

Exodus Chapters 4 -- John Karmelich

1. How many people are good at making excuses of something we're supposed to be doing?
 - a) Everyone is guilty of this.
 - b) Even Moses.
 - c) God called Moses to a great task.
 - i) Moses made excuses.
 - d) As you read Chapter 4 of Exodus, it is mostly about
 - i) The failure of Moses to do what God asked him to do.
 - e) One of the most important lessons to learn about God is that
 - i) When God expects you to complete a task for him,
 - a) God will *provide* the means necessary to complete that task,
 - b) God will *assure* you that God will be there the whole time,
 - c) While God desires you to complete this task *there is a limit* of his tolerance of excuses, as he expects the task to get done.
 - d) God's will, *will* get done. With you, or without you.
 - e) God will not violate your free will. This is why he will not *force* you to complete what he asks of you. But God *can* make your life miserable for disobeying Him!
2. The Moses of Chapter 4 is a man who lacks self-confidence.
 - a) Most adults go through some periods of time where they lack self-confidence.
 - i) Some more than others, some more often than others, but it happens to all people at some point in their life.
 - ii) Moses got to a point in his life where he no longer believed in himself.
 - iii) Moses still believed in God, the God of his fathers (Abraham, Issac & Jacob).
 - iv) He simply lacked confidence in *himself* to be used by God!
 - b) As I stated last week, God is not looking for *ability*, God is looking for *availability*!
 - i) God wanted Moses to complete a great task for Him.
 - ii) Whether or not Moses realized it or not, God has been preparing Moses *all his life* for the great task God has in mind for Moses.
 - iii) Moses simply didn't see God's hand in his life.
 - iv) Moses saw his life as a failure.
 - a) From the Pharaoh-to-be of Egypt to a guy herding sheep in the dessert working for his father-in-law. For *forty years*!
 - v) Just because God hasn't called you to a great task *yet* doesn't mean God can't.
 - vi) God is always looking for people to stand up and say "Here I am God, use me as you see fit!"
 - a) And God will.
 - b) The problem is that we think we are in on the game plan.
 - c) Our ego tells God, "OK, here's the plan, just you & me.
 - d) I'm sure that's what Moses thought during his training years under Pharaoh. "OK God, I'm ready, here *we* go.
 - e) God doesn't work that way.
 - f) God says "I will not yield my glory to another." (Isaiah 48:11b NIV)

3. As you read chapter 4, think about your own excuses you make to God.
 - a) Before you go out and say “Well, Moses is special. God doesn’t give me that kind of power”, notice these verses from the *New Testament*:
 - b) Paul says “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. (Ephesians 1:3 NIV)
 - c) Jesus says “anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. (John 14:12a NIV)
 - d) Think about this!
 - i) God has blessed us (that’s believers) with *every* spiritual blessing!
 - ii) Jesus said we will do *greater* works than *he* did during his 3 year ministry!
 - e) So what is stopping us?
 - i) Lack of faith, plain & simple.
 - ii) Moses excuses are not that different from ours.
 - iii) Like Moses, we have faith in God.
 - a) We *lack* faith in God to use *us*.
 - iv) One of my favorite quotes on the ability to be used by God, is what God said to Joshua. Joshua was Moses’ replacement after Moses’ death. Imagine the nervousness of Joshua about trying to fill *those* shoes.
 - a) When you read Joshua, the first thing God says to Joshua (essentially) is that Moses is dead. You’re in charge now.
 - b) After laying out how God wants Joshua to lead the people, God reassures Joshua by saying:
 - c) God said “No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Joshua 1:5b NIV)
 - v) Hopefully I’m reassuring you that the promises made to Moses, to Joshua, and to other great Bible characters are the same ones he’s making to you. With that, let’s begin today’s text.
4. Chapter 4, Verse 1: Moses answered again, "And if they do not believe me or pay attention to me, but say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you?'" **4:2** And the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He replied, "A rod." **4:3** And the Lord said, "Throw it to the ground." So he threw it to the ground, and it became a snake, and Moses fled from it. **4:4** But the Lord said to Moses, "Put out your hand and grab it by the tail"-so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand- **4:5** "that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."
 - a) At the end of Chapter 3, God tells Moses
 - i) 1. that he will perform all sorts of great signs in Egypt,
 - ii) 2. They will “plunder” the Egyptians (for all the back-due wages of slavery)
 - iii) 3. Moses will lead the entire nation out of Israel to worship God.
 - b) Notice Moses does not say “All right God, its about time, Let’s Go”
 - a) That would be showing Moses believed God at this point.
 - ii) Notice Moses does not ask God things like “How do I organize millions of people to march out of the land?”
 - a) That would be accepting of the task at hand.
 - iii) Moses just made excuses & God reassured Him.
 - c) Moses’ lack of self-confidence is obvious here. He doesn’t think the Israelites will believe him. This is a legitimate question.
 - i) God reassures Moses with 3 proofs. The 1st is given in Verses 2-5.
 - ii) One of the most interesting details is to notice Moses’ reaction to the rod turning into a snake.

