Following God into The Unknown - Part 4

# (Exodus 5:1)

We are continuing our series Following God into The Unknown and we’ve been looking at one of the greatest people in history. For hundreds of years the patriarchs, from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob were crying out to God, looking for a country of their own, longing for a better place, a promised place. Generation after generation they lived by faith, but they never received the things promised, they only saw them from a distance. Suddenly, after 400 years of enslavement in Egypt there was a supernatural declaration echoing through the courts of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt,

*“Let my people go” (Exodus 5:1).*

Over the past few weeks, we’ve been looking at the life of the most unlikely man to be the spiritual leader of millions of people. He was a criminal on the run, confused and insecure, but he had an encounter with God that would change the trajectory of his life. He would sit before kings and shake the nations, and as you and I have been learning from Moses’ faith, his triumphs, as well as his failures, we are discovering that following God into the unknown is more about the activity of God than it really is about Moses.

In fact, the Bible tells us in Numbers chapter 12, that…

*“Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3).*

In other words, the one characteristic that made him stand out from other men was not his bravery, his wisdom or his leadership, but his humility. Moses didn’t always agree with God, but he acknowledged God in all of his ways, he was subservient to God, and it was that attitude that earned him the title of the most humble person on the face of the earth.

Today as you and I are learning to follow God into the unknown, we must recognize that this journey is more about God than it is about ourselves, more about serving God than serving ourselves, and that’s why the Bible tells us to,

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time” (1 Peter 5:6).*

You could say, it’s a divine set up, as we humble ourselves before the Lord, he will exalt us at the appropriate time (James 4:10).

This is what we are seeing demonstrated in the life of Moses. Last week we saw him in the unenviable position of going face-to-face with one of the most powerful people in the world and telling the Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, “Let God’s people go.” But, if you remember, the Pharaoh scoffed at Moses and said,

*“Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2).*

And in the following eight chapters we will find Moses on a roller coaster ride of faith, declaring the Word of the Lord to Pharaoh, only to have him disobey, hardening his heart time and time again. But Moses is resilient, he’s invincible, he’d come so far spiritually, but at the same time he was not where he wanted to be.

Like many of us, Moses recognized that he was not who he once was, but he was still somewhere in the process, somewhere in the middle, and one of the things that helped keep Moses humble was that he recognized that he was just a pawn in God’s hands. Even though God had given him power and authority, Moses didn’t know how the Pharaoh would respond, he didn’t know the outcome, but he knew God had a plan and all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). And so, Moses recognized that he was just one of the pieces in a cosmic chess game where for every action there was a reaction, and it was that awareness that kept him from becoming arrogant or prideful as he was intent on doing exactly what God intended for him to do.

In the next eight chapters, Moses would confront Pharaoh, Pharaoh would make his move, and then God would move. Moses was in process, his faith was increasing, he was becoming, and God was coaxing him to keep moving, to keep stepping out, taking him deeper into the unknown. And so, we find Moses somewhere in the middle, he still had much to accomplish, he knew that this was not the end, and there was much more to be done. In fact, the apostle Paul’s words to the Philippians could have very well been Moses words in chapter 3 when he said,

*“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).*

Moses knew the Pharaoh’s refusal to let Israel go was not the end of the story, it wasn’t even where he thought he was going, and so he was straining toward what is ahead, pressing on toward the goal. You see, Moses recognized that this was just a stumbling block, it was a place where he could grow, it was a place where he would encounter God and hear his voice.

The Pharaoh, instead of doing what God had told him to do, instead of letting his people go, instead of giving them relief from their labor, the Pharaoh made it even more difficult, and there may be some of you today who have found yourself in a similar place. You know, where you are serving God, you are doing what you are supposed to do, when suddenly everything got even more difficult. And it can leave you sitting back, scratching your head, wondering where God is in all of this, wondering what he’s doing, and if you don’t realize he has a plan you could lose your mind.

When the Israelites work became unbearable because of the new rules, the Bible says they grumbled and complained, blaming Moses and Aaron, saying in verse 21,

*“May the Lord look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us" (Exodus 5:21).*

And Moses did what all of us should do when the going gets tough, he went to the Lord and began to talk to him honestly about the situation.

I think this was far from what Moses was expecting, because he had a Savior complex, he was expecting a pat on the back, maybe some praise, and he was disappointed because of the misunderstanding of his own people. And so, he went back to the Lord in distress and said in verse 22,

*“Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all” (Exodus 5:22-23).*

There are some of you listening today and whatever you’re in the middle of, I want to encourage you to take your disappointments to the Lord in prayer; because like the GPS in your car, where you are is just a little spot on the map, moving along on your journey and God never intended for you to stay in that place.

And so, Moses returned to the Lord, and he encouraged him, giving him a glimpse of the future. In the same way, when you and I spend time in his Word, when we claim his promises, we can experience peace and courage in the battles of life. And so, the Lord encouraged Moses, saying to him in chapter 6, verse one,

*“Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country" (Exodus 6:1).*

Moses came to the Lord complaining, “You have not…” and the Lord replied, “Now you will see what I will do…” He promised freedom from bondage, that he would bring Israel out of Egypt, that he would take them into their promised land, and yet from Moses perspective the journey was more like one step forward and three steps backwards.

