



The Lord is My Strength

Credentials

Exodus 4

- Remember how we had finished last week?
- God doesn't pull any punches with Moses
- He tells him how hard it is going to be
- He said, "Moses, Pharaoh is not going to let them go"
- But He reassures Moses with these wonderful verses at the end of the chapter:
- Exodus 3:20-22 KJV
 - 20) And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.
 - 21) And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty:
 - 22) But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.
- "Moses, there are some rough days ahead, but I am going to bring you through. I am going to bring the victory."
- "It's all God's doing, Moses, but you are the man I want to use."
- And now, look at the next thing that Moses says,

Exodus 4:1 KJV

- 1) And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.
- Moses was a reluctant leader...

- Moses said, ``I need something to show them"
- I think this is a weakness on Moses' part
- God had already fully informed Moses what he was to say and what he was supposed to expect, and that is why I say that Moses was only supposing that he needed some credentials because God had already communicated with him so clearly
- Moses really didn't need any kind of credentials, but the grace of God is demonstrated by the fact that God gave him some credentials anyway
- He thought he needed some, and so God, probably for Moses' sake, gave him the credentials.

- Exodus 4:2-9 KJV

- 2) And the LORD said unto him, What *is* that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.
- 3) And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.
- 4) And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:
- 5) That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.
- 6) And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand *was* leprous as snow.
- 7) And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his *other* flesh.
- 8) And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.
- 9) And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour *it* upon the dry *land*: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry *land*.

- Notice the surprising nature of these credentials
- Moses may have thought that God would give him some very obvious and clear kind of credentials that he could pull out of his wallet and flash in somebody's face and say, ``I am God's man. Here is my proof," but notice the surprising nature of these credentials
- First, they were surprising in their SOURCE

- These credentials that God is going to give to Moses are surprising in that God said, "I am going to give you some credentials, Moses, and I am going to give them to you out of what you already possess."
- Again, here is something that is typical
- Sometimes as we think about what God has given us to do, and as we look out over the situation God has placed us in, we think if God would only give us some proof or give us some great position in life or some significant thing that we could do or something special that would demonstrate that I am God's man
- But God doesn't operate that way
- Even with the man of God, Moses, He used just what Moses already had in his hand
- The supply of credentials was from the source that Moses already had
- In fact, if you will notice, this was evidently nearly all that he possessed
- Look down in verse 19:
- Exodus 4:19-20 KJV
 - 19) And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.
 - 20) And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.
- God lists details very, very carefully; and many times, when God is speaking about the major characters of the Scripture as Moses is, He would have listed in detail everything that Jacob or Esau or Isaac, or whomever it may have been, possessed
- As they started out on a journey, you remember how in the book of Genesis it says, "He took forty-seven cattle and three dogs and twenty-six chickens," and all of the specifics of what they took with them
- But here he took his wife and his sons and set them upon an ass
- That is not an over-generalization
- That is, I believe, a specific list of everything that Moses possessed
- He owned a donkey and he had a rod, and that was it.
- Coming back to the first part of the chapter, I say that this is a surprising source for the credentials because not only did God supply the credentials from just what Moses had in his hand, but that was all Moses had

- God said, "That is going to be your credentials."
- There is a very important application here
- We have said again and again that one of the basic concepts of the Scripture is that each one of us has a ministry to perform
- In the Body of Christ, we play various functions
- Your ministry is different and mine is different from someone else's, but God uses all of us working together to accomplish His purpose in reaching others for Christ and in bringing believers to maturity
- God has equipped and called each of us to a ministry
- But, people say, "There is not much the Lord could do with me because I just don't have very much. I am not wealthy. I'm not talented. I'm not eloquent, and there is just not much I can do. I don't know whether God could use me or not."
- Moses was thinking that way
- In fact, God had to train Moses to think that way because back in chapter 2, when Moses set out in his own efforts, he had been a dismal failure, so God has put him through forty years of desert schooling to teach him that if anything was going to be done, it was going to have to be done through God
- But now Moses may have learned that lesson too well
- He may have carried that too far because he said, "Lord, I am so incapable that I am going to need proof that I have come from You."
- So God said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "Well, Lord, it is a rod." Moses didn't say it, but he could have said, "It is fifty percent of my net worth. It is half of what I own---my rod and my donkey; that's all I have."
- God said, "I'm going to take what little you have, and I am going to use that for the credentials for your ministry."
- God says the same thing to you and to me
- You say, "I'm not very talented. I'm not very gifted," but God says, "Fine. I'm going to take what little you have, and I am going to use that in a wonderful way."
- The credentials had as their source a very surprising nature
- In verse 3, we have an interesting development
- God tells Moses to throw down what he had

