

Exodus 4

As we begin tonight we need to just understand that what we see here in chapter 4 is a continuation of what took place in chapter 3 of Exodus.

If you remember Moses had grown up a privileged man as an adopted son of the daughter of the king of Egypt. He had learned the customs of the Egyptians and he had access to what was probably one of the best educations that the world had to offer and even after all this Moses we were told still had a heart for his own people.

So much so that one day we were told he went out and he observed his people and as he did so he saw one who was being abused and Moses we were told looked this way and that and then killed the Egyptian that was guilty of this abuse. We then learned that the sin of Moses was found out and he had to run into the desert to hide from the wrath of the king.

Moses ended up marrying into a family that lived in the desert and he was seen taking care of the flocks of his father in law who we know as Jethro. Moses also received a wife from this man whose name was Zipporah and for 40 years Moses was with this family. It would seem that Moses had moved on from his people and he had really just put his focus on his family and the life that was before him.

At the end of chapter 2 while Moses was out in the desert we were told the people of Israel were crying out to the Lord for deliverance from the oppression of the Egyptians. As the people cried out we were told that God heard, that God looked upon His people, that God

remembered the covenants He had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that God acknowledged His people.

And then in chapter 3 we saw the Lord begin to call Moses to be the human instrument that God would use to deliver the people of Israel. God came to Moses in the form of a bush that was burning in the desert, but this bush was different in that it was never consumed and so Moses went over to the bush and then the Lord began to call him.

As God called Moses we can see that Moses was a man that was certainly hesitant to get involved at this point. We'll see between chapter 3 and chapter 4 that Moses had 5 objections to the call of God on his life...and each of those objections except for one were met with the patience of God.

I don't know about you but I'm thankful that when we might have reservations to the call of God on our lives that He is so faithful to reach out to us and give us opportunity to join the work repeatedly.

The first objection Moses had was when he said to the Lord "Who am I?" and Moses certainly knew that his own people had already rejected him in the past when he had supposed they would understand that he was the one that God had sent to be their deliverer. God responded to Moses by saying "I will be with you." And I have to say if God is for us then who can be against us. God can accomplish anything He pleases and He can use anyone to do that work.

And then Moses had a second question as he asked the Lord "Who am I to say has sent me to you...and what is His name?" And the Lord responded by saying "I AM WHO I AM".

And then the Lord laid out the whole plan for Moses as the Lord said He would surely deliver the people of Israel. He even said that the Pharaoh would refuse to let them go and that He would show many signs and wonders on behalf of His people Israel...Eventually the LORD said the people of Israel would leave the land of Egypt and as they did so they would actually ask their neighbors for gold and silver and clothing and they would respond by giving liberally to them.

I know that's a long introduction but it sets the stage for chapter 4 here where Moses is going to continue to have objections to the call of God on his life.

Look with me at verse 1 which says this **Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'"**

So Moses as the conversation goes on here is still doubting and he gives a third objection to the Lord using him and this time he says that he supposes that they won't listen to him when he speaks to them.

You might say that Moses is having a case of the "What If's" it's like Moses is running through a thousand scenarios in his mind about what might happen and how will the people respond. Have you ever had that happen in your life? The Lord can speak to us sometimes and we can sit there in our minds and hearts and we can say "Well Lord I think this is how they will respond when I say this" or we can say "Lord what if they don't accept what I have to say", or "what if Lord it doesn't work out how I think it should."

You know there are times that we can become paralyzed in our lives spiritually because we simply won't step out in faith when the Lord

speaks to us. I have had that happen in my life at times when I am thinking Lord I just don't see how this is going to work out...and actually when those times come up in life it's a great opportunity to first ask the Lord about it and then as He leads us it's an awesome opportunity to just go ahead and step out in faith and sometimes you just have to trust that God is going to work out the details.

I want to point out to you what the Lord had already said to Moses back in Exodus 3:18 and you might just jot that down for God had said to Moses that when he went to the elders that they **WOULD HEED HIS VOICE**...meaning God would take care of it and the elders of the people would be willing to listen to what Moses had to say.

Moses was all worked up about what **MIGHT** happen **instead of trusting what the Lord said **WOULD** happen.** Instead of worrying about all the details Moses should have just been obedient to move forward in the plan that God had revealed.

Again, I'm thankful the Lord is patient with us and there are times that God will confirm what He has said to us in multiple ways, but there comes a time where the rubber meets the road and God has spoken and you just need to be obedient by faith.

The Lord responds in verse 2 when He says this ²**So the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod."** As Moses is all worked up about the Lord using him and he is wondering how everything is going to work out and he is asking the Lord what to do if they say God had not sent him the Lord is now going to tell Moses to use what he has in his hand.

Now Moses if you remember was a shepherd at this point in his life and every shepherd had a rod that they would use to guide the sheep and examine the sheep. Moses was very familiar with this rod and I'm sure it was almost like it was part of his body at this point in his life. He probably had the same rod for many years.

What we are going to see develop here is that God is going to give Moses some very clear signs that he was to then give to the people of Israel so that they would know beyond the shadow of a doubt that Moses had been chosen to lead the people.

I want to point out to you that often times God will use what He has already given you to be able to minister to others. God has given each of us gifts and abilities by the power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps you have heard it said and it is true that what God has called us to, He will certainly equip us that we might be able to accomplish what is before us.

So often when the Lord calls we can look around and we can say "Lord I don't have enough to do this, I can't accomplish this Lord" and the Lord will often remind us that He is the one that gifts and equips us for the work that is before us. Often times you and I will focus on what we don't have and we forget that what we do have is from God and He can use that for His glory.

For Moses it is going to be his rod...For David what was it? It was his sling and for Samson what was found in his hand? It was the jawbone of a donkey...God can use the little that we have for His glory can't He? Think about the 5 loaves and the 2 fish that were brought to Jesus and how He used the little that the disciples had to feed the masses.

You and I must get past the fact that we don't have enough to do what He has called us to and understand that what God has given us is more than enough to accomplish His will. God can and does equip us by His Spirit for the works that He has called us to.

I know I have often felt inadequate to do what God has placed before me in life...and yet every time He enables me as I walk by faith to accomplish what He has commanded.

So the Lord is going to use this rod that is in the hand of Moses and then look at what happens in verses 3-5 which say ³**And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. ⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail" (and he reached out 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, has appeared to you."**

So the Lord commands Moses to cast the staff on the ground and when he does so the rod turns into a snake...and notice that Moses ran from the snake...I'd probably run as well as I'm not that fond of snakes but in this case Moses should have had some trust that even in this the Lord would protect and watch over him.

Then the Lord tells Moses to reach out and take it by the tail...I have to say that's actually the worst place to grab a snake for they can quickly recoil their bodies and bite you if you do it this way.

Moses as he was obedient to the Lord's command then picked up the snake and it became a rod once again. So notice that as Moses was

obedient the Lord worked on his behalf. I think this was a little lesson for Moses on just being obedient to what the Lord says and the Lord would keep him safe and watch over him.

Moses is going to be required to make all kinds of big steps of faith as this whole situation unfolds with the king of Egypt and each time the Lord will show Himself faithful acting on his behalf.

Now not only would the rod be used as a sign to the Israelites but we see there is a second sign given as well to Moses if you look at verses 6-7 which say **6 Furthermore the Lord said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom."** And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. **7 And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again."** So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his *other* flesh.

Here we have a second sign that God gave Moses and this time he was to put his hand into his tunic near his bosom and when he took it out it was leprous and then he would put it in again and when it was taken back out it would be cleansed.

Now leprosy in the Bible is seen as a picture of sin...From a physical standpoint when a person contracted Leprosy it was a disease that could not be cured...even today Hanson's disease as it is called now can be slowed or even stopped but it cannot be eradicated.

Sin is very similar to this in that once sin has stained a person's life they are from that point forward under the curse of sin.

Here Moses as this takes place is seeing that God has the power to make what is unclean clean once again...and this would be a valuable

lesson the people of Israel would learn as they followed the Lord in the wilderness...There will be multiple times that the Israelites will sin against God and yet the Lord will forgive them and continue to work in them as a people group.

Then the Lord gives a 3rd sign to Moses if you look at verses 8-9 which say this ⁸“Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. ⁹ And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour *it* on the dry *land*. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry *land*.”

This time Moses was told to go and take water from the River and as he poured it out on the dry ground it would then become blood...Now the Nile River which is where Moses will do this from was a place of great reverence for the people of Egypt, if you remember they actually worshipped the Nile River and they saw it as a source of life, fertility and blessing.

In seeing this life giving source of water turned into blood it would have spoken of death and judgment...It would have given indication that the God of the Hebrews is over the waters and has authority over the gods of the Egyptians...So God would take what produced life and allow it to produce death.

So the third doubt that Moses had was the “WHAT IFS” and the Lord has again responded to Moses by giving him several signs to perform for the people of Israel and then we come Moses’ 4th doubt or reason not to respond to God if you look at verses 10-12 which say ¹⁰Then Moses said to the Lord, “O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither

before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”¹¹ So the Lord said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? ¹² Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”

Oh Moses, how many excuses can you come up with. Here we can see that Moses simply says I am not a good speaker. Some commentators suggest that perhaps Moses had a speech impediment of some kind but I don't personally see a scriptural reason for that.

