

As we continue in Exodus...one point to rest in...The same God who was with them is with us... **God with you is enough to accomplish all God wants too with you... God has manifested Himself to Moses because He intends to manifest Himself through Moses....God manifests himself to you because he intends to manifest himself through you..** Interestingly while God promised the people two things (deliverance from Egypt and entrance into a new land), He commissioned Moses to accomplish only the first. God knew Moses would not enter the Promised Land . that roles would be given to others...

- God knows exactly his plan for you also is and is not though like Moses you may not know where that line is drawn...until much later in your journey....and this is the truth ...you play a role in The big picture of God plan for humanity. this has nothing to do with your worth in his eyes...they are two different things. He loves you as his child you will be with him for eternity as a member of his family...period.
- And his plan for the redemption of Humanity and all his creation includes a role for you to play, the greatness of that role in human reckoning has no influence to God ...every role counts and you are responsible to carry out that role well.... When it was revealed to Moses he was to be the human point person in the the deliverane of the nation...He was overwhelmed...which is a normal feeling for all of us **In fact when the Lord told him don't worry I will be with you...he did not find much solace in that and tried to adjust God's plan...**

*EX 3:11 But Moses protested to God, “Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?” 12 God answered, “I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain.”*

so we pick up the ongoing conversation today... Know this the size of the task God gives anyone,..is always overwhelming to them...one of the ways we know it is of God!

**But none the less God is not open to changing the task to fit our overwhelmedness...He just keeps on giving the step by step plan for what Moses is to do and what Moses is to say...**

*EX 3: 16 “Now go and call together all the elders of Israel. Tell them, ‘Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—has appeared to me. He told me, “I have been watching closely, and I see how the Egyptians are treating you.” 17 I have promised to rescue you from your oppression in Egypt. I will lead you to a land flowing with milk and honey—the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live.” 18 “The elders of Israel will accept your message Then you and the elders must go to the king of Egypt and tell him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So please let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord, our God....*

- **He is the I am to the children of God ...but to the Egyptians he is the God of the Hebrews..**
- **First two directives ...difficult but will give a positive result...Cool**
- **then He gives the God's role in the deliverance**

*19 “But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand forces him. 20 So I will raise my hand and strike the Egyptians, performing all kinds of miracles among them. Then at last he will let you go.*

- **"I know"there will be great resistance ...don't worry I will do great miracles to accomplish my will**
- **first mention of miracles to be needed...although Moses is talking to a bush that is engulfed with flames but not burning up...the threshold of the natural and the supernatural**
- **then the words we all hate...then at last he will let you go....So this will take a while... the greater the work the greater the resistance the**

greater the need for perseverance... all of us much prefer immediately he releases!

- **And this is what the end will look like!**

21 *And I will cause the Egyptians to look favorably on you. They will give you gifts when you go so you will not leave empty-handed.* 22 *Every Israelite woman will ask for articles of silver and gold and fine clothing from her Egyptian neighbors and from the foreign women in their houses. You will dress your sons and daughters with these, stripping the Egyptians of their wealth."*

- **They win big time! payback belongs to the Lord! the people will "collect," as it were, the wages the Israelites had earned in Egypt..**
- **ONE would think after being given this game plan Moses would be on board wholeheartedly but what is revealed is a Moses' lack of Faith in God's plan...**
- **It is interesting that the miracles will only take place after Moses obeys the first directives which God has given...it is a "DO THIS THEN THIS WILL HAPPEN" ...**
- **often times in the economy of God a do this first is required before a then this will happen...and that is where the rubber meets the road in our faith walk...**
- **We want the "THEN" without having to do the "do" \_because the "DO" seems so hard to DO**

*EX 4:1 But Moses protested again, "What if they won't believe me or listen to me? What if they say, 'The Lord never appeared to you'?"*

- **Moses' protested the plan pointing out to God his lack of faith in Gods word... for the Lord has just told him...the elders will listen ..**

