

# The Day God Almost Killed Moses

## Exodus 4

**INTRODUCTION:** Paul makes a statement in 1 Corinthians that enlightens our study in passages like the one before us today - **1 Corinthians 10:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

Things happened to them, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses... as examples... written down for OUR instruction. What happened to Moses was intended to instruct you.

You should learn something about your Creator today and perhaps you'll learn something about yourself in the process.

**CONTEXT:** Thus far in the series we have covered familiar ground. Moses, born under a sentence of death in Egypt, sent sailing in a ark covered with pitch by his mother, taken from the Nile by the daughter of Pharaoh. Then one day Moses sees one of his Hebrew brethren being beaten by an Egyptian. He intervenes, killing the Egyptian. He becomes public enemy number one in Egypt, flees to the land of Midian where he comes into the good graces of Jethro, a Midianite priest who in the course of time gives him Zipporah his daughter as a wife. Zipporah and Moses have two sons - Eleazar, and Gershaem.

40 years Moses lived in Egypt, 40 years Moses lived in Midian - now at the age of 80, with the hope of intervening on behalf of the Hebrews a distant memory - God appears to Moses with a MISSION IMPOSSIBLE - demand that Pharaoh releases over 1 Million Hebrew slaves. The demand would hit Pharaoh where it hurts the most - the economy.

The Egyptian economy had become reliant on the labor of the Jews. God knew that Pharaoh would not grant the request - so he promises to perform miraculous judgements on Egypt until Pharaoh relents.

What follows is a lengthy, persistent, objection on the part of Moses.

### **Exodus 4:1–17 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'"

This will never work. Who in their right mind will believe that any of this literally occurred? You can almost hear Moses wondering if even he believes it.

What follows is one of the most remarkable passages to reveal the character of God anywhere in the Scripture. Notice...

## 1. God's Commitment to Your Success

Like a loving father, speaking to a little leader afraid to swing the bat, God begins a dialogue with Moses. Let that sink it - the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, creative force of the Universe... stoops down from Glory... to listen to the **objection** of a being He personally created. Not only does He entertain the objection... Yahweh reasons with Moses and even accommodates some of his concerns.

No earthly King would have such a conversation with a peasant. No President, no dictator, no Prime Minister, would be in a meeting with the lowliest of occupations - a Shepherd.

But not only did God have the conversation - he was amazingly reasonable. It reminds me of the passage from Isaiah where God said the absurd - **Isaiah 1:18 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."

How will God bring you to this point of purity and innocence? Through reasonable conversation, not blunt force trauma, not through psychological manipulation, not through Divine ultimatums. But through reasonable discussion with a friend.

Oh what a Savior.

<sup>2</sup> The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." <sup>3</sup> And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. <sup>4</sup> But the Lord said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— <sup>5</sup> "that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

God intends to use what you have in your hand for His glory. For Moses it was a Shepherds staff. But a Shepherds staff submitted to the King of Glory becomes an INSTRUMENT OF PROVISION - and a WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION.

**One of my favorite songs says it this way -** *"If a cup of water I put in your hand, a cup of water is all that I demand"*

**SAMSON** - There was Samson minding his own business when the Phillistines came upon this Hebrew champion in order to bind him. But then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson - and we are told in Judges 15 that he took hold of a **fresh** jawbone of a donkey and struck down 1,000 men.

Do you know what that means? This donkey was standing there minding his own business, Samson takes hold of his bottom jaw and starts slashing the Phillistines.

Why a jawbone of a donkey? It was handy.

**DAVID** - Little David there in the Valley of Elah, before him the Phillistine Giant Goliath. He says you come to me with swords and spears, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts. He takes a smooth stone and thrust the little rock into the head of Goliath, turning the course of the battle in Israels favor.

**A LITTLE BOY** - Thousands upon thousands were following Jesus in the wilderness, and they needed to eat, yet there were no provisions to feed such a crowd, then suddenly a little boy offered what amounted to a sack lunch to Jesus. Lord, I don't know what you can do with this -but it's yours. The Lord blessed it, and broke it, and when everyone was fed, there were 12 basket fulls of leftovers - one for each of the doubting disciples.

Little is much when God is in it!  
 Labor not for wealth or fame  
 There's a crown, and you can win it  
 If you go in Jesus' name

***GOD ISN'T LOOKING FOR ABILITY  
 HE IS LOOKING FOR AVAILABILITY***

**WHAT is in YOUR hand? A Career? A Home? A talent? A Business?**

**Cast down that rod, and what what the Lord can do.**

<sup>6</sup> Again, the Lord said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. <sup>7</sup> Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. <sup>8</sup> "If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. <sup>9</sup> If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

Three powerful evidences that God is with Moses... but Moses still objects.

<sup>10</sup> But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." <sup>11</sup> Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? <sup>12</sup> Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."

One of our favorite sayings around here is, "has it ever occurred to you, that nothing has ever occurred to God?" This week a precious lady from my home town woke up one morning with an aching pain in her leg, she went to work and tried to walk it off -

then suddenly what they discovered to be a blood clot broke loose, went to her brain and killed her. The family is absolutely shocked... but God wasn't shocked. This day had been scheduled from before the foundation of the world.

13 But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." 14 Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. 15 You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. 16 He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. 17 And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."

### **God accommodates the doubt of Moses.**

This really is a shocking thing. One of the reasons that we can argue for the veracity of scripture is stories like this. You can't make stuff like this up. God makes an accommodation to Moses. He compromises, he meets him half way.

I think there is a lesson in that for you and me - We all have different faith struggles.

Some struggle with trusting God with their wealth.  
Some struggle with trusting God for their marriage.  
Some struggle with trusting God with their children.

LISTEN - start somewhere.

- If you don't have faith to tithe, give something in keeping with your faith.
- Perhaps you don't have the faith to trust God to provide you with a Christian husband, so you've begun to compromise and date unbelievers. Do you have the faith to discuss your faith with the unbeliever you are dating?
- The fear of God calling your child into a dangerous situation grips your heart. But can you believe God with trusting him with your child in some small way today, one day at a time?

God isn't looking for absolute perfection - that that sense God is a realist. But God does expect progress. As long as you are failing forward, God will work with you.

*God is committed to your success...*

## **2. God's Expectation of Your Obedience**

This is one of the most enigmatic, mysterious, and obscure passages in all of God's Word.

### **Exodus 4:24-26 (ESV)**

24 At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to put him to death.

- *Steven Spielberg didn't include this scene in Moses Prince of Egypt...*
- *This wasn't in Charlton Heston's epic saga the 10 commandments...*
- *You won't see this chapter in your kid's storybook bible.*
- *You don't hold them in your lap while you tell them about the time Zipporah took a flint stone to Junior.*

**But as is often the case the greatest truths sometimes lie in the most obscure passages.** This is a passage that draws into question everything we think we know to be true of God.

So after God makes all of these accommodations to Moses, God works with him, gently, patiently, then suddenly God shows up and decides, "I think I will just kill Moses". Where did that come from? Yesterday he was trying to hire him, today he wanted to kill him.

I told Julie, one would almost think God was Bi-Polar.

But what you don't understand - Zipporah completely understood. As Moses lay there at the point of death, in a Divine choke hold... Zipporah takes action.

<sup>25</sup> Then 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!" <sup>26</sup> So he let him alone. It was then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.

Well what do we do that? Well we have to assume a few things:

At some point in the past Moses and Zipporah made a decision NOT to circumcise their two boys according to the Covenant with Abraham. Every Israeli boy was to be circumcised on the 8th day. Moses was circumcised, that's how Bithia knew he was a Hebrew child.

But remember - Jethro, Moses's father in law was a Cushite Priest. They were from the region of Ethiopia and incidentally, Jethro and Zipporah were mostly likely very dark skinned. They were monotheistic, but they certainly weren't Jews and they didn't practice circumcision.

Now, God is calling Moses to deliver the Covenant people, but he had not kept the covenant sign with his own two boys. God shows up to kill Moses, and Zipporah knows exactly why - she takes a flint knife and circumcises the two boys. God relents and Moses lives.... Or exodus would have ended in 4 chapters.

It seems that Moses and Zipporah went through what so many couples go through - Moses wanted to obey God and circumcise the boys, Zipporah didn't get it. They argued about it - and Moses compromised.

It is important to note - that they BOTH compromised, but God held Moses

accountable. Just as when Eve sinned, but God went looking for Moses.

Theologians call this the doctrine of Federal Headship - That is - God holds the person he had deemed the HEAD/or Leader - to the highest degree of accountability in any given family.

MOSES had compromised, not Moses was fighting for his life.

You say, but wait a minute - you just taught us that God compromised with Moses, why is it so bad that Moses compromised with Zipporah?

Friend there are areas in life you CAN and SHOULD compromise. Then there are areas where you MUST be DOGMATIC. Knowing the difference in those two categories is one of the Keys to life.

Moses compromised in the thing God told him to do that would indicate he was a part of the Covenant Community.

***Zipporah stood as a type of our modern culture.*** A culture that despises the notion of the need for a blood sacrifice or the bloody parts of our religion.

Oh it's fine with our **moralism**. It's fine with the therapeutic aspects of Christianity... but loose that talk of blood. The fastest growing churches in our nation preach what Christian Smith calls, **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism**. But never make mention of the blood.

- If Zipporah couldn't stand the thought of the **circumcision** certainly wouldn't accept the notion of **passover**.
- If she couldn't accept **circumcision** how would she embrace a religion built around an **alter and death?**
- If she despises circumcision what will she do with **crucifixion?**

The heart of the Christian message is the picture of a bloody, broken, scarred Jew nailed to an old rugged cross. It's gross, it's bloody, it's supposed to be.

There is a fountain filled with blood  
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
 And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
 Lose all their guilty stains:

That is how a walk with God progresses. At times he will be amazingly tolerant and accommodating, but there are those areas where God says, it's all or nothing. Frankly, they seem to be different for every person.

Do you think Moses had sinned in other ways? Certainly, he was human, we all struggle from time to time. But God lays his finger on this particular area and says,

“fix it now”.

How does one make sense of a God represented in our text today? In the first part he’s reasoning, wooing, accommodating the faltering faith of Moses... in the next passage he’s ready to kill him for an area of disobedience?

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:**

ILLUSTRATION: Jay Stracks Daughter had complications at birth that resulted in-

Almost complete loss of hearing- she had to wear hearing aids

Scoliosis she had to wear a back brace

Eye problems- Glasses and a patch

One short leg- Shoe

He said, “Honey, I love you just the way you are - but I love you too much to leave you that way.”