

The Unique Challenges For God's Messengers

Exodus 4:18-31

1. God's Messenger Pays A Price (4:18-20)

2. God's Messenger Prepares For Resistance (4:21-23; cf. Rom 9:17-18)

3. God's Messenger Qualifies Through Obedience (4:24-26; cf. 1 Th 2:4)

4. God's Messenger Teams With Leadership (4:27-29)

5. God's Messenger Succeeds With Worship (4:30-31)

Conclusion: Be God's messenger by identifying ...

- Who you want to share the Good News of Christ with.
- What is the worse thing that could happen to you and compare that with salvation.
- What success is.

Discussion:

- What's the hardest part about representing God as a Christian and how does this passage encourage you about it?
- How can a lack of talent in speaking ability be an asset in ministry?
- What is the ultimate goal of evangelism, missions, ministry and Church? Why is it easy to lose focus of the main goal?

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Introduction:

1. Ie/ My call to ministry.
2. God calls us to be His messengers.
 - God called Moses.
 - God called Joshua
 - God called Isaiah
 - God called Jeremiah
 - God called 12 Disciples

Matthew 10:1 And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority

3. We're all called and commissioned to be His witnesses.
 - Evangelism is expected of each in the church
4. Moses gave excuses to the Lord
 - We lack confidence (Exodus 3:11-12)
 - We don't know what to say (Exodus 3:13-32)
 - We fear failure & rejection (Exodus 4:1-9)
 - We use our limitations as excuses (Exodus 4:10-12)
 - We would rather have someone else do it (Exodus 4:13-17)

1. God's Messenger Pays A Price (4:18-20)

¹⁸Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace." ¹⁹And the Lord said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead." ²⁰So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

- Moses asked Jethro for his blessing to take his family back to Egypt
- He didn't give the full explanation, that we know of, stating that his purpose was to see if his brothers were alive in Egypt
- It isn't mentioned that Moses is called by God through the Burning Bush to deliver Israel from Egypt's slavery
- But Moses gets Jethro's blessing
- It's tough to leave family and people we're so comfortable with
 - Ie/ In the last 6 months of Covid, several folks from church have **relocated** to different parts of the country – as they followed God's leading, it's tough to say goodbye

- Ie/ **What if God called us** to another part of the country or another country and we had to give up our aspirations of taking care of future grandkids
- Ie/ Seeing our **missionaries say goodbye** to their families
- Ie/ **Disowned by my dad.** Pastor Kevin has his own struggle with his family.
- Moses' shepherding staff became God's staff

2. God's Messenger Prepares For Resistance (4:21-23)

²¹And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. ²²Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, ²³and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.'"

- God allowed for **Pharaoh's hardened heart**

Romans 9:17-18 ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." ¹⁸So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

- Pharaoh was a recipient of God's mercy and grace – God raised him up to a position of leadership
- But does God hardening Pharaoh's heart remove Pharaoh's responsibility of sin?
 - NO! Pharaoh chose to sin.
 - The words that Paul uses for "harden" give a picture of **inflexibility** and **insensitivity**
 - "harden" = 14x in Exodus 4-14 – "make spiritually insensitive"
 - Pharaoh had become the most powerful man in the world and did not want to yield that to anyone else – even God
 - God does not force anyone to sin
 - God lets people continue in their sin
 - **Romans 1:18-32** – God "gave them over" to their sin
 - God removed His restraining grace from Pharaoh
 - God let Pharaoh follow his own heart
 - hand over to their own sin
- **Firstborn**
 - God calls Israel His firstborn – the son of privilege and responsibility
 - Pharaoh's 1st born son in threatened – which is a great insult to Pharaoh because the Egyptians worship the Pharaohs and the 1st born son is in line to be Pharaoh
 - Christ is God's Firstborn – ultimate representative of the Father
 - Christians are also privileged to be God's firstborn – representatives as His messengers
- We share a message of God's **expectation, warning** and **rescue**

- Ie/ Our Governor has regular updates to share the warning of the Covid spread and the State's plan to deal with it
- **Moses** shared with Pharaoh
 - **God's expectation:** "Let Israel go so they can serve God."
 - **God's warning** for disobedience: "If you refuse to let him go ... I will kill your firstborn son"
 - **God's rescue:** No death if you obey
- **Christians** to the world
 - **God's expectation:** Love and obey God
 - **God's warning:** Judgment for sin in hell
 - **God's rescue:** Christ became the substitute Sin Bearer for mankind. He resurrected Christ affirming His victory over sin and death.

Matthew 10:34-35 34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Matthew 10:22 and you will be hated by all for my name's sake.

Matthew 10:16 "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

- The fact that **God is sovereign in salvation** takes the pressure off us.
- God knows who His elect is. We don't. We keep sharing. God will save who He intends to save.
- J. I. Packer writes concerning evangelism & God's sovereignty: "The command to evangelize is a part of God's law. It belongs to God's revealed will for His people. It could not in principle be affected...by anything that we might believe about God's sovereignty in election and calling. Whatever we may believe about election ... evangelism is necessary, because no man can be saved without the Gospel. ... The sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents evangelism from being pointless, for it creates the possibility - indeed, the certainty - that evangelism will be fruitful. Apart from it, there is not even a possibility of evangelism being fruitful."
- Oh, Lord – bring me to an audience that is eager and ready to accept Christ

3. **God's Messenger Qualifies Through Obedience (4:24-26)**

²⁴At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. ²⁵Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" ²⁶So he let him alone. It was then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.

- This is one of the most bizarre texts of Scriptures, but not to be ignored
- Moses did not circumcise his son probably because it was convenient not to while in Midian
- Circumcision is a symbol of Israel's covenant relationship with God

- Moses' defiance was a major issue with God so much so that Moses probably got deathly ill
- Zipporah circumcised her son (who was probably in his 30's – poor Gershom)
- How can you **deliver Israel** if you don't want to **identify** with Israel
- For today's messengers: How can we deliver God's Word if we don't abide by it?
- **Hypocrisy** will be exposed!
- Ie/ It's been sad to see people disqualified for ministry – most recently a college president for the largest Christian university in the country, a popular speaker in a scandal, a popular Christian author rejecting the faith and the former editor of the largest Christian publication joining a denomination that rejects "justification by faith alone."
- The qualifications for Elders and leaders that God has in 1 Timothy 3 affirm God's concern about our character
- **Q:** At work, school or church, what could disqualify us from being used by God as His messenger?
- "Josiah Bancroft once wrote, 'Going into missions is like pouring Miracle-Gro on all your sins' (World Harvest Mission, Lesson 10, "Living in Light of the Cross"). In the Christian life, 'being' is most important, and then 'doing.' Good and fruitful action follows the one whose heart is fully yielded to the love and lordship of Christ. Therefore, praying for missionaries to be Christlike is foundational and critical to the gospel's success." (Biblical Ministries Worldwide, *The Prayer War*, p. 57)

1 Thessalonians 2:4 ⁴But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

4. God's Messenger Teams With Leadership (4:27-29)

²⁷The Lord said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. ²⁸And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him to do. ²⁹Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel.

- **Aaron** was given to be a teammate with Moses
- Aaron was more adept at verbal communication than Moses
- He was more than a brother, but a friend, confidante and co-laborer
- Ie/ I'm so grateful God has given me Pastor Kevin and Lawrence to team with for 3 decades. A one-legged stool is useless. God gives us other legs.
 - Ie/ There are also people alone on the Mission field, pastorate and even living a lifetime without a spouse – God does not leave them alone because He is with them. But team ministry is advocated and a blessing!
- Not just Aaron, but the **Elders** of Israel were on Team Moses, as well
 - God has given FBC a leadership team
 - Teams of youth sponsors
 - We have teaching teams – Sunday School, Tuesday theology class
- Jesus had **12 disciples** that He sent out **2x2** (Mt 10)

- God doesn't intend His messengers to be Lone Rangers, soloists
- Ministry isn't golf, track or swimming where it's an individual endeavor
- Ministry is teamwork – a diverse body of Christ
- Warning: Don't compare
- V. 30 – Aaron was the spokesperson for the duo
 - Rejoice that your brother is a better spokesperson than you
 - Rejoice that a sister church grows faster than yours
 - Root for our partners in ministry – don't compete with them

5. God's Messenger Succeeds With Worship (4:30-31)

³⁰Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.

- What defines success for God's messenger?
- Worship!

John 4:23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

- If the **messenger** realizes God uses us despite us and it leads us to worship God – that's glorifying God! That's success!
- If the **recipient** of the message repents of sin, receives Christ as Savior and worships God – that's glorifying God! That's success!!
- John **Piper**: "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. **Missions exists because worship doesn't.** Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever." (*Let The Nations Be Glad!*, Baker Books, 1993, p. 11)
- We have a world that worships self and self-empowerment.
- Our idols are not the Canaanite statues or the Egyptian pantheon – but we worship ourselves.
- Do we care more about likes of our image on Instagram than people liking, loving and worshipping God?
- Kent Hughes: "Success is not marketing, numbers, visibility, accessibility and sociology. ... Scripture...affirms that obedience (*knowing* and explicitly *doing* God's Word) is the key to true success." (*Liberating Ministry From The Success Syndrome*, p. 38)
 - Obedience is part of our worship and love towards God.

Conclusion: Be God's messenger by identifying ...

- **Who you want to share the Good News of Christ with.**
- **What is the worse thing that could happen to you and compare that with salvation.**
 - The worse thing someone can do is to kill you. Then we're in heaven – that's good news.
 - **Matthew 10:28** ²⁸And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
- **What success is.**
 - God has asked us to proclaim the good news. God will do the convincing.
 - Moses just had to communicate God's expectation to Pharaoh and warn Him. God convinces. Or God chooses to not convince (letting the heart naturally harden).

Discussion:

- What's the hardest part about representing God as a Christian and how does this passage encourage you about it?
- How can a lack of talent in speaking ability be an asset in ministry?
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