In fact over in Acts 7:22 we learn this about Moses when it says ²²**And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.** So previously in the life of Moses we can see he was a man that had some great words to say...I believe Moses has been humbled in his 40 years in the desert and now he thinks he just can't do what is placed before him.

Now I wonder if the Lord after hearing this from Moses rolled His eyes a little bit as Moses is just coming up with one excuse after another...Again though we see the patience of God as the Lord simply reminds Moses that He is the one that has made man's mouth and that the Lord is the one that knows everything about every person.

It's amazing to me that God knows my personal flaws and the things that I struggle with and He still calls me to do what I do on a daily basis. Don't ever think that God can't use you for any reason at all...God enjoys taking those who know they have nothing and have no special abilities and using them for His glory.

We talked about this last week but just listen to 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 which says ²⁶ **For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.** ²⁷ **But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;** ²⁸ **and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,** ²⁹ **that no flesh should glory in His presence.**

I think something you and I need to work through in our lives is the barrier that we have between the physical and the spiritual. Far too often I believe God wants to use people and people because of their own thoughts and their own understanding about where they are in life or their talents will feel as if they are unqualified to do what the Lord is asking of them.

When you personally come to accept the simple fact that God can use you and He can equip you and He can give you all that you need to be successful to what He has called you to, you will find there is great victory that is waiting for you.

Moses is going to discover that in his life...Paul found out what it meant to follow by faith as did Peter and James and John and David in the Old Testament as well. You are always going to feel as if you cannot do it and that's the perfect place to be for God then says "You can't, but I can and I will as you follow by faith." We are reminded of this over in Hebrews 11:6 which says ⁶ **But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must**

believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

I want to tell you tonight that as you follow Jesus by faith you are going to have some hard times and some times of doubt but God will be faithful to confirm your calling and help you each step of the way...At the end of the day Moses was never going to be able to think that he was something...God would do things in a way that only He would get the glory and that's what you and I should be looking for as well.

Don't let your own inadequacies be your downfall in following Jesus. God can and does equip us for every good work that He has for us.

Now as we come to verse 13 we see Moses' 5th response to the Lord's call on his life if you look at that it says **13 But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send."**

After all the Lord has spoken to Moses his response is Lord send someone else. I have to say that at this point it's just disobedience on the part of Moses...God has spoken so clearly to this man, He has given Moses signs to give to the people of Israel, He has answered every response that Moses has had and now we see Moses simply say send someone else.

Look at the Lord's response in the first part of verse 14 which says **14 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses,** Well it would seem like the Lord had heard enough from Moses at this point. God is seen as angry at Moses.

It took a lot for God to become angry didn't it. After 4 reasonable requests and questions from Moses the Lord had heard enough from this man.

Boy I hope I am never so slow to hear what God is saying that He becomes angry with me. God is so very patient with us in life but there does come a time where we ignore Him long enough or we deny His call in our lives enough times that He then becomes angry with us. Moses has had all kinds of evidence given to him that he is called by God to go and do this and when he flat out asks God to send someone else the Lord has finally heard enough.

Now what happens next I believe is the discipline of God in Moses' life for He is going to send Aaron his brother along with Moses but it was not the perfect plan of God for his life...Look with me at the rest of verse 14 through verse 17 which say **and He said: "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵ Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. ¹⁶ So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God. ¹⁷ And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs."**

So Aaron would be really a mouthpiece for Moses, someone that God would allow in the life of Moses to go and speak what was necessary. Aaron had the skill to speak well and while God would have given Moses the words to say because of his disobedience God chose to use someone else.

Moses would become like God to Aaron meaning Moses would hear from the Lord and then give the word to Aaron who would then go and be a spokesperson to the people. Moses would then take the rod and

do the signs before the people and this would be the way God would reach the Israelites.

Now a minute ago I said that really Aaron would be used against Moses to discipline Moses for his refusal to be fully obedient to God's call and I want to just point out to you that Aaron is going to be the one that makes the golden calf when Moses is up on the mountain...Aaron will be the one whose sons in the book of Leviticus will blaspheme God bringing trouble and Aaron will one day lead a mutiny against the authority and leadership of Moses.

So while Aaron might be a blessing, he would also be a hindrance to the ministry of Moses and every time something negative happened I believe Moses would remember that God had called him and he had said send someone else.

We ought not ever settle for less than God's best for our lives. There is a lot of conversation that takes place about the perfect will of God for our lives and the permissive will of God in our lives and perhaps what happened with Moses may be an example of God still accomplishing His will but doing so in a way that was not His initial plan...A lot goes into that conversation but just some food for thought.

