

Old Testament Survey - Part 12

by Dick Woodward

God teaches us four spiritual secrets to help us understand that He is the deliverer, not us, and that our availability is the greatest ability we can offer Him.

Duration: 27:33

Scripture: Exodus 3:10, Matthew 11:28, Luke 5:10, Acts 1:8

Topics: "Biblical Deliverance", "Spiritual Freedom"

Description

This sermon delves into the Book of Exodus, focusing on the people, the problem of slavery, and the prophet Moses as the deliverer. It explores the allegorical connection between the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt and our salvation from sin. The sermon emphasizes four spiritual secrets necessary for becoming a channel through which God delivers others, drawing parallels between Moses and modern-day believers like evangelists.

Transcript

As we continue our survey of the Book of Exodus, we want to continue to focus upon things like the people, the problem, and the prophet. This is as far as we have come in our survey of the Book of Exodus thus far. In the Book of Exodus, we see the development of the people of God, the special people of God, and we also see focused in the Book of Exodus for us the great problem they have, which is the problem of their slavery, their bitter bondage in Egypt.

Very early in the Book of Exodus, in chapters 2 and 3, we have focused for us the greatest man of God who has ever lived, in my opinion, Moses. He is the prophet who is called of God in Exodus 2 and 3 to be the deliverer who will be the human agent or the human instrument by which God will deliver these people from their slavery in Egypt. As we've said several times, this slavery in Egypt is allegorically a symbol of our slavery to sin, so that the deliverance from the slavery or the bondage of Egypt allegorically is a picture of our salvation.

This also means that Moses as the deliverer, allegorically or symbolically, is a picture of any human agent or human instrument who becomes the channel or the human instrument through which God delivers people from their bondage of sin, or what we might call an evangelist or a soul winner. As we consider the call and the commission of Moses in chapters 2 and 3 of Exodus, we saw that God had to prepare this man and teach him some things before he could be the deliverer. God had to teach him that he was nobody, God had to convince him that he was somebody, and God had to show Moses what God can do

with somebody who has learned that he is nobody.

In addition to these three big lessons that Moses had to learn, I believe there are four spiritual secrets that God had to share with Moses so that Moses could become the deliverer of the children of Israel. If you are interested today in becoming the deliverer for somebody else, I believe you also must learn these four spiritual secrets before you can become the human agent or instrument through which God will deliver somebody from the bondage or the slavery of their sin. Frankly, I could not function as a minister and I could not function as a believer if I did not know these four spiritual secrets and if I were not reminded of them frequently.

The four spiritual secrets that God had to share with Moses before he could be the deliverer for the people of Israel are these, in my opinion. First God had to show Moses this spiritual secret. Moses, you're not the deliverer, but I am, and I'm with you, Moses.

The second spiritual secret that God had to show Moses was, Moses, you can't deliver anybody, but I can, and I'm with you, Moses. The third spiritual secret that I believe comes out of the call of Moses is this, Moses, you don't want to deliver those people, I want to deliver those people, and I'm with you, Moses. After the great miracle of deliverance takes place, nobody has to tell Moses this fourth spiritual secret.

The fourth spiritual secret is, Moses, you didn't deliver those people, I delivered those people because I was with you, Moses. I don't know how you feel about what we call the ministry of evangelism, or being the vehicle, or being perhaps the branch through whom God is going to do his work, like the branch that's supposed to be abiding in the vine, according to the illustration of Jesus. I frankly have come to this conclusion.

These four spiritual secrets that God teaches Moses so that Moses can deliver the children of Israel are spiritual secrets that we all have to know if we're going to be the human instrument through which God works. God teaches Moses this first spiritual secret. You're not to deliver, Moses, but I am, and I'm with you.

He teaches him that spiritual secret at the burning bush. As we said in our last session, the burning bush was the commencement for Moses. He was graduating from 40 years of seminary, and God was the commencement speaker there at the burning bush, and essentially that's what God said to him at the burning bush.

Moses, you're not the deliverer, I'm the deliverer, and I'm with you. God also said to Moses there at the burning bush, Moses, you can't deliver anybody, but I can, and I'm with you. This was obvious through the failure of Moses.

God teaches these spiritual secrets to many men of God in the scripture, in the Old and New Testaments. And one of his favorite tools for teaching men this second spiritual secret, which is simply, you can't, but I can, I believe he uses failure to teach them that second spiritual secret. I believe that the fact that Moses had tried and failed made it easy for God to share with him at the burning bush this second spiritual secret.

The third spiritual secret could be described something like this, and I think the men of God in the scripture are very honest about this. God says to Moses, Moses, you don't want to deliver these people, I want to deliver these people, and I'm with you. I believe the people of God, the men of God especially, that God calls to do great works in the Bible, they nearly all say this, I don't want to.

But then God says, well, I want to. So let's go. I'm with you.

You see, it isn't what you are, it's what I am, and I'm with you. It isn't what you can do, it's what I can do, and I'm with you. And it isn't what you want, it's what I want, and I'm with you.

Now Moses really doesn't want to. He raises five objections when God commissions him, and you can read about these in these early chapters of Exodus. His first objection was, who am I? Why are you picking on someone like me? And as we suggested in our last session, Moses had a lot of objections to raise here.

He was public enemy number one, a murderer, a Hebrew, a shepherd, an ungrateful adopted son. In addition, it appears that he was a man with a speech impediment. His fifth objection when he raises these objections is that he doesn't express himself very well.

This could mean that he just didn't think he was eloquent, or perhaps he had a speech impediment, perhaps he stammered or stuttered. It seems pretty obvious when you look at this first objection of Moses, who am I, that Moses is the man God is choosing, and God knows that he's all these things. That's perhaps why God is choosing him.

You see, God wants this deliverance, when it takes place, to be obviously a result of his own power and not the charisma of some man. That's why he wants a Hebrew, a shepherd, perhaps a man who stammers, someone like this going into the presence of Pharaoh, demanding the release of these people, so that when the people are released, nobody will say, Oh, it was that Moses, oh, he was so eloquent, oh, I was there when he demanded the release of the people. It was dynamic, it was just electric.

God didn't want it that way, and that's probably why he chose the man that he chose. The second objection Moses raises is, they'll ask me questions that I can't answer. He may be referring here to the Hebrew elders whom he's going to have to go to and let them know that he's the deliverer sent from God.

They'll ask me questions I can't answer. When you think about sharing faith with another person, I wonder if you don't raise these same objections to God. Who am I? I'm not a preacher.

Why would I be the one to share the faith with somebody else? And then you usually have this objection, they're going to ask me theological questions and I can't answer all their questions. It's interesting, when Moses raises the first objection, who am I, God says, You're the man I'm choosing, and you have me with you. That's who you are.

And when he raises this objection, they'll ask me questions I can't answer, God says, you don't have to answer their questions. You tell them that I am and that I have sent you to them. That's all you have to tell them.

And don't get caught up in their arguments trying to answer their questions. His next objection was, they won't believe me. They'll never believe me.

And at this point, God gives him a little object lesson. He tells him to put his hand inside of his jacket and take it out again, and it's leprous. So he tells him to do this another time and then it's healed.

And then he asks him to cast his rod on the ground, and the word dedicate means to lay down. So God said, What is that in your hand? And he said, A shepherd's rod. And God said, Lay it down.

And when he laid it down, it became something that God used mightily all through the ministry of Moses. This is the concept of dedication, to lay down. I think symbolically what God is saying to Moses here is this, when those people to whom I'm sending you, when they see dedication and when they see the miraculous, when they see the evidences that you're dedicated and that God is with you, they'll believe you.

Don't worry about it, they'll believe you. And then Moses says, Well, I've got this speech hang-up. I mean, why are you asking someone like me to go in there and demand the release of Pharaoh? Now, you know, Aaron, he can speak well.

God said, I know Aaron can speak well. You see, if God had wanted Aaron, he would have called Aaron. And here's where God raises a great question.

He says, I made your mouth, didn't I, Moses? Who makes people deaf or dumb or blind? Have not I the Lord? And that's hard for some people to take. But I think what that's saying, again, is that message we saw in the life of Joseph. The dynamics of your life are designed by God.

You may never know why, but God does make us the way he makes us. And God is saying to Moses, If I wanted an eloquent man, I would have made you eloquent. The last objection of Moses causes the anger of God to blaze against Moses, because Moses said, Send somebody else.

Now, I wonder when God commissions you to be a deliverer, if you do not raise these same objections and end up by saying, Send somebody else, not me. I'm not going to be your instrument, I'm not going to be the branch through which you work. So many of the people of God in the scripture are honest enough that they will say to God, God, I don't want to.

And that's what Moses is saying. In a sense, this is healthy, because the one who wants to is very often suspect. Psychology teaches us that our want-to sometimes gets really mixed up, and we're not really sure of why we want to.

I heard a man say who was called to a great church, he turned down the call to this great church, and the pulpit committee said, But you can do it! And this man said, The man who can pastor that church probably doesn't want to, and the man who wants to shouldn't pastor that church. There is something unhealthy about wanting to too much. Why do you want to? What are your motives? You don't know your motives.

Maybe it's healthy that these men of God who are called to great ministries don't want to. But, of course, God points out to Moses, It isn't what you want, it's what I want. The fourth spiritual secret that God wants all of these men of God to remember after the victory comes, after the deliverance comes, is this one.

You didn't deliver those people, but I did, because I was with you. A very great Presbyterian minister who is a great Bible teacher, Dr. Manfred Gutzke, made a very profound statement one day on the radio, and I happened to hear it. Dr. Gutzke said, When Jesus rode that little donkey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and all the people said those great things, Hosanna, blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord, and all those great things, Dr. Gutzke said, Now, wouldn't it have been silly for that little old jackass to think that was all for him? One of the great pitfalls of the ministry is what we call acclimation.

When a minister is fruitful, that's what we call it, the world calls it successful, but when the church is big and everything is going fine, one of the pitfalls of the ministry is acclimation, all the people saying all those great things about that minister. In the words of Dr. Gutzke, when they do that, it would be silly for that little

old jackass to think that's all for him. I believe the scripture teaches us three kinds of jackasses.

First of all, in the book of Numbers there is the audible jackass through whom God speaks. God can't find a man who has enough faith to see him or enough faith to be the channel through whom he speaks, and so he speaks to a jackass. That's the audible jackass there in the book of Numbers.

Then in the New Testament you have the adorable jackass, that's the one who thinks it's all for him. And then in Matthew 21 you have another kind of a jackass. Jesus is about to ride into Jerusalem, and he tells the apostles to go and get this jackass.

He said, you'll find it tied up in front of a home, just untie it and take it. That's like stealing somebody's car today. So Jesus says, if they ask you, what do you think you're doing? Just say, the Master needs it, and they'll say, help yourself, it's available.

You see, I believe the message in the story of that jackass in Numbers 11, and even the one in Matthew 21, is really something like this. There is a myth today concerning the work of God and how God does his work through people. The myth is this.

God does super-duper things through super-duper Saints because they're super-duper Saints. That's a myth. What the scripture tells us and what Church history tells us is something closer to this.

The book of Acts especially will say, God does very extraordinary things to very ordinary people because they're available. That's the truth. Some people are long on ability and very short on availability.

Some are very short on ability and very long on availability. I think the scripture says to us, under the heading of this fourth spiritual secret, it doesn't matter whether you're long or short on ability. The important thing is to be long on availability, because that's what God needs.

In the work of God, I believe the greatest ability is availability. If it is he who does the work, if it's true that it isn't what we are, it's what he is, it isn't what we can do, it's what he can do, it isn't what we want, it's what he wants, if all of that is true, then the greatest ability that we can possibly offer God is our availability. So there you have four spiritual secrets that God has to teach Moses before Moses can deliver the people of Israel.

Number one, you're not the deliverer, but I'm the deliverer, and I'm with you. Number two, you can't deliver those people, but I can, and I'm with you. Number three, you don't want to deliver those people, but I do, and I'm with you.

