

Title: **SIGNS OF DELIVERANCE**
Text: Exodus 4:1-9
Subject: *Three Signs Given to Moses*
Date: Tuesday Evening — December 26, 2006
Tape # Exodus 33

Introduction:

After forty years in the backside of the desert **the Lord God appeared to Moses at Horeb** in the burning bush and declared that he had chosen him to go to Pharaoh and deliver his people from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 3:10).

(Exodus 3:10) “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

Moses responded to God’s revelation with astonishment and humility, saying, “Who *am* I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (v. 11). Then the Lord assured his servant of his presence, saying, “Certainly, I will be with thee (v. 12).

Then, Moses asked the Angel that spoke to him what his name is. “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (vv. 14-15).

The Lord then promised Moses that he would deliver his people from their affliction and bondage in Egypt and bring them into the land of Canaan. **He commanded his servant appear before Pharaoh** and beseech the Egyptian king to allow the Hebrews to go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that they might hold a feast unto the Lord their God. At the same time the Lord informed Moses that Pharaoh would not grant this request. Still, he assured Moses that he would bring Israel out of Egypt, that he would do so by smiting Egypt with his wonders. Not only that, he also assured him that Israel would spoil the Egyptians and be greatly enriched by them when he had accomplished their deliverance.

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MOSES' UNBELIEF

Still Moses' mind was occupied with difficulties and obstacles that appeared too great to be overcome. Let's pick up the story in Exodus 4.

(Exodus 4:1) "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."

Surely, Moses had seen and heard all that could possibly be needed to dispel his fears. Had he not? He had seen the bush burning with fire, yet unharmed by the fire. — He had seen Christ, the Angel of the Lord, and heard his voice. — The Lord God revealed himself in the most assuring and endearing titles and names, as the covenant God of Israel. — He had assured Moses of his favor, his grace, his presence, and his success in delivering Israel. — He assured him that his people would hear him and that Pharaoh would, at last, let his people go. — After all that — "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!"

How hard it is to overcome the unbelief our hearts! What evils are engendered by unbelief! God plainly told Moses that the people would hearken to his voice (Exodus 3:18); but Moses did not hearken to God's voice. But, lest we castigate Moses, we should castigate ourselves. What horrible unbelief rages in our own hearts!

How difficult it is, even for believing men and women, to believe God! Do you not find yourself constantly crying, like the man who brought his demon possessed son to the Savior, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief"? I am ashamed to confess it, but I do! How slow I am to believe the naked promise of God. The most slender reed that the human eye can see is trusted, but the unseen "Rock of ages" is not! We rush quickly to any creature stream or broken cistern, rather than abide by the unseen "Fountain of living waters."

Almost everything I have read, almost every commentary, sermon, or even the briefest comment, severely criticized Moses for his unbelief (and rightly so, I suppose); but I cannot help noticing that the Lord did not! It is true, as we see in the latter verses of this chapter, that the Lord was ultimately provoked to anger by Moses' continued unbelief; but here we see nothing

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but patience, forbearance, and grace. When I read Moses' words of unbelief in this first verse, and hear the sweet sound of God's silence concerning it, I am filled with gratitude and praise, as the sweet words of Psalm 103 ring in my heart (vv. 7-14).

(Psalms 103:7-14) "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. (8) The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. (9) He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever. (10) He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. (11) For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him. (12) As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us. (13) Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him. (14) For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust."

THREE SIGNS

In response to the third difficulty raised by Moses, the Lord gave his reluctant servant the power to perform three great wonders or signs, which were to be wrought before his people to convince them that he was truly God's ambassador to them. The fact that there is a deep meaning to these three signs, and that they were designed to teach important lessons to Moses, to Israel, and to us, should be obvious to all. The first was a sign of power. The second was a sign of cleansing. The third was a sign of judgment. These three signs were given as signs by which the Lord God assured Moses and his people of their deliverance from Egypt by his omnipotent grace. And they give even greater assurance to us of the greater deliverance of our souls by Christ. Let me show you these three Signs of Deliverance as they are set before us in verses 2-9.