- iii) At first Moses ran. Hey, if I saw a stick turn into a snake, I'd run too.
 - a) Who knew what that snake was capable of.
 - b) Moses took his eye off of God, and unto the snake,
 - c) Just like when Peter saw Jesus walk on water, Peter asked to do the same. When he took his eyes *off* of Jesus, Peter started to sink.
 - (1) (Matthew 14:28-32)
 - iv) Moses first act of faith was when he grabbed the snake by the tail.
 - a) Anybody who knows anything about snakes knows you don't grab them by the tail, unless you want them to bite you!
 - b) Moses did this *because* God commanded him to do so.
 - (1) Here was the first hint of a *small* miracle as Moses trusted God.
 - (2) It was *after* this first hint of trust that God again said to Moses who he was (The God of Abraham, Issac & Jacob, which implies the "God who keeps his promises. See last week's notes).
 - c) By God commanding Moses to grab the snake, God is teaching us a lesson that sometimes God asks us to do things that are not comfortable.
 - (1) Part of growing in faith is learning to trust God when he asks us to do things that are out of our "comfort zone".
 - d) There is a classical debate in Judaism over "who is more righteous, Noah or Moses?
 - i) When God asked Noah to build an ark, Noah didn't question God & got busy!
 - ii) When God asked Moses to lead his people, Moses made excuses.
 - iii) The other side of the debate will claim Moses was more righteous because when God (later) said he would wipe out the Israelites for disobedience, Moses interceded on the people's behalf.
 - a) Noah didn't intercede, he just said "Where's the wood?" ☺
 - iv) Again, this is a classical debate, there is no right answer.
5. Verse 6: **4:6** And the Lord also said to him, "Put your hand into your robe." So he put his hand into his robe; and when he brought it out-it was leprous as snow! **4:7** And he said, "Put your hand back into your robe." So he put his hand back into his robe; and when he brought it out from his robe-it was restored like the rest of his skin. **4:8** "And if they do not believe you or pay attention to the former sign, then they may believe the latter sign
- a) So here is God giving Moses sign #2.
 - b) God took Moses hand and made it leprous.
 - i) Leprosy is a skin disease. (Today called Hanson's disease).
 - ii) Leprosy in the bible, symbolically is a type of sin.
 - a) Like sin, it may be small and barely noticeable, but if left alone, it gets worse & grows.
 - b) Most commentators make a big point about how both the "snake" miracle and the "leprosy" miracle are both types of sin.
 - c) The "snake" is associated with Satan from the garden of Eden.
 - (1) In both cases, God took something useful (the rod, Moses' had), then made it "sinful", and then made it whole again.
 - d) Both speak of "conversion".
 - (1) We are all "sinners" like Adam (Romans 3:23)
 - (2) By faith, we are converted "whole" again.
 - c) God will often use what we have in our hand. This is not to say God uses our "talents", but he will often use materials readily available to us.
 - i) This is common in many Bible stories.
 - ii) For example, Jesus used a small boy's "five loaves and two fish", multiplied them to feed 5,000." Jesus did it this way (as opposed to creating food out of

thin air) to show how God can use the talents, supplies, and spiritual gifts *he has* supplied us for His glory.

6. God supplies one more sign: **4:9** And if they do not believe even these two signs or listen to you, then take some water from the Nile and pour it out on the dry ground. The water that you take out of the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."
 - a) The first two signs spoke of conversion.
 - i) They were both taking something “neutral”, making it bad, and making it good again. Both “the snake” and leprosy speak of sin.
 - b) The 3rd sign just speaks of judgement.
 - i) The Nile river, to those living in Egypt was the most important resource.
 - ii) It was the sole source of water for the land.
 - iii) Turning the water into blood was a warning of a judgement to come.
 - c) One of my favorite teachers, the late Walter Martin used to say:
 - i) “If they won’t listen to Jesus, give ‘em Moses.”
 - ii) What he meant by that, is that if people won’t respect the sacrifice that Jesus made for them on the cross, perhaps they will be persuaded by the judgement day to come.
 - iii) “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:27-28 NIV)
7. Verse 10: **4:10** Then Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I am not an eloquent man, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of mouth and slow of tongue."
 - a) The Hebrew for “slow of mouth” is literally “heavy of mouth”. Most believe Moses was saying he wasn’t a great speaker, perhaps implying he stuttered.
 - i) This is contrary to what Stephen said about Moses in the New Testament
 - a) “Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.” (Acts 7:22 NIV)
 - b) This is Moses giving an excuse.
 - i) Before you wag your finger at Moses, think about your own excuses to God.
 - a) What’s your excuse for not talking to your neighbor about Jesus?
 - b) What your excuse for not volunteering at church?
 - c) I’m as guilty as the next person, I’m just giving us things to think about.
 - ii) Here is God’s response
8. God’s Response, Verse 11: **4:11** And the Lord said to him, "Who gave a mouth to man, or who makes a person mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? **4:12** So now, go, and I will be with your mouth, and will teach you what you must say."
 - a) To paraphrase, “Hey Moses, I’m the guy who made your mouth, remember? That excuse doesn’t fly around here.”
 - i) Consider this next time you are giving God excuses.
 - ii) If God calls you to a task, he *will* provide the means necessary to accomplish that task!
 - b) I can’t read this verse and not think of the whole book of Job.
 - i) God’s response to Moses, sounds a lot like God’s response to Job.
 - ii) The main purpose of the Book of Job was to show that God allows us to go through trials so he can test our faith.
 - a) The only problem with that test in Job was Job himself was not aware of the game plan. You & I have an advantage of knowing that God puts us through trials to test us!

- b) Job's only significant error is that he demanded an audience with God to justify himself.
 - c) God's response "Hey Job, where were *you* when I created the heavens and the earth". If you can explain all that I do, you can justify yourself".
 - d) Job's response, (a good one) was to repent and realize his mistake.
- 9. Which leads back to Moses. Moses didn't repent, and finally said what was *truly* on his mind. **4:13** But Moses said, "O my Lord, please send anyone else whom you wish to send!"
 - a) Moses is saying "I'm not the man, I can't do it".
 - b) There is nothing sadder than someone who ignores the calling of God.
 - i) I've done it myself and paid the consequences.
 - ii) Turning your life over to Jesus, means walking moment by moment and obeying *his* will, and not your own.
 - iii) There is an interesting balance in life between answering God's will and our free will.
 - a) If we say no to God, God honors that. He won't violate our freewill.
 - (1) He loves us too much to do that.
 - (2) But God, *who knows what's best for us* will let us suffer the consequences of rejection of his will.
- 10. **4:14** Then the Lord became angry with Moses, and he said, "What about your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak very well. Moreover, he is coming to meet you, and when he sees you he will be glad in his heart.
 - a) Life is never good when God is angry at you.
 - i) "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31)
 - b) God gave in to Moses' request and let his brother Aaron be a spokesman.
 - i) For those of you who never studied the Bible, this was not a good thing.
 - a) Aaron was probably a smooth talker, but occasionally lost his faith
 - (1) Aaron lead the people into idol worship while Moses was receiving the 10 commandments.
 - (2) Aaron lead a mutiny against Moses (Numbers 12:1-8)
 - (3) Aaron and two sons blasphemed God by offering impure offerings (Leviticus 10:1-7)
 - b) I sort of envision Aaron as the "politician" type. Good speaker, but "goes with the flow", and follows whatever is the popular movement at that time. When it was politically correct to follow Moses, he did so. When the people wanted idolatry, he did that too. "Hey, you want to build a golden calf, let's get too it."
 - c) This verse also shows how God was working at both ends of the equation.
 - i) Was God aware that Moses was going to reject him? Of course.
 - a) God was *already* arranging for Aaron to come meet him.
 - b) Why did God give Moses the opportunity if God knew Moses was going to say no?
 - (1) Because God wanted to give Moses the *opportunity* to say yes.
 - (2) God *always* works on our level.
 - (3) God often wants to take you to a *higher* level of service, but God will never force you. If you say "no", he will offer a lower level of service.
 - c) I can't read this and not think of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 3.
 - (1) Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. "(1 Corinthians 3:1 NIV)

- (2) "Infants in Christ" implies low level of Christian maturity.
- (a) Paul *asks* the Corinthians to *grow* and *mature* in Christ.
Not by force, but by *encouragement*
11. Verse 14 again: **4:14** Then the Lord became angry with Moses, and he said, "What about your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak very well. Moreover, he is coming to meet you, and when he sees you he will be glad in his heart. **4:15** "So you are to speak to him, and you will put the words in his mouth. And as for me, I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you both what you must do. **4:16** And he will speak for you to the people. It will be as if he, even he, were your mouth, and you, you were his God. **4:17** And take in your hand this rod, with which you will do the signs."
- a) God is saying "OK, Moses, you want to have Aaron be your mouthpiece, so be it. He's on the way. Tell him the whole game plan."
- i) Since God called Aaron to meet him, I suspect Aaron was ready for the task.
- b) Notice in verse 16 it says Aaron will respect you ("you (Moses) were his God.).
- i) Remember that Aaron is the older brother.
- ii) Aaron remembers Moses as the one lead to being Pharaoh, and then ran away.
- a) Aaron probably lost respect for Moses, or possibly wondered if Moses was still alive. We don't know for sure.
- (1) Give Aaron credit for trusting God, and being willing to meet Moses. In some sense, he put more faith in God that Moses did at this point.
12. **4:18** So Moses went back to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, "Let me go, so that I may return to my relatives in Egypt and see if they are still alive." And Jethro replied to Moses, "Go in peace."
- a) Why was this verse included? Why doesn't the Bible say "And Moses & Aaron immediately took off to Egypt to go take on Pharaoh?"
- i) Hey, that's what I would have written! ☺
- b) God is teaching us with this verse the importance of human responsibility.
- i) Just because Moses was called to be a great leader, doesn't mean he can shirk his human responsibilities.
- ii) Moses was called by God, but Moses still had a job tending sheep for father-in-law. Moses needed to show responsibility to his employer.
- iii) Paul was teaching this in Ephesians: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart." (Ephesians 6:5-6 NIV)
- iv) One of my closest friends used to work for me. Years ago, he felt called by the Lord to quit and become a pastor.
- a) Instead of quitting on the spot, he talked to me about what God was doing in his life. We worked out a game plan for him to finish his projects and end our working relationship on a good note.
13. With that cleared, Moses returned to Egypt: **4:19** And the Lord said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, because all the men who were seeking your life are dead." **4:20** Then Moses took his wife and his sons and put them on a donkey and headed back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand. **4:21** The Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the wonders I have put under your control. But I will harden his heart and he will not let the people go. **4:22** And you must say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, "Israel is my firstborn son, **4:23** and I said to you, 'Let my son go that he may serve me, but since you have refused to let him go, I will surely kill your firstborn son!'"'"
- a) Moses took the leap of faith and started back to Egypt.

