

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,  
10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 4**

**EXODUS**

**CHAPTER 4**

**INTRODUCTION**

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians that the account of Exodus is recorded as examples for us (1 Corinthians 10:1-11)<sup>1</sup>. We can draw from these examples and apply them in the context of our church and our personal walk with God. The incidents include God's call of Moses, God's openness to Moses' objections, God's encouragement and assurances to Moses for the task he was called to do, and God's intent to kill Moses for his disobedience.

**OUTLINE**

**A. GOD GAVE MOSES THREE SIGN-MIRACLES TO PROVE HIS DIVINE COMMISSION (4:1-9)**

1. Moses was afraid that the Israelites would reject him (v.1)

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

2. God gave Moses three sign-miracles (vv. 2-9)
  - a. The turning of Moses' rod into a serpent (vv.3-5)
  - b. The affliction of Moses' hand (vv.6-8) by leprosy
  - c. The turning of the water from the river into blood (v.9)

**B. MOSES SAID THAT HE WAS NOT ELOQUENT (4:10-12)**

1. Moses said that he was not eloquent (v.10)
2. God assured him that He would enable him (vv.11-12)

**C. MOSES ASKED GOD TO SEND SOMEONE ELSE (4:13-17)**

1. Moses made one last appeal that God send someone else (v.13)
2. God told him to work with his brother Aaron who would come forward to meet him (vv.14-16)
3. God instructed Moses to use his shepherd's rod to perform the sign-miracles (v.17)

**D. GOD TOLD MOSES WHAT TO SAY BEFORE PHARAOH (4:18-23)**

1. Moses asked permission from his father-in-law to return to Egypt to see his people (v.18)
2. God reassured Moses and gave him further instructions (vv.19-23)
  - a. God told him that the people who sought to kill him were all dead (v.19)

- b. Moses took his wife and sons and his rod and returned to Egypt (v.20)
- c. God warned Moses that Pharaoh would not let the people go until Pharaoh's firstborn son was slain (vv.21-23)

**E. GOD SOUGHT TO KILL MOSES FOR HIS DISOBEDIENCE (4:24-26)**

- 1. Moses was in danger of being killed by God (v.24)
- 2. Moses' wife, Zipporah saved him by circumcising their son (v.25)
- 3. Moses was spared (v.26)

**F. GOD TOLD AARON TO MEET MOSES AND AARON SPOKE TO THE ISRAELITES ON BEHALF OF MOSES (4:27-31)**

- 1. God told Aaron to meet Moses in the wilderness (v.27)
- 2. Moses told Aaron all the instructions of the Lord and the signs God gave to him (v.28)
- 3. Aaron spoke, on behalf of Moses, all the words of the Lord to all the elders of Israel (v.29-30)
- 4. The Israelites believed and worshipped God (v.31)

**COMMENTARY**

**God's open-mindedness**

God commissioned Moses to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Moses did not readily accept God's call. He raised some objections. The first two objections were easily shelved by God.

Now Moses raised a third objection. He was afraid that the children of Israel would not listen to him. We observe that God had just told him that the children of Israel would listen to him (3:18). Although Moses contradicted God's words, God did not chide him. Moses' concerns were valid. God took Moses' objection seriously and gave him three sign-miracles.

God told Moses to throw his shepherd staff on the ground and it became a serpent. Then God told him to put his hand into his cloak and when he took his hand out, it was afflicted with leprosy. God said that if they still did not believe him, Moses should take water out of the river and pour it on the land and the water would become blood.

God provided Moses the power to perform these miracles to authenticate his divine calling to lead the people out of Egypt to worship and serve the Lord God. By themselves, these signs mean nothing. Their significance, however, lay in their interpretation.