MOSES ROD

The first of sign was the turning of Moses' rod into a serpent, and that back again into a rod.

(Exodus 4:2-5) "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

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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.”

Just three verses are devoted to the description of this wonder, but they are full spiritual riches. We are not left to guess what this rod is. In verse 20 we are specifically told that it is “the rod of God.” — “The rod of God” was upon Israel to deliver and defend them. — By “the rod of God” the red sea was parted (Exodus 14:16). — And by the rod of God Pharaoh and his armies were drowned in the sea (Exodus 14:26-27). — It was by “the rod of God” that Israel prevailed over prevailed over Amalek (Exodus 17:9). — “The rod of God” was upon Israel; but we read of the wicked, in Job 21:9, “neither is the rod of God upon them.”

The rod in Moses’ hand was the shepherd’s staff upon which he leaned.

As such it was that which he trusted, that upon which he leaned, that which upheld him, comforted him, and defended him. You are familiar with that rod. Aren’t you (Psalm 23:4).

(Psalms 23:4) “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

The rod of God upon which we lean is his almighty grace that is ours in Christ Jesus, and the Word of his grace we hold in our hands.

Cast away his grace, cast away his Word, and we are helpless before that old serpent the devil. The only way we can stand before him and withstand his wiles is by simple dependence upon God’s grace revealed in his Word.

The rod, being cast to the ground, became a serpent, and “Moses fled from before it.”

That shows the helplessness of man to cope with Satan. The sinner is completely under his power, “taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:26). That was Israel’s condition in Egypt. They were subject to bondage and utterly incapable of freeing themselves. Nothing less than Divine intervention and omnipotent power could set them free.

Notice this too: — **This power was placed in the hands of a mediator — Moses, the one who stood between Israel and God.** He, and he alone, was given power to deliver Israel. His power over the serpent was manifested by

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taking it by the tail and reducing it to nothing. The serpent disappeared when it became a rod again. So our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and men, of whom Moses was a type, is our only hope. He alone has all power in his hands to save us (John 17:2; Romans 14:9).

(John 17:2) “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”

(Romans 14:9) “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”

When Adam cast away the rod of God, the Word of God, in the Garden, the serpent began to slither through God’s creation. But he who is greater than Moses, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, has conquered Satan and shall destroy all his influence in this world (Psalm 2:8-9; Revelation 2:27).

(Psalms 2:8-9) “Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession. (9) Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

(Revelation 2:27) “And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.”

In a word, this rod represents Christ himself, who is called the Rod of God’s Strength in Psalm 110.

(Psalms 110:1-3) “A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. (2) The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. (3) Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.”

When he came into the world, when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, the Rod of God’s Strength came here to be made a serpent. The “serpent” is inseparably connected with the curse (Genesis 3).

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And, when he who knew no sin was made sin for us, the Son of God was “made a curse” for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:14). Our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up”. (John 3:14). But blessed be God that is all past: the Lord Jesus (the Rod) is now exalted to God’s right hand, and he declares, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die” (John 12:31-33). **Blessed be his name, he crushed the serpent’s head forever! And he who is the Rod of God’s Strength rules the serpent of hell absolutely!**

Yet, there is more. Our conquering Savior has made us more than conquerors in him; and the serpent of hell shall never do us harm (Psalm 91:13; Mark 16:18; Romans 16:20).

(Psalms 91:13) “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.”

(Mark 16:18) “They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

(Romans 16:20) “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.”

MOSES’ HAND

The second sign God gave Moses was just as significant and just as important as the first. As the first was a sign of power, the second was a sign of cleansing.

(Exodus 4:6-7) “And the LORD said furthermore unto him, 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. (7) And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his *other* flesh.”

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Moses was required to put his hand into his bosom, to slip his hand under his garment and lay it over his heart. “And when he took it out, behold, his hand *was* leprous as snow.” It was not Moses’ hand that defiled his heart. It was his heart that defiled his hand. What a vivid picture that is of our hearts (Mark 7:21-23).

(Mark 7:21-23) “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, (22) Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: (23) All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

Then as commanded, Moses put his defiled hand to his heart again, and it was restored whole as the other. Here, again we see a picture of our Lord Jesus, in his great substitutionary work, by whom alone we can be made clean before God. First, Moses is seen as whole, then as leprous, then whole again. That is exactly how the Scriptures portray our Savior. Ineffably holy in himself: He had no sin (Hebrews 4:15), did no sin (1 Peter 2:22), and knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). But in infinite grace Christ took our place and “was made sin for us”. (2 Corinthians 5:21).— “He bare our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24).

Being made sin for us, our adorable Savior was leprous as snow before God, defiled and unclean. The leper’s place was outside the camp (Leviticus 13:46), as one cast away from God. And on the cross the Lord Jesus Christ was separated for three terrible hours from the holy God, crying, “My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?” But after the awful penalty of sin had been endured and the work of atonement was finished, the Forsaken One is seen again in communion with God, saying, — “Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” And it was as “the Holy One” (Psalm 16:10) he was laid in the sepulcher. Thus, after Moses thrust his leprous hand into his bosom, he drew it forth again perfectly whole, every trace of defilement gone.

As the first sign intimated that the great Deliverer would “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8), the second signified that he would “take away our sins” (1 John 3:5) by the sacrifice of himself.

This also pictures God’s work of grace in us by his Spirit in regeneration, as he effectually applies our Savior’s blood to his redeemed.

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He, and he alone, can bring a clean thing out of an unclean! The cleansing begin in the heart, that is unseen. Only by this inward cleansing can the hand, which is seen, be made clean. — Our Savior says, “Ye are clean” (John 13:10).

- **The law entering our hearts, represented by Moses’ hand defiled us, made us leprous as snow before God, and slew us** (Romans 7:9).

(Romans 7:9) “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”

- **That same law, fulfilled and satisfied by Christ, entering our hearts, pronounces us clean** (John 15:3; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Titus 3:3-7).

(John 15:3) “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11) “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, (10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

(Titus 3:3-7) “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another. (4) But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, (5) Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (6) Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; (7) That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

- **Now, being made clean in Christ, by Christ, and with Christ, the very works of our hands are made clean and acceptable to God by**

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him, “odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.” (Philippians 4:18; 1 Peter 2:3-7; Ecclesiastes 9:7).

(1 Peter 2:3-7) “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious. (4) To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious, (5) Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (6) Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. (7) Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,”

(Ecclesiastes 9:7) “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.”

WATER TO BLOOD

Now, look at the third sign.

(Exodus 4:8-9) “And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. (9) And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour *it* upon the dry *land*: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry *land*.”

Moses was required to take some water out of the Nile and pour it out upon the ground. When he did it became blood — a preliminary sample of the first plague that fell upon Egypt (Exodus 7:19).

(Exodus 7:19) “And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and *that* there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in *vessels of wood*, and in *vessels of stone*.”

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This was a sign of simple judgment. The river Nile was the natural source of Egypt's fertility and prosperity. If they refused to hear God's messenger, the earthly fount of their life would become death; their blessing should be made a curse. Instead of life, God would make their river bring forth death, instead of fruitfulness corruption, instead of blessing a curse!

This third "sign" is unspeakably solemn. It shows us the consequences of refusing to believe the gospel typified by the first two. If sinners reject the testimony of God they heap to themselves "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:25). The water turned into blood speaks of life giving place to death. It anticipates "the second death," that eternal death, "the Lake of Fire," which awaits every Christ rejecting unbeliever. Be warned, and flee to Christ for refuge before the storm of God's wrath overtakes you. — "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

(2 Corinthians 5:20-21) "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

(2 Corinthians 6:1-2) "We then, *as* workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (2) (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)"

Amen.