

## Message #8

## Exodus 4:1-17

**One of the real marks of being truly right with God is true humility.** Over and over again the Scriptures are clear that God hates pride. In fact, God hates someone who even looks proud (Prov. 6:17). So there is a sense in which God wants us to be humble and honest in our business and relationship with Him. Now whenever we do anything for God, we need to do it with true humility. So having humility, distrusting self, not being proud is necessary if we are to do or accomplish anything for God. It is right, it is good, it is normal, and it is spiritual to doubt yourself and your own abilities.

**However, there is a very fine line between doubting yourself and doubting God.** There is a very fine line between not believing in you and not believing in God. In any thing we are called by God to do, the real issue is not whether we doubt ourselves and our own abilities, it is whether we doubt God and His ability. Do we actually trust God enough to do what He wants us to do?

God had called Moses from a burning bush to go and get the Hebrew nation and lead them out of Egypt. He told him exactly who to contact and what to say. He told him exactly what was going to happen. Now Moses has spent the past 40 years leading sheep in a wilderness. So I am sure that this was quite an intimidating and unexpected calling. So it is natural that he would have some doubts. But the problem here is that Moses' unbelief in himself was beginning to become unbelief in God and that made God angry (Ex. 4:14). In fact, the anger of the LORD started to burn against Moses. The point to see here is this:

**WHEN GOD GIVES CLEAR EVIDENCE OF WHAT HE WANTS US TO DO AND WE DISBELIEVE AND MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT DOING WHAT HE WANTS US TO DO, IT ANGERS HIM AND ULTIMATELY COSTS US.**

We are in a context in which Moses is making a bunch of excuses before God as to why he does not want the job or think he is the man for the responsibility. His first excuse was, "I am a nobody" (3:11-12). His second excuse was, "I don't know your name" (3:13-22). Moses is talking to God at a burning bush and there is a lot of interaction. Think of this, he is talking to a burning bush. You would think that in itself would be enough evidence.

**RESPONSE #1** – Moses invents a third excuse in response to God's calling. **4:1**

We come now to Moses' third excuse in **verse 1** and that is, "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I have to say?" In other words, Moses says to God, "What if I go to the people and tell them the LORD has appeared to me and they say no, He hasn't and we don't believe you?" Now upon first glance, this appears to be pretty reasonable response.

Back in 1987, Oral Roberts went on television and told people that God had appeared to him and told him that if his supporters did not send him 8 million dollars, God would take him home. He ended up getting 9.1 million dollars in donations. The man is a fraudulent religious charlatan, who quit high school and only took a few Bible classes part-time from Pentecostal places in Oklahoma. He is a Charismatic religious swindler. Now when Oral Roberts made this announcement, most believers recognized this guy is not telling the truth. Any person who knows the Bible and is of sound mind didn't believe a word he said.

Moses feared that very thing happening to him. He said what if I go to the people and tell them that God appeared to me and told me to come get you and they do not believe me? It appears to be a reasonable response. **That is until you remember what God told him in Exodus 3:18. God told Moses they will listen to you. They will believe you. They will follow you.**

So this is, in all reality, a question of disbelieving God and His Word. **The real issue here is whether or not you can believe the Word of God and take it at face value.** Moses is challenging God and he is questioning the very Word of God. So God responds to Moses' doubts and fears:

**RESPONSE #2** – God responds to Moses by demonstrating His miraculous power. **4:2-9**

God demonstrates that His calling is about His power. He will be with Moses and empower him to do the job. In fact, God specifically gives Moses three miraculous signs to perform.

Now before we look at the three signs, we will observe that they are called “signs” (**4:8-9**). A sign is for the purpose of pointing out something. In fact, the Hebrew word “sign” is one that means God signifies or signals something to someone in order to inform them to believe what they cannot see (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 24). For example, if you are driving down the road and see a sign for a gas station, the purpose of the sign is to inform you that there is a gas station that you cannot presently see.

**What these signs were designed to do was to point out that God's power was with Moses and Moses was telling the truth of the Word of God.** The three signs pointed to the fact that Moses was God's man and he was telling the truth and the nation needed to follow him.