- He said, ``Cast it on the ground." Moses cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent
- Moses fled before it
- I love that understatement in the Scripture
- Look how realistic the verse is:
- Exodus 4:3 KJV

3) And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

- Well, so would I!
- It is an extremely difficult thing, if not impossible, to stand still in the presence of a snake
- It is a very natural thing, the rod became a snake, and Moses fled from before it
- You would have also
- That proves if nothing else that it was a real snake
- It wasn't that Moses was kind of hot and the desert air was getting to him and he put his rod down and it kind of looked like a snake
- No, it was a real snake, so real that Moses started running.
- What we have here is a very, very important principle concerning God's use of what we have
- Do you see the situation?
- Moses said, ``God, I need some credentials. I need something to prove to people that I am really your man."
- God said, ``Moses, I will give you some credentials. What have you got in your hand? I am going to use what you already have."
- ``Lord, this isn't much. It is just a little staff." God said, ``All right, Moses. That is what I am going to use."
- But then God said, ``Moses, put it down. Get rid of it."
- It is one thing to recognize that we have very little, but it is another thing for God to say, as He always does, ``I want you to put down what little you have."

- "I don't have much, Lord," but the Lord says, "I am going to use it. Now, give it up."
- Sometimes we find out how honest we really are or are not
- It is a surprising thing when we have very little and we are aware of it, how important that very little becomes to us when God says, "All right, I want you to give it up."
- Did you know that before God can use you, you are going to have to recognize that even what little you have does not belong to you?
- Moses said, "I don't have much."
- God said, "I am going to use what little you have, but I want you to give it up. Throw it down. Put it on the ground."
- If you want to be used of God, God will sooner or later, before He can use you, bring you to that point
- Oh, you may not have to literally give it up, but you are going to have to face the fact that whatever that little bit of musical talent or whatever little bit of speaking ability or that agile mind or that ability to get along easily with other people or that educational background or that good family breeding and the contacts you have because of your family background or whatever it is that God might use for His glory, you are going to have to put it down and say, "It is not mine."
- You are going to have to come face-to-face with the fact that if anything is going to be accomplished, God is going to accomplish it, regardless of what little bit you have
- Sometimes when we face the fact that we are going to have to put it down, we recognize that we don't really think that it is so little after all
- Sometimes when God says to put it down, it may seem pretty big
- But God said, "Moses, if you want some credentials, you are going to have to put it down."

Then notice in verse 4 another surprising development:

- Exodus 4:4 KJV

4) And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

- Talk about a test of faith!
- Notice what God said: "Pick it up by the tail."

- Remember, God said this to Moses while Moses was already running away from the snake
- God said, "Stop, Moses. Go back and pick it up by the tail."
- Again I say, there is a lesson in that
- If you will are willing to put down what little you have that God can use, even though it may seem a very insignificant thing, then what is illustrated here and what is taught specifically in other places in the Scripture is that God will say, "All right, pick it up. Pick it up again."
- But He may not say, "Pick it up," in quite as practical a way as He said to put it down
- Don't be surprised if God says, "Pick it up by the tail."
- Don't be surprised if that little thing that you put down, God gives back to you in some other way
- Don't be surprised, for example, if what little you have to give to God is an agile mind, and you say, "Here, God. I am putting it down," and God says, "All right. Pick it up and take it through law school or pick it up and take it through medical school or pick it up and finish high school."
- God may give it back to you in some way that you never imagined. He may say, figuratively speaking, "Pick it up by the tail."
- Regardless of what way He may tell you to pick it up, when you give it to God, God will give it back to you
- There is something else that we need to notice that is very, very significant
- God had said, "Moses, put your rod down."
- The next mention that we have of the rod, after God tells him to pick up the snake is in verse 20, which we have already read regarding Moses' possessions
- Notice how it lists this:
- Exodus 4:20 KJV
 - 20) And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.
- The rod of God is never again referred to as *Moses' rod*
- From this point on, it is always the *rod of God*
- It was Moses' rod, wasn't it?

