

Brothers in Arms

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Exodus, chapter 4, Exodus 4 and verse 27, and we're going to go into chapter 5 as well.

But Exodus 4 and verse 27, what it says there, The Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.

So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him to speak and all the signs that he had commanded him to do, and so on.

During the First World War, there were two men called Noel and Christopher Shavas, and they were not only brothers, and they were also brothers in Christ, but they were also brothers in arms. As identical twins, Noel and Christopher, they were born on the 9th of November, 1884, and they were brought up in a Christian home with their mother and also their father.

[1 : 23] Their father was called Francis Shavas, who was appointed as the second bishop of Liverpool in 1900. And I mention him because Francis Shavas, he was the second bishop of Liverpool after succeeding the first bishop of Liverpool, who was my good friend J.C.

Ryle. He was the first bishop of Liverpool. But these Shavas twins, Noel and Christopher, they were extraordinary men. They both represented Great Britain in the 1908 Olympic Games.

They ran in the 400-metre race. And when World War I broke out in 1914, they both, both the Shavas brothers, they both enlisted for the First World War.

Christopher served as an army chaplain, while Noel served as an army medic. But as brothers in arms, the Shavas twins, they saw themselves first and foremost as Christians.

They saw themselves as brothers in Christ and soldiers of Jesus Christ. They were in the Lord's army. And as Christians in the Lord's army, they sought to do everything they could during the First World War, not only in service to king and country, but also in their service to King Jesus and his kingdom.

[2 : 45] And, you know, the desire and the determination of the Shavas brothers, it was actually recognized repeatedly. They were both awarded the military cross for their service and bravery.

Christopher Shavas, the older of the two, he survived the war and he went on to become the Bishop of Rochester. But it was the younger twin, Noel, Noel Shavas.

He was awarded the Victorian cross in 1916 after rescuing 20 wounded soldiers during the Battle of the Somme while under fierce enemy fire.

And then in 1917, a year later, Noel Shavas was in a different place where he was serving in no man's land, right in no man's land on the German, beside the German trenches.

He was there collecting wounded soldiers and trying to bring them back to safety. And it was actually when he was in no man's land that he was seriously wounded by a German shell and he died two days later.

[3 : 46] But Noel Shavas, this young, young Christian soldier, he was posthumously awarded a second Victoria cross, making him the most decorated British soldier during the First World War.

Noel and Christopher Shavas, they were brothers. They were brothers in Christ and they were brothers in arms. And you know, as we consider this passage this morning from Exodus, we see the same with Moses and Aaron.

Because Moses and Aaron, they were not only brothers, they were brothers in Christ and they also became brothers in arms. They were brothers in arms who had been sent not to defeat Hitler's Germany, but sent to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

And I'd just like us to consider this passage this morning under three simple headings. The reunion, the request, and the resistance. The reunion, the request, and the resistance.

So first of all, the reunion of these brothers. The reunion, we see that in verse 27. It says, The Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him.

[5 : 01] And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him to do.

Now, unlike the Shavas twins, they were actually three years between Moses and Aaron. Aaron was three years older than Moses.

And as brothers, they both had an elder sister called Miriam. But you know what I always find remarkable when you come to this period in the book of Exodus is that Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, they're all now in their 80s.

Moses, you could say he had just celebrated his 80th birthday. Aaron was now 83. And Miriam was probably about the age of 85. And they were obviously fit for their age in what they were doing. But the Lord had called them like many others. And when the Lord called them, you know, like most people at the age of their 80s, they say, Well, I'm too old to serve the Lord now. But as we saw last week, Moses, he had many excuses when the Lord called him.

[6 : 10] Moses, by his own admission, he confessed that he was very anxious, very apprehensive kind of person. He was very reserved in his outlook. He was very reticent in his approach to other people.

He was a stammering, stuttering, shaking, and shuddering servant. Moses thought that he wasn't suitable for the task that the Lord had given him. But the thing is, the Lord knew Moses and Aaron better than Moses and Aaron knew themselves.

And the Lord had planned and permitted, and he had given to them every providence and purpose in their lives. And he did it all. And this is what I love about how the Lord works in our lives.

The Lord worked in the lives of Moses and Aaron by his grace for their good and to his glory. By his grace for their good to his glory.

Because, you know, as men in their 80s, Moses and Aaron, they had something that can't be taught and trained in a college. They had life experience. They were in their 80s.

[7 : 13] They had attended the University of Life for many years. And they had gleaned and gathered life experience. And as you know, nothing teaches or trains us better than our life experiences.

And we've certainly seen that with Moses. Because, as we know, Moses, he was educated in Egypt. Then he gained life experience in Midian. And as our good friend D.L. Moody said, he spent the first 40 years of his life thinking he was a somebody.

The second 40 years of his life thinking he was a nobody. And now in his final 40 years, from 80 to 120, Moses discovers what God can do with anybody.

My friend, nothing is wasted with the Lord. Nothing is wasted with the Lord. You know, and it's the same in your life and in my life too. The Lord uses our education. He uses all our encounters.

He uses our experiences. The Lord even uses our sins and our slip-ups. Our obstacles and our opposition. Our sicknesses and our sorrows. And he uses it all by his grace, for our good, and to his glory.

[8 : 26] And more than that, the Lord even uses it sometimes to strengthen and support others who are going through the same or similar experiences to us.

Nothing is wasted with the Lord. And like Moses and Aaron, who were servants, what we see about them is that the Lord doesn't call the equipped.

He equips those whom he calls. The Lord doesn't call the equipped. He equips those whom he calls. And as Christians, the Lord has called us first and foremost to salvation.

Then he has called us into service. He has called us to surrender and to submit our will and our wants to the Lord. Therefore, as Christians, you know, we need to be willing and wanting to serve the Lord and seek his glory in our congregation and in our community.

And my Christian friend, you might say, like Moses and Aaron probably did say, I'm not good enough. I'm not strong enough. I'm not fit enough. I don't know enough.

[9 : 33] You might even say, like Moses and Aaron probably said, I'm too old. I'm too busy. I have too much on. But, you know, when we look at these 80-year-old men, they weren't allowed to retire

or rest or relax or retreat.

Yes, they might not have felt ready. But their reunion, as we read here in these verses, their reunion is so that they can redeem and rescue souls from slavery.

And that's what we should be about, isn't it? That's what we should be about. We should be. We might not feel ready. But we should be about redeeming and rescuing souls from slavery.

Not that we save people, but that we speak to people about Jesus. Because, as you know, my friend, Christianity is not about being a consumerist Christian, always wanting but never willing.

Christianity is not about being a casual Christian, only when I feel like it, but it's not really my focus.

Christianity is not about being a contented Christian, a Christian who is saved, stuck, and satisfied.

[10:45] No, my friend, Christianity, it's all about being a committed Christian. Committed to the Lord, willing and wanting to serve the Lord and seek His glory in our congregation and in our community and beyond.

And so we need to be willing. We look at these men and we see that they needed to be willing.

They needed to be wanting. And so we need to be willing. We need to be wanting to come before the Lord and say with Isaiah, Lord, here am I.

Here am I. Send me. Use me. Enable me. Equip me to serve you for your glory.

And you know, that's a hard prayer to make, isn't it? It's a hard thing to say to the Lord, here am I.

Send me. But that's what we've been reminded this morning.

We should be coming before the Lord saying, here am I. Send me. Use me. Equip me. Enable me to serve you for your glory. But you know, what I love about this reunion is that the Lord brought Moses and Aaron together so that they would support one another and spur one another on in their service to the Lord.

[12:03] Because you know, they were not only brothers, they were brothers in Christ, as we said, and they were brothers in arms. And you know, from reading the narrative, it seems that Moses and Aaron, they hadn't seen one another for the best part of 70 years.

You remember that Moses, he was separated from his family in his youth, probably around the age of 10. And then he was brought up in Pharaoh's palace. But now Moses, he's reunited with his long lost brother Aaron.

And together these men are going to be brothers in arms as they serve the Lord for the next 40 years together. They're brothers in arms that serve the Lord for the next 40 years.

And you know, the reunion of Moses and Aaron, it should make us realize that the people in our congregation, the people in our congregation are for the most part with us for life.

They're with us for an average of 40 years. You think about how long you've been in this congregation and the people who have been with you all that time.

[13:16] Many, many years. The minister, he's the most dispensable person in the congregation. Ministers come, ministers go. Ministers are removed, ministers are replaced. But as members in the congregation, you are here with one another for years.

Because you worship, you witness, and you work together in the congregation and in the community. I know, that's what the reunion, that's what I see this reunion of Moses and Aaron emphasizing to us.

That when it comes to serving the Lord, when it comes to seeking his glory, we're to be in it together. We're to be in it together. Two are better than one, said Solomon, because they have a good reward for their toil.

For if they fall, one will lift the other up. And you know, when Jesus sent out his disciples, he didn't send them out on their own. No, he sent them out together.

Because that's the biblical model. When Paul writes to the New Testament church about worshiping, witnessing, and working together, he says, as in one body, we have many members.

[14:25] And the members do not all have the same function. So we, although many, are one body in Christ, we are individually members of one another.

Therefore, having gifts, says Paul, gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. This is the important part. Let us use them.

Let us use the gifts that have been given to us. My friend, the reunion of Moses and Aaron ought to remind and reaffirm to us, as a congregation, that we're not only brothers and sisters in Christ, we're brothers and sisters in arms.

We are soldiers of Christ. We're in the Lord's army. We're here to serve the Lord and seek his glory by worshiping, witnessing, and working together.

And so we see, first of all, the reunion. And secondly, the request. So the reunion and then the request. Now look at verse 1 of chapter 5. It says, Now chapter 5, as you see there, it begins with the word afterward.

[15:55] Meaning that after Moses had got over all his anxiety and apprehension, after Moses had caught up with his brother, his long-lost brother, and spoke about all the decades of not seeing one another, after Moses had explained to Aaron that the Lord had called, commissioned, and commanded them to do their task, after Moses had shown Aaron all the signs, the signs that he had been shown, the sign that we saw last week of the snake staff, and the leprosy, and the blood, the water being turned into blood, after Moses and Aaron had called together all these Israelite elders, and convinced them that the Lord had heard their cries, after all of this, after Moses and Aaron had shown the signs, and spoken to the Israelites, after all that, when things were going well, and it was good, and it was gaining momentum, then we begin chapter 5.

Afterward, Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a fast to me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh says, And who is the Lord?

Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice, and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go. You know, everything looked so promising.

Everything looked so progressive. Everything was so positive. Because it seemed, as you read the end of chapter 4, these openings are being made, obstacles are being removed, opportunities are being given.

Then you come to chapter 5, and one word from Pharaoh, and it all comes to a stop, and a standstill. Who is the Lord, he says? Who is the Lord that I should obey him?

[17:39] Who is the Lord that I should listen to his voice? I will not let Israel go. And you know, it seems that after having all this encouragement from the elders, and the insight from the Israelites, Moses and Aaron, they're so full of energy and enthusiasm, and they go straight up to Pharaoh with the promise of the Lord, and passion for the Lord, and they speak to the Lord's enemy with confidence and conviction, and they say to the Lord, they say to Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord.

And they spoke as prophets to Pharaoh. They were powerfully preaching the word of God to Pharaoh. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Let my people go.

You know, Moses and Aaron, they were men who made their request with confidence and conviction, and they expected the Lord to just move Pharaoh mightily and miraculously.

They expected the Lord to powerfully penetrate the heart of Pharaoh and bring him to surrender and submit his life under the authority of the Lord. But that's not what happens.

That's not what happened. They expected miraculous things, and yet Pharaoh responds to their request with a rebuke.

[19:03] Who is the Lord? Pharaoh responds to the request with a rebuke. You know, Pharaoh's response to the request here, where he says, Who is the Lord?

It reminds me of what a minister once told a Christian woman. This Christian woman, she was newly converted. She had been brought to faith.

She was full of the joys of salvation. She was amazed at what the Lord had done in her life, that the Lord had changed her heart and transformed her life. And she was so amazed that she thought that the Lord would do the same for her husband the following week.

She thought her husband was going to be saved next week. If I'm saved this week, he's saved next week. And she told this minister of her happiness in Christ and her hopes for her husband.

And the minister said to her, My dear, you might have to wait for it. You might have to wait for it.

[20:07] And now, over 30 years on, I can confirm she is still waiting. And you know, my friend, that's what Moses and Aaron were going to learn.

They were so full of energy, full of enthusiasm, so full of passion, but they were going to learn to wait upon the Lord. They were going to learn to wait upon the Lord.

Now, there was nothing wrong with the way they approached or the way they appeared before Pharaoh. There was nothing wrong with the fact that they had conviction and confidence in the Lord. There was nothing wrong with their excitement and their enthusiasm and their expectation that the Lord would powerfully penetrate the heart of Pharaoh.

There was nothing wrong with looking and longing for the Lord to move Pharaoh, to surrender and submit his life under the authority of the Lord. There was nothing wrong with them being full of passion.

But their passion, with their passion, they also needed patience. With their passion, they also needed patience.

[21 : 16] You know, I was reminded of this recently. I was attending a rural ministry conference in Dingwall and it was said during that conference, the Bible teaches us that God is love.

We're to love one another and love our neighbor because love is patient. So the Bible says that God is love. We're to love one another, love our neighbor and love is patient.

Therefore, if you put them all together, we were told you're to love your people patiently. Love your people patiently.

And you know, that's hard as a minister. Not that I don't love you, but it's hard to wait for you. To be patient. Hard and sometimes heartbreaking.

Especially when you're wanting and willing and waiting upon the Lord to save those whom we love. Whether we're waiting, you know, my Christian friend, whether you're waiting for your spouse or your siblings, your children, your grandchildren, your friends or your neighbors, your classmates or your colleagues.

[22 : 33] Sometimes it's hard. Sometimes it's heartbreaking to love people patiently. Because, you know, we love them so much, don't we?

We love them so much and we long for them to be saved. We love them so much and we long for them to be saved. And you know, my unconverted friend, I want to say to you this morning, I want to remind you and reassure you this morning that if you have a Christian mother or father, a Christian spouse or sibling, a Christian friend or neighbor, a Christian child, classmate or colleague, I want to say that you can be sure.

There's one thing you can be sure and certain about them. It's that their love for you and their longing for you is that you'll be saved. If you were to ask them what they really want, they would say that their love of you and their longing for you is that you'll be saved.

They love you and they long for you to come and commit your life to Jesus Christ and confess Him as your Lord and Savior. They have to love you patiently.

But don't make them wait forever. You come. You know, the sad reality is that sometimes those whom are called to love patiently, when we ever speak to them, just like Moses and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh, when we speak to them about the Lord, they respond just like Pharaoh.

[24 : 14] They say, who is the Lord that I should obey Him? Who is the Lord that I should submit and surrender to Him? Who is the Lord to dictate and make demands on my life?

Who is the Lord that I should listen and even love Him? And you know, what often happens is that when we speak to people about their soul, what often happens is that instead of their heart softening, sadly, their heart hardens.

And instead of responding to the gospel, there is resistance to the gospel, which is what we see happening with Pharaoh. His heart hardens. There's resistance to the request.

There's resistance to what Moses and Aaron are saying. And that's what I want us to see lastly. The resistance. So there's the reunion of Moses and Aaron. There's the request, let my people go.

And then there's the resistance. The resistance from Pharaoh. Look at verse 6. It says, The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, he said, You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks as in the past.

[25 : 25] Let them go and gather straw for themselves. But the number of bricks that they made in the past, you shall impose on them. You shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.

You know, it was the 18th century Methodist preacher, Adam Clark. He famously said, The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay.

The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. Now, some people attribute that to Spurgeon, but it was actually Adam Clark who said it before him. And what he meant by that was that the Word of God either humbles or hardens your heart.

When you sit under the Word of God, it will have an effect upon you. It will either humble you or harden you. The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay.

And you know, that was certainly true of Pharaoh because, you know, as we'll go through the story of the Exodus, even on into the new year, we're always going to be given a report of the condition of Pharaoh's heart.

[26 : 37] And how his heart was hardening more and more. Pharaoh's heart was a hardened heart. But you know, by this point, it was still quite soft.

It was going to get harder and harder. And you know, my unconverted friend, that's the sad and solemn thing about Pharaoh is that he heard the Word of God like you did. He heard the Word of God and the message of these two ministers, Moses and Aaron.

Pharaoh heard the passionate and the powerful pleas and the preaching of the Lord's prophets. Pharaoh saw the conviction that they had and the confidence in God's Word that they had with which Moses and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh received the request. He heard it loud and clear. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, let my people go. He heard the Word of God but in his hardness of heart he resisted and he rejected the Lord.

And that's what often happens when people hear the Word. That's what often happens when the Bible is proclaimed to people. The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay.

[27 : 56] and how the clay can become so hard. You know, the Word of God it either humbles you or it hardens you.

It either humbles your heart or hardens your heart. Do you know, how is your heart this morning, my friend? How is your heart? How is your heart?

Is it a hardened heart? Or is it a humble heart? How is your heart? But you know what we ought to notice about Moses and Aaron?

You know, when Pharaoh responded, Pharaoh responded with rejection and resistance to their request. And it seems that when Pharaoh responded in that way, Moses and Aaron, they recoil and they retreat.

One commentator says that when Pharaoh rejects the Word of the Lord, Moses and Aaron lose their nerve. And you know, my Christian friend, that's often what happens, isn't it?

[29 : 03] You know, when we receive rejection, you invite someone to church, you speak to them about the gospel, you talk to them about their soul, and they give you rejection. They reject you, they resist it, and it causes you to recoil, maybe even retreat.

But as we said, we're to love our, we're to love our unconverted friends patiently. We're to love them patiently, passionately, pastorally, and persistently.

We're to love our unconverted friends patiently, passionately, pastorally, and persistently. We're not to give up on them. Even if they seem to become harder and even more resistant to the truth.

And even if they go in the opposite direction, like Pharaoh did. Because, you know, what we read in the rest of this chapter is that Pharaoh, he not only resists and rejects the word of God, he also opposes and oppresses the Lord's people, the Israelites.

He says in verse 7, you shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks as in the past. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. You know, if you've ever wondered where the saying, you can't make bricks without straw, comes from, it comes from Exodus chapter 5.

[30 : 22] Because, and with this I'll close. You know the saying, this saying here, you can't make bricks without straw, it comes when Pharaoh resisted and rejected the word of God.

He opposed and he oppressed the Lord's people. He put up his hands and he said, who is the Lord that I should obey him? And, of course, this statement that we've become so familiar with, you can't make bricks without straw, we know what it, well, what it means today is that you can't achieve the end goal without the appropriate elements.

You can't achieve the end goal without the appropriate elements. And, you know, thinking about it, well, you can't make bricks without straw. The same is true for salvation.

Because, you can't be saved without the Savior. You can't enjoy forgiveness without faith. You can't know rejoicing without repentance.

You can't experience blessing without believing. You can't have joy. My friend, you will never know joy. You can't have joy without Jesus.

[31 : 40] My friend, you can't make bricks without straw. You can't be saved without the Savior. You can't be a Christian without the Christ.

You cannot be a Christian without the Christ. You know, don't be like Pharaoh. Don't resist or reject the Word of God. It's there for you.

It's speaking to you loud and clear. Don't put up your hands and say, who is the Lord that I should obey Him? He's speaking to you this morning. So don't reject Him.

Don't resist Him. Because the same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay. The Word of God either humbles you or hardens your heart.

And so my friend, I just want to conclude this morning by asking you that question I often ask you. How's your heart? How's your heart?

[32 : 43] Is it a hardened heart like Pharaoh's only getting harder? Or is it a healthy heart and a humble heart bowing before King Jesus us?

How's your heart? How's your heart, my friend? And may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for Thy Word.

We thank Thee, Lord, that it comes to us with a challenge, that it comes to us with clarity. And our prayer is that Thy Word would penetrate our hearts, that we would all humble ourselves before King Jesus.

And Lord, help us as Thy people to love those around us patiently, to love them first and foremost, because the Lord loves them, but to love them patiently by speaking to them and sharing with them this Jesus.

And Lord, we pray for those who are our unconverted friends. O Lord, we ask Thee that Thou wouldest soften their heart, bring them to know this Jesus, bring them to confess Him as Lord, bring them to live lives for Him, that we would be like the man whom we spoke to the children of, that we would all have that sweet fragrance of Christ in our life, a fragrance of life unto life.

[34 : 21] Lord, bless us then, we pray. Bless us on this day, the Lord's day, that we may find rest in it, that we would wait patiently upon Thee, and that we would enjoy not only rest for our bodies, but rest for our soul.

Do us good, we pray. Go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing in Psalm 22.

Psalm 22. It's on page 228 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 22 at verse 22 to verse 25.

So Psalm 22 at verse 22. I will show forth thy name unto those that my brethren are, amidst the congregation thy praise I will declare. Praise ye the Lord who do him fear, him glorify all ye, the seed of Jacob, fear him all, that Israel's children be.

We'll sing down to the verse, Mark 25, of Psalm 22 to God's praise. I will show forth thy name, master, those of my brethren are.

[35 : 49] praise ye the Lord who do him fear, and glorify all ye, praise ye the Lord, who do him fear, and glorify all ye.

mercy of Jacob, mercy of Jacob, hear him all, that Israel's children be.

for ye, for ye, for ye, for arbore, or the sw toothpick, dá ■ ■ ■ E ■ weary, the cannons ■ ■ ■ ■ EN, or the phenomenal ■ ■ ■ ■ dynasty, none Vallahi ■ ■ ■ ■ sending Ease Himw Radiation, nor how ■ ■ ■ ■ Heter know the Lord and the quantitatively in arduous His blood ■ ■ ■ ■ wen ■ ■ are, He to him did cry.

Within the congregation great, My praise shall be on thee.

My mouth before them let him fear Shall be performed by thee.

[37 : 42] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.