- **Before we bash his faith to much.... Have you ever had to face a group of skeptics and convince them that God sent you, based upon a conversation you had with God appearing in a burning bush?**
- **Moses feared that no one would believe his story. People don't stand around talking to burning bushes.**
- **God response doesn't seem to take much issue with his lack of faith..  
...I will have you do a three miracles which will persuade them...**

2 Then the Lord asked him, "What is that in your hand?" "A shepherd's staff," Moses replied. 3 "Throw it down on the ground," the Lord told him. So Moses threw down the staff, and it turned into a snake! Moses jumped back. 4 Then the Lord told him, "Reach out and grab its tail." So Moses reached out and grabbed it, and it turned back into a shepherd's staff in his hand.

- **The first question is, "WHAT IS THAT IN YOUR HAND?" It was a simple question leading to a profound realization. The answer was (initially) easy: a staff. A wooden stick which Moses literally used for job survival. It was his tool, his technology, which enabled him to do his job of sheep herding. his staff was job security..**
- **The principle behind the question is this: You already possess what God can use! By itself, the staff was just a stick with a crooked end for walking over rough terrain and guiding sheep.**
- **Moses throws down his staff and when it hits the ground it turns into a snake. One thing you can be sure of: being a shepherd in the desert, Moses knew snakes. Moses starts to run from it and he no longer has his staff to protect him from it. He runs away...**
- **But the LORD tells Moses to pick up the snake – by the tail. Moses would know that the last way to pick up a snake is by the tail; it could curl up and bite you. The way to pick up a snake, would be to use your staff to pin the back of the neck and pick it up there, so that it cannot twist and bite.**

- **But Moses fearfully obeyed and took hold of the snake by the tail.** When he got his fingers wrapped around the snake it changed back into a staff right in the palm of his hand.
- **But when it became the staff of God, look what it could do. It allowed Moses to catch a serpent by the tail, symbolizing power over Satan. O.K., what is in your hand? Think!**
- **Now For Egyptians, snakes were associated with deity and fertility. The snake was a symbol of divine power. The sign of the staff turned snake turned staff again would demonstrate Yahweh's superiority to "Egyptian snake power..**

*Ex 4:5 “Perform this sign,” the Lord told him. “Then they will believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—really has appeared to you.”*

### **God then gives Moses a second sign without being asked.**

*6 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Now put your hand inside your cloak.” So Moses put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out again, his hand was white as snow with a severe skin disease. 7 “Now put your hand back into your cloak,” the Lord said. So Moses put his hand back in, and when he took it out again, it was as healthy as the rest of his body.*

- **He tells Moses to put his hand inside his clothing next to his chest, and then pulls out his hand only to discover that he now has a leprous skin disease.**
- **Leprous skin diseases were considered incurable social diseases.** Not only were they thought to be contagious, but also defiling. A person with leprosy was isolated from the group, even family.
- **To have leprosy was to be a social outcast. Moreover, leprosy was considered a sign of divine judgment. Not only was the leper rejected by society, but also was deemed to be cursed by God.**

- **Thus, Yahweh demanded not only what was in Moses' hand, but Moses' hand as well, and thereby his social life. God's skin claim amounted to a social claim.**
- **Yahweh then told Moses to put his hand back next to his chest. If I were Moses I would be holding that hand as far away from myself as possible.**
- **When he pulled it back out of his garment he discovered that his flesh had been restored. The hand that became leprous and was restored speaks of the power to curse or to heal.**
- **Moses' could curse or heal...**

**When the LORD calls, the demand is for our tools, hands, and heart, our total existence. then he adds another power...**

*Ex 4:8 The Lord said to Moses, "If they do not believe you and are not convinced by the first miraculous sign, they will be convinced by the second sign. 9 And if they don't believe you or listen to you even after these two signs, then take some water from the Nile River and pour it out on the dry ground. When you do, the water from the Nile will turn to blood on the ground."*

- **The Nile River was the life-source of Egypt. Egyptians recognized this and thereby deified the Nile. Turning the water to blood demonstrated that Yahweh was superior to the Nile and the "Nile gods" of the Egyptians.**
- **Moses will have to wait till he gets to Egypt to perform this one. The ability to turn the water of the Nile into blood stands, as we shall see in coming weeks, for power over all the gods of Egypt. God would do all of that using something Moses already had in his hand.**
- **This sign enables us to see another dimension present in the first two signs. First, for the Israelites these signs were visible evidence that God had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. A burning bush is no harder to believe than these phenomena.**

**Second, for the Pharaoh and the Egyptians, these signs were evidence of the “power of God”** At the word of Moses, a staff could become a serpent, leprosy could be inflicted, and water contaminated.

**In other words, Moses had the power to inflict injury and to destroy. Pharaoh had tried, in vain, to destroy Israel. Moses could easily destroy Egypt. The signs were all “plague-like,” and Pharaoh would do well to take heed.**

The reluctant Moses, having not only seen the signs but actually performed them, now offers his next protest:

**Yeah But...the ole yeah But Lord...you don't understand**

*Ex 4:10 **But** Moses pleaded with the **Lord**, “O Lord, I’m not very good with words. I never have been, and I’m not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.”*

**The excuse is simply irrelevant. What difference does it make? God's work does not depend on our skill...but his power Faith from first to Last**

1. **If God wanted to do it alone**, He wouldn't be sending anybody.
2. **But when one is the vehicle god chooses to use, you are looking at a whole new ball game.**
3. **Once God is involved, a whole new set of abilities have to be factored into the equation.**
4. **Not able? Of course not, by yourself. But You've been chosen and will be equipped by God. Get on with it.**
5. **remember his 80 years of Moses leading Moses...made him a shepherd in the wilderness...one meeting with God makes him a deliverer**

It is basically an insult to God. Saying in effect God is inept in his choice of servants!!

*EX 4: 11 Then the Lord asked Moses, “Who makes a person’s mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the Lord? 12 Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.”*

- **The Lord asks Moses a question...Who gave man his Mouth?**
- **Well, that's easy. God did, of course. and you wont need your voice until you are standing in front of Pharaoh! In God’s work you don’t get what you need until you need it...**

*EX 4:13 But Moses again pleaded, “Lord, please! Send anyone else.”*

**C. Finally where Moses is really at: "I don't want to do this."**

- **"Send anyone (as long as it's not me)." finally being honest!**
- **all these excuses, and any others Moses might have come up with, really boil down to: rebellion, disobedience, sin. And what about yours? Do they fit any of these categories?**

*again like in chapter three verse ...<sup>12</sup> God answered, “I will be with you....God with you is more than enough to overcome any issue..*

- **God with you is enough to overcome anything**
- **however he does not say only God and you...God uses what you already possess...he will use miracles...he will use others along- side you to help...as we will see...**
- **God does God stuff with us his way ...that is probably the most difficult concept to rest in... now go!**

- **do not confuse that or think falsely that your value to God is based on anything else than his love for you**

*Eph 1:4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.*

- **However there is work for each one of us too...listen to Paul as he wrote his closing remarks to the Philippian church**

*Phil 4:2 Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. 3 And I ask you, my true partner,[a] to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.*

- many worked with Paul a few are named...most not...yet all are written in the Lams book of life...and so it is rather normal that most labor for the

Lord in relative anonymity...but some don't and their stories give us principles in how god deals with all of us in our own calls...

