

## Exodus 4

Written by K B Napier  
Tuesday, 06 March 2018 15:37

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As a nurse, I have looked after people who have had limbs removed. The dressings have to be renewed, to keep the fresh wound clean. Sadly, some have become far worse and they die. I remember one foot that went from sound flesh to necrotic (dead) in less than one week, the flesh coming away in large pieces, revealing the bones. Despite amputation, the necrosis travelled upwards and the man was dead very quickly.

This is a gruesome way to begin a Bible study, but it portrays how men are weak vessels. In particular we are all weak spiritual vessels. We might begin with good intentions, but we so easily fail to notice the small signs of sin that creep into our lives. They lay deep in our souls. We fail to root them out. Suddenly, the sins erupt and become a danger to our Christian lives. Few sins are sudden and unannounced! They are usually left dormant.

The end result can be swift, or insidious, creeping through our lives like a death-stalker. Then it opens up and drags with it a whole host of other sins. Because we let it stay, it can overwhelm us and our tranquil lives become battle-grounds of faith. The answer is the sharp knife of the surgeon, every time a sin tries to take root.

Moses escaped his duties for maybe 60 or 70 years. He no doubt enjoyed his simple life as a shepherd. But then God came upon him. It was not a whim. This was the enacting of God's will, a plan decided before the world began... only Moses was unaware of it. Like so many Christians today, he just ambled through life and never dreamt there would be such dramatic changes, changes he initially tried to resist.

When God calls us to action we must obey in spite of any fears we have. Why? Because the result to our lives of *not* doing God's will are far worse than the results of doing the thing we fear the most!

Moses was commanded to do something few men of faith have ever done before or since. Noah would have understood. A man tending sheep was to lead a whole nation. Not only had he to get them out of captivity, but he then had to be their spiritual and physical leader for many years. A bit of a change!

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This is why I say to all Christians, especially all those who, in mock-humility, say *"I am not a Paul or a Peter. I am just a humble (??) Christian"*

...

*someone*

has to be a Paul and a Peter! None of us can tell who God will choose to be of similar type. We cannot be the first Apostles, but we can certainly be used mightily of God. How and when, we cannot tell. We must just be ready, and we must just obey when the call comes. I can tell you now, from experience, that you will probably fight God's will, but you must then submit, for the good of your soul and in honour of the Lord Who calls you, whether or not you are fearful. Take it from one who quakes!

### Verses 1 - 5

1.

"And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

2.

And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

3.

And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

4.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

5.

That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee."

Moses continues his objections to being called, saying the Hebrews would not believe him. Is

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this not how most of us would feel? If you walked into a group of people who did not know you personally, would you doubt they would believe you if you told them God told you to speak to them? Probably.

Of course, it is possible that Moses was simply scared. And who would not be frightened by such a task, even without the anxiety at the back of your mind that someone would kill you for murdering an Egyptian! From long experience I know what it is like to fight in the Lord's Name. Mostly, I fight without hesitation or fear. But there are times when my human frame is cowardly and I try to find ways not to fight! So, I understand Moses! However, God has ways to bring you back into service.

God gave Moses some assurance and asked him what he was carrying in his hand. Moses replied "A rod". God told him to throw it to the ground. When he did, the rod turned into a poisonous snake! Naturally, Moses ran from it. But, God then told him to grab the snake by the tail. Moses complied and when he did so, the snake turned back into a rod. God said that it would be a supernatural sign to the Hebrews, to prove Who had sent Moses.

What can you offer people? You go to them, claiming to have God's word. But how do you prove it? God does not always send a physical sign! Often, the only sign is your own zeal and depth of spiritual assurance. At other times it is with a prophecy. At other times, the thing you speak of comes to pass. Those who simply speak and have no other proof, will rarely be listened to. Indeed, most preachers nowadays are of this ilk. These are saved men who have not been called to preach or to teach, but have assumed the office in a human way.

### Verses 6 - 9

1.

"And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.

2.

And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.

3.

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And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

4.

And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.”

It could be asked, why did God use two miracles to convince the Hebrews? Surely, if God will is supreme, only one would be needed? We could ask the same about Pharaoh... God would have known he would not listen to the first or several miracles, so why not ‘cut to the chase’ and simply use one miracle and at the same time change Pharaoh’s heart? No doubt we could make many guesses, but what is the point? God did what He did!