The signs were not selected randomly. The snake was a much revered animal in Egypt. It was worn on the forehead of the Pharaoh. It was a symbol of power and authority. It was worshipped by the Egyptians. The power to perform this sign anticipated the superiority of God over the snake-god of the Egyptians. The affliction of Moses' hand with leprosy, which was a

dreaded disease, demonstrated the power of God. The power to turn the water of the river Nile into blood, making it undrinkable and life-threatening, displayed the power of God over the god of the Nile worshipped by the Egyptians. These sign-miracles were related in one way or another to the gods of Egypt. The primary purpose was to vindicate the divine commission of Moses.

This exchange between Moses and God reveals that God is open to disagreement. God's relationship with Moses was neither authoritarian nor dictatorial. God seriously considered what His servant had to say.

### **God's Anger and Patience**

Having been given the signs to vindicate his divine commission, Moses' next objection was that he was not "eloquent" but was "slow of speech", and "slow of tongue" (v.10). God, once again, was patient. God said that He, who endows man with the abilities of speech, hearing and sight, would teach Moses what to say.

God repeated His commission to Moses. He had taken Moses' objections seriously and addressed all of them. Moses had exhausted all his objections but instead of submitting to God's call, he told God to send someone else. The divine Word tells us that God was angry with Moses. God could have removed him completely or struck him dead but He did not. God suggested that Aaron, Moses' brother, become his spokesman. Aaron would speak the words that Moses gave him, and the words of

Moses would in turn come from God. Obviously, this was not the best way. But if that was what Moses wanted, so be it. God would still accomplish His purpose, but Moses had forfeited the honour of being God's spokesman to His people.

God's anger is but for a moment (Psalm 30:5)<sup>2</sup>. God accommodated Moses' objections. Not all of Moses' objections were valid. God chose the weak and the lowly to accomplish His purpose to the praise and glory of His Name. The example of Moses illustrates this truth. Paul declared to the Corinthian church many years later (1 Corinthians 1:26-29),

*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.*

Moses finally gave in. It was the right thing to do. Did not he desire to help his brethren who were suffering in

<sup>2</sup> KJV Psalm 30:5 For his anger *endureth* but a moment; in his favour *is* life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning.

bondage? Now with God's help, he will deliver his brethren. God chose him partly because he had this desire, and partly because the forty years spent in the "backside of the desert" had changed him. He was humble. God loves a humble man.

### **God's Control Over Man**

Before Moses set out for Egypt, he went to Jethro, his father-in-law, to seek leave of absence to see his brethren. This was the proper thing for Moses to do because he was in the employment of his father-in-law. Moreover, it was respectful. Obedience to God does not negate the essential courtesy due to others. Jethro gave his blessing. Moses did not tell Jethro everything that God had told him. Moses took his wife and sons. It was mentioned earlier that Moses had a son, whom he had named Gershom (2:22). Another son was born to him after Gershom whose name is mentioned in Exodus 18: 4<sup>3</sup>.

God reiterated His commission to Moses assuring him that all those who sought his life were dead (v.19). God gave him specific instructions on what he should do when he stood before Pharaoh. He should not hesitate to perform all the wonders, which God had empowered him. God told him that in spite of all these sign-miracles (there were others besides the three sign-

miracles), Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go because his heart was hardened.

Moses was told to specifically declare to Pharaoh that Israel was God's firstborn and Pharaoh should let "my son go" so that he could serve God (v.21-23). This is the first time it is mentioned that Israel is the firstborn son of God. God's relationship with Israel is special and this father-son relationship cannot be broken for He had made an everlasting covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

An important truth is revealed to us regarding the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart shows the absolute omnipotence of God. But what perplexes many people is why Pharaoh was held accountable for his action in refusing to let God's people go when it was God who hardened his heart. Scripture recorded that Pharaoh's heart was hardened in three ways.

First, it was mentioned that God hardened his heart (v.21). Secondly, Pharaoh's heart is hardened (7:14). This is stated in the passive voice. Who or what hardened his heart is not mentioned. The third way is that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15).

