

What Is That In Thy Hand?

Exodus 4:1-5



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FOCAL Read Responsively Exodus 4:1-5 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. {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.**

God will take the ordinary and make it extraordinary. He will take the common life and turn it to eternal life. He will take that which is little and make it much. He will take that which is dark and make it light. He will take them which are bound and make them free. There is nothing that God cannot do, nothing that He cannot make better – but you must surrender it to Him.

What is that in thine hand?

God called Moses to be the leader of His nation Israel. Before Moses could be great he had to learn the truth that all people must learn – greatness comes only from the life surrendered to God. Just as the Psalmist wrote:

Psalms 84:11-12 For the LORD God [is] a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good [thing] will he withhold

from them that walk uprightly. {12} O

LORD of hosts, blessed [is] the man that trusteth in thee.

The Lord is our Sun – He provides light in the midst of darkness. The Lord is our Shield – He protects us from our enemies. The Lord is our Grace – by Him only comes salvation. The Lord is our Glory – He magnifies those who magnify Him.

God told Moses “Go to the King of Egypt. I will deliver my chosen Israel – and you will tell the King all about it. Go to Him, tell Him to let My people go. Tell My people that I have sent you. You are My Prophet.” As soon as Moses heard this He began to make excuses. Go back to Egypt? He had escaped from Egypt after killing an Egyptian (**Exodus 2:12**). What would happen to him if Pharaoh knew of his bloody act? What would happen if the children of Israel would not follow him? He wasn't an orator, wasn't a dynamic leader. What would happen if none would follow? The Lord answered Moses' questions with a simple illustration. He asked “**What is that in thine hand, Moses? What is that in thine hand?**” It is but a common rod, a walking stick Lord. A piece of debris that I picked up as I came up the mountain to look at this burning bush. It's nothing – nothing at all. “**Toss it on the ground Moses. Let it go and see what I can do with it.**” Moses tossed it on the ground and – low and behold – it became a snake. It so frightened Moses that he ran away. The Lord said “**Pick it up by its tail, Moses, and see what happens**”. The snake turned back into a walking stick. The Lord told Moses:

Exodus 4:17 And **thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.**

Take that which is common and give it to God. When God takes the common He makes it uncommon and miraculous. God would have Moses take this same common walking stick and touch the waters of the Great River Nile (**Exodus 7:17**). God would use that common stick to *turn the waters into blood*, killing the fish and all that was in it. But God would not stop here. He would have Moses stretch out this stick and *all the waters* of Egypt would become bloody (**Exodus 7:19**). Not only would the streams and rivers run with blood, but all stored, kegged, or bottled water would turn rancid and bloody. The rod of God would bring a plague of frogs (**Exodus 8:5**), lice (**Exodus 8:16**), hail and fire (**Exodus 9:23**), locusts (**Exodus 10:13**), and it would divide the waters of the Red Sea as Israel departed from Egypt (**Exodus 14:16**). This same stick would be used in the wilderness of Horeb when Moses struck the Rock and water flowed from it (**Exodus 17:5**). When the armies of Amalek came to destroy Israel Moses stood on the mountain with the rod of God in his hand (**Exodus 17:9**) – and God gave His people victory that day.

God can take the common and make it uncommon, the dead and give it life – but we must first “**cast it on the ground**”. **What is that in thine hand?** Had Moses never cast the rod on the ground, he would have never seen it turn into a snake, nor would he have seen the mighty Red Sea part. God is calling you to eternal salvation, and to a victorious, overcoming life.

1 John 5:4-5 For {whosoever} is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, [even] our faith. {5} Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

The stick surrendered to God becomes alive. It parts the waters. It becomes a tool that changes lives. The soul surrendered to God gains life. Out of that person flows rivers of living water. He or she becomes a tool that can change lives.

What is that in thine hand? Give your life unto Him, and watch Him transform it into something wonderful.

**1. God Has Given Me Time To Serve Him:
Do Not Make Excuses – Do As He Says**

God has given us all time to serve Him.

If you are on this planet, you are here so that you can serve Him and glorify His Name. Moses did the same thing most of us do when God calls us to service- he made excuses. In our focal text we read:

FOCAL Exodus 4:1 ... But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath

not appeared unto thee.

“They'll not listen to me, God. They'll say that I was dreaming, or that I'm out of y mind. But they'll not hear me”. Moses had a very poor self image. There are two debilitating conditions common among humanity. We either are lifted up with pride:

Proverbs 16:18-19 Pride [goeth] before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. {19} Better [it is to be] of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

a very destructive emotion – for what have we to be proud over? Are we not all sinners for whom Christ had died? Doesn't the Scripture teach:

Romans 3:10 ... There is none righteous, no, not one:

We who are human truly have nothing to be puffed up over – but neither should we esteem ourselves so poorly that God cannot use us. Both emotions – pride and pitifulness – are ditches that we must not fall into. One says “I am better than God” whereas the other says “I am useless to God” - yet neither is true. If God can use a stick to part a sea, He can use you and I.

We should never fall in either the ditch of pride, nor

in the ditch of poor self image.

The time that you have on this earth has been given to you by a Gracious God Who wants to use you for His glory. The Lord called Moses from the midst of the burning bush:

Exodus 3:4 And when the LORD¹ saw that he turned aside to see, God² called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here [am] I.

Please note that *two Names for God* are mentioned in the calling of Moses. First of all we see the most Holy Name of YHWH – the Name that signifies the Eternity of God. The Eternal “**I AM**” called out to the temporal “**i am**”. The Infinite Creator **Yahweh** called from the midst of the eternal burning bush to Moses³ or **môsheh**- the one *drawn out of water*. Eternity called on the finite and called him to service. When the Eternal I AM calls a person, He calls them *knowing all their faults and failures*. God knew that Moses had killed an Egyptian

1 H3068, יהוה, y^hôvâh, *yeh-ho-vaw'*, From H1961; (the) *self Existent* or eternal; *Jehovah*, Jewish national name of God: - Jehovah, the Lord. Compare H3050, H3069.

2 H430, אלהים, 'êlôhîym, *el-o-heem'*, Plural of H433; *gods* in the ordinary sense; but specifically used (in the plural thus, especially with the article) of the supreme *God*; occasionally applied by way of deference to *magistrates*; and sometimes as a superlative: - angels, X exceeding, God (gods) (-dess, -ly), X (very) great, judges, X mighty.

3 H4872, מֹשֶׁה, môsheh, *mo-sheh'*, From H4871; *drawing* out (of the water), that is, *rescued*; *Mosheh*, the Israelitish lawgiver: - Moses.

before running away to the **deserts of Midian**. (**Exodus 2:12**). This is the Eternal I AM – He is always there. He knew that Pharaoh would be mad at Moses. This is the Eternal ELOHIYM, the Triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit. Nothing can be his from Him. So when God called Moses out of the burning bush and Moses made the excuse:

What the significance of God introducing Himself to Moses as Yahweh (I AM) Elohiym (the Triune God)?

Exodus 3:11 ... Who [am] I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

The answer to that question is “**You are the one that the Great I AM has called. God called you Moses – surely He will go before you.**” When Moses (thinking back on his past transgression) said:

Exodus 4:1 ... behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

God knows all about it. He knows that Pharaoh will not believe *before Pharaoh is even asked*. He knows that Israel will be hard hearted. God knows it all – He is the Great I AM. God is behind Moses. Moses just needs to be careful to walk where God has said walk. When Moses said:

Exodus 4:10 ... **O my Lord, I [am] not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I [am] slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.**

he was wasting the Lord's time. The Triune God knew his limitations when He called Moses. When God calls, we would be best blessed if we would just answer.

When an ambassador will not follow the directions of the nation who sent him, he is liable to be recalled. In the same way the believer who will not do what God has said may be recalled to Heaven.

Moses made excuse after excuse, wasting time, rather than trusting in the Lord. We need to learn to say as David did when delivered from the hands of his enemies:

2 Samuel 22:2-4 And he said, **The LORD [is] my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; {3} The God of my rock; in him will I trust: [he is] my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. {4} I will call on the LORD, [who is] worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.**

When God calls put your trust in Him. Believe in Him,

praise Him, and do as He so directs. The Great I AM will not call then fail to equip you. Cross the Red Sea, Cross the Jordan, enter Canaan – and He will give you rest. If we fail to follow Him we will see the pattern of Israel reenacted in our lives. Life is given you to serve God. Serve Him wholeheartedly.

Do you believe that God will call you to do something for Him that He will not equip you to do?

