

Lenten Devotional

2020

Saturday, February 29, 2020 (Leap Year!)

Day 4, Exodus 4

Fear of Failure Can Kill Future Attempts

“Moses answered, ‘What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The Lord did not appear to you?’” (Exodus 4:1)

There is a couple of places where I think I hear Moses trying to get out of being the deliverer of Israel with God. There is the quote above. In the face of God’s promise Moses still has fears that he will not be believed. It’s happened before. Then in verse 13 he asks God to send someone else. Finally, we have the obscure tale of the rest stop where God is ready to put Moses to death until Zipporah intervenes. Perhaps this was Moses’s last attempt to have himself disqualified to act as God’s spokes person (through Aaron).

I don’t think Moses is physically afraid of what might happen in Egypt. Rather, I think his past is haunting his present actions. Specifically, Moses has been a failure. He had a sense of himself as deliverer only to fail in the role. It doesn’t matter that the role was self appointed at the time. That kind of event leaves a scar, and scars can become very hard and tough skin to break through.

I can empathize with Moses on this point. Years ago I took on working for and then running my wife’s family’s business. Despite doing good work and improving the picture, ultimately we had to shut down the company with a loss. That failure—which wasn’t mine alone—haunted me as God called me into pastoral ministry. I was fine so long as I was in the preparation phase of God’s calling, but when it came time to pastor and lead a church, that old failure reared its ugly head.

Make no mistake. We have an enemy who knows our weaknesses. Satan played on those fears as I obediently (and unlike Moses enthusiastically) stepped into ministry. There were so many times when I was sure I was going to fail at this leadership calling. When those moments came I just wanted to shut down. Like Moses I wanted to inform God that he had made a bad selection and encourage him to find someone more suitable. I don’t know if God ever became angry with me the way he did with Moses. I found God to be patient, kind, and comforting at those times.

Maybe you feel the same way sometimes? You’ve tried to draw closer to God or speak to someone about faith in Jesus and it went horribly wrong. Maybe you’ve had a deeper failure. Perhaps you’ve plumbed a depth of sin that others haven’t or don’t usually. Now you are frozen. You desire to obey God but no matter how hard you try you just can’t put that one foot in front of the other. It’s okay.

God meets us where we are. He meets Moses’s objections one by one. I’ll give you signs to show them, I’ll give you Aaron to speak on your behalf, and I’ll give you a sign of my covenant in your own son. Years ago my pastor Rob quoted Martin Luther in a sermon and it has stuck with me as one of the most hopeful things I’ve ever heard, “God doesn’t look around in the world to find what he can use. He makes us what he can use.” The way I say this to my own people is that God equips those he calls. If God has called you he knows you can do it because he will give you all you need to do it. He love and grace can overcome your fear—put yourself in his hands.

Prayer

Lord of our fears, thank you for meeting me where we are. We pray that you would give us the things we need to fulfil the call you have placed on our lives. Thank you for your grace and patience as we become renewed by your Spirit. Amen.