So, God gave Moses a second sign. This time He told Moses to put his hand inside his coat and to remove it again. When his hand came out, it had the characteristic of the hand of a leper, white and dead-looking and evidently diseased. God then told him to put his hand back inside his coat. This time it came back out normal. If they do not believe your first sign, said God, they will certainly believe the second.

But it did not end there. God told Moses that in the event of the Hebrews not believing the first two signs, he was to give them a third. He was to fill a container with water from the river. Then, he was to pour it onto the dry river bank, where the water would turn into blood. You will note that God did not say “as blood”. The word ‘blood’ means ‘blood’ in this case. The word – *dam* – can also, at times, mean wine, but only when used figuratively.

Later, we come across a similar miracle, and, as with all miracles, human beings try to offer human ideas. They do not like the thought of God, or, if He exists, of God doing miracles which they cannot study and reproduce. So, they bring miracles down to the human level. Thus, ‘blood’ is only the colour of blood, possibly the result of chemical reactions. But, God does not say this. He says plainly that the water became blood, actual blood. You will note with each miracle, that they are impossible to bring about by human means! Do you believe God did this?

### Verses 10 - 18

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1.

“And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

2.

And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?

3.

Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

4.

And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.

5.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.

6.

And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

7.

And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.

8.

And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

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9.

And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.”

Moses is just as we are! Though he had just witnessed three mighty miracles, he continues to fight God’s will, that he should confront Pharaoh! We are all like this. Even if we have witnessed wondrous things, we still falter. This has happened to me many times. Why do I fail and become anxious, when I have, at various times, witnessed the power of God? The reason is simple – I am human and I sin. I do not want to, but I do and this prevents me from believing as I should. It also causes me to have a low spiritual expectation.

Probably thinking of how stupid he would look, or how his life might be in danger, Moses tried another way of getting out of his responsibility. ‘But, I am a terrible speaker! I’ve never been good at putting my case! My speech is dull and I find speaking hard!’

The reader can almost feel God’s anger rising at this point. God replied ‘Who made the mouth of men? Who made people dumb, deaf, to see or not to see? Is it not me, the Lord?’ With much patience, God then said, ‘So go – I will make sure you say the right things!’

Then Moses, still anxious, said, ‘Oh Lord, please send someone else!’

That was when God became angry. Moses would not get away with it. ‘Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? He speaks well enough! He is coming out to meet you and his heart will be overjoyed to see you. He will speak on your behalf, and you shall give him the words to say. And, I will tell you what to say to Aaron. In this way, you will speak!’ He will speak for you, and you will speak for me. And you will take this rod and do the miracle I showed you.’ Aaron had not yet started out; this was an action yet to come about.

Of a truth, I believe myself to be similar to Moses in his frail human form. There may be times

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when I am eloquent, but I never feel eloquent. I see my own speech as slow and stupid. That is why I mainly use words on paper! But, if we believe, God will fill our mouths, and guide our pens. If God has given the task, then He will enable us mightily, though we may be naturally dull or slow.

After this awesome meeting with God, Moses returned to his home and asked him to release him for his new ministry. He told Jethro that he wanted to see if his Hebrew brethren were still alive, and Jethro agreed: *"Go in peace."*

It is often frightening to receive a call from God. Those called think they are not up to the task. Probably they never are! But the task is not done in our own strength. It is done by God, through us, and it is this that makes the task inevitably fruitful and successful.

### Verses 19 - 23

1.

"And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

2.

And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

3.

And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

4.

And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

5.

And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go,

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behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.”

We cannot be sure about the length of time that elapsed between Moses returning to Midian, and God calling him to go to Egypt. God came to Moses and told him to start out for Egypt, as those who remembered him and wanted him dead were now themselves dead. This was one fear dealt with!

Moses gathered together his family and put them on asses. He set off for Egypt, with the rod in his hand. This very simple object was to be the sign of God’s power!

Along the way God again spoke to Moses: ‘When you reach Egypt, make sure you perform all the wonders in full view of Pharaoh. But, he will not listen, because I will stop him from obeying me. He will not allow my people to go. Then you will tell Pharaoh, “*God said, Israel is my son, the first of my chosen people, and He tells you to let his people go so that they can serve Him. If you refuse God, He will kill your eldest son*”.’

You will notice: God deliberately caused a man not to listen to Him, so that God could display His power. Some Christians hold to the fallacy that God calls everyone to salvation and does not wish for anyone to die without hope of heaven. This is a very clear rebuttal of that fallacy. God can choose a man for destruction or for glory! It is up to Him, not us.

