. He was not permitted to enter the promised land because he lost his cool and misrepresented God before the people.

Moses does not see himself as a spokesman at all. There are a lot of very responsible people who do not want the limelight. My wife is also one of the most responsible people I know, who hates becoming the focus or spokesman. On the other hand, if God tells us to do something we have to trust that he will provide the anointing and ability and the opportunity. I like to call it *failing forward*. There have been numerous times when I made errors in judgement, but I prayerfully took the action that seemed to be needed. God turned my miscalculations into correct solutions. God made a paradigm shift wherein the wrong answer inexplicably became the right answer. It is humbling to think of yourself as a big shot, knowing fully well that you blew it; but only God knows it.

One lesson to make note of is that God does not force us to obey. frequently we are permitted to do things our way instead of his. That is always problematic. Aaron was allowed to become the fellow spokesman with Moses; but it came at a cost. It is not specifically stated, but implied that Aaron and Miriam were notable leaders in the Hebrew nation before Moses were called. Aaron was at the center of the golden calf rebellion, in which many people died. Once the last Pharaoh who vowed to kill Moses died, they had a green light to return. Like young Jesus, Moses plays the role of God's good shepherd called out of Egypt.

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son. (Hosea 11:1)

Moses' wife was not totally on the same page with him. There was a reluctance to get their boys circumcised and fully embrace all that he was doing for Israel.

Read Exodus 4:21-31: God tells Moses in advance that Pharaoh will not take him seriously or agree to letting all of the Hebrew slaves go. Moses' response is to be that his people are his first born; and that Egypt's first born would die if he did not release them. The underlying concept is that Israel is God's chosen son who needs to be redeemed. Any first-born animal in the flock always belonged to God. To keep it, we could kill another animal or, in some cases pay money. Essentially, the sons of Egypt became the sacrifice for God's sons to go free. Again, Satan's road

blocks to progress and freedom would turn into a worldwide memorial of how the God of the Hebrews destroyed the world's greatest army.

It says here that the children of Israel worshipped God at the prospect of God's salvation from Egyptian brutality and lifelong bondage. This is the pattern for all believers. We are slaves to sin, until our redeemer frees us from demonic control and our own appetites. This may have been the peak season of faith for Israel for the entirety of the Old Testament. We are told in Numbers that the 40 year wilderness experience was a period of faithless protesting and idolatry. We are told that the era of the judges and the kings were horrible times of sin in Israel. There was a brief moment, under duress, when the people actually wanted God in their lives.

Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ² "Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "I remember you, The kindness of your youth, The love of your betrothal, then you went after Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown. ³ Israel was holiness to the LORD, The first fruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; Disaster will come upon them," says the LORD.' " (Jeremiah 2)