

Exodus 010
Excuses, Excuses!
Exodus 4:1-12
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Well good morning everybody. Let us take our Bibles this morning and open them to the Exodus 4:1. We are continuing our verse-by-verse teaching through the Book of Exodus, arriving now in Exodus 4. The title of our message this morning is "Excuses, Excuses!" Of course, it is at this section in the Book of Exodus, as we are working our way through it, where God is seeking to redeem a nation. Typically, the way God works is He selects a vessel to work through. In this case, the human instrument being Moses.

When God decides to use people, that is tough, because people are not always cooperative with what God wants to do. Many times before God can use the human vessel, there is that time of preparation bringing him to that state of usability. That is what we see God doing here through this man, Moses. Before the ten plagues and the parting of the Red sea and the giving of the law, and all of the things that we are going to read about in the Book of Exodus, before any of that happens, He prepares His instrument—a man that He has selected named Moses.

Moses spent the first 40 years of his life with a silver spoon in his mouth, if we can say it that way. He was set adrift on the Nile, as you remember, and taken in by the daughter of Pharaoh. He had the best education and naturalistic training a human being could receive. But then at age 40 he saw an Egyptian abusing a Hebrew, and he tried to fix matters in his own hands. He committed murder, and consequently he became a fugitive of justice for the next 40 years of his life in a place called Midian. He was no longer a prosperous prince, but he was a very obscure shepherd.

Now God has to take him into that next phase of his education, because your naturalistic training can only take you so far. One of the most difficult things a human being can experience is trying to do the work of God through human power. It does not go well because the arm of the flesh can only extend so far. So God takes Moses, He takes us, and He puts us into phase two of our education. For Moses, it lasted 40 years, where he was reduced to almost nothing. All of the accolades were gone, all of the fanfare was gone, and all of the privileges were gone. He was just an obscure shepherd for 40 years over the flock of his father-in-law Jethro.

Around the time when Moses is about reduced to nothing in terms of pride, God discloses Himself to Moses at the age of 80. It was in an event called the burning bush. That takes him to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God, which is going to be a big deal, because later on it is from that mountain that the Law of God is going to come forth through Moses.

Moses sees this bush that would not burn up, and that is strange. It is normal to see burning bushes, believe it or not, as I have looked at a lot of the literature on this in the Sinai Peninsula, given the heat and the wood and the bush and so forth. The miracle is that it kept burning and it would not be consumed. Moses realizes something abnormal is happening here.

This is where God discloses Himself and He reveals Himself to Moses as a holy God. He says, "Take your shoes off, you are standing on holy ground." It is in Exodus 3 that Moses receives his assignment from God. This is where he learns that he is the human instrument selected by God to be Israel's deliverer. Now, given his preparation, he is in a place of usability. He was not like that at age 40, but he is like that now at age 80, having his character sculpted and molded and shaped as only God can do.

God discloses His assignment to His instrument, Moses, and here come the excuses. Moses has been reduced to next to nothing; he feels himself completely inadequate for the task. By my count, there are five excuses here. We have covered two, and three are coming.

Excuse one is inadequacy (Exodus 3:11-12). Who am I to be Israel's deliverer? God answers that excuse by saying, "I will be with you, so it does not matter." One of my youth pastors used to tell me over and over again, "God, plus one is a majority." It does not matter what your inadequacies are. If God is on your side, then you are going to come out on the winning side.

That leads to excuse number number two, which is a lack of authority (Exodus 3:13-15). "They are not going to listen to me. This is the same crowd that would not listen to me 40 years ago. Why are they going to listen to me now?" God answers that excuse by disclosing Himself as the great I AM, the self-existent One.

Now we move into excuse number three. It is the excuse of unbelief (Exodus 4:1-9). That will pave the way into excuse number four (Exodus 4:10-12). That will pave the way into excuse number five, which Moses is finally going to tell God there: "I withdraw my resume" (Exodus 4:13-17). I am not sure he put it in a resume or an application, but he says, "I do not want to do this. I am not interested in doing this. Go pick someone else."

Moses' Calling (Exodus 4:1-31)

- I. Third objection (1-9)
 - A. Objection: Israel will not believe (1)
 - B. Response: proofs (2-9)
 - 1. 1st proof (2-5)
 - 2. 2nd proof (6-8)
 - 3. 3rd proof (9)
- II. Fourth objection (10-12)
 - A. Objection: poor speaker (10)
 - B. Response: God's sovereignty (11-12)

- III. Fifth objection (13-17)
 - A. Objection: send another (13)
 - B. Response: Aaron as spokesman (14-17)
- IV. Moses returns to Egypt (18-20)
 - A. Jethro's permission (18)
 - B. God's comfort (19)
 - C. Moses' return (20)

We can identify with these, because when God calls us to do something, the something that He calls us to do is bigger than us. We lapse into fear, and we make excuses as to why we cannot be the person God wants to use.

Here comes objection number three. The objection is stated in Exodus 4:1 and then God's response is given through three proofs in Exodus 4:2-9. Notice what Moses says as we are now at excuse number three:

"Then Moses said, 'What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you''" (Exodus 4:1).

"Lord, I am going to go to first of all Israel and get them on my side, and then to the leader of the known world, Pharaoh, and tell him what to do? Are you kidding me? This is the same crowd that rejected me 40 years ago."

You might remember when Moses tried to handle things in his own power at age 40.

"But he said, 'Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?'" (Exodus 2:14).

Obviously that is what is in the back of Moses' mind as God is saying, "Go now. Speak to your people." "They did not listen to me 40 years ago. Why would they listen to me now? They did not believe me 40 years ago, and You want me to tell them that You appeared to me through this burning bush incident? They are not going to listen to that."

Here is how God assuaged Moses' mind through three proofs (Exodus 4:2-9): Proof one (Exodus 4:2-5), proof two (Exodus 4:6-8), and proof three (Exodus 4:9). Proof number one: this is where Moses' rod turns into a snake and turns from a snake back into a rod. How's that for proof?

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'What is that in your hand?'" (Exodus 4:2).

As if God did not know. These are what you call rhetorical questions. They are for the benefit of the listener. It is like when I walk in my house and my wife says, "Did you close the door?" Well, she can see I did not close the door; it is just a polite way of saying, "Close the door." It is more of a question for the listener. It is not that God does not see what is in his hand.

"Then the Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' And he said, 'A staff.' Then He said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it" (Exodus 4:2-3).

Proof number one: You are worried about what everybody is going to think of you. Do you not know who you are dealing with here? You are dealing with a miracle working God. His staff turns into a snake, and then notice what it says there at the end of Exodus 4:3: Moses fled from it when it became a snake. Is it not interesting how Moses is more afraid of the snake than he probably is of God? He is more afraid of Pharaoh than he is of God. He is more afraid of the Hebrews and their reaction to him than he is of God. Should he not be afraid of God, who gave Moses this command to be "My deliverer"?

We are very much like that. We are afraid of people. We are afraid of reactions. We are afraid of responses. I would suggest that we should be more afraid of the God who told us to speak, because all these people that we are intimidated by would not even be able to have their next breath if it were not for God.

*"The fear of man brings a snare,
But he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted." (Proverbs 29:25).*

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..." (Proverbs 9:10).

That is who we ought to be afraid of; that is who we ought to respect; that is whose opinion we should factor in first, not the reactions of people. The Bible says that once that dominates in your mind, it is nothing but a snare or a trap. It stops you from becoming what God wants you to become.

"But the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand and grasp it by its tail"—" (Exodus 4:4).

"Now the staff is a snake, go grab it by its tail." That would intimidate me; I don't know about you.

"...so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—" (Exodus 4:4).

God is capable of taking the staff and making it a serpent and then reversing it. There is a reversal in these miracles there in Exodus 4:4, and also the second one coming later on in Exodus 4:7. How does God disclose Himself there in Exodus 4:4-5?

"that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you" (Exodus 4:5).

"It is these types of miracles that you will do that will demonstrate to them that I really have appeared to you. By the way, Moses, you are just the continuation in a long plan because I put this plan into motion about six centuries ago in what is called the Abrahamic Covenant." This is where God promised unconditionally land, seed, and blessing to the Nation of Israel through the Abrahamic Covenant.

Right now, the Nation of Israel is not experiencing those things, being outside the land that God gave them. "So, Moses, you are the guy that is going to bring My people back into the land and thus launch a large march of events that really will not culminate until the Millennial Kingdom. But, Moses, you are going to jumpstart the whole thing by bringing My chosen people into their land, that I have bequeathed them—a chunk of real estate that goes from modern-day Egypt to modern-day Iraq."

God is going to do what He is going to do here, because He made a promise to the Nation of Israel. God is a promise keeper. Exodus 2:24, as you might recall, says,

"So God heard their groaning [that is the enslavement of the Hebrews in Egypt]; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Exodus 2:24).

What God does in the Bible is make a covenant, and then He spends the rest of the Bible keeping His word because He cannot lie.

"...it is impossible for God to lie..." (Hebrews 6:18).

God works in a similar pattern in your life. He makes you a promise. He says, "You trust in My Son and you will have the gift and the hope of heaven." We trust in His Son, and He spends the rest of our lives executing what He promised that He is going to do, getting us to our destination. In the process of getting us to our destination, He grows us up a lot along the way. You can rest assured that wherever you are with Jesus today—in fellowship, out of fellowship—He is still going to get you to arrive at your final destination, just like He did with Israel and still does with Israel, and will do with Israel. His nature is such that He cannot lie.

"God is not a man, that He should lie..." (Numbers 23:19).

"Moses, you are part of a chain of events here. This is not the Moses show; this is the God show. Moses, you are just a link in a long chain."

If that was not proof enough, let us give you proof number two (Exodus 4:6-8) where Moses' hand becomes leprous and then is restored.

"The Lord further said to him, 'Now put your hand into your bosom.' So he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow" (Exodus 4:6).

In the Gospels, Jesus cures people constantly of leprosy. It is a terrible disease. What we see is that God can actually cause the disease of leprosy. Do we say everyone that has that disease is there because God caused it? Not necessarily. I am going to try to make that clear in just a minute, but in this case, God caused it.

This is going to be something that Moses is going to have to remember because Miriam, his sister, who will rise up against his authority, is going to be afflicted with leprosy later on in the Moses story.

"But when the cloud had withdrawn from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow. As Aaron turned toward Miriam, behold, she was leprous" (Numbers 12:10).

"File this one, Moses, in your memory bank, because you are going to see a resurfacing of this as I am working out My purposes later on." Just as God can cause leprosy, He can uncause leprosy. We see that happening there.

"Then He said, 'Put your hand into your bosom again.' So he put his hand into his bosom again, and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh" (Exodus 4:7).

What is God revealing here? That He is sovereign. He is sovereign over what? He is sovereign over the animal kingdom. He is sovereign over issues that happen in the human physical body. If God is sovereign in this way, why are you worried about how people are going to react to you? Why are you more afraid of a serpent than you are of God?

"You ought to be afraid of Me," God says. "Do not be afraid of Pharaoh. You should feel sorry for Pharaoh, actually. You need to be afraid of Me, because the 'fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'" (Proverbs 9:10). God summarizes these two signs in Exodus 4:8.

"If they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign" (Exodus 4:8).

If all of that weren't enough, you go to Exodus 4:9 and you have proof number three that God gives to Moses. In this particular case, it is a prophecy dealing with the taking of the Nile and turning it into blood.

"But if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground" (Exodus 4:9).

I have been to the Nile. It is not as nice as it looks in the movies, by the way, when you travel there today. You have to understand that in Egypt, particularly in this time period, the Nile was everything. It was the source of life. Charles Ryrie puts it this way:

"If Moses could turn the water of the Nile, considered the source of the prosperity of Egypt, into blood, a sign of death, then surely his power over Pharaoh would be acknowledged."¹

"I am going to take the source of your life, and I am going to exert authority over it," is what is going to happen ultimately. You can imagine taking the source of economic prosperity of the United States—our farming, our agriculture, water supply, whatever it is—God doing something through a human demonstrating His authority over that. God is saying, "You think this river is the source of life for you, but it is I who have exercised authority over it." God has authority over everything.

Now Moses has received three proofs. By the way, it is interesting in this third proof (Exodus 4:9), that there is nothing here about the Nile going back to water. The staff became a snake, then a staff again, and the leprous hand became leprous and then free of leprosy again, but there is no reversal here with the Nile. I think that is foreboding on what is coming, because in the first plague, which is coming later on in the Book of Exodus, God is going to take the water of the Nile and turn it to blood.

By the way, you better get used to this, because the same thing is going to happen in the Book of Revelation. First, God is going to take the entire seawater, and a third of it is going to become blood. Then He is going to take the Earth's freshwater supply, and a third of that is going to become blood. When human beings do not repent, God says, "Let us take a third and let us make everything blood red." The fresh water supply of the Earth is going to become red like blood, and the salt water supply.

That is a lot of water when you think about it. The oceans are 75% of our Earth. "I am going to take that, and I am going to turn it completely to blood." You would think that people in the midst of that would repent, but what the Bible says is many of them do not. They get angrier and angrier at God, and they start to curse Him because they figure out that He is the one that is controlling these plagues, and He is doing these plagues in such a way to show people that He is in charge, not these created things and inanimate objects.

Do you realize that all over the world today, people worship Mother Earth? It is called Gaia. Even our Texas tsunami² that happened 4th of July weekend, if you look at the comments that are made in mainstream media outlets as to what caused them, they say the Earth caused it. What they are basically saying is that we have not treated the Earth properly, so the Earth retaliated against us through this Texas tsunami.

¹ Ryrie Study Bible, page 95.

² Reference to flooding that occurred July 4th 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/weather/live-news/texas-flooding-camp-mystic-07-07-25-hnk>

Why have we not treated the Earth properly? Because of something called "climate denialism," where they say that because we in the United States and particularly in Texas, believe in economic choice—we believe in capitalism. The Earth got mad at us and did what it did on the 4th of July weekend.

If you start looking for those comments from mainstream media outlets, you will find them. What is that? That is the worship of the created thing rather than the Creator. Paul is very clear that the final stage of degeneration amongst humanity in the end times will be that they worship the created thing over the Creator.

