

When Life Doesn't Go Our Way

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 September 2022

Preacher: Dylan Marais

[0 : 00] Well, families, families are important, aren't they? I guess with the passing of the Queen, it's the family, the royal family in England has been on everyone's mind just for the last few days.

But families play such an important role in our lives, don't they? You can choose your friends, the same goes, but you can't choose your family. Just remember that the same goes for the Christian family.

Now, families give us the most joy, but they can give us heartache and stress, can't they? We all have dreams of making our families successful, but nearly all of us have to deal with some sort of skeletons in the family closet.

None of us have families that are pristine and clean and shiny, not that I know of. There might be one or two, but very unlikely.

And definitely all of us will have to deal with life when things don't go according to the plan that we want for ourselves or for our families. And when it doesn't go well, it raises all kinds of doubts and questions. We wonder if God is working in our lives.

[1 : 06] We wonder if he can really use me in my family. If I think about the strange things that my family get up to sometimes, they are probably wondering the same thing about me and about us, of course, as well.

We wonder, can he really use me and my family in his great purposes for the world? In our story today, Moses is having the same kind of questions, and God has some very important answers for us to learn.

Now, Moses' life hasn't exactly gone according to plan. He's fled as a fugitive. He's on the run from a life of luxury and prestige and privilege. He's eking out a living as a sheep herder in the desert. He finally gets his big break. He meets the God of the universe. Or rather, the God of the universe meets with him.

He tells him he's come to fulfill these ancient prophecies that he set up hundreds of years before. He tells Moses, you're the chosen one. Sends him on a quest to free his people from slavery, and then empowers him with these amazing, miraculous abilities.

[2 : 15] It's like an episode out of X-Men. This is epic storytelling stuff, myth and legend that's going on over here. I don't mean myth and legend as in not real. I just mean big canvas, epic storytelling kind of thing.

Of course, something goes seriously wrong. Moses eventually marches off to go and tell Pharaoh what he needs to do. Pharaoh sends Moses packing, dials up the pain and suffering for the Israelites, who then reject Moses for a second time.

If you remember, Moses was rejected the first time he tried to help them, just like he did all those decades ago. For Moses, God's great plan of rescue has fallen apart.

It's failed to start, according to him. Moses is devastated, confused, hurt. Nothing has gone according to plan, and he doesn't know what to do. Everything has gone to part.

It's a mess for him. And so Moses is living proof that life doesn't always go according to plan. But we know this all well ourselves, all too well for ourselves.

[3 : 22] Our plans to make a better life for ourselves and our families are all too often met with opposition, frustration, discouragement, a failure. Almost every step of the way.

Many of us are here dealing with really big life issues in our families. Trauma from past abuse. Regret about broken relationships.

Many of us, all of us, will be worrying about the future. It raises big questions about God. What is God doing? Why is he letting these bad things happen? What is his plan?

Well, what's the way out of this confusion for Moses, for us, if we're caught in that situation? How do we get help? What's the way forward? Well, the answer we find in our text today is that God has a plan.

And because it's God's plan, it can never fail. And secondly, Moses is going to learn an important lesson, that being part of God's people, because he's part of God's people, he's part of God's plan. [4 : 26] So let's look at the first thing that Moses has to learn today. God has a plan. The first part of God's answer to Moses, his big question, why, Lord? Why is this happening?

It's to remind Moses of just who he is. So we started our reading in chapter 6. If you just cast your eye back, oh, by the way, just have your Bibles open if you've got them there. Just cast your eye back to chapter 5.

And verse 22 and 23. This is at the end of where everything goes wrong for Moses. Moses returned to the Lord and said, O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people?

Is this why you sent me? Why did you send me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon the people, and you have not rescued your people at all. You can see that age-old question that rings out from Moses' lips. Why? When things are going bad. Why, Lord? What's going on? You're not doing anything. What Moses needs to be reminded of is exactly who Yahweh is.

[5 : 31] And that's what God does in chapter 6, verse 2 onwards. I, he says. I, says the Lord. I am Yahweh. We've seen what that means.

The one who is. The one who will be who he will be. He's the creator of time itself. The God of the past, the present, and the future. It means he's the ruler of history.

He also talks about himself as being El Shaddai. The almighty one. In the English, it's almighty. In Hebrew, El Shaddai. In Greek, it's the pantokrato.

He's the all ruler. The powerful one. The one who is able to make all things in creation serve his will and his plans.

In other words, God is totally able to deliver whatever plans and promises that he makes. And nothing can get in the way of that. Nothing can stop him from accomplishing his plans.

[6 : 33] Yes. So Yahweh, the one who is, El Shaddai, the one who's got all the power to make the things that he says come true. These names underline the main point that God wants Moses to understand about who he is.

And about what his plans are for the world. And how Moses can trust him with that. And the main point that God wants Moses to understand is that he, Yahweh, is the God of covenant.

The God of covenant. Just notice in the text, it's because of the covenant. The covenant is the thing that gets God moving towards his people. So have a look at verse 2.

God says to Moses, I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty. But by my name, the Lord, I did not make myself known to them. That's actually a question, or it can be written as a question.

Did I not make myself known to my people? I appeared to them as God Almighty. Did I not make myself known to them?

[7 : 36] The answer is yes. I have actually made myself known to them. They do know who I am. Moses, you should know me by now. I've been working with this family for many centuries.

If you see the text has got a little subscript, a footnote, and you'll see it says, Did I not make myself known to them as Yahweh?

But notice what he says as well. I also, verse 4, established my covenant with him. I've made something that stood up and started working. To establish there, to stand up and make it start. Make it do something. It's not something that lies down and does nothing. I established, I began my covenant with them. I established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan where they lived as aliens.

Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. It is because of the covenant.

[8 : 36] Did you notice? That God hears the cries of his people and is moved to act on their behalf. Now we should know what covenant is by now, but essentially it's a strong binding oath.

It's the strongest promise. It's a blood oath that the kings of the ancient world used to take to promise protection and prosperity to people. God does the same thing with his people.

It's the strongest form of promise that any being can make to let the other person know, whatever it is going to happen, I promise to do the following things. Does that make sense? We all know what a covenant is.

It's an unbreakable blood vow that God has made with his people. And because of that, he will always act according to his covenant to help them when they're in trouble.

Moses just has to have a bit of faith here, a bit of trust. And then, just count with me the things that God is going to do for his people because of his covenant with them.

[9 : 39] Have a look at verse 6 onwards. Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord and, 1. I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt.

2. I will deliver you from slavery to them. 3. I will redeem you with an out-of-gen armor with great acts of judgment. 4. I will take you to be my people.

5. I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 6. I will bring you into the land that I sought to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

7. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord. Whew. Imagine standing there and receiving those promises. Interesting that it's 7, isn't it?

Perfect answer to life's problems right there. Rescue. Redemption. Freedom. Belonging. Family. Land.

[10 : 37] Home. All of these things God gives to his people because of the covenant that he made to Abraham all those years ago. And because he's Yahweh and because he's El Shaddai, his covenant promises will come true.

To know Yahweh is to know that he makes and keeps his covenant promises. His very name is a guarantee of the fulfillment of his promise and proof that he will be faithful to keep his covenant promises.

All Moses needs to do now is to place his trust in God and to get on with doing what God has told him to do.

To get on with the task at hand. Anytime Moses gets himself worked up into a frenzy of doubt, all that God does is remind him of who he is.

And then tells him to get on with the job. Later on he says he's going to, Moses is going to come up with another excuse. And God is going to say, don't worry. Just get on with the job. I've told you who I am.

[11 : 45] It's going to be fine. Just go ahead and do what I've told you to do. Don't worry about the details. God takes the lead. Calms him down. Points him in the right direction.

Now God is doing the same thing that first responders do when they find people in a panic. You know, you come on the scene. There's a big accident. And no one knows what to do. Unless you're trained.

Speak in low calming tones. Let the people know who you are. You're there to help. Stay calm. Do what he says and everything will be okay. My sister's a trained nurse.

We were traveling in the UK once. And there's a steep hill called Cheddar Gorge. And there were some cyclists coming down. And one of them came off really badly.

And I thought I'd go and help. And I get there and there was a lot of...

[12 : 44] Well, the guy's face had come off. To put it mildly. He wiped out. And he cut himself so badly. And I looked at that. And I nearly fainted.

But I couldn't do anything for him. My sister's a trained nurse. Just go to the car. Fetch this and that. That'll be fine. Tells me exactly what to do. And immediately I knew what steps I could take.

Before that, I was a useless mess. I couldn't do anything. I was too frazzled. But the moment someone comes in and knows what they're doing and can tell you what to do, it's a help. And you can get going.

And life can go on. I think what this means for us, what Moses needs to learn, what we can learn, is that no matter how badly our family's past has been, no matter how badly we've messed up our past, no matter how badly we don't know what God is doing and life has gone wrong, no matter what dire situation we find ourselves in, we can trust in God, the one who's got a plan.

We don't have to carry our past pains around with us, nor do we need to worry about our uncertain future. God has got it all under control. He's got a plan.

[14:02] We must just live today with trust and obedience and let God sort out the details. God is totally trustworthy. The challenge for us is to trust Him, to believe that He's doing something, that He knows what He's doing, and that He's acting according to the plan that He's set in place, the covenant promises that He put in place all those years ago under Abraham, that He continues now through Christ.

Because He is God, He will make the plan work. Moses doesn't really need to put a hand in. Yes, he's got to be obedient to God, but He's not the one pushing the plan forward.

I'll do it, Moses. I know what I'm doing. Just go ahead and do what I've told you to do. You don't know the details. I know the details. As long as we're trusting God and living a Christian life, we're still part of God's plan.

He will still use us to bring about blessing in our lives, the lives of our families, and the world around us. We need to have the long game in view, the same view that God does.

Part of our problem, like Moses, we want instant results. God is always going to do what He promises. It's just going to take a little bit longer than Moses expected. And God is going to take some unexpected detours.

[15:18] He brings salvation and He brings rescue, but He brings it in a very unexpected way. That's okay. We don't need to know the details. We need to know who God is.

We focus on Him. That'll help us focus less on what's going wrong and more on what God is doing in our lives. So when things are going wrong, we just need to recapture this vision of who God is. This creator, redeemer, powerful God who's got this plan in action. And He walks through history making sure that that plan, He's got all the power under His control to make sure that plan goes ahead.

We hang on to God and we trust Him through that. That'll do fine. However, even after this amazing revelation of God, Moses still doesn't fully trust Him.

Or he doesn't fully trust that God's plan is going to work. And the problem here is his own insecurity and feelings of inadequacy that are coming to the fore again. Have a look at verse 12.

[16:32] After this amazing statement that God makes about Himself, Moses goes, well, let's have a look at verse 9. Moses tells us to the Israelites and they didn't listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.

They're too focused on their problems in front of them. The Lord says to Moses, go tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of this country. But Moses said to the Lord, if the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me?

Since I speak with faltering lips or uncircumcised lips is the truer translation. So Moses is still doubting his place.

Yes, God has got a plan, but has God chosen the right person? Moses is now wondering. The answer that God gives him is a rather surprising one. He gives Moses a genealogy.

But the genealogy is important here. It seems so out of place. There's this huge plan. Moses is about to go and tell Pharaoh what's going on. And we push pause on the whole project. And so-and-so is the son of so-and-so.

[17:43] He's the son of so-and-so. He's the son of so-and-so. How is this going to help us trust God better and know our place as part of his plans and be confident about our place in his plans?

Well, this genealogy is going to tell Moses without a doubt that he really is the right person for the job.

Because he is part of the people that God has chosen. Moses is part of the plan. Because he belongs to the people that God has chosen.

And so we can know that we are part of God's plan for similar reasons. So genealogy seems like a very strange thing with which to convince someone they are indeed part of God's plan.

And to lay their doubts and fears. So how does it do that? Well, you'll notice that the genealogy follows the line of Aaron and Moses. I might have put it up on the screen. If it will start.

[18:42] But, you know, you've got all these names. But notice it starts with Reuben. It moves on to Simeon. And then from verse 16, it talks about the sons of Levi. Levi lives 137 years.

Kohath, his son, lives 133 years. Amran, his son, the son of Kohath, lives 137 years. And Amran is the father of Aaron and Moses.

And then it goes past. So it focuses on Aaron and then goes through some of his children, which is interesting. So this genealogy stretches, looks to the past, tells Moses something about where he

is, and then looks to the future as well.

Now here's what God is telling Moses through this genealogy. First of all, he's telling him that God is true to his promises. Remember what God said to Abraham?

And this is 500 years. Abraham is 500 years before Moses. Just about 500 years before Moses. I will bless you. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky.

[19 : 49] Genealogy says that's true. He said he would make them numerous. They are now numerous. Therefore, Moses can trust him to do what he says. And that he hasn't made a mistake in choosing Moses.

It's concrete proof. Concrete biological proof that God does indeed keep his promises. Yes, they're in slavery. But God said he would make them numerous.

Now he said he's going to take them out of slavery. He'll do it. They just have to trust him. Secondly, God's plan stretches through time and space. Because it's covenantal, it's multi-generational.

Covenants work through generations, through families. God doesn't just save individuals and then leave them. He saves individuals as heads of families. And through those families, the covenant gets spread.

Which means God is in his plan of redemption, of salvation for the long haul. Paul, he's been doing this thing for 500 years by the time he gets to Moses.

[20 : 55] While that tests our minute ability to be patient, it does speak to the total faithfulness and the power of God to make sure that his promises and blessings are indeed delivered to his people.

The New Testament says that Jesus came to do what he came to do for his people based on what God said to Abraham. Just look at the genealogy of Matthew chapter 1. So Abraham is 500 years before Moses.

Moses is 1500 years before Jesus. We are 2000 years after Jesus. And God is still being true to that promise.

I'm going to give you a people. And one last thing that it tells Moses is that even when families don't work too well, if you belong to the family of God, he will still work through them.

Even when families don't work so well, if you belong to the family of God, he will still work through our families. The list, this genealogy, legitimizes Aaron, but it reveals some family skeletons.

[22 : 02] It talks about Korah and Nadab and Abihu. Korah was, we all know from later on in the story, led a rebellion against the leadership of Moses and was taken out by God.

Nadab and Abihu offered unauthorized fire and were killed. But here's the thing. God still works through Aaron and Moses' family.

The sons of Korah wrote many of the Psalms. Phineas mentioned here, famously saved Israel from being wiped out in a plague because of their sin.

And isn't this just how much, kind of the same way that our families work? We're a mixed bag of good and bad. Functional and dysfunctional. We look at the issues we have to deal with in our families and we wonder, can God really use my brokenness?

Look what I've got to deal with in my past. Look at this baggage I'm carrying. Can God really use me to bring blessing to my family and to others? Do we really belong to the people of God?

[23 : 14] God. This genealogy shows that God knows that our families come with issues. He knows that. He's the one that called these people in the first place. Our family issues, our past, is not going to overthrow God's plan to use our family to bring blessing to the world.

If we've joined His family, we can take heart that we belong to Christ, that if we belong to Christ, we really do belong to God's family. Our Ephesian passage brings out very similar things that what we're finding here in Exodus chapter 6.

I wonder if you saw it. Let's see if I can highlight that quickly. In Ephesians chapter 1, Paul says this, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

That's the same blessing that God has promised to Abraham, to do good to people. It's now happening through Jesus Christ. In love, He predestined us for adoption to sonship.

Through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will, we get family by coming to Christ. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

[24 : 27] We've got redemption. When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.

We've got an inheritance. We've got a future. We've got a hope. But you've got to be part of God's family if you want to have any hope of saving yours.

You won't be able to sort out the skeletons in your family closet unless you come to Christ and let Him start a new work in you. You'll stay fearful of the past and uncertain of the future because there's no hope without Christ unless you come to Christ and let Him make you part of the people that He's going to use to change the world.

Some here will feel, well, it's too late. My children have grown up. It's not too late. You can start something new in your family.

Others may not have biological children. That's okay. Take heart. God has made you part of a much bigger family to be part of a blessing and to bless. So we can take heart that we and our family are part of God's plan if we are part of His people, part of His family.

[25 : 41] What that means is we must live out our covenant calling in our families. Some will have inherited a Christian legacy. Make sure that you pass it on.

It's one of the most important things you can do to your family. Maybe your family didn't have a Christian legacy.

That's okay. If you're a Christian, make sure that you pass it on to your children. It's the most important thing you can do for them because it gives them hope. It gives them a future.

Our plans often go wrong, but God's plans always works. We can totally trust in the God who has this history-changing plan to bless His people and through them to bless the world.

God doesn't give us all the details, but He does give us enough to know that we can trust Him and that He will carry out His plans and that we can be part of a future and it can start now.

[26 : 44] Let's pray to God. Heavenly Father, we are mindful of the fact that we are so finite and don't have the power and the ability we need to bring success and blessing that we want and Lord, these things are totally dependent on You.

Lord, we long to heal the issues of our past and to pass on good things to our families and to others, Lord. we know we can only do that if we come to Christ and let Him redeem us and let Him heal us and let Him give us His Holy Spirit.

And so, Lord, we ask for all the families here that are serving You, that You would do all these things that You promised to us, heal our past, give us a future, help us to trust in You and help us to be a blessing.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen.