

Exodus Chapter 4 - John Karmelich

Greetings everyone and hope you're all well! We're now at one of the most famous scenes in the bible: Moses talking to God via a burning bush! As most of you know, I don't write these lessons just to teach history, but I love to discuss how to apply God's Word to our lives! For this lesson I'd like everyone to remember three letters: "C, E, O". (Think of the Chief Executive Officer of a Company as that can help us to remember those letters). The letter C is for "Called". God did call Moses despite his desire to not do God's will! (Moses didn't want to lead the whole Exodus thing!) That leads us to the letter E, which is for Excuses! That eventually leads to O which stands for Obedience. If God calls us to be a witness for Him we must trust that He'll give us the ability to do what He desires of us. That does not mean life will be easy. It just means if we desire to make a difference for Him, (is there a better reason to live?) I am positive He'll give us the ability to accomplish His desires! That means our excuses are a waste of time! God's goal for us is always obedience! The challenge is getting to a point of obedience. Yes it's a lifelong battle as we constantly want to do our will versus doing God's will for our lives!

That leads to the big question: What's God's will for our lives? It starts with what Jesus tells us: We're to believe He is God and trust that He's guiding our lives! (John 6:40 et.al.) That's Step 1, and I assume if you're reading this, that's old news. Now what? As I always preach what's the thing we enjoy doing and have a gift to do? The joy is to use the gifts we know we have to make a difference for Him! As I joke, nobody has the spiritual gift to take out the trash! I'm just saying we got do our share of what has to be done not just what we want to do! The specific answer is different for everyone and I believe God answers every prayer of how we can draw closer to Him and use our lives for His glory!

Meanwhile we left Moses out in the middle of a desert! As we go through this chapter don't just notice the things that happen to him. Notice the Calling, Excuses and Obedience of Moses here! Contemplate what the "CEO"'s are that God calls for us! With that said, let's begin with where we left off. As most of us know the original text doesn't have chapter breaks. So I'll back up a little to see where we left off: Chapter 3's a famous scene of God speaking to Moses for the first time from a burning bush that wasn't consumed by a fire, (a picture of our sins not destroying us BTW). The "Calling" began there! Chapter 4's mostly a dialogue between God and Moses as God explains His "game plan". He explains to Moses that he's to tell the Israelite elders about the Exodus plan and also what to tell the Pharaoh (the title for the Egyptian king). Notice as we go through this chapter both Moses excuses and his obedience.

The chapter opens with Moses thinking "The Israelite leaders will not believe me. How can I prove to them that I spoke to God and I'm called to lead everyone out?" God responds in effect with a reminder that "He's God and we're not"! The first sign was God told Moses to drop his walking stick. He did that and it turned into a snake. Like most people, if we saw a stick turn into a snake (a cobra I assume) we'd do what Moses did and get away from it! God then told Moses to pick it up by the tail (the wrong thing to do in real life). Then it became a stick again. A second miracle was then done as God told Moses to put his hand under his cloak (where his heart is) and his hand turned white. Technically it's not what is called Hanson's disease (leprosy). It is still symbolic of that disease. By the way Leviticus (13-14) does focus on that deadly disease and what to do about it! Anyway, the third sign wasn't performed there on the spot, but God said that if Moses pours water from the Nile on the ground it'll turn to blood.

OK John, that's neat and yes most of us have seen the movie! Obviously, God doesn't give us a "game plan" like we get here. How does this apply? Just as Moses was called by God each of us are called as well. Just know that if we believe Jesus is God, died for our sins and we consider Him in charge of our

lives then yes we are called! I spoke earlier about using our gifts to make a difference for Him and that in effect is how He speaks to us! OK then, back to the story.

Meanwhile Moses is still making excuses. He tells God in effect, "I'm not a great speaker". That leads to God going on a short rampage saying in effect, "Who do you think makes people's mouths?" God is reminding us that if He's called us to do something He'll make it possible for us to accomplish it!. Yes, it'll be hard work, but He'll make it a reality once we commit our lives to serve Him. Moses is running out of excuses and he tells God to go get someone else! The problem with being called by God is we've got to remember He doesn't make mistakes! Once we're called we must accept it and live with it. Yes, we do mess up and we can always do less than what He desires, but who God calls, well God calls!

Then God says (in my opinion sinking to Moses' level and knowing what he would say) that He (God) has already called Moses brother Aaron (who Moses hasn't seen in 40 years) and Aaron is traveling to Mt. Sinai (where they were) to meet Moses. Aaron will get the role as God's spokesman to Pharaoh!

So what does one do once one is called by God? The answer is next practical thing. Moses still had a job taking care of his father in law's sheep. Moses doesn't tell him the whole burning bush saga, (since his father in law would think he was nuts for saying that)! So Moses says in effect I want to go see my family in Egypt. The father in law figures that's a reasonable request and he leaves along with his wife and two sons. Then Moses gets another reminder from God, as Moses is probably still nervous to face the Pharaoh after what happened 40 years ago (Moses killed an Egyptian). God says in effect, "All the people who wanted you dead are all dead themselves. So go and tell the Pharaoh to let all the Israelites go or else God will kill all of the first born Egyptian men"! Realize Pharaoh won't want to release what are probably 2 million slaves (including wives and children) so Moses had to make a strong case!

Anyway Moses, his wife and his two sons left where his father in law lived. We then get a few lines of how his wife had to circumcise one of his two sons and well she wasn't happy about doing that to put it mildly. The issue here is obedience. That act was a sign God gave to Abraham and expected all Jewish people to do and well, Moses failed to do it. (It always fascinated me that Moses never required all the Israelites to circumcise their children when they wandered in the desert for 40 years (The Israelites had to do that when they entered the land of Israel 40 years later). Realize even the great Moses struggled a bit with obedience so don't feel bad that we struggle to.) Scholars suspect this is when his wife returned to her father because she's not mentioned again till Exodus 18 when Moses is reunited with her after all of the plagues, parting of the Red Sea, etc.

The final scene of this chapter was Moses back at Mt. Sinai for the reunion with his brother. Moses did not forget that God said his brother would meet him there, so he traveled back there and they caught up on the last 40 years of news! The chapter ends with the fact they both traveled back to Egypt where the Jewish elders believed Moses. The final line says the Israelites worshipped God for the deliverance He was about to do! It'll lead to the big confrontation with Pharaoh over the next bunch of chapters and the whole issue of hearts being hardened that I will get into in the next lesson.

Let me end by returning to the whole issue of a "CEO". That acronym is associated with someone who is in charge of company. Obviously to have that title one has to be called to assume that role. Mistakes are often due to excuses and obedience is necessary to do what needs to get done. My point is all of the Calling, Excuses and Obedience is a part of every Christians life. Our obedience for us to do His will is always the issues at hand!

If interested, there are two other links on this chapter. They are for a more detailed lesson that I wrote about 20 years ago. Of course, you're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John