*Ex 4:14 Then the Lord became angry with Moses. "All right," he said. "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you. 15 Talk to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with both of you as you speak, and I will instruct you both in what to do. 16 Aaron will be your spokesman to the people. He will be your mouthpiece, and you will stand in the place of God for him, telling him what to say. 17 And take your shepherd's staff with you, and use it to perform the miraculous signs I have shown you."*

**Is there not Aaron?**

- **This question is asked in anger because by this time it is clear that Moses is just stalling.**
- **God has answered all his objections and he still doesn't want to go! Note carefully what is happening here.**
- **In v. 12, God had offered to give Moses the eloquence he needed to speak to the people and to Pharaoh.**
- **In v. 13, Moses in essence refuses the offer.**
- **So in v. 14, he gets Aaron instead! No doubt Moses would have had his help anyway, for he was already on his way to meet him. But perhaps Aaron ended up with a prominence he was not meant to have--which we discover to be a problem in the regrettable episode of the Golden Calf.**
- **At any rate, by balking, Moses loses the opportunity to become eloquent, but he does not get out of the assignment.**
- **The third principle is that God is going to accomplish his purposes with or without you, but you will lose a blessing if you are not obedient. It is always better to obey God.**

*He finally begins the journey....*

**Moses finally goes...** *Clutching his staff, Moses set out to ask Jethro's permission to leave,*

*EX 4:18 Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Let me go back to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive." Jethro said, "Go, and I wish you well." EX 4:19 Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead."*

- You will notice that the NIV renders verse 19, “Now the Lord had said to Moses. ...” The inference is that these words were spoken earlier, perhaps at the bush, but that they were recorded here for a reason.
- The reason is that we find out how Moses either misunderstood what God had told him or how he distorted it. God never suggested that “his own people” had died, but that “those who wanted to kill him” had died.
- When God's words are placed in juxtaposition with those of Moses, Moses' words do not conform to the truth. This revelation of God, placed where it was, informs us that Moses hedged concerning the truth. It is

possible that Moses meant that he wanted to see if his mother and father were still alive.

- He certainly knew that the Israelites were living, for how could God send him to rescue a people who had been exterminated (which was, of course, Pharaoh's intention)?
- Jethro, who seems to be a wise and gracious man, grants Moses' request, wishing him well

*<sup>20</sup> So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.*

In verse 20 it is called God's staff, as being used in signs,

Paul had to learn the same thing..

*PHP 4: <sup>11</sup> I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> **I can do** everything through him who gives me strength.*

- **And the sign I am with you will be after you bring them out...you plural will worship me...in a sense this is a bigger miracle that the miracles to release them...they will worship God..**

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10 But Moses pleaded with the Lord, "O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled."

13 But Moses again pleaded, "Lord, please! Send anyone else."

14 Then the Lord became angry with Moses. "All right," he said. "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you. 15 Talk to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with both of you as you speak, and I will instruct you both in what to do. 16 Aaron will be your spokesman to

the people. He will be your mouthpiece, and you will stand in the place of God for him, telling him what to say. 17 And take your shepherd's staff with you, and use it to perform the miraculous signs I have shown you."

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- and 77 As I understand these two questions which are found in chapter 3, Moses is legitimately seeking clarification. The questions in chapter 4, however, cross over the line of what is appropriate and acceptable, for they reveal a deficiency in the faith of Moses, one that exasperates God to the point where the reader begins to fear for Moses, if he were to resist God's commission any further. Cole writes, "God answers Moses' objection as to his own inadequacy in two ways. First He promises His own presence; secondly Cole, p. 68.

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## **Exodus 4 and 5 the Mission starts**

**The mission... Moses told...** *EX 3:16 "Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob-- appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. 17 And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites--a land flowing with milk and honey.'*

*EX 3:18 "The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.' 19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. 20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.*

*EX 3:21 "And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. 22 Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians."*

**Moses finally goes...** *Clutching his staff, Moses set out to ask Jethro's permission to leave, along with his wife and two sons. It would seem that such permission was required*

*EX 4:18 Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Let me go back to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive." Jethro said, "Go, and I wish you well." EX 4:19 Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead."*