- Moses put it down and Moses picked up that same rod again though it was in a little different form than when he laid it down
- He picked it up, and it changed back into a rod
- No, it wasn't his rod; it was the rod of God
- I hope the application is obvious
- If you give it to God, God will give it back to you, whatever that little is that He can use
- When He gives it back to you, it won't be just that you laid down
- Hereafter, it will be the rod of God. It will be God's talent. It will be God's money. It will be God's background. It will be God's education or whatever it is that you laid down as yours when God gives it back.
- What a sad thing it is when we pick up that which God gives back to us, and it is now God's rod, but we use it for our own purposes
- There is a real temptation to do that
- Moses did that, and part of the reason that Moses was never allowed to go into the promised land was that one day, years later, he took that rod of God and struck a rock as God had told him to do to provide water for the Israelites, but he struck that rock twice
- Do you see how Moses went about that?
- He used the rod of God for his own purposes
- He used the rod of God to impress the people of Israel: "Must I fetch water from this rock for you?" he asked, and he struck the rock twice
- He was using that rod for his own purposes
- As far as we know, it was the only time that he used it for his own purposes, but let me tell you something: God delights to use you, and God will use what little you have to the extent that He will make it His, and He will give it back to you to use, but be careful that you don't begin using that for your own purposes
- God will never be able to accomplish through you what He wants to accomplish if you take back the rod that is now the rod of God and begin to use it for your own purposes
- That rod was something that Moses already possessed, but it became God's possession, and it became mightily used of God through the coming years

- God used that rod again and again to demonstrate that it was He who was behind Moses and Moses' activity

- Exodus 4:6-8 KJV

- 6) And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand *was* leprous as snow.
 - 7) And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his *other* flesh.
 - 8) And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.
- God gives two more credentials in verses 6-7
 - He gives him the ability to have leprosy and then to cure leprosy
 - He says in verse 8: ``...They will listen to you..." (That's an understatement!)
 - Can you imagine? Leprosy in that day was something probably like the specter that cancer has in our day
 - Can you imagine the shock value of the ability to put your hand into your bosom and bring it out all cancerous and eaten with leprosy and then to put your hand back into your bosom and bring it out and have it all clean and smooth flesh again?
 - It was an obvious miracle, and God said in verse 8: ``If they won't listen to what I have already given you, they will listen to this."

- Exodus 4:9 KJV

- 9) And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour *it* upon the dry *land*: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry *land*.
- Then in verse 9, He gives him the ability to turn the water into blood
 - Obviously, that is going to impress people, but there is a lesson in this also
 - There is a lesson in the order in which the credentials are given to Moses
 - I think we are seeing more and more in our study of Moses that he was just like us
 - I think this leprosy business and this water to blood business was the kind of thing Moses had in mind when he said, ``God, I need some credentials," or when he said, ``God, I have got to have some way to prove to these people that I am Your man."

- I am sure that he thought that God would give him something like the ability to have leprosy and cure it and the ability to turn water into blood
- God did do that, but do you see the order that God followed in doing that?
- So many times we get the cart before the horse
- We say, "God, I want a demonstration of Your power over my life, and I want everybody to know that I am Your man. I want You to use me."
- God says, "All right. Give Me what you've got."
- "Lord, that's not very much."
- "Give it to Me, anyway. I can use it."
- If we can only learn to give Him what little we've got and let Him use that
- From the life of Moses, we can see that He can use it in a miraculous way, but if we could learn to give Him what little we've got and let Him begin to use that, then He can give us those impressive, flashy kinds of credentials
- God isn't going to give you an obvious demonstration of His power in your life if you are not willing to give Him what little you have right now
- If you want it to be obvious to others that you are God's man, the first step is to give Him what little you have.
- The first step is to put down your rod and let God give that rod back to you
- If God can see that a man is willing to give what little he has, then God knows that He can trust him with leprosy and water turned to blood
- In verses 10-17, the other part of God's supply of credentials is what I refer to as *The Reluctant Leader*
- We'll talk about that next week...