

Exodus 4:29-31, 5:1-5, 17-23, 6:1-12 "Moses: Doubt and Disbelief"

Intro- ***doubting Kate will respond positively to DTR talk illust.*** We're going to look at the cause for doubt/disbelief and the cure. Two causes and one cure.

**Cause: We make assumptions about people** – seen in Pharaoh's response to Moses' plea (chapter 5). What does Pharaoh assume? He assumes two things. Two reasons why Israel and Moses want to leave Egypt. Laziness and lies. First assumption is that Israel is lazy. Pharaoh thinks it's all an excuse because of laziness. He understands human behavior, and the motives of the heart. Doesn't know God. So only can rely on what he knows. Only reason for people to want to leave is to slack off from work/responsibility. We assume things based on experience without any direct evidence. Assumptions are ultimately just guesses and that's what Pharaoh did. He says in vv4-5 that you guys aren't working. You need to go and do your job. Stop this Exodus nonsense. And then in v8 and 17, he makes it clear that he thinks the Hebrews are a bunch of lazy slackers who don't want to work.

Now the second assumption Pharaoh makes is that Moses and Aaron are lying. You see this in v9 when Pharaoh tells the slave drivers to work the Hebrews so hard that they won't pay attention to lies. What lies are he referring to? Vv1, 3. That the Lord wants Israel to worship him in the wilderness and if they don't obey, He'll kill them. Now, it's perfectly understandable that Pharaoh would assume that Moses was lying. He's never heard of the Lord and Israel has never worshiped the Lord. Now out of nowhere two Hebrew guys claim the Lord appeared to us and wants you to let us go. What would you think if you were in Pharaoh's shoes? To Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron are false prophets claiming to hear some voice from some God in order to benefit themselves.

So those are the two assumptions. Laziness and lies. And you see these assumptions from his response. In vv6-9, Pharaoh orders the Hebrews to produce the same quota but refuses to provide the necessary resources. Build same amount of bricks without giving them straws. Now that seems counter-intuitive. It's an impossible demand. Why is he doing this?

What Pharaoh is doing is quite shrewd. He wants to deal with laziness and lies. He wants to make the Hebrew slaves realize that life could be a lot harder if they try to slack off. It's Pharaoh's way of saying, you don't want to work hard? Then your alternative is extreme work. You either work hard or die from impossible labor demands. On top of that, Pharaoh wants to turn Israelites against Moses. He believes the Israelites are to blame for laziness and Moses to blame for coming up with this idea of exodus. So best way to deal with this problem is turn Israel against Moses.

So, Pharaoh orders the unreasonable work demands but doesn't give any reason. It's not until the Israelite leaders come in v17 that Pharaoh explains it's all because you say you want to go and sacrifice to the Lord. That way, the Israelites will turn against Moses and not listen to his lies. It's a pretty brilliant plan because it works beautifully. Israelites complain to Moses and in 6:9, we're told that they didn't listen to Moses because of harsh labor and discouragement.

Now, we may claim to be Christians, but we often think like Pharaoh. We claim to know the Lord, but we act like we don't. When do we do that? When we assume human behavior like Pharaoh. When tough times come. When God's promises aren't happening. When you're

doing all the right things, praying, tithing, and see not only no fruit, but worse, terrible results. That's when you and I assume that someone must have done something wrong. I didn't do this right. Someone must be at fault. On the flip side, if we do these things well, the ministry will then just grow and grow.

Be careful in not making false assumptions of human behavior. When things aren't going our way, one of the biggest temptations is to assume someone else's fault. We think someone is lazy, someone is lying, someone isn't doing their job right. We assume human behavior. False assumptions, which leads to doubt. Even refuse to believe that God may be allowing this hardship to take place.

So next time something unexpected, something bad happens to you, don't immediately assume it's because of human error or human behavior. Take a moment to consider God's will in all this. We doubt and disbelieve God when we assume human behavior. We doubt and disbelieve God when we presume God's behavior.

**We presume how God works** – To presume something means to make a guess based on probability. So, for example you say the victim was presumed dead when the vehicle was found. That's a guess based on probability. To believe something is the case without any investigation. The Israelites and Moses are both guilty of this. They presume God's behavior. They think they know how God acts without spending time to learn or investigate.

At the end of chapter 4, we're told that Israel believed Moses because of the signs. They believed him when he told them God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about their condition, they bowed and worshiped. But there's the start of the problem. They presume God's behavior. Israel thinks that this will be a quick fix. Moses and Aaron talk to Pharaoh. Pharaoh will let them go. No more slavery. Freedom. Fresh start. Let's worship God! But they forgot God's words that He will harden Pharaoh's heart. And make no mistake, they did hear that part because we're told in v30 that Aaron told them EVERYTHING God said to Moses. And God did warn Moses that Pharaoh's heart will be stubborn and hard. It won't be easy. But surprise, Israel conveniently forgets that part. Or you could say they just focused on the positive aspects of God's message. I will save you. You will be freed. They presume God will deliver them right away and the hardships and slavery will end overnight.

Now that's a pretty big thing to take for granted isn't it? To assume and expect God to do things according to your presumption. The irony is it's not just the Hebrews who presumed God's behavior inaccurately, Moses does the same. We're told in chapter 6 that the Hebrews would not listen to Moses when he tried to reassure them with God's promise. And then Moses turns around and begins to doubt God. Because he's presuming that God will make things right quickly. He's thinking like the Hebrews. If the Hebrews aren't persuaded by Moses, how in the world is Pharaoh going to be persuaded? Moses presumes that when God is working for you, things should be moving easily. This should be a piece of cake. Certainly not rejection by both the Hebrews and Egyptians. To put it in a different way, if God can't solve your problems now, why in the world do you need God then? He says in 5:22, why did you ever send me? Why bother? And then in 6:12, how would Pharaoh listen to me if Israelites won't even believe me?

