

February 23 – Exodus 4

It is indeed true that God is patient with us. The Bible says that He is gentle, compassionate, and longsuffering. These characteristics are certainly true of God's nature, yet there is a point where our objections to being obedient become an affront to Him and call into question His wisdom, goodness, and sovereignty. True worship is to love, trust, and have faith in who He is and it shows itself in genuine obedience. Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. Moses offers objection three (4:1) and four (v.10) even after God provides a valid and lengthy explanation for what He is about to do in the previous chapter. Verse 14 says the anger of the Lord burned against Moses as He reminded him of who it is that made his mouth and gives him the ability to speak.

God, continuing to be patient with His chosen vessel Moses, offers him three signs to validate him as the one God had chosen. Moses is given the staff to snake and back, the leprous hand healed, and the water turned into blood. The fear and/or doubt that Moses seems to be concerned about is what will the people think. His doubt is not focused on God's inability to do what He is planning; it is centered on Moses' fear of people. Thus, we find in verse 5 that God is giving Moses these abilities so that "they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers...has appeared to you." I am both humbled and encouraged to see how willing our Father is to work with our frailties, doubts, and fear. What a gentle and good God we serve. He is indeed a good, good Father.

Let's focus for a bit on the staff of Moses. This is the beginning of the development of the concept that Moses' staff symbolized Yahweh's power, a concept that culminates in Moses' holding up the staff at the Battle of Rephidim as a symbol of God's throne (17:16). Did Moses' staff have power in itself? Not at all. Its power, and every aspect of its effectiveness, came from God's use of the staff in Moses' (or Aaron's) hand as a symbol of the divine authority, supremacy, and presence. The miraculous staff was designated to convince Moses and Aaron, then the Israelite leadership, and in turn Pharaoh, and finally the nation of Israel of God's sovereign control in his plan to liberate his people from their bondage. It becomes progressively clear that the staff was not really Moses' or Aaron's (or anyone else's) but God's. The staff is to be seen as the power, outside of Moses, granted to him from God (4:17). To God be all the glory.

Can we find Christ in this chapter of Exodus? Of course. Let's recall that Moses is a type or picture of the Deliverer/Redeemer. The signs that God chooses to utilize to convince the people that He called and sent Moses point to God's plan of redemption. First of all, in their foreshadowings of Christ, the first sign suggested that the great Deliverer would "destroy the works of the Devil" (1 John 3:8), while the second signified that He would "take away our sins" (1 John 3:5). When God turned the staff into a serpent, the normal reaction of Moses was to run from it. But God demonstrated that He has power over the serpent. Leprosy was a sign of sin throughout the Bible. God reveals to us that He has the power to cleanse us of our sins in the second sign. But what about the third sign?

This third "sign" is unspeakably solemn. Its position in the series supplies the key to its interpretation. This third sign was to be carried out only if the testimony of the first two was refused. It therefore tells of the consequences of refusing to believe what the other signs so plainly bore witness to. If man rejects the testimony of God's Word that he is under the dominion of Satan and is depraved by nature, and refuses the One who alone can deliver from the one and cleanse from the other, nothing but Divine judgment awaits him. The water turned into blood speaks of life giving place to death. Praise God for His perfect plan of redemption. May we receive it while there is still time!