2. Whatever God Has Placed In Your Hand Should Be Used For His Glory

FOCAL Exodus 4:2 ... **the LORD said unto him, What [is] that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.**

Everything that God gives to us is a tool that should be used for His glory.

When our possessions are surrendered to Him – when we treat all that we have as *His possessions on loan to us* – then God will bless our every waking moment. God says unto His people:

Psalms 50:10-15 For **every beast of the forest [is] mine, [and] the cattle upon a thousand hills. {11} I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of**

the field [are] mine. {12} If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world [is] mine, and the fullness thereof. {13} Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? {14} Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: {15} And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

The world belongs to God, not to us. It is all His. God wanted Moses to surrender that stick to Him so that He could use it for His glory. **What is that in thy hand, Moses? Throw that stick down and I will show you a new thing.** The stick was a tool that God wanted Moses to use to glorify Him. But Moses Himself was a tool that God wanted to use. We see the Lord telling Moses:

Exodus 4:6 ... 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.

Leprosy was a terribly debilitating disease. The Lord told Moses **“Put your hand in your shirt and pull it out again”**. When Moses did as God told him to do that hand turned **leprous**. Why did God do that? Because He wanted to show Moses that not only did his possessions belong to God, **Moses himself belonged to God**. It is written:

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

You were given life by God *for a reason*. God did not give us life so that we could waste it on the inconsequential. He gave us life so that we could use it for His glory. He gave us life so that we could *make an eternal difference in the midst of this infernal world*. It is written that life ...

James 4:14-15 ... is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. {15} For that ye [ought] to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

Life is so transient, so fleeting. It is like the fog in the morning that, when the sun rises, it is gone. It is so sad that so many waste their lives on the foolish and the unimportant – when there are so many important things that can be done.

Am I spending my life doing things that are eternal, or fleeting? Is what I am doing today going to change the world – or even matter a hundred years from now?

This is why the Scripture tells us:

Ephesians 5:14-17 Wherefore he saith, **Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.** {15} **See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,** {16} **Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.** {17} Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord [is].

Do not waste your days on the foolish. One day you shall stand before Eternal God and **give an account** for your lives. Wouldn't you like to give a good account? Has the Lord given you a talent to sing, or to do, or to be? Moses told the Lord **“I don't think I can do this, Lord, because I'm not eloquent”**. The Lord replied:

Exodus 4:11 ... **Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?**

If God made you, called you, and gave you a job to do – you had best do it. When we fail to use what He has given us as a tool to glorify Him our Lord can just as easily *remove that which He has given*.

The attitude of Job was always – even in the midst of trial – maintaining a right attitude before the Lord. When

all was lost he worshiped God, saying ...

Job 1:21 .. **Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.**

What is that in thy hand? Has God given you money? Use it for His glory. Has God given you a singing voice or musical talents? Use that for His glory. Has He given you nice possessions? Use that for His glory. What about your children? Teach them to glorify the Lord in all that they do. The children of Israel were given the Promised Land, though they were not allowed to possess that land until they obediently honored the Lord. The first generation of Israel died in the wilderness. Moses and Aaron themselves died in the wilderness. Why? Because they did not continue to glorify the Lord.

The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. If we cease to use that which in our hands for His glory, He can take it out of our hands.

What may God do if we do not surrender that which is in our hands to Him?

Isaiah 42:5-8 Thus saith **God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth,**

and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: {6} I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; {7} To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, [and] them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. {8} I [am] the LORD: that [is] my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Our God cannot abide idolatry. What is that in thy hand? Make sure it is surrendered to Him.

3. Real Solutions Begin With A Real Relationship With God

FOCAL Exodus 4:5 ... 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.

At a revival I went to not too long ago I heard a preacher remark “I was saved seven years before I ever knew it”. I heard another preacher say “I can't tell anybody

anything about how to be saved – that's something God will have to tell them.” Lord help us all! We live in a desperate age where life has been devalued beyond belief. If it was shocking to God that Cain would murder Abel and then say “am I my brother's keeper” (Genesis 4:9) it must truly hurt the Almighty's heart when we so lightly abort our children. Just the other day I read where a sixteen year old boy stabbed and killed his brother because that brother wouldn't give up the controls of the computer game he wanted to play. We live in a world filled with sin of every imagining.

