



Deut. 31:14-15; 23

How God Builds Real Leaders

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of meeting.

15 Now the LORD appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle.

...

23 Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

It is amazing the way that God not only calls but prepares men to serve Him in ministry. Moses had been a man called, and trained, and gifted to serve the Lord. The Lord had preserved his life when he was young, had caused him to be raised up as a prince in Pharaoh's household. Moses had attempted to set himself up as a leader of God's people –to inaugurate himself and perhaps lead a slave rebellion. He had seen an Egyptian beating one of his Hebrew brethren and had killed the Egyptian and then the next day had attempted to intervene in a fight between two Hebrews. And they asked a critical question: **Exodus 2:14 Then he said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" So Moses feared and said, "Surely this thing is known!"** and he fled but this too had been part of the Lord's plan, He sent Moses out in to the wilderness of Midian as a shepherd to learn humility, and obedience and leadership and then when the time was right, at the Burning Bush on Mt. Sinai He himself called and inaugurated Moses as the Leader of his people:

Exodus 3: 12 So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

13 Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"

14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

Now Moses is old and the time has come for a new leader, whom the Lord has also trained and gifted to lead the people into the promised land. During their time in the wilderness, many had attempted to take power from Moses – Rebels like Dathan and Korah and even Moses' own brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, yet God had his own man whom HE intended to call and install as the successor of Moses. That man was Joshua.

Moses readily obeys the summons, of the Lord, because as Calvin puts it “*he was not one of those that look with an evil eye upon their successors, but, on the contrary, rejoiced in him.*” Joshua had done a long internship as the assistant of Moses he had been the military commander of Israel, he had been with Moses when he went up Mount Sinai to meet with God and obtain the Ten Commandments, and the Lord had gradually been investing him with authority and showing the transition in power. God had already commanded Moses to take Joshua through a ritual giving some of his authority to Him:

Numbers 27:18 And the LORD said to Moses: "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him;

19 "set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight.

20 "And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.

And now the full transfer is to be completed in a deeply symbolic way - He did it this way, because this was the way that the Lord had met with Moses:

Exodus 33:7 Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the LORD went out to the tabernacle of meeting which was outside the camp.

8 So it was, whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, that all the people rose, and each man stood at his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle.

9 And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses.

10 All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man in his tent door.

11 So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

Now Joshua is being elevated from the one who waited at the Tabernacle while God met with Moses, to the man whom God met with and spoke with directly. There the Lord Himself appears so that all Israel can see and inaugurates Joshua as their leader. God also gives Joshua a wonderful charge and promise in verse 23: ***"Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you."***

He will be with Him. No man is able in his own power to lead God's people, and certainly no mere mortal was up to the task ahead of Joshua in the conquest of Canaan. This was all the more poignant because Joshua knew his old friend and mentor, perhaps the only man in the entire camp who knew what was ahead of Joshua was about to die. Peter Craigie had it right when he said - ***"Of the forms of loneliness that a man can experience, there are few so bleak as the loneliness of leadership."*** That has been the confession of so many of the leaders of God's church, Calvin among them, and had it not been for the consolation of the Lord's presence, it would be too much.

But God appears to him and says that He will go with Him and Joshua knows that GOD has the power to accomplish every work that He commands His people to perform. How did He know that, because that had been part of His training.

The training of the Lord, is so often designed specifically to cause the future leaders of God's people to be willing to trust the Lord and do what he commands come what may. Joshua spent forty years in the wilderness being fed by God every day, he saw that when the Lord was with his people and they obeyed his commands, they triumphed. He had watched during the battle with the Amalekites at Rephidim:

Exodus 17:9 And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand."

10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

Now God could have simply caused Israel to prevail over Amalek without Moses raising his hands, but he wanted Joshua and indeed all Israel to learn that their military success depended entirely upon His favor. And that their victory would be "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," Says the LORD of hosts."

That meant that it was far more important for the leaders of God's people to love the Lord and keep His commandments than to do what either the people wanted, or even what seemed to pragmatically make sense if it conflicted with the Lord's commands.

This was one of the biggest differences between Saul and David and why Saul was a failure as Israel's king, while David was a success.

1 Samuel 13:8 Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

9 So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering.

10 Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him.

11 And Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash,

12 "then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering."

13 And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

14 "But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

Just two chapters later, in 1 Samuel 15 Saul will again disobey the Lord by sparing Agag the king of the Amalekites and saving "the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good" despite the Lord's commandment to destroy them. Undoubtedly Saul had once again heeded the wishes of the people instead of doing what the Lord had commanded.

Now, it's worth noting that Saul *was not* trained and instructed via a long period of difficulty in the wilderness as David was. David learned the hard way in his time running from Saul and before that as a shepherd to trust the Lord and do what He commanded. He saw that the Lord honored those who honored Him. Joshua had seen the same thing as the assistant to Moses.

So let me get to some quick closing applications for us:

We tend to think it's personality and gimmicks that will prevail: in the modern age the example of Saul and not Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, Elisha and the Apostles seems to be prevailing. We tend to think that we need so much more than to simply love the Lord and carry out his commands. We need gimmicks, we need to do what the people want, we need quick fixes, and plans, plans, plans. New paths.

Jer. 6:16 Thus says the LORD: "Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls

It is the Lord Who trains and gifts and calls men to the ministry:

Eph. 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Men, and certainly not women should not be running unsent:

Jer. 23:21 " I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in My counsel, And had caused My people to hear My words, Then they would have turned them from their evil way And from the evil of their doings.

23 " Am I a God near at hand," says the LORD, "And not a God afar off?

“A ministerial call comes from outside, from God. A career decision may be to some degree a strictly human decision. You do not decide to become a missionary the same way a person decides to be a banker. You are called. Why have we so missed this truth? The American church is plagued with elders who were not called by God. Someone came to them and pleaded with them until they said: “Well, if you can't find anyone else, I guess I am willing to be nominated.” And when they are nominated under those conditions they are always elected. Is it any wonder the church is in such sad shape?” – Carl Bogue, *Running Unsent*

These are not *our* people, they are Christ's lambs

Acts 20:26 "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

27 "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.