**Sign #1** - The sign God would perform with Moses by using Moses' staff. **4:2-5**

In **verse 2**, God asks Moses what he has in his hand and he says a staff. In **verse 3**, God told him to throw it on the ground and it became a serpent. Now carefully observe the response of Moses, “he fled from it.” Being a shepherd, Moses was used to seeing snakes. Since he flees, this tells us it was probably a very deadly poison snake, which most believe was a cobra.

Most people do not run away from small type garden snakes or blue racers. Now of course, I do flee from them. In fact, I have a phobia about snakes. I don't like them and do run from them and if I happen to have a gun in my hands, I blast them.

However, Moses was a man used to seeing snakes because he had been a shepherd for 40 years. So this snake must have been fearful.

Now notice in **verse 4**, what God asks Moses to do—pick the deadly snake up “**by the tail.**” Now personally, I think it is idiotic to try to pick up any snake. We had a doctor in our church in Idaho and he told me the biggest number of emergency calls at the hospital came on weekends of people who would get drunk and try to pick up a rattlesnake and they would get bit.

Anyone who knows anything about snakes knows that if you do have to pick up a deadly snake, you definitely don’t pick it up by the tail. In fact, those who do these things pick them up by pinning their heads and grabbing them just behind the head. If you try to pick up a deadly snake by the tail, it will strike you and kill you. But that is exactly what God told Moses to do.

The text says when he stretched out his hand and took the snake by the tail, it immediately became a staff in his hand. For me, that would be all the sign I would need, but God did not stop there.

**Sign #2** - The sign God would perform with Moses by using Moses’ hand. **4:6-7**

In **verse 6**, God told Moses to put his hand into his bosom. The Hebrew word “bosom” means put your hand into your coat or garment at about the breast level (*Ibid.*, pp. 275-276). So Moses did and when he pulled his hand out it was leprous, white like snow. Then in **verse 7**, God told him to do it again and when he pulled it out the leprosy was gone and his hand was restored.

Now in **verse 8**, God says if they don’t believe these first two signs, I’ll give you one more.

**Sign #3** - The sign God would perform with Moses by using Nile River water. **4:9**

God told Moses to take some water from the Nile River and pour it on dry ground, and the water **which Moses takes** will become blood on the ground. Now the first two signs Moses did while talking to God in the burning bush. But this final sign he would do when he got to the Nile River. Now before we move on there are three observations we want to make:

**(Observation #1)** - These signs were performed by God through Moses.

God uses men. He typically uses one specific person to lead. Moses was God’s choice and he was the major individual God would use to accomplish His will. God still singles out individuals to use them for His will. God does still pick His leaders.

**(Observation #2)** - These signs were very specific to this time in the program of God.

The serpent sign showed that God was more powerful than any supposed deity of the Egyptian world. The Pharaohs wore crowns that had serpents on them that they believed were gods.

The leprosy was a sign that only God can heal sin. Leprosy was often a punishment for sin and it was a sign that sin may only be forgiven by God. The Nile River sign was a sign that the river was not sacred, God was sacred.

**(Observation #3)** - These signs are very applicable to us.

We have all been snake-bitten by Satan and we have all committed leprous sins against God, and the only one who can take our sin and wash it away by blood is God, and that is exactly what He does when we believe on Jesus Christ.

**RESPONSE #3** – Moses invents a fourth excuse in response to God’s calling. **4:10**

Now Moses comes up with another excuse as to why he can’t do the job and the excuse is he is not a good speaker. He is not eloquent like a Haddon Robinson. In fact, he says, “I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”

Now the word “slow” can mean several things. It can mean to be heavy at an honorable level, it can mean to be great at an abundant level or it may mean to be dull or heavy (*Ibid.*, p. 381). Some have questioned whether or not Moses had a speech impediment.

I am not sure we can conclude that based on this word. In fact, Stephen said that “Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians and he was **a man of power in words and deeds**” (Acts 7:22). It seems to me that the more probable argument Moses is making is that he is claiming that he is not really a great communicator. He was not a guy who would win oratorical contests.