Moses would tell Pharaoh that if he refused to let God's firstborn son go to worship and serve Him, God would judge and punish him by slaying his firstborn son. From this, we learn that although God hardened Pharaoh's heart, Pharaoh would still be held accountable for his actions. The divine

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<sup>3</sup> KJV Exodus 18:4 And the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father, *said he*, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh:

comment on God's sovereign will in the affairs of man is aptly addressed by Paul in his letter to the Christians in Rome.

Paul affirmed that God is sovereign. God does what He pleases. Paul used the illustration of the potter who has absolute power over his clay. God has the prerogative to delay His judgement upon those who hardened their hearts. Pharaoh hardened his heart against God. He deserved nothing less than instant judgement, but God in His mercy and for His purpose, hardened his heart and postponed the judgement (Romans 9:18-23).

It is difficult to understand and reconcile the seemingly opposing elements. But we must humbly accept that the wisdom and justice of God is absolutely correct. The truth is that while God is in absolute control, we are accountable and responsible for our own actions.

### **God's Servants Set Example**

It was recorded that God having called, chosen and reasoned with Moses now "sought to kill him" (v.24). This matter concerns the circumcision of his son<sup>4</sup>. Zipporah quickly circumcised her son and we know that Moses was not slain.

This tells us that God holds obedience to His commandment as a very important and necessary act. For Moses, it would be doubly imperative. A

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<sup>4</sup> Moses had two sons, and which son was involved in this instance is not mentioned. The name of the son is immaterial. What is important is circumcision.

person who is a bearer of God's Word to the people of God must be blameless in obeying God's law.

We do not know how Zipporah knew that it concerned the circumcision of their son. There must be more to what was reported. However, the revelation is that God's intent to kill Moses was to correct him rather than to exact satisfaction for Himself. God is ever merciful and longsuffering. It pleases Him to see His people keep His commandments. God placed a high premium on circumcision. We, who live in the New Testament, can safely say that God also views water baptism as very important, although Scripture teaches that one cannot be saved by water baptism. If you are a believer, have you been baptised?

### **SUMMARY**

Our discovery journey has revealed many precious truths concerning the Lord our God. God treats us as His children. The dialogue between Him and Moses reveals that He allows us to present our reasons and objections to Him, and He will reassure and encourage us, as He did Moses.

God tempers His wrath with patience and loving kindness. He accepts us as we are for He knows our weaknesses and our limits, and also our strengths and capabilities.

God is displeased when we disobey Him. God will deal with us as a father deals with his son. He will

chastise us. We must be wise and discerning and amend our sinful ways.

Finally, we learn that God is in control of everything. This truth does not absolve us of our moral responsibility and accountability. While we may not fully comprehend this vital truth, we can take comfort and encouragement in that all things work for good to them that love and do His will.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Exodus 4:1-9; 1 Corinthian  
14:22; 2 Peter 1:19-20

**TUESDAY:** Exodus 4:10-17; 1  
Corinthians 1:26-31

**WEDNESDAY:** Exodus 4:18-23;  
Romans 9:13-25

**THURSDAY:** Exodus 4:24-26; 1 Samuel  
15:13-23

**FRIDAY:** Exodus 4:27-31; Joshua 23:6-  
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**Discussion Questions**

1. What do you think of Moses' third  
objection after God had said that the  
Israelites would listen to him (3:18)?

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2. What is the purpose of the sign-  
miracles?

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3. What kind of people are the sign-  
miracles intended for?

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4. What do we learn about God in view  
of Moses' three objections?

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(4:10)

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(4:13)

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5. What privilege or honour did Moses forfeit by his last objection?

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6. Was it right for God to harden the heart of Pharaoh?

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7. What law is promulgated in vv.22-23?

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8. Why would God seek to kill Moses when He had called him to lead His people out of Egypt?

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9. How would you describe the spiritual health of the leaders of the children of Israel after they heard what God had said to Moses?

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10. Give a title to this chapter.

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