



Less about You, More About God

March 2, 2025

Exodus 4:1-17

Clint Pressley

*4 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.'"* *2 The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff."* *3 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. 4 But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—* *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."* *6 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. 7 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. 8 "If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. 9 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 on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."*

*10 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 am slow of speech and of tongue."* *11 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?" 12 Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."* *13 But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."* *14 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. <sup>17</sup> And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."*

*(Pastor Prays)*

The land of "what if's" is a hard place to live. It is the cause of so much anxiety when you think of what might happen. What if the chemo doesn't work? What if you don't get the job? What if there isn't enough money? What if I don't pass the test? If I don't make the team? What if I am not good enough? What if I don't get married? What if I can't have children? What if I get married and it doesn't work? What if I can't stop crying? What if I'm wrong? It's a tough place to live in the land of "what if's". And that's exactly where we find Moses. God has appeared to him in the Burning Bush, and spoke to him, and given him a commission to go and speak to the people of Israel, and more specifically, the Elders of Israel. And in this passage, all Moses can think of is his deficiencies. And in this passage, what God is going to do? God is going to reorient Moses and remind him this is less about the messenger, Moses, and more about the message. This is less about you as an individual and more about God. In fact, I'll make that the theme of the sermon.

### **Christian Maturity Means It's Less About You and More about God**

So here's what we're going to do this morning. We're going to just walk through it, 17 verses. I know it's a long passage, but I'm going to walk through it like a tour guide and point out a couple of things that may be of some interest to you. After we come through it, I'll go back and make some applications. What can we do to make it less about us and more about God?

Let's start in verse one. Moses is standing, and he and God are having a conversation about what God has called for him to do in Chapter 3 at the Burning Bush. Moses has asked, who am I? What if they don't listen to me? They're not going to believe me. Which is amazing because, in chapter 3, verse 18, God has just told him they will listen to you, and Moses is already

doubting. Moses says they're going to say God didn't appear to you. So now the Lord gives him three signs. They are the staff turning into a snake, and then the next sign is the hand becoming leprous and then being healed. And the third sign is in the future. He tells Moses to pour out the water that you got from the Nile on the dry ground, and it will turn into blood. Let's go through them quickly. The Lord said to him, what is that in your hand? It is not a scepter like a king, and it's not a spear. It is a staff, like a shepherd. I read that, and I immediately thought of Psalm 20 with the Good Shepherd, which then points me to Christ, who is the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. It's a staff Moses has in his hand, and the Lord says to him, throw it down on the ground. So he throws it down on the ground, and it becomes a snake. And Moses did what he should have done: he ran from that thing. I cannot understand why anybody would have a pet snake. Look, Katie Kiser, who runs our preschool program, has pet snakes. I don't know what is the matter with that girl. I don't want to have anything to do with the pet snake. I don't want to touch your snake. I don't want to see it. I'm not going to stick around to find out if this is a poisonous snake, the good kind of snake or bad. So Moses runs from the snake, and the Lord says, come back. Look at verse 4. The Lord said, put your hand out and catch that snake by the tail. I know enough to say I'm not going to pick that snake up by the tail. Don't try this at home, boys and girls. But Moses reaches down and picks it up by the tail, and it becomes a staff again. God says so this is a sign you will use to convince the Elders of Israel to let them know that the message I'm sending you with has authority. But God says, you know, that may not be enough. Come down to verse 6. God is going to give Moses a backup miracle. Here's a backup miracle. Take your hand and put it in your cloak. If you have ever seen those pictures of Napoleon, he's got his hand inside his jacket. Put your hand in your clothes; it's like a little party trick. His hand is then diseased. It could be what we know as leprosy. It could be any number of infectious skin diseases. That was a terrible thing back in that time. You don't want to be close to somebody that has leprosy. And even on this day, you're not going to ask somebody who has leprosy to sit beside you on the bus. Moses pulls his hand out, shows it, and puts it back in. When he pulls it out next, he's healed. Now, there is another sign that what you're saying is the truth.