Number four, you didn't deliver those people, but I did, because I was with you. I said that I couldn't function as a believer or a minister if I didn't believe those four spiritual secrets. Some of us come into faith with a lot of broken wings.

Jesus said, Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Many of us, when we come to Christ or we come to faith, we are heavy laden, we have a lot of problems. I came that way when I was 19 years old, with a great many problems.

Because of these problems, I had an inferiority complex. Later, I majored in psychology, and I discovered there wasn't anything complex about it, I was just plain inferior. I thought for a long time it was complex, but because I had all these broken wings, I was very shy.

I was so shy that when I was about to go on the staff of a church, a lady in that church asked the pastor of that church if I was retarded. I was that shy, she actually thought I was retarded. I remember one of the first assignments I was given when I went on the staff of that church was to visit a couple.

The woman had become a believer and the husband had not. We were to have dinner with this couple, my wife and I, and I was to lead this man to Christ. I was so shy that when I got there, he and I were in the living room and our wives were out in the kitchen.

Because of my shyness, I used to get migraine headaches, so I got this terrible migraine headache. I turned white as a sheet and began to perspire, and I was getting nauseated. While we were making small talk, this man looked at me and said, Do you feel all right? I said, I think I'm going to have a stroke.

He said, Well, you'd better lie down here on this couch. He put me down on the couch, and he got me a cold cloth for my head, and I'm supposed to be leading him to Christ. Then I got so sick that we had to leave, and I never even could stay for dinner.

Later on, the man decided that if what I had to tell him was so important, I was willing to sit there and have a cerebral hemorrhage, it must be worth hearing. So he looked up someone who was a believer and asked them how to become a believer. He did become a fine believer.

This was where I was when I began in the ministry, and this is why I couldn't function as a minister until I learned these four spiritual secrets. God calls us as ministers and as believers to be deliverers, to be the human instrument through which other people are delivered. I had to learn these four things, or I couldn't function as a minister.

I'm not, but he is, and he's with me. I can't, but he can, and he's with me. I was honest enough with God that I would wake up so many mornings and say, God, I don't want to, and that he would say, Well, I want to, and I'm with you, so let's go.

The fourth spiritual secret, I could hardly believe it, but when I discovered that God was using me and the acclamation began to come, I found that I had to explain to people that fourth spiritual secret. I didn't do that, God did that, because he was with me. It was at a breakfast where several hundred men were studying the scripture that one morning they gave me a standing ovation because it was coming up toward Thanksgiving, and one of the men said the thing he was most thankful for that year was the teacher, because he had come into faith through the teacher of this class.

When I responded to that standing ovation, I had just heard Dr. Gutzke make that great statement on the radio. I said to these men, after quoting Dr. Gutzke's story about the little old jackass, I said, Men, if God has spoken to you through this breakfast, or if he has come riding into your life through this breakfast, thank the Lord, don't thank the jackass. Later the word got around that I thought I was a jackass.

Some very fine ministers took me out for lunch one day, and they asked me when we got to the front of the lunch, Do you really think you're a jackass? And I remember saying to them, I'm sure glad you're sitting down, because I not only think that I'm a jackass, I think that you are a jackass, too. Frankly, I believe this is a message that we will see again and again in the character studies of the men God uses and the women God uses. God doesn't use us because of what we are, but in spite of what we are.

We should never lose sight of the fact that it's God who does the work of deliverance through us. There's a New Testament illustration of this that just parallels it so much that I would like to share it. In the 5th

chapter of the gospel of Luke, you have an example of the Lord teaching Peter these same spiritual secrets.

In Luke 5, remember, this is not the first time the Lord and Peter meet. They've already been introduced, and the Lord has issued the challenge to Peter, "...Follow me, and I'll make you fishers of men." And Peter hasn't accepted the challenge yet. So this morning, the Lord is backed up to the waters of the Sea of Galilee, and a great crowd of people are there hearing him preach or teach.

And he's backed right up to where Peter has his boat. Peter has been fishing all night, and he's caught nothing. The Lord asked permission to use his boat as a pulpit.

So it says that Peter agreed to this, and the Lord got up on the boat and sat on the boat and taught the people from Peter's boat. When he finishes his teaching session, he turns to this man, Peter. It's obvious on this occasion in Luke 5 that the Lord has his eyes on this man on this occasion.

We don't know anything about that crowd of people, what he taught them or what the response was, because that's not what's important. The Lord knows as he teaches that morning that this man here who has fished all night and caught nothing, this man is going to be the man through whom the Holy Spirit is going to come burst into the world on the day of Pentecost. He knows that one day this man will walk down the streets of Jerusalem and people will crawl on their hands and knees so that perchance the shadow of this man might pass over them, because if it does, they'll be healed.

Jesus knows that's the man right there washing his nets. The challenge is, how is the Lord going to take this man who can't even catch fish, he's fished all night and caught nothing, he's a failure just like Moses, how is he going to take this man who can't even catch fish and turn him into a vessel who can catch men? The last few words of the 10th verse of Luke 10 are my favorite version of what we call the Great Commission. Jesus says to Peter, Catch men, Peter.

Follow me and I'll show you how to catch men. In order for the Lord to take this man who can't catch fish and turn him into a man who can catch men, he has to teach him four things. First he has to teach him this spiritual secret.

Peter, you're not the fisherman, I'm the fisherman, and I'm in your boat, I'm in your ship. Dr. Samuel Shoemaker used to say back in Pittsburgh, Fellowship is two fellows in the same ship. That's a good paraphrase of the word fellowship.

Here we have a picture of what it means to have fellowship with God, because Jesus is in Peter's ship, and he says to Peter, You're not the fisherman, I'm the fisherman, and I'm in your ship. When they finally go fishing, the Lord suggests that they go fishing, and Peter doesn't really want to. When they get out where the deep water is, the Lord says, Now throw the nets over for a big catch.

Peter gives them some static. Peter says, Teacher, we've taught all night and we've caught nothing. I've always imagined there was about a 30-second pause there while the Lord stared him down.

Then Peter says, Nevertheless, that's your word, here goes the net. Now we know the story. The net is filled with fish, the boat almost sinks, and his partner's boat almost sinks.

What is the Lord trying to teach Peter? Peter, if you're going to catch men, you've got to understand something. I'm the fisherman, you're not the fisherman. And you can't catch men, Peter, you can't even

catch fish.

You can't catch men, but I can, and I'm in your ship, Peter. You don't want to catch men, Peter didn't want to go fishing, just like Moses didn't want to deliver those people, but Jesus said, But I want to, and I'm in your ship. In the book of Acts, I think we all discover the fourth spiritual secret as it's applied to Peter's life.

Peter becomes a great catcher of men. He's the great leader of the New Testament church. He preaches the sermon on the day of Pentecost, and 3,000 men are saved, and then thousands later when he preaches.

He's a great catcher of men. How did he learn that? I think he learned that in Luke 5, when Jesus taught him these four spiritual secrets. Peter, you're not the fisherman, I'm the fisherman.

You can't catch fish or men, but I can. You don't even want to, Peter, but I want to. And when it happened, nobody had to tell Peter, Peter, you didn't do that, he did that, because he was in your ship.

I really believe these four spiritual secrets are critical if we're going to be the people through whom God works. Remember, again, the call and commissioning of Moses shows us this, just like the calling and commissioning of Peter or anybody else. It is the plan of God to use the power of God in the people of God to accomplish the purposes of God according to the plan of God.

In order for that to happen, these men have to learn these four spiritual secrets. I heard a story recently about a pilot who guided big ships into their berths, and he was one of the best of these pilots, but before he went to work every morning he always took out of his safe, the wall safe in his family room, a little black box, and he took out of the little black box a piece of white paper and looked at it very reverently and then went to work. He did this day after day, year after year, and he never would tell his wife what was written on that piece of paper.

After the old gentleman died, she got into the little black box and took out the piece of white paper, and it said, "Port is left, starboard is right." Frankly, I don't have a safe in my family room, but if I did and if I had a little black box in that safe and a piece of white paper, what I would write on that piece of paper would be these four spiritual secrets. I'm not, but he is. I can't, but he can.

I don't want to, but he wants to. I didn't, but he did.

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