### Verses 24 - 26

1.

“And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.

2.

Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.

3.

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So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.”

Verse 24 causes us to ask, “*Am I missing something?*” Suddenly, we read that God wants to kill Moses. No explanation is given. He was “*by the way of the inn*”.

The inn,  
*malown*

, or khan, or lodging place, was on a main route to Egypt.

“*The LORD met him and sought to kill him.*” One meaning for this is to die prematurely because of unwise moral conduct... but no explanation is given for this sudden statement. At this time Moses was probably over 60, or even 70 years of age, so what had he done to receive a threat of death? It is interesting because when God has passed sentence there is no escape. But here we are told God wanted to kill him, and yet did not carry out the sentence. It is quite possible that there is more to this part of the account than is given in scripture, but it might have had something to do with his son being uncircumcised, suggested by the next text.

Zipporah, his wife, circumcised their son with a sharp stone, threw the skin at Moses’ feet, and complained bitterly. There appears to be a link with Moses’ killing of the Egyptian, e.g. he was guilty of a blood-crime. The main cause, however, seems to do with circumcision itself. Without further detail this suggests that Zipporah was not pleased with Moses’ Hebrew line, at least not at that time. The performance of this ritual caused God not to kill Moses, however vague the details are to us.

Our Christian path is not always clear or triumphant. Indeed, in my own life, I have known trouble, often immense with little respite. Some have a relatively ‘easy’ time, and others are taken close to breaking point by God. Those inflicted are chosen by God for His own purposes, so that they may endure the trials put forth. Even knowing the trial is from God for his own good, a poor servant often feels close to failing, such is the intensity of trouble. Those who claim to endure a trial and smile with obvious joy are, to my mind, not enduring a trial at all. A man who is tested thus by God is under great pressure and he is likely to be taken very close to the edge of his endurance. Joy in such a situation is often clouded or hidden. If it is not, where is the test?

Moses was about to embark on an incredible test, one that he did not wish to undertake. On

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some occasions in my ministry I have wished to hide from certain tasks, simply because I have been afraid. I see the relative ease with which most Christians live and wonder why I have to go through the fires set before me. I want to turn around and walk away, but God prevents it, to my dismay! But, I know I have no choice. When God calls, I must obey, fearful or not. The ridiculous thing is that if God sends a man, He also equips him with everything necessary. So, why want to hide? Human beings are weak creatures, that is why! And this contrasts with God's mercy, grace and power, thus showing the results are given by God and not by men.

It seems to me that many Christians observe another Christian's trial without compassion, and without offering at least prayer. They appear never to be under any kind of trial. Is this because they hold God at arm's length, fearing not men, but what He might ask them to do? Do they fear their comfort will be challenged, and their lives will be turned upside down? This is what happens when a person is given a trial by God! But, the end result is better than before the trial began. In between, during the trial, there is fear, grief and many emotional crises, until the person is guided through to peace and joy by God, stronger than before.

### Verses 27 - 31

1.

“And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

2.

And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

3.

And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

4.

And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

5.

And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel,

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and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.”

As Moses continued on his journey, God spoke to Aaron and instructed him to meet Moses. There is no evidence that Aaron dismissed the idea, or that he had doubts. Thus the meeting with God had to be substantial and powerful. Aaron travelled out into the desert and found Moses at the *"mount of God"*. The Hebrew is *har*; mountain or hill. The Greek is *Armageddon* ('the hill of Meggido'). They met after so many years, and Aaron kissed Moses in Hebrew fashion.

Moses told his brother everything God has told him, and about the signs he was to use to persuade Pharaoh. The rest of the journey is not told, for the next event was the gathering of the Hebrew elders. Moses performed the signs given by God, and the elders believed this was an authentic calling. Immediately, they all bowed their heads and worshipped God for the deliverance He was promising. As Christians we should know God will deliver! But, in our frailty, and sometimes our sin, we can often make a mess of this, and fear the consequences of doing God's bidding. Or, we just refuse to believe God calls us at all, to our detriment.

Nowadays God still sends signs to us (I am not talking about those false signs embraced by charismatics), but how many of us watch for them or recognise them in our unbelief? Sadly, many of us miss the signs and thereby miss the opportunity to do God's bidding, such is our unbelief. We therefore do not do the great works required of us.

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