Look at verse 18 which says ¹⁸**So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive."**

And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

When this began Moses was in the back of the desert watching his father in laws flocks and now he returns back to his father in law and it is a little odd the way that Moses phrases this as he asks for

permission to see if his people are still alive in Egypt...That's not really all that truthful for God has already told him that they were alive and he was to deliver them...why not just be honest with his father in law?

In any case Jethro then responds that Moses can go in peace.

Look at verses 19-20 which say this ¹⁹ **Now the Lord said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead."** ²⁰ **Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.** I appreciate it that God did not just command Moses to go do all these difficult things before Pharaoh but we get the sense that God was right there next to him all throughout the process...God gave Moses almost step by step instructions as he went through this.

One of the concerns Moses probably had was what am I to do about the king that wanted me dead...and the Lord spoke to him that this was not a concern at all at this point for all those that sought Moses were dead...meaning he had no reason to fear his failures of the past.

And so Moses here is obedient and takes his wife and two sons and heads out to the land of Egypt and notice the rod of God was in his hand...No longer was it a shepherd's staff but the staff that God would use to speak to the king of Egypt.

Look at verses 21-23 which say ²¹ **And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go."** ²² **Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: "Israel is My son, My firstborn."** ²³ **So I**

say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.” ’ ”

So Moses is on the way and the Lord reminds him that this won't be easy...I suppose nothing is ever easy when it comes to accomplishing God's will. The enemy of our souls will always stand up to us and work to thwart us from doing what God has said. The Godly we are told in 2 Timothy will face persecution, Jesus even said the world would hate us as we live for Him.

And it would be the same for Moses as the Lord told him that He would personally harden the heart of Pharaoh to the point that he would not let the people of Israel go.

And then notice that Moses was to say that Israel was the firstborn of God and that means that the people of Israel had a special place in God's heart, that he saw them as his child, that God watched over them and was decidedly for them in every way...It is as if God is saying if you deny my firstborn son I will take out your first born son...and sadly that's what took place and we'll get to that here in a few chapters.

We should remember that Israel is God's chosen people and God is always for them...Those nations and people's who come against His people find themselves in great trouble.

Now look at verses 24-26 and we'll see one of those things in the Bible that might make our eyebrows raise it says this ²⁴ **And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him.** ²⁵ **Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely**

you are a husband of blood to me!”²⁶ So He let him go. Then she said, “You are a husband of blood!”—because of the circumcision.

So the Lord calls Moses and then on the way to Egypt He wants to kill Moses...Now I will say if God really wanted him dead it would have been done but the idea here is that God is angry with Moses about something that had happened.

And really it all boils down to the fact that Moses had not circumcised both of his children. Earlier we saw Moses take his sons and go to Egypt and now we learn that one of them had not been circumcised and this was probably the younger one though we don't know for sure.

Zipporah his wife actually had to get involved and she performed the surgery throwing the foreskin of the son at the feet of Moses and Zipporah then rebuked Moses.

Here is my take on this...Moses I believe was being disobedient to the sign of the covenant that all the people of Israel were to have with God. This was given to Abraham back in Genesis 17:10-14 if you want to read that...God had said on the 8th day of every male's life they were to be circumcised and it was to be a sign of the agreement God had with His people.

For whatever reason Moses had chosen not to follow through with this and you can imagine here comes Moses into Egypt to represent the people of God to the Pharaoh and Moses himself is not even walking in obedience to what God had asked His people to do...In other words Moses was being hypocritical in his walk.

I want to just encourage you that if God is going to use your life then you need to choose to be obedient to the commands of God not just

at your church or in your service of God but in your every day life as well.

And then finally look at verses 27-31 which say the following ²⁷ **And the Lord said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him. ²⁸ So Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him. ²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. ³⁰ And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹ So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.**

So God was working not only in Moses but also in Aaron and the two had a reunion in the wilderness...and then these two went before the elders and spoke to them and we see that just as God had said the people believed and they had a hope in their lives that the Lord had seen their affliction and was going to rescue them.

And notice that after all this took place the response was to worship God...and I think you and I also as we see the mighty works of God on our behalf should worship and honor the Lord for all of His goodness on our behalf.

God certainly has delivered us from the enemy of our souls just as God will rescue His people Israel from Egypt and we of all people should praise and honor the name of the Lord and lift Him on high.

Tonight, as we close, I just ask you has the Lord spoken things to your heart in which you are being like Moses? Are you always coming up with excuses as to why you refuse to be obedient to the Lord? God is so very patient with us isn't He? We should respond to Him in obedience, the Lord wants to use us if we will just submit ourselves unto Him.

We should cease making excuses and start being obedient and finally as we move forward Moses is going to begin to follow by faith and the Lord is going to use him to set His people free.

Let's pray and we'll worship.

Exodus 4 "Excuses Abound"

Cross References

Verses 10-12

Acts 7:22

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

Hebrews 11:6