Adults need real answers, and many of those who occupy our pulpits are handing out bubble gum and roses from the sacred desk.

Beloved, we need to get back to the Bible. We need to start looking in the Holy Book and quit listening to popes and pips and pompous peddlers.

What is the most important question you can ever ask?

My prayer is that I teach you these words: “**Where is that written in the Book?**” This question – if you ask and answer it – will weed out more foolishness from the Christian way of life than any. We who are God's creatures need to stop dancing to the tune of fools and begin to heed the Voice of our Creator. **Where is that written in the Book?** Show me. Don't show me your degree, your doctorate, your nice suit and tie. Show me

where is that written in the Book.

One preacher, I read, said that he doesn't believe that there is such a thing as hell. **Show me where that's written in the Book.** There is a hell – Jesus preached it frequently (**Matthew 5:22; Matthew 5:29; Matthew 5:30; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 11:23; Matthew 16:18; Matthew 18:9; Matthew 23:15; Matthew 23:33; Mark 9:43; Mark 9:47; Luke 12:5; Revelation 1:18; Revelation 6:8; Revelation 20:13; Revelation 20:14**). In fact, Jesus taught us that we should do *anything* – even pluck out our eyes – rather than leave this life unrepentant and enter hell. Hell is real, or our Lord is wrong – and our Lord is never wrong!

Did Jesus believe there was such a thing as *an eternal hell*?

Real solutions begin with a **real relationship with God**. May I say that Moses didn't get saved – then stumble on that knowledge seven years later. Salvation isn't based on a feel good sort of thing. Salvation is based on believing God and believing what He has said. Salvation is based on turning to Him in faith, believing that He took your hell on Calvary so that you can inherit His Heaven. When God called Moses out of the midst of the burning bush *Moses immediately knew that he spoke to God*. **“Take off your shoes, Moses, you are on holy ground”**. The ground was holy because God was there, and because God was calling Moses to service there. I have heard people beg God over and over again to be saved. Do you honestly believe that *God needs you to*

beg Him? The Prophet Isaiah said of Jesus, the Eternal Son of God:

Isaiah 53:3-5 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were [our] faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. {4} Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. {5} But he [was] wounded for our transgressions, [he was] bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Did God the Father send God the Son to that terrible Cross, beaten and torn, bruised and rejected, chastised for us *for naught*? Did God do this so that we could beg Him and beg Him for that Manna from Heaven? Absolutely not! God did not beg Moses to salvation. He called, and Moses answered. Moses came to the burning bush and met the Lord face to face. You – if you have been saved – came to the bloody tree and saw Him hanging there, beaten, dying, bearing your sin burden as He has borne mine. Moses had a stick in His hand that he was to use to lead Israel into the Promised Land. God had a stick in His hand – that Old Rugged Cross – and He used Roman soldiers, whips, nails and a hammer to open a way whereby we could all enter that Eternal

Promised Land. Moses lifted up his stick over the Red Sea and it parted, allowing the children of faith to cross unharmed. The Lord God Almighty lifted up the stick of the Cross and not only parted but quenched the fires of hell, so that **whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** The unbelieving Egyptian felt his feet bog down in the mud, and felt the crush of water as the judgment of God descended on each and every person. The believing Jew crossed over unhindered, for **they who believe in Him shall never be condemned.**

If you are a Christian God asks you “**what is that in thine hand**”? Are you giving this dying world real Biblical solutions or are you adding to the problem? Are you sharing the Gospel with the lost around you, or are you telling them tales and feeding them emotional dribble?

If you are a Christian then you are the watchmen on the wall. Do you think that God will hold you accountable for that which is in thine hand?

If you are an unbeliever then God asks you “**what is that in thine hand**”? What are you clinging to that is not Jesus? **God is not willing that any should perish, but calls all to repentance.** Look in Christ's hands. “**What is that in Thine hands, dearest Jesus?**” It is nails that pin Him to the cruel tree, but love in His heart for you and I that held Him there. He is the Promised Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Have you believed in Him? Have you given yourselves unto Him?

Have you taken off your shoes, knelt, and believed that He gave Himself for you? Please, I beg you, do not die in your sins. Turn to Jesus. Choose life, not death. **He Who knew no sin was made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).** The stick was made a serpent. From the Rock came forth water. Christ was made sin. How long will you not believe? May today be the day of your salvation!