When we presume God's behavior, we begin to doubt and even disbelieve God when rough times come. They thought if God is on your side, working to save you, things will just get better and better. Like never-ending economic growth and prosperity. Example of hot hand fallacy in basketball, gambling. False assumption housing/stock will keep going up and up. Thing that are bad will get better. And the good things will remain good if not improve as well.

But you know what, we make the same mistakes. We don't realize that sometimes with God, things will get a lot worse before they turn for the better. Ex: Joseph from family to suffering to salvation. David was anointed as king yet didn't come to throne until 15 years later of persecution, hardships. In NT, Jesus' triumphal entry is followed by crucifixion then resurrection. Early church saw great signs, people coming to faith but then church was scattered/persecuted harshly before it spread. This is the common pattern of biblical revival/God's salvation. It doesn't always happen this way, but enough to dispel the silly presumption that with God things will always be better and troubles will go away immediately. Things will often get a lot worse before they get better. Israel and Moses presumed God's behavior and when it didn't happen the way they expected, doubt and disbelief.

Talk about biblical example of Job's three friends who assumed his guilt/sin and presumed God was judging him. Job also makes the error of assuming his completely blameless and presumes that God should never allow anything bad to happen to him.

Have you ever struggled with doubt? Have you ever wondered where was God? Why is he allowing this terrible thing to happen to me or someone I love? Is God mad at me? Perhaps you're wondering if God was punishing you or even has abandoned you. Maybe it's not doubts but discouragement. Discouragement at what you see in church or an individual. We may get frustrated with lack of progress. Some of us may even lose hope. Wonder if God is still working in this person's life, or if this person is still listening to God's will. But let me encourage and remind you, don't assume or presume. Don't allow your assumptions about man and God's behavior to weaken your faith.

**Cure: We are secured by God's promises** – (6:2-8) It's interesting that when Moses and Israel express doubt and disbelief, God doesn't respond by giving them more signs. Instead He talks to Moses about covenant. In vv4-5, we're reminded that the Lord established a covenant with the patriarchs and intends to keep it. Then starting in v6-8, God begins to lay out a new covenant with the Hebrews. He starts and ends by saying I AM the Lord. I am all powerful, eternal, unchanging.

Then, God gives seven 'I will' statements to clarify what's in this new covenant. You can break it into three parts. First part is in v6 where he says I will bring you out, I will deliver you, and I will redeem you. That's redemption. Second part is in v7 where God says I will take you for my people, and I will be your God. That's adoption. Then the last part is in v8 where God says I will bring you into the land, and I will give it to you for a possession. That's blessing. Redemption, adoption, blessing. That's the covenant with Israel.

Now perhaps you're wondering, how does a covenant deal with doubt and disbelief? And the answer is covenant is all about promises. Seven promises made by God to Israel. And that's the foundation of a covenantal relationship. When you enter into a committed relationship with anyone, whether it's marriage, or business agreement, or international alliances, the key to that relationship is promise. You promise each other what you will do. You vow to each other

that you will be faithful to one another, despite temptations and difficult times. That's what makes covenantal relationship work.

In fact, it's what makes any relationship meaningful and reliable. Knowing that you will keep your word to each other. That's what God is doing. He is promising Israel, swearing and declaring by his own name, the Lord, I AM WHO I AM, the one who cannot lie, that he WILL redeem them, he will adopt them, and he will bless them. See, in a covenantal relationship, you don't have to worry about false assumptions about human and God's behavior. Because the Lord promises to do His part. Even though the exodus is filled with challenges, hold on to God's promise. Once you're in a covenant with God, you relate to God with absolute confidence of His role and your future.

That's the genius of a covenantal relationship. It takes away the burden from us that we must have strong faith and never doubt in order to secure a strong relationship with God. No, we are already secure in Christ by grace through faith. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. And God is saying to us, "Don't ever question my love for you, don't ever think I have abandoned you, don't ever presume that I will never allow evil to happen to you, and certainly don't ever think you can pin me down and assume you know how I work. Because I am the Lord, and you are not. Yet, I chose you. I choose you; I choose to sacrifice my son for you. Remember that. That's how much I love you. That's my guarantee that no matter what happens, no matter how you feel, no matter what you wrongly assume or presume, nothing can separate you from me. Because I am who I am. You are mine, and I am your God, your heavenly father".

As Christians, we know that we're in a covenantal relationship with God. What governs our relationship with God is the new covenant. We promise to obey and worship the Lord, and God promises to redeem, adopt, and bless us. Jesus Christ fulfilled the new covenant for us through his perfect life, death, and his resurrection. In Jesus, we now get to enjoy God's redemption, adoption, and blessing. Just like Israel. Even when we doubt, even when we struggle with disbelief, even when we break our promise, God pays our penalty. He sent his son Jesus to pay for our sins. Our God is a covenant God. He not only fulfills his part; he also fulfills our part of the covenant. Isn't that amazing? How can you not trust in a God like that? How can you doubt a God like that? So, the next time when things aren't going well, when doubt and disbelief are taking over your heart, remember God's promise. Remember God's covenant. He promised to redeem and adopt you which He has done already. And he promises to bless you. That promise is secured by Jesus. So, hold on to Jesus. Hold on to God's promise. Don't let false assumptions about man and God's behavior weaken your faith in the Lord.