

Exodus 4:1–9

## “God's Gracious Reminders to a Doubting Saint”

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***How did God respond when Moses doubted His Word?*** Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. Exodus 4:1–9 prepares us for the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these nine verses, the Holy Spirit teaches us that God is patient and gracious, and when we doubt Him we need to be reminded that we deserve Hell, that the most dangerous thing is to disobey Him, that true safety comes not from any place or circumstance but from the Lord Himself, and that He is the Giver of all life and goodness.

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### Wednesday, August 18, 2021 ▪ Read Exodus 4:1–9

Questions from the Scripture text: After Yahweh told him that the people would heed his voice (cf. 3:18), what objection does Moses raise anyway (4:1)? With what question does Yahweh respond (v2)? What does Moses answer? What does Yahweh tell him to do with it (v3)? What happens to it? What then does Moses do? Then what does Yahweh tell Moses to do (v4)? By what end? Why would this ordinarily be a bad idea? But what happens to it? How does v5 complete the statement about the rod? Now what does Yahweh say to do in v6? What happens to Moses's hand? And what does He say to do in v7? Now what happens to it? What does Yahweh give as the reason for two signs (v8)? But what must he do if they still don't believe (v9)?

God's interaction with Moses continues to display Him as marvelously gracious. Certainly, He does not tolerate sin; in fact, He's about to judge Egypt and Canaan for it. But, at the beginnings of His dealings with Moses, He is emphasizing His grace to His chosen prophet.

**A glimpse of what we deserve, v3.** Horribly, Moses suggests that God may be mistaken; v1 directly contradicts 3:18a. So, when the holy God before Whom Moses stands barefoot creates a supernatural serpent, we understand why Moses would be terrified. Of course, if the serpent is judgment from God, fleeing in that terror doesn't make much sense. How can you escape God's punishment?

**The unsafety of disobedience, v4.** You don't have to be a herpetologist to know that the tail is the worst place to grab a venomous snake. But at this point, there is something even more dangerous than grabbing a supernatural, venomous snake by the tail—disobeying Yahweh is far more dangerous! And the Lord affirms this by turning the snake back into a rod as soon as Moses obeys. Like grabbing the snake by the tail, there are many commandments of God that feel counterintuitive to our flesh, but they are the path of safety and blessedness: Sabbath-keeping, generosity, love for enemies, submission to imperfect authorities, preaching the truth about guilt and Hell, etc. But whatever God commands is whatever is wisest and safest, simply because He commands it! He is indeed our merciful, covenant God (v5).

**The unsafety of ourselves, v6.** Just as there's ordinarily no more dangerous place to put your hand than the tail of a venomous serpent, there's ordinarily no safer place to put your hand than in your bosom. But now Yahweh shows him that we ourselves are not even safe to ourselves. Moses's hand becomes leprous in his bosom (v6). But again, God Himself is what makes even this safe—not only safe but even restorative, as the same action heals his hand when God commands it in v7.

**The ultimate power of God, v8–9.** Yahweh now gives Moses a sign that he doesn't get to “test drive” like the others. This may be in part because it is very specific to the river of Egypt, the Nile. For good reason, Egyptians (and others) considered that their own lives were given to them by the Nile, but the third sign takes what they thought was the god of their lives and turns it into the blood of death.

How have you doubted the Lord's promises or resisted His commands? How do the reminders in this passage help you?

*Sample prayer: Lord, You are the all-glorious God from whom we receive all our life. In Your Son, our Lord Jesus, all Your promises are “yes” and “amen.” Forgive us for when we have balked at obedience because we did not trust you for the outcome. But You, O God, have not spared Your own Son, but given Him up for us; and, together with Him, You are freely giving us all things! Keep us from trusting in ourselves, or in Your good gifts, instead of in You and Your goodness. Shower that goodness upon us, we pray, in Jesus's Name, AMEN!*

Suggested songs: ARP2 “Why Do Gentile Nations Rage?” or TPH483 “Loved with Everlasting Love”

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**(The following is a machine-generated transcription.** Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Exodus chapter 4 versus 1 through 9. These are God's words. Then Moses answered and said but suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice. Suppose they say, you always has not appeared to you, so you always said to him, what is that near hand?

He said, a rod and he said casted on the ground. So he casted on the ground and it became a serpent in Moses fled from it. Then you always said to Moses reach out your hand and take it by the tail and they reached out his hand and caught it and it became a rotten his hand that they may believe that Yahweh God of their fathers, God of Abraham, the God of Isaac.

And the God of Jacob has appeared to you. Furthermore, y'all who I 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 leprosy like snow and he said, put your hand in your bosom again, so he put his hand in his opposing again and drew it out of his Muslim and behold.

It was restored like as other flesh, 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 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.

So, for the reading of God's own word,

God does very gracious and patient with Moses here. The Lord has already told Moses inverse 18 of chapter 3. Then they will heed your voice and you shall come you and the elders of Israel to the king of Egypt and so forth. So when Moses says in verse 1, but suppose they will not believe me.

Or listen to my voice. He's actually saying, suppose, what you just told me for five verses to go is wrong, or a lie? It's very wicked, isn't it? When you think about it to directly oppose the Word of God. Like that. I'm afraid. All of us do this at times.

In our hearts, we will read something that's pretty plain and clear in the Bible. But we'll have objections in our heart and I'll say, but suppose or but what if? And we don't realize at the moment that we are directly contradicting, the word of God that we have just read, not because the word itself isn't clear.

But because we think we know of reasons or contingencies or factors that make it harder to swallow. Well, the word of God is often hard to swallow because we're unbelieving and wicked but we should question ourselves. Not his word. So here, Moses questions, God's word and the Lord rather than incinerating him, right.

He's speaking to him from a flame in the bush, hasn't consumed the bush. But at this point, we're pretty sure that it would righteously, consume Moses, if it did, and yet rather than bring upon Moses. What he deserves, the Lord's teaches Moses shows Moses, things about himself the Lord and shows Moses things about him, the Lord's servant.

And so the very first thing I think that we see in the past is how gracious and patient are God is even with shockingly, wicked unbelief and rebellion, which is a great mercy to us because we often find coming out of our hearts even after we believed in Jesus Christ, even after we've been in dwelt by the Holy Spirit, we still have that fleshliness remaining from our original nature and you will find shockingly unbelieving.

Things coming out of your heart, that sometimes it's suggestions from the devil, sometimes it's from your own nature. It's often hard to figure out what the which one it is. You may have a wicked thought like what if all of this isn't true and we're just deceiving ourselves and what if God is not real, or Jesus is not God or you have all you have these horrible wicked things that come out of your heart.

So one good thing to know, right off the bat is that when Moses answers and says but suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice. Suppose they say y'all who has not appeared to you that the Lord is gracious and merciful with his servants whom he's set apart for himself, even with such as that he calls us to repentance by teaching us about himself by showing us about himself and that's what he is doing in part with Moses now.

So that Moses can repeat these signs later, when the people do after their initial belief, that the Lord has told them about they too, will often be unbelieving and rebellious. It's not without any data that Moses is questioning. It's just that he hasn't factored in the greater data of the fact that God cannot lie.

So, what do we see about God and about ourselves? Well, we see in the first place, what we deserve. So go away asks him verse 2. What is that in your hand? Moses says, a rod and the Lord says cast it down. He cast it to the ground and it becomes a venomous serpent.

So, you always appeared to him. Plug it. Y'all has appeared to him in a flame of fire, which already shows that our God, as a consuming fire and shows what we deserve from the presence of his glory and his wrath, which will come upon people forever in hell. They will not be apart.

From God, they will be a part from the favor of God, but they will be in the immediate presence of God's glory and his wrath forever and ever and they will receive the destruction that comes from him. Second Thessalonians, chapter 1, teaches us. So he seen the flame in the middle of the bush and now he has told God that what God has said a few verses ago might not be true.

And now he throws a rod down on the ground and the rod turns into a venomous serpent. What do you think is conclusion? Might be is the purpose of that. Serpent while that serpent's gonna bite them now and he's gonna die because that's exactly what he deserves. Can you imagine how immediately his conscience would be quickened of what he has done?

