

Settling issues

God is determined to have our hearts and he will go to any lengths to get them.

Read Exodus 4:18-31

In this chapter God calls Moses to go back to Egypt, to stand before Pharaoh and confront him and lead his people out of Egypt. In the first half of the chapter the Lord gives Moses very clear signs and it is obvious that he has been called and equipped for the task. In verse 8 God plainly tells Moses that he will perform miracles so that the Egyptians know that God is with him. In verse 10 Moses argues with the Lord because he is not eloquent and the Lord gets cross with him and eventually tells Moses that Aaron will be his mouthpiece. Moses sets off towards Egypt with Jethro's blessing and on the way stops at a lodging where there is the strange incident in which God tries to kill Moses. It is this episode that these notes concentrate on.

In Scripture there are other incidents where men have wrestled with God - for example, Jacob at Jabbok. This tells us that there needs to be a crucial point in a person's life when something significant is settled. In this story Moses has been shown incredible miracles by God so he has no doubt about what God can do; the only doubt is in Moses' response. There is a gap between believing in what God can do and what we, as humans, can do. Moses experienced this dilemma and often we do too; we do not have any doubts about God, who he is and what he can do, but we do doubt ourselves and our connection with God because what we feel about ourselves can nullify that connection between who God is and who we feel ourselves to be. This is the dilemma Moses found himself in here - he knew who God was but doubted that God could use him and that he could fulfil the calling God had given him. We often say that, if the Lord calls, he equips, that all the resources are in the Lord but we doubt the truth of that for ourselves and let the negative things we feel about ourselves break that connection between who God is and his greatness and what he can achieve in and through us.

Verses 24-26

For some reason one of Moses' sons born to Zipporah was not circumcised. We do not know why; it could be neglect, it could be that Moses did not circumcise him in order to accommodate his wife who was not Jewish. However, the rite of circumcision was part of the Covenant God had made with Abraham and his successors and Moses was part of that line and Moses neglected it and compromised and God tried to kill him because of it. God was reminding Moses to take him seriously, that there were foundational things that needed adhering to in order to make the Covenant relationship work. His wife responded by circumcising their son and Moses was spared. There was no avoiding the foundational issues that God had put into place so that his people would always be distinctive and would always be people of the Covenant.

Similarly for us it is important not to neglect the foundations of our faith both as individuals and as a church. There are things we have all learnt over the years which cannot be neglected. The issue with Moses was that the Lord wanted his heart, that he had to be willing to pay the price to walk with God and put him first. Abraham had to be willing to do that, even to offer his own son as a sacrifice to the Lord. Similarly the Lord wants our hearts; that is what Jesus meant when he said "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God". That refers to those who are single-minded, who have

settled their hearts very clearly on one issue - that is, to know the Lord and hunger and thirst after righteousness.

The Lord wants our hearts more than anything else, he wants it to be settled that we will follow him with all our hearts. It does not mean being perfect, we will all make mistakes at time - rather it is about our underlying attitude, the humility of heart that is involved in being shaped into the image of Jesus Christ. It involves what the Lord wants to do in our hearts to set us free from past patterns that damage us, the things that limit the Lord's ability to use us because we are not connecting the Lord's greatness with who we are, by faith, so we move into whatever it is that God has for us to achieve. We cannot put a limit on what God can do in us and through us, we do not know what God has in store for us or who he wants us to influence. What we are called to do is give the Lord our whole hearts.

Moses knew what God wanted him to do – at this point he did not know all that it would involve and all the struggles he would face – but what he did learn on this journey was that before he got back to Egypt his heart needed to be right otherwise he would not have been able to do the job God had called him to do.

If we want the Lord to use us then he wants our whole hearts. Jesus made it clear in his teaching that there was no room for compromise. When Moses set off on this journey he might have thought that the Lord already had his heart but in reality he did not. Moses had experienced so much since he left Egypt forty years earlier but now he needed to make that crucial decision to truly let God be God in his life. We need to pass through that time when those questions are settled deeply. By the time he reached Egypt the Lord did truly have his heart and Moses was taking God seriously. Then the Lord was able to take him and use him. Does the Lord have our hearts?

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