In chapters five, six, seven, all the way to twelve, Moses faced obstacles and resistance. And I want to read a summary of these events from Psalm 105 for the sake of time. The psalmist wrote in verse 26, that God sent…

*“Moses his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen. They performed his miraculous signs among them, his wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness and made the land dark (because they had) rebelled against his words” (Psalms 105:26-28).*

Moses demonstrated the miracles before them, but Pharaoh’s magicians imitated the signs in an attempt to minimize the power and glory of God. However, God wasn’t surprised, he still had a plan, he was still on the offensive, he wasn’t finished, in fact he was about to take it up another level. Verse 29 says he began demonstrating his power over the false gods of Egypt.

*“He turned their waters into blood, causing their fish to die. Their land teemed with frogs, which went up into the bedrooms of their rulers. He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country” (Psalms 105:29-31).*

You see, the Egyptians made gods of everything and so the Lord God of the heavens and the earth made a mockery of their gods. He darkened the sun, polluted the river, invaded them with frogs, bothered them with the dust of the desert and swarms of flies. He made life miserable for the Egyptians and verse 32 says he even,

*“Turned their rain into hail, with lightning throughout their land; he struck down their vines and fig trees and shattered the trees of their country. He spoke, and the locusts came, grasshoppers without number; they ate up every green thing in their land, ate up the produce of their soil” (Psalms 105:32-35).*

The Lord powerfully demonstrating his authority over nature, but time and time again the Pharaoh hardened his heart. In spite of the destruction all around him he refused to yield to God’s demands, and so Moses and Aaron went to him once again telling him,

*"This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews says: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go…” (Exodus 10:3).*

God had brought the nation of Egypt to its knees; the Pharaoh was beaten, but he wouldn’t admit it; and instead he warned Moses that if he came back into the palace he would be killed. But before he left the palace, Moses declared one final warning from God, he said,

*“This is what the Lord says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh… to the firstborn son of the slave girl… and the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt, worse than there has ever been or ever will be again” (Exodus 11:4-6).*

After declaring this last dreadful judgment on Egypt, Moses hot with anger left Pharaoh. Returning to his people he called together all the elders of Israel, and in Exodus chapter 12, Moses prepared them to go through this judgment, saying to them,

*“Go, pick out a lamb or young goat for each of your families, and slaughter the Passover animal. Drain the blood into a basin. Then take a bundle of hyssop branches and dip it into the blood. Brush the hyssop across the top and sides of the doorframes of your houses.”*

*“No one may go out through the door until morning. For the Lord will pass through the land to strike down the Egyptians. But when he sees the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe, the Lord will pass over your home. He will not permit his death angel to enter your house and strike you down” (Exodus 12:21-23, NLT).*

And so, when they took the blood of the Lamb and applied it to the top and sides of the doorframe it was so that the death Angel would Passover. It would Passover because of the sacrifice, that through the substitutionary death of the Lamb, death was already applied to the house, the blood was a sign that death had already visited the house. And so, the death Angel would Passover because of the evidence of the blood of the Lamb.

This was the beginning of the nation of Israel, God was about to bring them out on eagle’s wings, they were going from being slaves to being sons, from being servants to being a holy nation. And Jews around the world have been celebrating this annual feast of the Passover for over 3,000 years fulfilling the ancient prophecy:

*“Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants” (Exodus 12:24).*

But this feast had a greater significance, because it wasn’t intended only to memorialize their deliverance, but also to point to the coming day when the Lamb of God would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

In fact, the night before Jesus was crucified, he told his disciples,

*“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15-16).*

You see, before his crucifixion the Lord established his Supper, which the Bible says we are to continue to observe “until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). And so, Jesus Christ fulfilled all that the Passover prophesied when he shed his blood on the cross. The Holy Spirit testified in first Corinthians,

*“For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the Festival… with bread… of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).*

And so, our faith in Jesus is a participatory faith, let us keep the Festival. In other words, not only do we share in the faith, but we share in the glory of his resurrection, and if we’re hurting in any way for our faith, we also share in his sufferings. We’re participating with him, we’re remembering him, recognizing him in the breaking of bread, and so we want the Holy Spirit to lead us in this time together.

The apostle Paul reminds us of the nature of the Lord’s Supper, that we’re actually participating with Jesus and in first Corinthians chapter 10, he asks in verse 16,

*“Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16).*

And so, not only do we share in the glory of his resurrection, but we also share in his sufferings, as we participate in the body and blood of Christ.

The Scriptures encourage us to examine ourselves, preparing ourselves before partaking in the meal, and so, we want to take a moment to examine ourselves, just pausing for a moment and looking within. Because if there is sin in our lives, this is our opportunity to repent of it, to ask Jesus to forgive us, and help us walk away from it. It’s in this time as we draw near to him that we find that he is so near to us. In fact, the Bible tells us in Hebrews,

*“We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body… let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19-22).*

And so, this is the hope we profess, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 Corinthians 1:9). And so, let us look within preparing ourselves and praying together.

If you’ve got a piece of bread, wherever you are, you can just hold it up and remember this. The Bible says,

*“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24).*

We eat in remembrance of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*“In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25).*

We drink together in remembrance of his shed blood. And the Bible tells us,

*“Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26).*

And so, now we look forward to an even greater Supper when Christ returns, for the promise to all who believe is this:

*“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9).*

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