If those two don't work, let me give you one more down in verse 9. Here's the third sign, but it's in the future. Go get water out of the Nile, pour it out, and it will turn into blood. That will be a foreshadowing of the plagues that are coming. These are the signs that God gives Moses to

show what he's saying is actually true. Then, in verse 10, Moses said to the Lord, here come the excuses, who am I? Moses is going to try another tack. I am slow in speech. My tongue is too big for my mouth. I can't talk. We don't know if it's a speech impediment. Sometimes people don't want to be speaking in front of the public. Speaking is hard, so you get scared. Maybe he's forgotten the Hebrew. We don't know what the problem is he's offering up. Maybe he's just not eloquent. I can't speak. But look what the Lord says. *"Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"*<sup>12</sup> *Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."* Do you know what this made me think of? This made me think of when Job gets at the end of all of his complaining, and the Lord says, who are you? This made me think of Jeremiah. God says, go down to the Potter's house and watch as the Potter takes the clay and forms it. This made me think of Romans Chapter 9, when the Lord says to him, in verses 10 and 11, who's made your mouth?

The Lord says to Moses, you think you have a deficiency; I'm going to be with you in it. I'm going to be with your mouth. In verse 13, we finally get to the crux of the matter. It is not really just excuses. It's not really that he is just humble. It's that he is rebellious. In verse 13, Moses says, I don't want to do it. Please send somebody else.

I read about a preacher who was preaching on this, and he titled his message, Here I am, Lord, send somebody else. That's what Moses is doing here. Please, not me. And for the very first time in Genesis and Exodus, there is something we haven't seen yet in the Bible. In verse 14, it's the first time ever that we see God mad at someone. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses. Now, God goes to get a substitute. Think, the word substitute is first used for Aaron. He will be a priest. So then God goes to get Aaron, the Levite. I know that he can speak well. He will be glad in his heart, and so there will be a sequence of events in verses 15 - 17. Look, he shall speak, but I'll be with his mouth. He'll be your mouth, and you will be like God to him. Verse 17 is important. <sup>17</sup>*And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."* Don't forget, pick the staff up, you're going to need that. That staff is a symbol of God's presence. It will finally become known as the Rod of God. Moses will strike the rock and turn it into water. When he holds it up high, they win the battle. You take that staff with you wherever you go. So, how does this passage point to Christian maturity? And how does Christian maturity mean that

it's less about you and more about God? Let me see if I can make some recommendations and applications. Here's the first one, number one.

### **God's promises are trustworthy**

I want you to remember that God's promises are trustworthy. You see it right there in verse one. Let's learn from the negativity of Moses. What do we find? Remember, he's having a conversation with God. God is sending Moses to the Elders of Israel. In verse one, what does Moses say? They will not believe me. But God has made a promise in Chapter 3:18, saying, they will listen to your voice. Moses didn't trust God's promises. It's good for us to remember when God says that it's trustworthy. Your faith will grow to the degree you trust the promises of God. Now, you can even Google if you want to find the promises of God in the Bible, and there are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them. I would like to offer up five passages that are familiar to you. They are verses that you know. I want you to claim them for yourself because all of God's promises find their Yes and Amen in Jesus.

So here's the first promise. This is every high school senior's life verse, right? Jeremiah 29:11.

*<sup>11</sup>For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.* It is given by God to exiles who are under an oppressive government. That promise finds its ultimate end in Jesus Christ. It is pointing to the Gospel of Jesus, the truth that Christ lived for us and Christ died for us. Put your faith in Christ, and there you'll find a future and a hope.

So maybe you say, alright, that's the Old Testament. I've got something in the New Testament to give you. It's the New Testament version of Jeremiah 29:11. It's Romans 8:28. Some of you like to get tattoos. If you're going to get a tattoo, get Romans 8:28. What does Romans 8:28 say? *<sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* God has taken every bit of it. Everything you're walking through, everything you've suffered, every bit of anxiety, every circumstance, it's God weaving all of that together into something good for you.

That's a promise from the Bible. Let me give you something else. You know Philippians 4:19. Paul says, <sup>19</sup> *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* Your needs will be met. Let me give you another one.

Philippians 1:6. Here's a promise. There are a bunch of these, hundreds of these. Paul says in Philippians 1:6, <sup>6</sup> *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* He called you his own. He adopted you by faith in what Christ has done, and you became a daughter or a son of God. God started something. You are not stuck. He will complete it in the day of Jesus.

Let me give you another promise. It's a great promise for any of you walking through a really hard time. Here's a good one to claim for yourself. He is the God of all comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, <sup>3</sup> *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,* <sup>4</sup> *who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

The Bible says that he is close to the brokenhearted. That is so that we may be able to comfort those who are in affliction with the comfort that we ourselves have been comforted with. That is God comforting the sick and the grieving. All of this is to say that God's promises are trustworthy.

Let me give you one more in Romans chapter 10. This is an extra. Paul says if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and if you will believe in your heart, God will raise you from the dead. To be raised from the dead means Jesus went to the cross, and there he paid the penalty for every sinner that will ever be saved. They buried him in a tomb, but God miraculously raised him from the dead. Paul promises you that if you believe that, you will be saved. God's promises are trustworthy. Let me give you something else. Maybe that wasn't enough. Let's go to a second point, number two.

### **God's power builds our confidence**

What's going on with the three signs? God is going to give Moses some signs to build his confidence. So the first sign is the staff. It's going to turn into a snake. Then Moses can turn the

hand that is filled with leprosy will be made clean. And the last one is in the future; Moses is going to change water out the Nile, into blood. Let me just walk through them.

When you read that first one about the staff, what are some lessons we learned there? Well, we learned that God has power over creation. You see, a serpent is a reminder of what happened in the garden. Satan first revealed himself as a serpent, but God has power over Satan. An Egyptian pharaoh would wear a crown that had a serpent on it. This is a lesson of God's power over the Egyptian gods. What else? When you look at Moses carrying that staff, a staff is not a scepter. He is not a ruler. He is not a warrior. He is a shepherd. It points us to the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. You look at that staff and we're reminded that the staff, is there as a symbol of God's presence. He is with Moses, and one day when they have a battle in Exodus Chapter 17, they will have to keep his hands up to win. In one hand is the staff as a reminder of the presence of God. It turns into a snake. You watch that, and we are reminded of God's power over evil. God has power. When you read the promise in Genesis 3:16, what God says is that the seed of the woman, who is Jesus, will crush the head of the serpent, who is Satan. That's the Gospel, brothers and sisters, that you can have confidence when you look at those signs.

You see the next sign of Moses putting his hand in his garment and turning it into leprosy, and then, when pulling it out again, it's been healed. I think that can be a reminder of God's power over our bodies, of God's power over nature. God's power to heal or to not heal. What about verse 9? The sign of the water turning to blood? What do we do with that? That's going to be in the future; he didn't do it right here. It's a foreshadowing of the plagues that God is going to send in the next few weeks. They will be a sign of God's power that gives us confidence.

You know, as Christians, we have a sign in the Christian Gospel. It tells us that Jesus Christ lived perfectly and died in our place at the cross. He dies to take the wrath of God away. This is the sacrifice for all sinners that will be saved. He dies in their place as the substitute. They put him in a tomb, and three days later, God raised him from the dead to show us the sacrifice had been accepted. That is the sign that confirms the sacrifice works. That's a sign that tells you your sins are forgiven. Look, one day, when you breathe your last, you will die, and they will put your body in a grave. And because of the empty tomb, one day in the new heavens and the new Earth, you will live in eternity with God. That is the sign, we're reminded of God's power.

Remember that it's less about you and more about God. So, we have the first two points that remind us of his promises and his power. Let's go to a third one, number three.

### **God's presence is guaranteed**

There is something about that staff that I want to run by. The staff there in verse 2 turns into a serpent and then turns back into the staff that one day will be called in Exodus, The Rod of God; it is a reminder that God is with us. When Moses says I can't talk, the Lord says, I'll be with your mouth. Isn't that what Paul prays in the book of Colossians? He prays for those in Colossia that they will be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might. He prays for all endurance so that you might have patience with joy. Do you have that? It's the power of God. I'll give you a fourth point, number four.

### **God's promise is inscrutable**

When I say prerogative, what I mean is God has the absolute right to do whatever he wants with his creation. When you get to verses 10-12, look what Moses says in verse 10. <sup>10</sup>*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 am slow of speech and of tongue."* So maybe he's got a speech impediment. Maybe he doesn't know the language. It's an excuse. And look what the Lord says in verse 11. <sup>11</sup>*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?"* Verse 11 is one of the most pro-life verses. This is a reminder that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. God has made you like you are. If you have a bad attitude and you think I have a bad attitude, that's just the way the Lord made me; that's not what this means. God has made you like you are on purpose for a purpose. For some of you, God has given you these great abilities. Maybe you do math really well, or you can sing really well; God has given you this great ability, and he's done that so that you will glorify him with your ability. God has also withheld abilities. God has given you inability. You have some disabilities ordained by God. There are some things that you cannot do, even though you wish you could, and those were given by God so that you will glorify God in your disabilities. Let's keep pushing on that. Some of you have disabilities. Disabled humans are made in the image of God. They are born with a disability, and it is ordained under the providence of God. He has done that for his glory. There is a preacher friend of mine named Daniel Richie, he has actually

preached for some of our student events here at Hickory Grove. Daniel was born without any arms, but he can do things without any arms. Like he can shoot a bow and arrow and do it with no arms. He can run a chainsaw with no hands. He can do more with no arms than I can do with six arms. And Daniel says, I was brought into the world like this for God's glory.

Look at the promise. Moses has said, I have a disability. I can't speak. What is the promise in verse 12? God says I'm going to use the deficiency. I'll be with the disability. I will be with your mouth. It is ordained by God for his glory. Let's not forget that he's the potter; we are the clay. All of that is to say you serve God the very best you can with what has been given to you. Be satisfied in him; be satisfied in his ways. It's Christian maturity. It's you not saying why has God made me like this. It is you saying thank God. Christian maturity means it's less about you and more about God. I'll just add one more point and will be done. So what do we have? God's promises are trustworthy. God's power builds our confidence. We have a sign; it is the empty tomb. God's presence is guaranteed. God has the right to do with you what he wants to do. So here is number five.

### **God's patience saves us**

So when you get to verse 13, the excuses are over. We finally get to the very crux of the matter.

<sup>13</sup> *But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."* I just don't want to do it. This is straight-up-and-down rebellion. God has said to do something, and Moses says, I don't want to do it. And look at the reaction in verse 14. It is the very first time in the Bible that God is angry with someone. I find that amazing. I mean, we have the story of Adam and Eve, who fell into sin. The Bible doesn't say God is mad at them. Cain killed his brother Abel and how about the flood that wiped out all of humanity in Genesis Chapter 6? We see Isaac and Jacob and all their foolishness. None of that says that God was angry, but here, the spirit of rebellion shows up. And the Lord's anger was kindled against Moses. There are a couple of things I thought about. First, if God could be angry at the most humble man in the world named Moses, how must he feel about my sin? How must he feel about yours? And if he looks at us with his anger, we need a substitute. Aaron would be the substitute for Moses, but our substitute is Jesus. Jesus doesn't just speak for us; our substitute goes to the cross and takes the wrath of God away from us. He dies for us to take away the anger of God. This is a reminder that the cross saves us. God saves

us so that our lives, in every way, will honor him. All of that to say, Christian maturity means it's less about you and more about God.

*(Pastor prays)*