As he sees the rod transform into that venomous snake. Immediately his conscience would say. I have just told the living God that. I don't believe him that he's a liar and he is judging me now. So the first thing he sees is that he deserves hell and that is something that the Lord holds before us over and over again in his word so that we may see how gracious he is with us.

This is what the problem. The so-called problem of evil should remind us of those who are unbelieving and rebellious and wicked against God, they'll say well if God is good. Well, yes, there's so much evil in the world. Well, God is good. You're just rebelling against that in your heart, but when you see the evil in the world and you know, that the fact of God's goodness means that evil will be judged fully by elf or ever and ever what you should see is that you're not judged yet.

You deserve the act and you haven't received that yet. The problem is the problem of good. How can it be that God is still merciful and gracious? And it's because he's saving people. And so it's important for us to see what we deserve. And if you have doubts about God to immediately, remember, I know I deserve hell because I am wicked, but I'm not very yet.

Because God is patient and because God is merciful, okay? So the first thing he sees is what he deserves, what do you deserve? He'll Absolutely. Are you there yet? No, and you won't go there because you are being called to repentance. And the Holy Spirit will help you to repent and belief.

And as soon as he sees the serpent, then what does the Lord tell him to do? Then he always says to him as is reach out your hand and take it by the tail. Now, you don't have to be a snake scientist, you don't have to be a reptile scientist a herpitolologist to know that if you're going to capture and pick up the venomous snake, you do not grab it by the tail, right snakes have those so many joints in their bodies that they can coil and and if you grab the venomous snake by the tail, what's gonna happen?

It's going to recoil on you and bite. You isn't it? And so, it seems like that as he's running away from the venomous snake just about the most dangerous thing. You could do is turn around and grab it by the tail, but that's not the most dangerous thing. You can do.

The Lord has commanded him to grab it. By the tell, what is the most dangerous thing he could do? What is the most dangerous thing you can ever do? Disobey the Lord, whatever else we think is most dangerous in a situation, the most dangerous thing is to disobey the Lord.

Now this is a very important lesson from Moses, wasn't it? He was going to be in a lot of dangerous situations and so it was important for him to be able to remember standing before that venomous snake and being commanded to grab it by the tail. And realizing the most dangerous thing is not grabbing the venomous snake by the tail.

The most dangerous thing is to disobey the Lord and you're going to be in lots of situations in your life and what you feel like you're in danger. You feel like your desperate and, you know what's, right? You know, what's wrong? You're tempted to do what's wrong? Because it feels like like that's the only way out of danger and you need to remember the most dangerous thing is to disobey the Lord.

Now there are other motivations you're going to have because you love the Lord and you want to serve him and you want him to get glory by what he does through the situation and and how he proves faithful in your trusting him. You think about the Afghani Christians right now?

And they've got all those motivations. But they, in addition, all of those other motivations, they have this one. The Taliban is not the most dangerous thing. Sin is the most dangerous thing. Disobeying the Lord is the most dangerous thing. And so the Lord's teaches Moses that lesson to. So he teaches Moses, what he deserves death and hell judgment and that God is being gracious.

And patient with him, he teaches emerges that disobedience is safe. He teaches Moses not to feel safe from anything else, but the Lord taking care of him. What is the safest place in your bosom? And he tells Moses next, furthermore y'all always said to him verse 6. Now put your hand in your bosom, he puts his hand in the safest place.

What happens? There it becomes leprosy, it gains this disease, that was so deadly. And so contagious that that it was equated with death and anybody who had it, you wouldn't go anywhere near them and it's

in his own bosom right up by his heart. You want to put your hand in a safe place.

You're just right there and that's where that's where acquires death. And yeah, so he himself isn't safe and then he says, put your hand in your bosom. Again, the last time you put his hand in his wasn't, they got leprosy. Now, what's gonna happen to it, but what's the most dangerous thing to disobey?

God, he puts his hand in his bosom and oh it comes out fully healed. Is it because? His bosom is such a safe and healing place. No, it's because of the word of the God who told him to do. It is the safe and healing word. And so Moses learns that the thing that seems safest on this world is not in and of itself safe.

But what makes anything safe? There's the Lord using it for your good. And so the Lord's word is the safest thing for you. Wonderful lessons here are there. This is how God is responding to servants sin, but teaching him these most important lessons. What we deserve how that disobedience is the least safe thing in the world that no, where is actually safe.

Except that God makes it safe for you and that God himself can make even that which just produced death to be, to be safe for you. And then finally, that God is the ultimate power Egypt. Thought that the Nile was the ultimate power because God did bless them with the Nile, didn't he?

Then I all river meant that all of Egypt could have life. They had, they would irrigate from the Nile and, and they would be able to have better agriculture than almost anywhere else in the known world. At the time, they thought life came out of the river. But what's the third sign?

This one Moses doesn't get to test drive on Mount Sinai. What's the third sign that the Lord gives him? He takes water from the Nile and he pours it out and it becomes blood. And so, it's a death from that, which they thought gave them life because God is the ultimate power.

And God is the ultimate life giver. And that will be the first lesson that Moses actually shows Egypt, and God shows each and through. Moses as God, systematically judges, all that the Egyptians depended upon and worshiped, all of the Gods and their wicked pantheon of idols. The first will be the Nile as God says, that life and power actually come from him and not from the river.

And if you trust in the river instead of trusting in God, then what you have gotten from the river is not life, but ultimately death, anything that you trust in apart from God does not give you life and good. If you're trusting in it apart from God, if you're becoming an adulterer with it, then what you're actually getting out of it is death and so as soon as you realize that you're resting upon something else apart from the Lord, you turn from that, you rest in the Lord only as to whatever extent it was actually good for you.

You thank the Lord. That he is the one who is giving you life and good from it and confessed to him, that almost you had made his good gift into death for you by resting upon it instead of resting upon him. So, we see how graciously got deals here with his servant, even when Moses had basically accused God to be in long or even lying.

We think God that he is gracious with us as well for the sake of Christ. Let's pray of Father we thank you for your grace and your mercy that when you're not condemned to help for our sin because you sent your son into the world not to judge the world but that the world through him might be saved and this has because of how much you have left.

You love so much that you give yourself and yourself in your son, so that we might not perish, but have everlasting life. So we pray that you would keep us from unbelieving and rebellious we can thoughts even. And that should they come upon us by temptation from the outside or from our sinful remaining sin remaining flushing?

That's from within that you would help us to remember how gracious you are and that we would hate the sin and again turn to Christ rest in him. No, your grace and your mercy to us, we'll pray that you would remind us often of these lessons that you taught Moses at this time by these signs and that you gave him for the teaching of your people, we too.

Lord are your people and we need reminding these lessons that we do deserve. How that that the most dangerous thing in every situation is to disobey you, the sin is more dangerous than any enemy or any circumstance rent to us. Clear wise understanding of these things that we may live righteously before you because of our enemies.

We pray that your spirit would make us walk straight in the path of your righteousness. Since our departing from that. Path is more dangerous than whatever, any enemy threatens to do to us. We do pray. Lord for our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan and other places where they are in great danger, that your spirit would bring home to them from this and other places in your word, where you teach it these, this important truth that you'd give them faith to stand that.

They would love not their lives, even unto death that they would overcome by the blood of the lamb and by the word of his testimony and we pray that you would deliver them and give them powerful testimony by which even you raid the kingdom of Satan and bring salvation in a mighty and glorious way there.

Lord and pray that you would not allow us to depend upon ourselves or the apparent safety of our circumstances but that you would make us know that it is you alone who make us to dwell and safety. Thank you for reminding us on of that and consecutive days from Psalm 4 and now from Exodus 4 help us to find our rest.

In you help us to find our rejoicing in you. So that our peace and our joy is not something that can be taken by any man or been by any circumstance and make us to respond with thankfulness to the knowledge that whatever else you use to do it. Even if it was something as great as the Nile even when it is something is great as the the sun that whatever else you used to do it.

It is you who give us life is you to sustain us by your power and so make us not only to rest upon you but because of your personally caring for us and giving us our life make us to be thankful make us to delighten you and to be grateful to you grant all these things.

We ask by the work of your spirit in us applying the character of Christ to us. Thank you that everything we ask for concerning righteousness. He perfectly has been in our behalf. And so, it's in the basis of his righteousness. Counted for us, his sacrifice putting away our sin that we call upon your name for these things.

Amen.