

A CALL IS A CALL**Exodus 4****(Read Exodus 4)**

Intro: A call is a call. My dad was an ordained minister in the Brethren in Christ Church from 1944 until he died in 1998. Of those 44 years, he was a pastor for 23 of them. In the early 1940s, as World War Two was raging, he had been called by his congregation, Gratersford Brethren in Christ to be one of the two pastors of the church. His was a truly Anabaptist calling process, where the body of believers selected the one they had determined together to be called. But really, it was a no-brainer for them. There may have been others but he was the one they would call, but in truth, Irvin Tyson was their only choice. Daddy answered the call, and he faithfully served until the late 1960s when Gratersford BIC changed its name to Perkiomen Valley BIC and called its first paid pastor. The senior pastor, Jacob Bowers, retired and it was time for a change. Did they put Daddy out to pasture? Nope but it was a time for a new era and Daddy could not have been happier. You see, he never felt at home in the pastoral role. He told me once that he never felt comfortable in the pulpit, and that he loved serving as a deacon (which he did so effectively in his later years) much more than he did as a pastor. But when his church called in 1944, he said yes.

This was the example of a pastoral call, but it counts for any call by God on any of his followers. No matter who you are and what your call is, a call is a call and when God called Moses, Moses's response was "Certainly not me?!"

His excuses began with . . .

But they will not believe me!

- To which God's answer was, "*Yep! There's always that chance – but let me worry about that.*"
- We can be tough on Moses here but just think what we might say if we were in front of that burning bush. And besides, he was in good company, since he wasn't the only person in the Bible to think he wasn't called. To name a couple Jeremiah thought that he was too young to be God's prophet (Jeremiah 1:6-7) but God told him otherwise and Paul confessed to the Corinthians that he was a mere faltering human (2 Corinthians 12:10-11), but God had worked mightily through him anyway.
- Last week we saw that Moses tried a first excuse of "*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?*" Exodus 3:11. Then he raised the possibility that the people wouldn't even know who this God is for whom he was a messenger. Now, in our text for today, Moses is saying, "*Well, they might know you God, but they don't know me as your servant, especially since the last time they saw me, they thought I was a murderer.*"
- God persisted and gave Moses some signs to convince him. He told Moses to throw his shepherd's crook on the ground and it became a snake – and pick it up by the tail and it was a shepherd's crook again. He was then told by God to put his hand in his cloak and pull it out – it was leprous – and put it back again and it was clean.
- Moses was a slow learner but what he should have seen was that . . .

God uses what we have

- Yes, he doesn't use what we don't have. God makes a way where there is no way. He builds on our gifting and makes it flourish. Later when he tells Moses that his brother Aaron is coming, he is showing him that he will make sure he has exactly what he needs for the calling he has for him. Remember that! When he calls you, he equips you to use the gifting you already have.
- So that . . .

When God calls, we go

- Even when it makes us uncomfortable or even scared stiff. As I pointed out at the opening of this talk, my dad was never very comfortable with his pastoral call, but he did it – because he was called. I've always said I'd go wherever God called me and I'm so glad he called me to Ashland because it would have been tough for me to be an inner city pastor or some other less desirable place. But I would have gone if I truly knew it was a call from God. And I would have loved it! Not because I'm better than Moses, but because God has never left me down. Every time I followed his call I experienced the satisfaction of being in his will, when I ran from it – not so much.

- God makes us love our calling because . . .