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- The reason is that we find out how Moses either misunderstood what God had told him or how he distorted it. God never suggested that "his own people" had died, but that "those who wanted to kill him" had died.
- When God's words are placed in juxtaposition with those of Moses, Moses' words do not conform to the truth. This revelation of God, placed where it was, informs us that Moses hedged concerning the truth. It is possible that Moses meant that he wanted to see if his mother and father were still alive.
- He certainly knew that the Israelites were living, for how could God send him to rescue a people who had been exterminated (which was, of course, Pharaoh's intention)?
- Jethro, who seems to be a wise and gracious man, grants Moses' request, wishing him well

*<sup>20</sup> So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.*

- In verse 20 it is called God's staff, as being used in signs, and in [Exodus 7:9](#) it is used by Aaron...he took what was Moses and made it his...

*EX 4:21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go."*

- I do what I tell you to do and you will be a great failure....as I will control his heart and he will not submit to your request....

*<sup>22</sup> Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, <sup>23</sup> and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'* "

for there are three father-son relationships referred to here: (1) God as the Father of Israel, His firstborn son (vv. 22-23a); (2) Pharaoh and his firstborn son (v. 23b); and (3) Moses and his son (firstborn)?

*EX 4:24 At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met Moses and was about to kill him. <sup>25</sup> But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me," she said. <sup>26</sup> So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said "bridegroom of blood," referring to circumcision.)*

- **Could it be that Zipporah saw/felt Moses tossing and turning all night, wrestling with God, even oppressed by God to the point of death, if he did not surrender himself utterly to God? Was God after Moses' life, heart, soul, will, body, identity, his very being, in the same way God is after ours in the call of Christ?**
- **Moses has had a chapter and a half conversation with God at the burning bush. Moses finally gives in and accepts God's call to go to Egypt and lead forth the Israelites from bondage. He has left the burning bush as well as his father-in-law and is on his way to Egypt to do God's will.**
- **Why is God making an attempt on Moses' life, especially now that he is acting in obedience? Why go through the whole burning bush thing if only to kill Moses on the way? Did God lose it or what? This event is the key to the entire chapter, explaining Moses' deeply rooted resistance to obeying the call of God to return to Egypt to rescue the Israelites.**
- **It appears that God was about to kill Moses because Moses was not circumcised. The episode takes place while Moses, his wife Zipporah, and their son are lodging for the night. As Moses comes under attack by God, Zipporah takes a flint knife and circumcises their son.**
- **Scripture says that she then takes their son's foreskin and touches Moses' feet with it. "Feet" is a Hebrew euphemism for "private parts" (our own English euphemism for genitals). The genitals are so private that they are not mentioned. Every Israelite reading/hearing the story would know that Zipporah did not touch Moses' "feet" with the foreskin, but his private parts.**
- **In this way she performed a vicarious circumcision, identifying Moses with the circumcision of their son.**
- **Upon this act the LORD "let him alone"(4:26) and let Moses live. Zipporah's quick thinking (and cutting) saved Moses' life. (As a side note, notice that Moses has now been saved by four women: his mother, sister, Pharaoh's daughter, and now his wife.)**
- Given that the LORD "let him alone" when Zipporah did this, it is implied that Moses must not have been circumcised, at least Hebrew style, prior to this.
- Perhaps this had to do with his upbringing in Pharaoh's house.
- Some Bible scholars have suggested that the reason Zipporah did not circumcise Moses as well was that the time required for healing would have interfered with their travel plans. A "freshly circumcised" man does not travel well.

**My question is why Moses' lack of circumcision was cause for God to "about to kill" Moses. Why was circumcision so crucial? Why would God want to kill Moses for not being circumcised? I don't know the complete answer to that question, but let me share three observations.**

**First**, circumcision was the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 17.

*GE 17:9 Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. <sup>10</sup> This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner--those who are not your offspring. <sup>13</sup> Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."*

**It literally marked Abraham as belonging to God. This was not a unique cultural feature of the Hebrews since other people practiced male circumcision as well.**

**However, in the Genesis narratives circumcision was adopted as part of the covenant signs of the Hebrews, most likely to distinguish them from some of the Canaanites such as the Philistines, who did not practice circumcision. All of Abraham's offspring were to be circumcised as well, thus bearing the mark of the covenant - that the LORD is their God and that they are the LORD's people. It is a sign of costly grace: they could not earn the covenant, it was gift; but it demands their all, it is costly.**

**Second**, in Deuteronomy we find the phrase "circumcise the heart." This gets at the meaning symbolized in the ritual of the circumcision of the foreskin. Circumcision is more than just the surgical procedure of removing a piece of skin. It involves bearing the mark of God upon one's heart, yielding ownership of the heart to God, surrendering the center of one's being to God.

*DT 10:14 To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. <sup>15</sup> Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. <sup>16</sup> **Circumcise** your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.*

*DT 30: 6 The LORD your God will **circumcise** your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live*

- Thus, circumcision, even though its origin lies in the culture of the ancient Middle East, became an exceedingly important ritual for the Israelites, indicating the profound grace of God as well as the all encompassing demands of that grace.

That helps us understand the importance of circumcision, but does not really address God's intent to kill Moses.

**Third.** In the New Testament the Jewish ritual of circumcision is replaced by that of baptism. New believers are not circumcised into the people of God. Rather, they are baptized into the people of God.

Baptism serves the same function as circumcision, that is, of marking people as belonging to God, as having been brought into a covenant of costly grace. And just as circumcision was an outward ritual of a "heart thing," so is baptism.

In Romans 6 Paul writes about the heart thing of baptism.

*RO 6:4 We were therefore buried with him through **baptism** into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

He points out that in baptism the believer is baptized into the death of Christ and receives the newness of life of Christ's resurrection. In baptism the old life is crucified with Christ and the believer is given a new Christ-like life to live, along with the Spirit to empower Christ living.

**Thus, baptism, the church's circumcision ritual, involves the death of the believer vicariously in the death of Christ, and it is only via this death that one can receive the newness of life offered in Christ.**

The covenant was the “gospel,” the promise of blessing and salvation which every Israelite was called upon to believe and whose belief was symbolized by the circumcision of his sons and all the males in his household. Moses was to go to Egypt and tell the Israelites that God was about to fulfill His promises, based upon His covenant. And yet Moses had not yet circumcised his son.<sup>107</sup> And if this son is his firstborn, he has had many years in which to do so.

If God takes the “hardness of Pharaoh’s heart” so seriously as to kill his firstborn son ([Exod. 4:21-23](#)), then He must likewise deal with the sin of Moses who by not circumcising his son has endangered him greatly.

According to the word of the Lord recorded in [Genesis 17](#), his son should have been “cut off from his people.” The holiness of God is clearly manifested in the near fatal illness of Moses. God does not look lightly on any sin.

**Moses’ wife rightly perceived the problem and spared the life of her husband by her prompt action. The great man Moses was saved by his wife’s keen perception and decisive measures. Her rebuke was well-deserved, and Moses was man enough to record it for posterity. Would that we husbands had the integrity to be so honest.**

For whatever reasons, Moses’ wife and children do not appear again in the account of Exodus until chapter 18. It may therefore be that Zipporah and the two sons returned to the home of Jethro at this time.

*EX 4:27 The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him. <sup>28</sup> Then Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and also about all the miraculous signs he had commanded him to perform.*

- By divine revelation God instructed Aaron to meet Moses in the wilderness (4:27). They met on the holy mountain of God.
- What a happy reunion that must have been. At least 40 years would seem to have passed since they had seen each other. Most of all, Moses had to share the most recent events of his life, especially his encounter with God at the burning bush, the commission he had been given to deliver Israel, and the part which Aaron was to play in it all.
- One can only surmise what Aaron’s response to this might have been.

*EX 4:29 Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, <sup>30</sup> and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, <sup>31</sup> and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.*

- Together Moses and Aaron went back to Egypt and met with the elders of the Israelites, telling them all that God had said to Moses and performing all the signs which God had given Moses
- Both the elders of Israel and the people believed Moses and bowed down to worship the God of their fathers (4:31). **This brief account of Israel’s belief and worship underscores the fact that all of Moses’ fears were unfounded.**
- **In this text there are two separate threads pertaining to Moses which are intertwined.**
  - **The first we might call his personal walk with God.**

- The second we will call his public work for God. Moses' objections all deal with God's call and commission with reference to his public work.
- We find that Moses' problems with regard to his public work (returning to Egypt to rescue Israel) are all rooted in his private walk.
- His son is not circumcised. He cannot challenge men and women to step out in obedience, based upon their faith in God's covenant promises when he has not yet even circumcised his son as an evidence of his faith. Thus, Moses' problems in relationship to his public work are rooted in his personal walk.

**No wonder Paul wrote this to Timothy: “**

*1TI 4: 16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

- Take note that Paul urged Timothy to take heed to himself (his personal walk) and then to his ministry (his public work). One's personal spiritual life takes priority over one's public ministry.
- When our personal walk is deficient, our public ministry will suffer as well. Moses' problems are an illustration of what happens when one's personal walk is defective. It is hard to call people to faith when one is deficient in this very area. It is difficult to challenge people to obey God when we are disobedient.

**I am suggesting that one's personal walk with God has priority over one's public work for God. God became angry with Moses regarding his reticence toward his public work. The result of this anger was to be stuck with Aaron as an assistant. But when God became angry with Moses relative to his private walk, it nearly cost Moses his life. I would infer from this that the latter evil was greater than the former. Thus, one's private walk is the highest priority for our lives.**

**Although hard to admit, I believe that many, if not most, of our problems as Christians are rooted in unbelief.**

**Regardless of the ministry which God has given, let us do so with diligence, looking first to our own walk and then to our work, trusting and obeying the “I AM” who has called us and is forever with us.**

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Even those who are called to serve God should show common courtesy to their fellow men. Moses showed consideration for Jethro by getting his permission to leave. “This act of Moses was very commendable. Jethro had taken him in while a fugitive from Egypt had given him his daughter to wife, and had provided him with a home for forty years. Moreover, Moses had charge of his flock (see 3:1). It would, then, have been grossly discourteous and the height of ingratitude had Moses gone down to Egypt without first notifying his father-in-law... This request of Moses manifested his thoughtfulness of others, and his appreciation of favors received. **Let writer and reader take this to heart. Spiritual activities never absolve us from the common amenities and responsibilities of life. No believer who is not a gentleman or a lady is a true Christian in the full sense of the word. To be a Christian is to practice Christliness, and Christ ever thought of others” [Pink, 39].**

As Moses was preparing to leave, God spoke to Moses, reiterating his mission: **“Now the Lord had said to Moses in Midian, ‘Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead.’ So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand”** (vss. 19–20). In addition to telling him to go back to Egypt, God reassured Moses that **“all the men who wanted to kill”** him were dead. **God knew that it was a fear of Moses’ that his life was in danger from those who knew him. In fact, this may have been a reason that Moses offered up so many excuses not to go back to Egypt. “Perhaps some secret fear of falling into their hands was at the bottom of Moses’s backwardness to go to Egypt, though he was not willing to own it, but pleaded unworthiness, insufficiency, want of elocution, etc.” [Henry]. Whatever the case, God in His grace assured Moses that he would be safe from his former enemies.**

Even after Moses stepped out in faith, God continued to speak to him of his mission: **“The Lord said to Moses, ‘When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then say to Pharaoh, “This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, ‘Let my son go, so he may worship me.’ But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son”’”** (vss. 21–23). **God laid it all out for Moses to know ahead of time. God even told Moses of the resistance he would face from Pharaoh, as Pharaoh heart was hardened. God is and always has been forthright with his servants, frankly letting them know that, even though they are servants of the Most High God, they will face opposition and adversity.**

Before Moses was to fully enter into God’s service, there was a bit of unfinished business God had to deal with: **“At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son’s foreskin and touched Moses’ feet with it. ‘Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me,’ she said. So the Lord let him alone. (At that time she said ‘bridegroom of blood,’ referring to circumcision.)”** (vss. 24–26). **This passage seems a bit obscure, but with a bit of study, and a dose of inference, we can figure out what’s going on. It seems that Moses had neglected to circumcise a son of his, apparently because Zipporah objected to the rite. Perhaps Moses had performed the rite on the first son, and the witnessing of it caused Zipporah to object to circumcising the second son.**

Circumcision was commanded for all male descendants of Abraham, as God told Abraham: **“My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant”** (Gen. 17:13–14). Thus, by not circumcising his son, Moses was in flagrant disobedience of a commandment of God. This disobedience was all the more serious because circumcision was the sign and seal of the covenant between God and His people; and then, Moses was to be the leader of God’s people, serving God as the covenant promises made to Abraham were fulfilled, so such a lapse in obedience could not be tolerated by God, in Moses’ case.

And so, God threatened Moses with death. We are not told how God made this threat, whether through the voice of the Angel of the Lord, or through the voice of conscience, but it was clear to both Moses and Zipporah that the threat was made. This threat showed Moses the **“earnestness God demanded the keeping of His commandments” [K&D]. God was to show no favoritism to Moses, even though Moses was to be the leader of God’s people. On the contrary, God demanded a stricter obedience from Moses, that Moses might set an example for the people. In the same way, God demands of all His servants a strict obedience. We get no special favors where the Law of God is concerned, just because we serve Him. “Before God suffered Moses to go and minister to Israel, He first required him to set his own house in order. Not until this had been attended to was Moses qualified for his mission... As a general rule God refuses to use in public ministry one who is lax and lawless in his own home” [Pink, 40].**

Moreover, though it seems it was Zipporah who convinced Moses not to circumcise the boy, “nevertheless, it was Moses, the head of the house (the one God ever holds primarily responsible for the training and conduct of the children), and not Zipporah, whom the Lord sought to kill. **This points a most solemn warning to Christian fathers today. A man may be united to a woman who opposes him at every step as he desires to maintain a scriptural discipline in his home, but this does not absolve him from doing his duty**” [Pink, 40].

**As Moses was journeying towards Egypt, God was at work in Egypt, preparing for Moses’ return: “The Lord said to Aaron, ‘Go into the desert to meet Moses.’ So he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him. Then Moses told Aaron everything the Lord had sent him to say, and also about the miraculous signs he had commanded him to perform” (vss. 27–28). “This is another example of how when God works, He works at both ends of the line: Moses was advancing toward Egypt, Aaron is sent to meet him”** [Pink, 40]. God in His wisdom and grace sent Aaron to meet Moses. This must surely have made it easier for Moses, a stranger to the Hebrews after having been gone for forty years, to step out in front and lead them. “When it comes to serving the Lord, two are better than one (see Eccl. 4:9)” [Wiersbe, 22].

When Moses reached Egypt: **“Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, and they believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped”** (vss. 29–31). When asked to serve the Lord, Moses expressed to God his fear of the people’s reaction to him: **“What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The Lord did not appear to you?’”** (Ex. 4:1). God, in His faithfulness, set up the circumstances and prepared the hearts of the people so that they did believe Moses. So, the fears of Moses were allayed right away. And not only did they believe Moses, but his presence and the mission he was sent on by God caused the people to **“bow down and worship”** the Lord. **What better reward for a servant of God is there than to be able to bring people into reverence and worship of God?**

Exodus 4:18-31: God Seeks Moses'