- i) This is the same Moses, a few verses ago who said “Lord, send anyone but me!”
 - ii) Notice Moses was *now* trusting God.
 - a) He took the staff. (I’m going to need this thing to turn it into a snake!)
 - b) He took his wife & sons with him!
 - (1) Moses must have considered his family’s life as well as his own by going back to Egypt. That’s *faith* to trust God not only with your own lives, but with those you love.
 - b) I talked last week about God *hardening* Pharaoh’s heart and Pharaoh hardening his own heart. This is not a contradiction.
 - i) It is best to explain it by thinking that Pharaoh *initially* hardened his own heart, and God, who honors *your* will, “gave Pharaoh what he wanted” and *then* God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.
 - c) Quick note to those who ever deal with Jehovah Witnesses:
 - i) The word “first-born” here is a title.
 - ii) Sometimes it literally means the first to be born.
 - iii) Other times it is a title, like it is in Verse 22.
 - iv) Jehovah Witnesses deny Jesus as God.
 - a) They will argue “How can Jesus be “first-born” and God at same time?”
 - b) The answer is that “first-born” as it applies to Jesus, is a *title* of importance like in this verse, not literally the “first of many sons.”
 - d) Verse 23 tells of God killing the first-born sons of Egypt.
 - i) This was the last and greatest of the 10 plagues upon Egypt.
 - ii) I suspect God told Moses about the “big plague” now to reassure Moses when he hears Pharaoh say no to his face. Moses was well aware of Pharaoh’s power.
 - iii) God was building Moses’ confidence by revealing his plans to Moses.
 - iv) What does this have to do with us?
 - a) God reveals *his* plans to us.
 - b) One of the joys of studying prophecy (past, present and future) is understanding God’s game-plan.
 - c) By seeing all the things of history that have been predicted and came true in the Bible, we can have assurance of
 - (1) 1. The validity of the Bible
 - (2) 2. The future prophecies will come true.
 - (3) 3. That God loves us & has a plan for our individual lives.
14. Next comes a strange little story: **4:24** Now on the way, at a place where they stopped for the night, the Lord met Moses and sought to kill him. **4:25** But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off the foreskin of her son and touched it to Moses’ feet, and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me.” **4:26** So the Lord let him alone. (At that time she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” referring to the circumcision.)
- a) One verse earlier God reassures Moses of all the great things God is going to do!
 - b) The next verse God is threatening to kill Moses because he didn’t circumcise his son!
 - c) Why?
 - i) Moses had a responsibility to God.
 - ii) God required all Jews to circumcise their children. Moses ignored this.
 - a) Commentators are mixed as to “why” Moses ignored this.
 - (1) Some speculate it was because his wife was not an Israelite, and she was against the idea, until God made his intentions known.
 - d) When Moses asked his father-in-law’s permission to go to Egypt, Moses showed his responsibility to the people he was accountable to. Moses forgot that he was also accountable to God!

- i) If God gives you a responsibility, you can be God holds you accountable!
 - ii) Jesus said “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. (Luke 12:48b NIV)
 - iii) I can’t help thinking about Paul’s comments in 1st Timothy. Paul lays out who should be called to be elders and deacons (helpers) in the church. Paul lays out the importance of these men having a good *reputation* before God & men.
- 15. Earlier it said God told Moses that he (God) had called Moses’ brother Aaron to meet him. The last set of verses tells of God’s action with Aaron. **4:27** The Lord said to Aaron, "Go to the wilderness to meet Moses. So he went and met him at the mountain of God and greeted him with a kiss. **4:28** And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him and all the signs that he had commanded him. **4:29** Then Moses and Aaron went and summoned all the elders of the Israelites. **4:30** Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. **4:31** And the people believed. When they heard that the Lord had attended to the Israelites and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed down close to the ground.
 - a) My favorite sentence in the whole chapter is in Verse 31: “And the people believed”
 - b) Note what Jesus said about God’s requirements for our lives:
 - i) Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:28-29 NIV)
 - c) Remember Moses’ doubts?
 - i) Moses thought nobody would believe him.
 - ii) Verse 30, Aaron did the talking, Moses showed the signs, the people believed.
 - iii) Some of us believe in God by hearing the Words.
 - iv) Others believe by seeing the miracles of changed lives.
 - v) Jesus said “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. (John 14:11)
 - a) Believe one or the other, or suffer the consequences of the wrath of God!
- 16. Father, we thank you for the lessons you taught us about Moses in these verses. Like Moses, we often have more excuses than faith. You give us your word for reassurance, you bless us with every spiritual blessing, and yet we still don’t trust. Help us to be strong and courageous, to be available for what you call us to be. For we ask this in Jesus’ name, amen.