

Sunday, September 18, 2022 | Feels: Thriving in the Valleys

Exodus 3:1-15; 4:1-17 | "The Valley of Doubt"

Sometimes our spiritual lives feel like a series of peaks and valleys. One moment, we're soaring high; the next, we experience a crushing low. This Sunday, we'll be starting a five-week series called *Feels: Thriving in the Valleys*, and this study is all about what we should do when we hit the low points in life. Along the way, we'll examine the journey of faith through the eyes of five famous bible characters: Elijah, Paul, Moses, Joseph, and Peter. By the end of this series, the hope is that the Christian will be equipped to combat the negative "feels" that seem to plague us and steal away our inner peace.

In week 1, we navigated the valley of depression through the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19. We saw how the Lord comforted this depressed prophet by providing for his needs and listening to his pleas. And while Elijah was still in a sorry state even after his encounter with God, the Lord still chose to use him. Elijah's depression did not disqualify him from serving. This is not to say that the prophet wasn't changed in some way. He still went back to the very thing that made him flee. Thus, the lesson we took away from Elijah's valley was that **communing with God and fellowshiping with others helps to soothe the depressed heart.**

Last week, we explored the valley of deficiency through the lens of Paul's own testimony in 2 Corinthians 12. What are we supposed to do when we face our own legitimate weaknesses, knowing full well that we don't have enough to succeed at whatever task we've set our minds to? Thankfully, Paul showed us that our inadequacies and imperfections do not hinder the work of God. And, often, those fragilities are not curses but **gifts from God which help us rely upon him** because God's power is made perfect in weaknesses. Thus, as the apostle put it, we can say, "When we're weak, then we are strong."

Today, we'll explore the valley of doubt from the perspective of Moses. And this might come as a surprise to most people. After all, what sort of persona do we attach to Moses? Undoubtedly not one of doubt. Quite to the contrary, the odds are that most people would imagine a man with a burly gray beard holding the ten commandments while standing confidently on top of a mountain. Or, if you grew up in the 90s, you probably have the movie *Prince of Egypt* playing through your head with Val Kilmer providing the voice of Moses and the fantastic Ralph Fiennes providing the voiceover for the villainous Ramses. Or, if you're a part of my parent's generations, when I mention Moses, you probably think of Cecil B. DeMille's [Sessile B. De-Mill]

movie *The Ten Commandments*, where the iconic Charlton Heston provided the first on-screen adaptation of Moses.

But, as the famous Georg G. Byron (aka, Lord Byron) wrote in his poem *Don Juan*, "'Tis strange but true; for truth is always strange; stranger than fiction; if it could be told...." While eventually a great leader, Moses wasn't bold and brazen, willing to confront the most powerful nation on the planet without hesitation. No. Moses was a man *plagued* by doubt. Before he was ever used by God to wrestle a nation to its knees, he first had to come to grips with his disbelief, skepticism, and even cynicism. Moses had to walk a valley of doubt before he ever got to the mountain of God. And as we walk through this story today, I want you to take note of the things that fueled Moses and how God answered those concerns.

READ: Exodus 3:1-15 (ESV)

¹ Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. ³ And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." ⁴ When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" ¹² He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

i. God made up for Moses' lack of confidence with his promise (cf. Ex. 3:1-12).

¹³ Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

ii. God made up for Moses' lack of knowledge with his presence (cf. Ex. 3:13-15).

READ: Exodus 4:1-17 (ESV)

¹ Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'" ² The Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." ³ And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. ⁴ But the Lord said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— ⁵ "that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." ⁶ Again, the Lord said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. ⁷ Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. ⁸ "If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. ⁹ If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

iii. God made up for Moses' lack of optimism with his power (cf. Ex. 4:1-9).

¹⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." ¹¹ Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? ¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."

iv. God made up for Moses' lack of skill with his provision (cf. Ex. 4:10-12).

¹³ But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." ¹⁴ Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. ¹⁶ He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. ¹⁷ And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."

v. God made up for Moses' lack of motivation with his precepts (cf. Ex. 4:13-17).

So, what's the takeaway?

God's sufficiency is sufficient to counteract our doubts.

Trusting in the Lord and being obedient to his commandments enables us to move forward even though we may still be laden with our doubts, worries, and concerns. God never did take away Moses' doubts. In fact, the prophet made things worse when he first came to Pharaoh, and this enraged the Israelites and further discouraged Moses (cf. Ex. 5). Moses had his doubts even as he was trying to lead Israel out of bondage. Only as he continued to trust and obey God did his faith grow, and his doubts began to diminish. Or, as J. A. Motyer put it,

"When Moses was faced with his vocation to bring *my people the Israelites out of Egypt* (3:10), his reaction was, 'I can't therefore I won't.' The Lord sought to bring him to the point where he would say instead, 'I can't, but HE can, therefore I will.' That is the obedience of faith—doing the will of God because he will always do what he has willed; trusting the promises of God because he will always keep his word; acting on the assumption of divine provision because he will never fail to provide."¹

Sometimes, doubts go away. Other times, doubts linger for a lifetime. But this does not mean we stop doing what we know we should do. Just because we have our doubts does not excuse us from being obedient. Faith often says, "I will go," even though you're not entirely sure what will happen.

¹ Motyer, J. A., *The Message of Exodus*, The Bible Speaks Today Series, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2005), p. 61-62.

Video Description

Feels: Thriving in the Valleys | Week 3 | “The Valley of Doubt”

TEXT: Exodus 3:1-5; 4:1-17

Today, we'll explore the valley of doubt from the perspective of Moses. And this might come as a surprise to most people. After all, what sort of persona do we attach to Moses? Surely not doubt. Quite to the contrary, the odds are that most people would imagine a man with a burly gray beard holding the ten commandments while standing confidently on top of a mountain. But, as the famous Georg G. Byron (aka, Lord Byron) wrote in his poem *Don Juan*, “’Tis strange but true; for truth is always strange; stranger than fiction; if it could be told....” Moses, while eventually a great leader, wasn't a bold and brazen individual at first. Nor was he willing to confront the most powerful nation on the planet without hesitation. No. Moses was a man *plagued* by doubt. Before he was ever used by God to wrestle a nation to its knees, he first had to come to grips with his disbelief, skepticism, and even cynicism. Moses had to walk a valley of doubt before he ever got to the mountain of God.

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: