

Moses' Audacious Unbelief

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[0 : 0 0] brother thank you for that sister appreciate that uh you're bringing us to a point of praise and worship in the presence of our god thank you it is um my pleasure to be here once again and uh thank you that i get the opportunity once again to bring the word of god to you so thank you for having me back you might have looked on your calendar and uh and and saw that it was myself that was preaching and you still turned up so that's a that's a good thing so uh you did tell okay okay you left that last minute secret so no it is it's thank you i appreciate you being here this morning and and uh we'll get into it i speak with uh david just before the service about how wonderful it was to share last week together um at calderwood for those of you who were there it was a blessed time and uh and again as i was sharing with our dear brother about we're not at odds as churches we are partnership together in this kingdom work we're not at odds and it is such a blessing to us uh that you came and we were able to spend time together and and my apologies if i didn't spend enough time with you last week i was on guitar but um but no it was great to see you and it's great to great to be here this morning today we are going to be continuing as carl's mentioned in the study of exodus and we're going to be looking at the first 17 verses uh this morning of exodus 4 if you have your bibles with you this morning i'd like to invite you to open them at chapter 4 and we will read from verse 1 moses is given powerful signs it says the heading in my bible it says then moses answered but behold they will not believe me or listen to my voice for they will say the lord did not appear to you the lord said to him what is in your hand he said a staff and he said throw it on the ground so we threw it on the ground and it became a serpent and moses ran from it but the lord said to moses put out your hand and catch it by the tail so we put out his hand and caught it and it became a staff in his hand 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 again the lord said to him put your hand inside your cloak and he put his hand inside his cloak and when he took it out behold his hand was leprous like snow then god said put your hand back inside your cloak so he put his hand back inside his cloak and when he took it out behold it was restored like the rest of his flesh if they will not believe you god said or listen to the first sign they may believe the latter sign if they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it out on the ground on the dry ground apologies and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground but moses said to the lord oh my lord i am not eloquent either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant but i'm slow of speech and of tongue then the lord said to him who has made man's mouth who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind is it not i the lord now therefore go and i will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak but he said oh my lord please send someone else then the anger of the lord was kindled against moses and he said is there not aaron your brother the levite i know that he can speak well behold he is coming out to meet you and when he sees you he will be glad in his heart you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth

and i will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do he shall speak for you to the people and he shall be your mouth and you shall be as god to him and take in your hand this staff with which you shall do the signs amen may there may god bless the reading of his word let's pray together before we go any further father god we thank you that we can gather here this morning that we can freely read from your word lord help us unlock the wisdom and the treasure that is within the scriptures this morning guide us by your holy spirit and be with us in this service this morning and it is only for your glory lord that we say all of these things in jesus name amen the sermon this morning um as you probably saw on the notices is called the audaciousness of moses moses audaciousness and i think it is quite audacious and audacious is probably quite the right word to say here and our passage begins with god having a conversation with moses and it's a direct continuation from chapter three it's the same conversation and where they are now as someone who you may not know or you might know i apply my trade as a police officer and i like to begin with facts okay i like to have everything evidenced so we're going to have a quick recap of what's been happening uh so what do we know well god has appeared to moses in the burning bush on the mountain of the lord the specifics of the location of the mountain are unknown only that it is referred to as being in the region around sinai or midian which in modern day is south of jordan and northwest saudi arabia and it's just over the border from egypt moses finds himself receiving instruction from god via the burning bush regarding god's plan to rescue and deliver his people out of the bondage of slavery out of egypt and into the land flowing with milk and honey plundering the egyptians as they leave if you clashed your eyes over to chapter three now moses has been on the run from pharaoh and he's been in the region of midian for 40 years 40 years this makes moses at this point where we read this morning an 80 yearish old man moses has been given the name of god i am who i am in chapter three moses has been given promises and assurances from god that i will bring you up out of affliction of egypt to the land flowing with milk and honey and they will listen to your voice promises and assurances given directly from god moses has been given what to say to the king of egypt pharaoh and now we find the continuation of that conversation starting here in verse one of chapter four this subsection i've labeled as the excuse incorporated to chapter three and four moses offers up five excuses as to why he is not the right man for the commission that god has ordained chapter four starts with an immediate excuse coming from moses and this is number three of excuses out of the five i'd like you to think about moses just for a moment who is he what do you think about him when the word and name of moses is said out loud what thoughts go through your head does it conjure up this mighty warrior this leader of israel

moses being a strong character in physical form and personality maybe a great leader of the people what kind of man is he if any of these thoughts have crossed your mind at some point we certainly do not find that moses in verse one that we've just read what we do find is a man who is crippled by self-doubt uncertainty insecurities and someone who sees himself as unworthy i don't know if you've ever felt like that at any point in your life i know i have but behold they will not believe me or listen to my voice for they will say the lord did not appear to you that's the thought going through moses that's his initial reaction to hearing what the lord god almighty has just said to him i'd now like you to imagine you are moses for the first half of your life so far you were an egyptian prince you grew up in the egyptian court and quite possibly resented by your own people who view you as an egyptian the very nation that is oppressing the hebrews and the israelites at this point in time you have murdered another man murdered another man ran away to another land and now you have been told by who a peasant no you have now been told by the lord god almighty i am that you have to go back to the people of israel and tell them that yahweh has sent you that you are the chosen man of god to be the messenger to them and also to the most powerful man on earth who is pharaoh audacious is probably the right word in the timeline of the israelites and where we meet them here this morning in chapter 4 there hasn't been a manifestation of god since he appeared to jacob who was also on his way to egypt 210 years prior to where we are this morning 40 years have passed since moses was in egypt and many of the hebrews and israelites would probably be unaware of who moses is he might have been a distant name someone who oh he was here for a bit and now he's gone for those that do know who he is moses might be thinking what right does he have what right do i have to go back how did that israelite put it in chapter 3 who made you a prince and judge over us those words ringing in his head for 40 years i wonder how many times you or i have made an excuse when it comes to hearing something and wanting to do or doing something completely different have you ever had that moment when someone asks you for an answer or advice and you provide said answer or advice and the person who is asking completely ignores it and goes and asks for a second opinion yeah i've had it i've done it moses is offering excuse after excuse he offers nothing else he doesn't even say thank you what should he have done then what should you or i do when faced with god almighty he has just been introduced to almighty god now the the weight of this is huge the creator of heaven and earth the great i am yahweh speaking to him should have fallen on his face on holy ground before god and just worshipped him right there and then and never got up but he doesn't so how does god deal with moses

well we now get a glimpse into the graciousness and the patient character of god as he addresses the skepticism and unbelief of moses now before we look at the signs that are given to moses by god it's worthwhile noting that god doesn't do things just for the sake of doing it there is a purpose and a reason behind each of the signs that god has revealed and i want to spend a little bit of time just on the signs because it's a grounding for what's going to come in the bigger picture of exodus and the bigger timeline of what we have in the old testament so let's look at first uh two together in chapter four it says the lord said to him what is that in your hand and he said a staff and he said throw it on the ground so he threw it on the ground and it became a serpent and moses ran from it but the lord said to moses put out your hand and catch it by the tail so he put out his hand and he caught it and it became a staff in his hand that they may believe don't miss that bit that they may believe that the lord god the god of their fathers the god of abraham the god of isaac the god of jacob has appeared to you this is the first sign and wonder that god gives moses and it's significant not only for addressing moses in his unbelief but a change in moses job title i wonder if you've ever had your job title changed by a snake or throwing a snake on the ground in the ancient world where they find themselves in the egyptian culture um were the the staff or a rod was depicted as a symbol of authority and the egyptians would have been no strangers to knowing the significance of this especially when the staff turns into a serpent a shepherd uses a staff or a crook this was considered an extremely lowly profession by the egyptians moses had a time of breaking in the desert which separated him from all that he learned in egypt many times in the bible we see that the way in which god calls his people into his purpose is through a hardship of some kind have you ever been brought to a place where you've felt god has had to break you or you've had a hardship in your life and god works through it and it's only the beauty of hindsight that you look back and go oh yeah i wonder why i wonder why that happened oh yeah god's working those purposes through me again i know i have god will often break our staff or our purposes in order to reshape and recommission us the purpose of the breaking is not to destroy us but to bring us to a place of willingness to lay down our purposes so that god can use them for his purposes taking us to a point where we say i can't but he can therefore i will the breaking prepares us prepares our heart for the new calling god required moses to lay down his staff in order for him to see that it now has something that had power he had not viewed his job as a shepherd as having any power once moses lays down his staff and then takes it back up again a significant change is taking place here in the life of moses it was no longer a shepherd's crook or a shepherd's staff it was now the staff of god god's staff has power to the egyptians snakes were seen as divine and to the israelites a snake

was a reminder of the devil god uses this and don't miss this this morning god uses this to illustrate that it is he who is far more powerful than the fake snake gods of egypt and that it is he who is far greater and more powerful than the devil with this staff in his hand god was using this to affirm that moses was his chosen representative and that it was he who's to lead them out of egypt if you cast your eyes to verse 6 we're going to have a look at the second sign that god has furnished moses with and reading from verse 6 at chapter 4 again the lord said to him put your hand inside your cloak and he put his hand inside his cloak and when he took it out behold his hand was leprous like snow then god said put your hand back inside your cloak so he put his hand back inside his cloak and when he took it out behold it was restored like the rest of his flesh the second sign is given to moses and it is equally as significant as the first the hand of any person in ancient times was seen as an emblem of power you could work with it work with your hands you could give and you could take away with the power of the hand you could punish or you could be kind whenever we see the sign of leprosy in the bible although it's not it's most commonly associated with sin or being unclean however the leprosy although not a sin in this case here is pictured as a moral uncleanliness as a consequence of sin what have they done with that hand that has become leprous it's the consequence of sin that is directly affecting what is happening here when god commands moses to take his hand and put it inside his cloak that word again rings true it's audacious it's a leprous hand that takes a lot of faith because he's taking his hand out of action out of working with it almost as a means of rest when you put your hand inside your cloak it was seen as you were just resting you were just chilling effectively when moses hand is taken back out of his cloak his hand is leprous as white as snow as it says this is a striking representation of being unclean the fallen consequence has corrupted you the hand has been used for evil and not for good and it will contaminate everything it touches eventually leading to death is that not a picture of what god commanded adam and eve in the book of genesis you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden neither shall you touch it lest you die this direct disobedience man's fallen nature has led us to being in desperate need of a savior as we are dead in our sins i wonder at this point how many times myself you included have offered up excuses in an attempt to cover up our sins before god instead of trusting in god we've gone our own way in direct disobedience not holding fast to his promises this disfigured leprous hand was made new by god under his command this sanctification process completely restores and makes new that which was once defiled just as the people of israel will be and we move on to the third sign the blood

[20 : 19] verse 8 we'll read from if you join me if they will not believe even these two signs will listen to your voice you shall hear that commandment again you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground up to this point we can read in verse 8 Moses has been furnished with two signs from God God has now promised again another promise to show another sign to his people and later on the timeline of Exodus to Pharaoh also before Moses can object further God is issuing another sign now in Egyptian times the river Nile was not only a source of water but it sustained all life for drinking water for livestock to irrigate the land of Egypt the importance of the Nile to the Egyptians cannot be underestimated in a worldly view this sorry thus God is purposeful in the signs that he gives to Moses and God is purposeful in every act that we have seen so far or will ever see the Nile was seen as a deity by the Egyptians highly sacred and revered to change this mighty water sorry this mighty river's waters from a life-giving source to transform it into blood would not only destroy this Egyptian narrative but it was to demonstrate God's power his authority his lordship over the Egyptian land its people and its current ruler Pharaoh so they're the three signs that we've seen let's move on to verse 10 just have a look at that but Moses said to the Lord oh my Lord I am not eloquent either in the past or since you've spoken to your servant but I'm slow of speech and of the tongue the fourth excuse I feel like at this point Moses is clutching at straws he's really getting to that point where he's just like I'm not very good at speaking maybe he's offering up he's running out of excuses at this point I think I think the next one that's come out of his mouth is like the dog ate my homework I joke with Cal this week that I've felt like Moses a few times in my life just offering up excuses so many times for why I shouldn't do things you know offering up excuse after excuse I don't know the dog ate my sermon the Lord is patient and kind amen verse 11 says this then the Lord said to him who has made man's mouth who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind is it not I the Lord now therefore go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak another promise from God through God's statement that we find here in verses 11 and 12 God is not only displaying that he it is he and he alone who is sovereign but he is further promising that he will be with Moses every step of the way verse 13 continues but he said oh my Lord please send someone else please send someone else I don't know who the most important person is in your life and they've asked you to do something obviously the most important person in my life is my wife

obviously you know in the worldly matters obviously do I offer excuses a few times potentially but much higher than that we are reading that Moses' life at this point has been interrupted by the Lord God Almighty and he is asking him to do something would you offer up an excuse would I maybe effectively what we've got to is the bottom of it we've got to the bottom of these excuses Moses has now effectively said I don't want to go I don't want to do it I don't want to go pick someone else the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses the Lord is patient and kind God is rightly angered by Moses' resistance to his purposes and plans yet still it is a wonderful reminder to us that God is still showing his goodness towards Moses and he said is there not

Aaron your brother the levite i know that he can speak well behold he is coming out to you and when he sees you who will be glad in his heart 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 both what to do he shall speak for you to the people and he shall be your mouth and you shall be as god to him god offers to help moses with the aid of his older brother Aaron this leaves moses at check making he is run out of excuses we are at a point of fute non verba actions need to take place not words now although the words accompany the actions he now has to help to carry out and fulfill god's purposes it would have been easy at this point when we read to look to look into this and say well for god to say moses do you know what don't worry about it it's fine okay i found someone else who can get the job done god's plans purposes and his ultimate will will be carried out and which is the mystery of god that he uses us as ordinary people to accomplish them god did not alter his instructions to moses he did not alter moses to carry out those instructions but the lord uses moses moses moses moses moses apologies insecurities and his inadequacies to great effect promising divine aid and comfort to both he and his brother who is now on this journey with him on what would seem to moses as an audacious task and taking your hand this staff with which you will do the signs love that we line at the end there of the verse 17 it's just like oh oh by the way take that with you take that with you you're going to need that so we've now been through the 17 verses that we can see here this morning in the study that we're looking at in exodus 4 all of the signs all of the instructions all of the promises that flow over from chapter 3 into chapter 4 who are they from again they're from god they are from god god himself who does moses think he is it's astonishing you don't have to turn to it but in deuteronomy 32 it's ironic that moses writes this later on says that god's ways are perfect he is the rock his works are perfect and in all his ways are just a faithful god who does no wrong upright and just is he in romans 3 paul proclaims that god's works are just and true god cannot lie it is impossible for god to lie it is utterly incomprehensible to think that god could lie for he is ultimate truth and in him there is perfect truth for it is he in his very nature is perfect and yet still moses hesitated when god furnishes you with a promise from his word you have a choice believe or

unbelief belief or unbelief take action or don't the lord's anger comes about not because god had enough of the excuses from moses but it came about from his unbelief in who god said he was anger is only one letter away from danger we read in our bible of individuals of the israelites going their own way because of their unbelief not putting their trust in the almighty god this has consequences god is incredibly patient but not endlessly so god gave moses over to the desires of his excuses please send someone else so what does god do well he agrees to send aaron who if you don't know or if you're unfamiliar with his work builds a golden calf for the people of israel to worship which when we read in judges the israelites are still abandoning god to go and worship them in the bars hundreds of years later consequences i'm fairly sure you are but you're familiar with cornhill the training center the tron church in glasgow and i was there yesterday with a few others from calderwood and the conference day yesterday was titled his word in my hands there's a training day conference of how to handle the bible how to read it how to interpret it properly if you ever get the opportunity to go to one of the conferences i would highly recommend it i'm sure calis talked about it quite often about cornhill here i'm sure it's a truly rich day of learning i have to say one of the studies was in the book of judges which is anywhere from about 100 years to 400 years after the events that we're reading about this morning that's the time span of judges from where we are we were learning about the kings that god sent to the people of israel some good some bad and some are just outright terrible not very good kings at all however in our studies we came across a king called hezekiah you may have heard of him what is evident from the study that we were doing and what we covered yesterday is that the people god's people needed to be ruled in chapter 4 where we find ourselves this morning in exodus pharaoh is the current israelite ruler a harsh oppressive dictator a passage this morning is nothing less than a wonderful demonstration of the sovereignty and divine power of god he supplies moses with signs that he and the israelites may believe the in and of itself is pretty awesome i think you'd agree and if i stop there as important as those signs are i'd be completely missing the point because it is god he doesn't forget his people god is a covenant keeper he does not forget his promises when it is said of him i will never leave you or forsake you guess what he won't do he'll never leave you he'll never forsake you the people need a ruler they need a king they need to be ruled over by god god in this passage is

sending moses to be his messenger to lead the people out of slavery and into the promised land this exodus and the deliverance from the land of egypt provides us with a beautiful picture of divine salvation that only god only god can bring about this is a foreshadow of what is to come if you look over to chapter four if you will god has furnished these signs to moses he's given him every instruction that he wants to give him what was he worried about really because in chapter four where it says in verse 31 read that and the people believed and when they heard that the lord had visited the people of israel and that he had seen their affliction what did they do they ran away from it into midian no what's it say they bowed their heads and worshipped bowed their heads and worshipped this next statement is taken from the united nations website and is currently up to date it says this the latest global estimates of modern slavery published by the international labor organization international organization for migration and international human rights group walk free revealed this last year that over 50 million people were living in modern day slavery this is not exodus this is not egypt this is today this is our timeline that i'm talking about 28 million people in forced labor and 22 million in forced marriages that's taken from the united nations website 50 million people 50 million men women children i won't go into the statistics it would make your blood turn cold that's an incredibly distressing number incredibly distressing and situations are how many more people are trapped as slaves to sin how many of the 8 billion people 8 billion now we're into billions living on this planet are dead in their sins and in desperate desperate need of a savior how many people in bells hill how many people in cold in east cobridge are in need of a savior and what are you going to do about it god does not forget his people he sent a savior and this is where it gets i'm an emotional person and apologies if i uh if my bottom lip quivers here but he sent a savior to defeat sin and death once and for all god has sent his eternal king and his name is jesus he is the king of kings and he is the lord of lords the alpha and omega he is

[37 : 33] god's perfect spotless sacrificial lamb that was slain it is he who secures our salvation hallelujah jesus not only died as the perfect for the imperfect the sinless for the sinful but he lived the life of perfect obedience required for our salvation carrying out every instruction every promise of god perfectly so he could claim those who were once dead in their sins to be saved into his glorious son if you're not a christian here this morning or if you're listening to this i urge you repent of your sins believe in the name of jesus and you will be saved cast off the chains of sin that strangle and tangle your life and lean and trust on every promise that is given by his word if you have already placed your trust in jesus i say this to you god always expects his children to believe in him to trust him and then to do what he says for it a non verba you have to take action with this trust and obey i asked you the question earlier of your thoughts about moses it is because god is holy good kind faithful being the very author of love full of truth that responds to faith with grace he did not leave moses where he was and as philippians 1 verse 6 puts it i am certain that god who began the good work within you will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when christ jesus returns god is faithful whatever he has started he is committed to finish it in the same way god will continue the process and journey that he has led you to i'd like to leave you with a quote from warren weirsby it says this god knows us better than we know ourselves so we must trust him and obey what he tells us to do when we tell god our weaknesses we aren't sharing anything he doesn't already know the will of god will never lead you where the power of god can't enable you so walk by faith in his promises amen let us pray together heavenly father we are so thankful for your word we are thankful for the richness of your living word and lord we thank you that you do not leave us where you find us dead in our sins but you sent the perfect spotless righteousness that was jesus christ to die in our place that we might stand restored and redeemed by the blood of the lamb thank you lord for the time we have spent this morning we pray that your holy spirit will inspire us and our thoughts and our memories of what we have heard this morning throughout our week and lord may we never be in a position where our unbelief stops us from sharing your good news jesus and lord we stand as your children adopted into your family and we just say thank you for lord it is only for your glory and your honour and your praise in jesus name we pray amen thank you for your understanding to