

EXODUS 4:18-ch.10 Moses, Israel, and the Lord 10-20-13

(Exodus 6) Today's message will be the sixth installment in our series of studies through the book of Exodus. To this point I have pretty much led us straight through the book and I will do some of that again later but for two Sundays I will shift to a thematic treatment of the book. The reason is that we are getting into the portion of Exodus that deals with the ten plagues. It is interesting reading. I hope you take time to read it yourself. But it is certainly repetitive. So what I am going to do is handle Exodus 4:18 to the end of chapter 10 in two messages. First we will look at the interrelationships of God, Moses and the people of Israel. Next week we look at the interrelationships of God, Moses and Pharaoh. So that explains the change in tactic.

As we look at God, Israel and Moses today I want to start by looking at what God says concerning the people of Israel and how He looked upon them. 6:**2-8** *God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord;³ and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them.⁴ I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned.⁵ Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.⁶ Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.⁷ Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.⁸ I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the Lord.'"* My guess is that you weren't very moved by that reading - but you live in this text for a while, as I did this week, you really meditate on it and you will find your soul stirred by the love of God. There is, from verse 6 to verse 8 the seven "I will" promises of God. In verse six He says, *I will bring you out. Then I will deliver you. Then, I will also redeem you.* In verse 7 we find *I will take you for My people. Also, I will be your God.* Then in verse 8 the Lord says *I will bring you to the land, and finally, I will give it to you for a possession.* The first three *I wills* deal with their deliverance out of their problems in Egypt but God doesn't stop there. Oh, no. God doesn't just deliver his people out of the pits. He doesn't just take us out of bondage and make us equal to the Egyptians. He goes way beyond that and saves us from the guttermost to the uttermost. 7ab *Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God.* The parallel to us who know Christ is that God saves us from sin

into a special relationship to Him. He pulls us out of the pig trough and sets us down in the royal palace. We go from being debtors to aristocrats! Deuteronomy 4:**20** *the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession.* To paraphrase that: He brought us out of hell and set us down with Him in heaven. The elect of God are called a people for His own possession. And you can see plainly in Exodus 6 that God has a plan. His plan is to call out a special people who will be His own personal treasure, who will be holy unto Him. And what does He call them in verse 7? “My people.”® That says something about every other people group on the earth and it says volumes about Israel They were to be God’s. I Peter 2:9 pulls together several Old Testament verses about Israel and says **9-10** *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* Peter applies that to the church now but first it was said of the Hebrew nation. What an exalted position was theirs!

Why them? Why the Hebrews? By Exodus 6 the answer is that God had made a covenant with Abraham, but why Abraham? Why single out his descendants for so much special treatment? I don’t remember much from my college classes but I do remember a classroom discussion in which we talked about the Jewish idea that they are the chosen people. And one girl, who identified herself as Jewish, figured she would enlighten the class by explaining that the term, “Chosen people” didn’t mean that God had chosen them but that the Jews had chosen God. College classes could really try my patience. Is that what it sounds like to you? No. They are the “chosen” (passive) people, not the choosing people. God took the initiative here. He says, “I will, I will, I will.” He says **7a** *I will take you for My people.* And He didn’t even put this to a vote. Praise God He never asked me if I wanted to be born again, He just reached down and did it. The God of the Bible is pro-choice. You with me? He is pro-choice. HIS Choice! Jesus said to His disciples, “You didn’t choose me. I chose you!” John 1:12 says we are born again not of our own will but by the will of God. God authoritatively, unilaterally elects a certain people to be His own. He does it now with men from all the world, He did it first with one race of men. God set His love on Israel, and delivered them into a holy, special blessed relationship with Him.

All this is good enough, but God says something in chapter 4 that takes it all a step further. **21-23** *The Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh*

all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. ²² *Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Israel is My son, My firstborn.”* ²³ *So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve Me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.”* God uses different human images to communicate His heart to us. Do you see what He says here about His heart towards His chosen people? 22c *Israel is My son, My firstborn.* Plumb the depths of that statement. I am a father. I have a first-born son. To say that that first-born son is special to me, valuable to me is a massive understatement. I can’t put it into words. The intensity of my feeling toward my boy is an awesome thing. That’s true with all our children but somewhat more towards that first-born and, in my case, my only son. There are a lot of young men in the world, but you put em all together and my eye goes right towards one every time. He means more to me than all the others put together. That is the heart of a father and that, is the heart of God towards us. The Lord speaks this way several times to the Old Testament church. Deuteronomy 14:1-2 *You are the sons of the Lord your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave your forehead for the sake of the dead.* ² *For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.* Mind-boggling stuff here. Hosea 11:1 *When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.* God is willing to call them His sons. And it says He called them out of Egypt. What He said was, “Pharaoh, let my people, my children go.” Pharaoh had no right to keep them so the warning follows, “You keep my son I will kill yours.” There is nothing like the vengeance of an offended parent. I grew up on a farm with lots of cows that were nice and gentle until you got near the babies -- then you better watch out. We get more emotional, more quickly over our kids than anything I can think of. Pleasant adults can get downright ugly and rude and hostile when they think the well-being of “my” kids is on the line. I say that as a warning, Mom, Dad. I’ve been guilty myself. But my main point is to show how much trouble Pharaoh and anybody else gets in when they mistreat God’s children.

Now, the New Testament speaks much more often and more powerfully than this about our position as children of God. Can you see that in this choice of language God is shouting at us that He loves us. I John 3:1 *See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.* Man alive! That God would say to me that I am like a first-born son to Him is humbling and thrilling and then that He would back it up by shedding His own blood for me should

eliminate any doubt forever. Are we precious to God? You know it. And I apply all this to you and me, at least to the true Christians here because these are God's words to us. Like the Hebrews were we are the chosen of the Lord. Galatians 3:7 *be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.* 29 *if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.* We are the true Israel. Read with me Ephesians 1 with an eye toward the things God has said to Israel of old. 3-8a *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,* ⁴ *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love* ⁵ *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,* ⁶ *to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.* ⁷ *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace* ⁸ *which He lavished on us.* 1:11 *we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.* Like the Hebrews of old we are redeemed and forgiven and chosen to be God's holy people, even His children who await His inheritance. So, what does that make you want to do? How shall we respond to such love from the Almighty? Look at how the Hebrews respond. 4:29-31 *Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel;* ³⁰ *and Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people.* ³¹ *So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.* When you believe the message of God's love, when you learn of His salvation, there is only one proper response - worship, grateful, humble worship of God. Many of you understand this. Some maybe don't. Some of you come here on Sunday for different reasons. Some of you today are here to please your mother or your wife maybe but you have no desire to worship, no heart to thank your Lord. You may even wonder why the rest of us make such a big deal over Jesus. Why do these people like to worship and sing and pray? The answer is that we believe the message of God's love. ® and so we worship as a natural response. Now, you say, "Well, I believe in a god of love too." No, you don't. ® Not the kind of unconditional, sacrificial, world-changing love we are talking about. You say you believe it but you really don't. If I stood up here and said, "There is a bomb in the building and you need to leave immediately." And you sat there saying "amen, yeah" and nodding your head should you be believed? Of course not. When you believe certain propositions it

will be noticeable in your behavior. Lack of gratitude and worship shows a lack of belief. God sent His son to lay down His life so you may live as His child forever. We know if you believe that by your response and if that response is to look around and daydream as we praise our Redeemer then hey, is your claim to believe really credible? When the people believed they worshipped. And when you really believe it will show.

All of this concerns the relationship of God to Israel. Now let's look at how Israel related to Moses. Initially we see that they believed Moses didn't they? They received him and Aaron and their message and miracles but...then comes chapter 5. In chapter 5 Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and say, "Let my people go." Pharaoh says, "You're crazy and just for asking I will increase the work load on your people." Pharaoh sent orders to make the Hebrews work major overtime. The foremen of Israel complained to Pharaoh but Pharaoh said, "you're just lazy, that's why you sent Moses here to ask for a religious retreat." That's not the way it was supposed to happen was it? Moses was supposed to deliver them from slavery not make intensify it. Things were getting worse, not better and since God wasn't quick about changing their lot the Hebrews grumbled. 5:**20-21**

When they left Pharaoh's presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them. ²¹ *They said to them, "May the Lord look upon you and judge you, for you have made us odious in Pharaoh's sight and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us."*

Talk about a sword. Moses must have felt like they stuck one in his belly. The people he had courageously come to deliver are now insulting him and blaming him for their woes. You can imagine how Moses would feel and his prayer confirms it. **22-23** *Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, "O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me?"* ²³ *Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all."* Put yourself where Moses is. Moses is really hurting.

He's confused, angry, frustrated and probably embarrassed. Criticism does all of that to you.

Especially when the criticism comes from the people who are supposedly on your side. Opposition from the world is hard enough, but when it comes from the church too its tough, so tough to take.

And here is Moses, risking his neck for the sake of his people, doing what God said to do and the very ones he is aiming to help are now coming against him. No wonder he complains to God, "Why did you ever send me?" I've done all this and look where its gotten me." You ever felt like Moses? I bet you have and its not easy. But, if you aspire to leadership you must understand that this is part of the package. Criticism is the guaranteed price of leadership. I read an article this week by one of

my favorite writers and it was called, "Being the Lightning Rod of the Church." It was about pastoral leadership. Dealing with criticism is part of the deal. Understand when you take on leadership that you are asking for an emotional roller-coaster ride. The highs can be very high and the lows can be very low. Read the Biblical stories of Moses, and David and Samuel, and the prophets. Jeremiah, in chapter 20 of his book got so discouraged by criticism he wanted to quit. He wanted to turn in his prophet card and run away. **7-8** *O Lord, You have deceived me and I was deceived; You have overcome me and prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; Everyone mocks me.* ⁸ *For each time I speak, I cry aloud; I proclaim violence and destruction, Because for me the word of the Lord has resulted In reproach and derision all day long.* **10** *For I have heard the whispering of many, "Terror on every side! Denounce him; yes, let us denounce him!" All my trusted friends, Watching for my fall, say: "Perhaps he will be deceived, so that we may prevail against him And take our revenge on him."* Times like this are the price of courageous leadership.