Now Moses was well-trained in Egyptian education and it is possible that he is struggling with the fact that he doesn’t think he knows Hebrew well enough to lead the Hebrew nation. In light of what God says about Aaron in **verse 14**, that he speaks “fluently,” this is a real possibility.

Now let’s face it. For the past 40 years, Moses has not been a public speaker; he has been a quiet shepherd. He has been working for a Midianite priest. He has not been polishing up on his Hebrew or for that matter he hasn’t been talking too much of anyone. But all that was about to change.

**RESPONSE #4** – God responds to Moses concerning His sovereignty. **4:11-12**

Now God says to Moses, who do you think makes people the way they are? That word “made” or “makes” is one that means God actually designs and places or sets people up in exactly the way He wants (*Ibid.*, pp. 370-371). So when we see someone who we think is born with a handicap, that person has been created by God and is here by God’s sovereign decree.

God determines if a person comes into existence not being able to talk. He determines if a person comes into existence who cannot hear. He determines if a person comes into existence who is blind.

Now maybe you don't like that about God. Well, that is too bad. Our problem is we want God to fit in with the way we think about things; but God is a whole lot bigger than the way we think about things. He is God. So what we need to do is to recognize His great sovereignty in everything, including people who are handicapped.

This does not mean we do not have responsibilities. A pregnant mother has pre-natal responsibilities to do healthy things. But the fact is when a baby is born, that baby is here by God regardless of what we perceive to be a handicap.

After God says this to Moses, He says your excuse does not hold water. I will be with your mouth and I will instruct you what to say.

**RESPONSE #5** – Moses says he does not want the job and God needs to get someone else.  
**4:13**

In all reality, Moses is saying to God, "I do not want your will for my life." Moses is standing in front of a burning bush talking to Jesus Christ, who has just done and said all the things we have looked at and Moses says to God, get someone else. He says I am not your guy. You need to find someone else.

**RESPONSE #6** – God emotionally responds to Moses. **4:14-17**

God is a Divine person and He is getting angry. In fact, His anger burned against Moses. This is very serious language because when God got angry with Uzzah for touching the ark, He terminated his life (II Sam. 6:7). You never want to have God's anger burning against you.

Now God is a God who is slow to anger, but after this statement, God is getting to the point where He was done fooling around with Moses. But even with Moses' doubts and fears, he was still God's choice. Basically God says you are going to do this job. So God had four final messages for Moses:

**Message #1** - Aaron the Levite is coming to meet you and will be glad to team up with you.  
**4:14**

God puts up with Moses' insecurities for awhile and Aaron, his brother, who speaks fluently, comes to his aid. But here is the problem. This will cost Moses and cost Israel. Moses will share his calling with Aaron, who is a good speaker, and because Aaron has oratorical skills and this connection to Moses, he will be able to convince Israel to move in a direction of idolatry (Ex. 32).

**Message #2** - You are to speak to Aaron the words I will give to you. **4:15**

Moses' job was to instruct Aaron. He was to teach him God's Word.

**Message #3** - Aaron will speak to the people in behalf of you but you are as God to him. **4:16**

God would speak to Moses; Moses would speak to Aaron and Aaron would speak to the people. Moses was the key man. Don't miss this. Moses is getting the Word of God and communicating to Aaron and Aaron is communicating to the people. Moses is God's man. Moses was "as God" to Aaron because he was speaking directly the Word of God to him.

**Message #4** - You are to take the staff with you to perform the signs. **4:17**

### **PARTING THOUGHTS:**

- 1) It is not wrong to doubt your own abilities to accomplish things, but it angers God when you doubt His ability.
- 2) Our perspective of God needs to be what God's Word reveals Him to be, not what we want Him to be.
- 3) You don't need much in your hand to be greatly used by God.

You may think you don't have anything to offer God. What did Moses have? A shepherd's staff. It is not about what we have, it is all about the power God has. We all have handicaps, but those handicaps should never be excuses for not doing God's will.

- 4) We are all leprous with sin and we have all been snake-bitten by Satan, and the only way to be clean is to turn, by faith, to Jesus Christ.