God is a God of transformation

- Moses repeatedly said he was not a clear communicator, but God made him so. One of my heroes is the late Dr. Roy Peterman, my senior pastor at Manheim BIC Church. In his childhood, Roy had a terrible stutter. It was so bad that his family and church questioned him closely when he expressed a sense of calling to pastoral ministry. He followed that call. He did a college degree, a seminary degree and then, as he served as senior pastor of five of the largest BIC congregations over almost 50 years of ministry, he attained a Doctor of Ministry Degree as well. He wasn't a great preacher (he still stuttered, though not as badly as when he was a child) but, his teaching was solid and anointed. Add to that the fact that he was a great shepherd of the sheep and an even better servant of the living God, and the result was that every church he ever pastored grew astronomically because he followed the call. God is a transforming God.
- Davie Napier writes, *"Because it is God who is uniquely able to equip one for the prophetic role, he will be with your mouth and teach you what you will speak. God's claim that he will 'be with your mouth' uses a verb identical with the one used in the giving of the name of Yahweh."* That is to say, the Great I Am will be with you.
- Here's the truth, and it was born out in Roy Peterman's humble and dedicated life: God uses those who share his word. He's not looking for smooth talkers or shiny objects with great hair and fancy words that wow the crowd, he's looking for servants with conviction and depth.
- But Moses still persisted with . . .

Excuses! Excuses!

- I'm really, really not the man for this! Send someone else! Another commentator writes, *"This man's humility goes deep. He regards himself in truth as insufficiently qualified for such a gigantic task."* And, think about it, who wouldn't?! BUT THIS WAS GOD CALLING!!!!
- Finally, his persistence pushes the God's patience to the limit. He does this by doubting God. In fact he implies that God will not do what he says he will do. One commentator pictures Moses saying it all with an insolent shrug that implies, *"You have my permission. Send someone else, whomever you please, I'm just not your man!"*
- Now, God gets ticked off! The truth is, God doesn't mind excuses, because he can work with excuses. But its unwillingness and outright refusal that really makes him mad. Finally, when God has addressed every excuse with a very adequate answer, Moses just breaks down and says "Look, I can't do this, I really can't talk well, so I won't do it!"
- One commentator says that *"Moses is then made aware that he is pleading impotence before the omnipotent who bestows and increases faculties and gifts as he wills and he's promised that he will learn to speak by speaking what he is taught by God."*
- But Moses still refuses. . .

Moses had no idea what was coming, but God did

- Do we ever really know? If Jesus would have been there he would have looked at Moses and said, "Oh ye of little faith!"
- To his credit, Moses finally relents. He agrees to be God's servant and lead God's people.
- And then one more thing happens. After all the convincing it took for Moses, God had one more thing for him. He made it painfully obvious that . . .

Moses needed to get his house in order

- A quick aside is that he still asked his employer for a leave of absence. Moses was conscientious for sure. His employer was his father in law and, of course, Dad gave his blessing.
- What follows is an interesting and mysterious segment where Moses was afflicted in some way. Our text says that . . . *the Lord met him and sought to put him to death.* Exodus 4:24 Apparently Moses had neglected to circumcise his son . . . and his wife, Zipporah's quick action of circumcising their son saved Moses. Commenting on Moses's illness because he had not circumcised his son, F. B. Meyer writes, *"No man who has put his hand to God's plow can take counsel with flesh and blood, or look back. At whatever cost, we must set our own house in order before we can emancipate a nation."*

- I don't know anything more about this but I do know Moses was ready for the task ahead. I also know . . .

Zipporah discovered the weight of her husband's calling

- And she accepted it. No spouse ever really knows what they're getting into, but a leader's spouse needs to be ready. AND they are to be highly honored for their ministry and sacrifice. I thank God for my lady who never thought she'd marry a preacher and yet has followed that calling and has been so wonderful at it.
- Finally . . .

AND THE PEOPLE BELIEVED!

- Just like God said they would. Specifically, our text says, *Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. And 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.* Exodus 4:29-31.
- Lots more to come. In the meantime – Moses was poised for the next chapter of his ministry. His calling was sure, which is good because the people who believed now would eventually cause him to experience orneriness on a scale even he could not attain to.
- For now, remember this . . .

Conclusion: A call is a call. Once you have determined its God's calling, you've gotta go! And that's enough to chew on today. Amen.