So, what can a leader do about it? The challenge is to stay at the helm, not give up, don't throw in the towel. The challenge is to keep leading and loving an insubordinate, unresponsive people. That's what Jesus did. Remember Jesus ®. That's the first principle of Christian leadership. Jesus could have said, "Forget you ungrateful slob! I have better things to do than to try and redeem you." But He kept on. He loved us enough, and He loves us enough to put up with the attacks and the gripes and the apathy. Jesus puts up with far more than I or you ever will. So I challenge you who lead - do you care enough to keep going in spite of the critics? Husband, do you love your wife enough to keep leading and loving her even when she isn't grateful? Remember Jesus - your model. Parent: Mom, Dad, do you love your kids enough to keep teaching them and disciplining, and providing for them even when they seem like the most ungrateful, complaining creatures on this planet? That's the challenge before Moses. That's the challenge that every leader will face. To survive as a leader under fire you must find a source of strength beyond yourself. Verse 22 says Moses returned to the Lord. When under fire Moses retreated to His prayer closet, to the place of solitude where He conversed with God. I admire Moses more for this than anything else. He is the most criticized leader in all the Bible but He constantly retreats to God, the source of His strength and comes back to love the unlovely some more. When discouraged and confused Moses retreats to God, where do you go? When things are going wrong where do you turn? To the TV? To the refrigerator? To the bar? These are the devil's substitutes, my friend. In time of emotional need we

are to go to God. He is our Hiding Place, our Refuge, our Fortress, the Lifter of our heads. You can dump your complaints on the Lord, He will listen and He's big enough to take it. Without God to go to you end up despondent or depressed, which is pain turned inward. OR you end up angry and hostile, quick to blame others, which is pain turned outward. The only place the pain gets defused and dissolved is in the presence of God. The challenge for leaders is to keep going when criticism hits. The strength is found in the presence of God and in remembering that, in your leadership role, whether it wins you accolades or derision, you are serving Him.

So, we've seen the relationship of the Lord to His people, of the people to Moses, I snuck in the third point on the relationship of Moses to God. Now, I want to go back to the relationship of God to his people for a few minutes to look at chapter 6, verse 9. This is where God tells the people all the great things He will do for them. He testifies of His distinctive, electing, saving love, the same sermon that before made them worship. Now, **6:9** *So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage.* Now, it says, they heard the message with their ears but could not hear it with the heart. Do you understand that? Do you understand why? As a preacher I'm intensely concerned that what I preach get through to folks and I've noticed in a number of people this identical phenomena -- that the message of God's great love seems unable to penetrate the heart. Oh, you hear that God forgives you and loves you unconditionally but the message is lost on you for certain psychological reasons. It's due to your despondency of sorts. To be specific, what I find is that individuals who grew up in homes where their parents loved them unconditionally have fewer problems hearing this message. But, those who grew up in homes where love was offered sparingly, or was based on the child's performance, will often find it hard to believe that they are loved by God. Stay with me here because this is very important. Many of you can sit and hear sermon after sermon on the forgiveness of God, on the love of God for sinners and yet still struggle with guilt and shame. You still aren't sure that God loves you like He says. You see that He is holy, and powerful and angry with the wicked, but His loving heart seems hidden from your sight. You hear clearly when we preach about sin and repentance and righteous living but when the message is on God's love the reception gets fuzzy. Does that sound like you? If it does, I urge you to attack this problem head on. You will never grow to maturity in Christ without internalizing the message of grace. My encouragement to you is to get around Christians who show you God's love, pray for you, support you (such as in a care group) and saturate your mind with His word. Memorize passage after passage on the great love of God.

Psalm 103 and Eph.1 and Romans 8. I see parallels here to marriage. You husbands tell your wife you love her frequently, consistently, increasingly, repeatedly, incessantly, redundantly, and redundantly. Why? Because women have a leak in their love bucket. We guys think they ought to believe us, we've told em 1000 times but they need to be told again anyway. And some of us, many of us are like that with God. That's why He does tell us again and again in His word that we are His special treasure and He loves us. So, saturate your mind and heart with those words of grace. Don't let the devil shut out the voice of God when He testifies of His great love. You turn up the volume, bathe in the good news of divine affection and see if the sweet music of divine grace won't reach your heart and change your life.

As we close today I just want us to sing to one another of the Lord's great love for His people and may the Spirit of God help us truly believe what we read and what we sing.