You are constantly force-fed this Mother Earth Gaia ecology, and not only that we should be good stewards of the Earth (which I am on board with), but "be nice to your mother so your mother does not throw a temper tantrum and throw a hurricane or a tsunami or an earthquake at you." They all teach this. Danny Glover taught it in 2009 with the Haiti earthquake. He was asked why the earthquake happened. He said that it was because at the Copenhagen Summit we did not capitulate to climate alarmism as a nation., so the Earth just retaliated through an earthquake.

This is how they are explaining the Texas tsunami that just took place. It is Mother Earth theology. God, in the Tribulation Period, is allowing the ocean to become blood red, and the fresh water supply to become blood red. He is demonstrating in the future Tribulation Period exactly what He is demonstrating here in the Book of Exodus: that He is the one that is in charge, not these things that people think are in charge, that they worship in the place of God. These judgments are coming. The first one is going to be water to blood in the Nile. Maybe that is why there is not a reversal here of the Nile from blood back to the water that it was.

"7 SIGNS" in Gospel of John		
    	Changing Water into Wine	2:11
	Healing official's son	4:46-54
	Healing an invalid at the Pool of Bethesda	5:1-18
	Feeding the 5,000	6:5-14
	Walking on water	6:16-21
	Healing a blind man	9:1-7
	Raising dead Lazarus	11:1-45
		  

The Bible is a book of signs. Jesus in John's Gospel performs seven signs. I actually think there are nine signs because these do not include His resurrection or the miraculous catch of fish at the end of John's gospel. Why is Jesus portrayed as the Savior of signs? Because when He walks on the water, heals from a distance, and feeds the five thousand He is demonstrating His authority over the laws of nature. He has a right to do that because He created the laws of nature. Therefore, it is completely foolish for humans to worship the laws of nature when there is someone who puts those laws of nature into existence and that He has authority over.

You are going to run into people in your Christian life that will say, "I noticed your Bibles on your desk at work. I noticed you pray before meals. I am investigating the claims of Christ. What Book of the Bible should I read?" Where would you send them? You send them to John's Gospel. Do not send him to Leviticus. You might get saved reading Leviticus, but Leviticus is not set up as an evangelistic presentation. John's Gospel is.

You should read John's Gospel, and these seven signs that Jesus performs, in addition to seven I Am statements and seven discourses. You are supposed to look at this and you are supposed to say, "This guy is the Son of God." John, an eyewitness, was on the ground floor and explained this to us. That is why John talks about how the miraculous catch of fish involved 153 fish.

People spill all this ink trying to figure out what 153 means. Is that a code? What is that? Is that a symbol? Here is the meaning: 153 fish means 153 fish. John would remember a detail like that since he was there to see it. He took what he saw, and he wrote down Christ's seven I Am statements, seven miracles, seven discourses. He does not say, "Fold your Bible and go home." He says. "Do something with the information."

At the end of his book, this is his purpose statement:

"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;" (John 20:30).

"I could have told you a lot more," John says, "but the Bible would read like the IRS tax code. I simplified it for you. I just picked seven, seven, seven."

"But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name " (John 20:31).

This is written to people that did not have life because they have never believed, because they do not know who Jesus is. John writes all this stuff down to evangelize the lost. So when someone says, "What Book of the Bible should I read?" Give them John. "Just start with John. We will have a conversation about it in a week or two when you get your reading assignment done."

It is not there as a historical account only. It is not there only as a revelation of the identity of Jesus. It is there to get the lost sinner to say, "I need to trust in Him for my salvation and have the gift of life." One of the ways that you know Jesus is who He claimed to be, is that He was sovereign over the laws of nature, which He Himself created.

The Book of Colossians says that He not only created them, but He is also sustaining them even as we speak (Colossians 1:17).

People who understand science have told me that there are particles in our body—I do not know, atoms, whatever you want to call them—that are just trying to break apart, but something is holding them together. Who is holding them together? It is Jesus Christ. We are, as we speak, moving at a very fast speed, rotating around the sun in our heliocentric solar system. We are not so close to the sun that we burn to death, although in Texas it feels that way sometimes. We are not so far away from the sun that we freeze to death. We orbit at exactly the right distance to sustain life. Who is keeping that going? What is preventing the planets from colliding with each other? Jesus, who is not just the Creator of these laws of nature, but He is the sustainer of these laws of nature.

When you read about these signs, you should understand who Jesus is. Is He who we claimed to be? Do not stop the process there; take it a step further and trust Him for your salvation and the safekeeping of your soul.

Those are three major proofs. You think Moses would say, "All right, God, You win." But he does not. We have a fourth objection given in Exodus 4:10. The response of God is given in Exodus 4:11-12. His fourth objection is: "I just do not have the gift of gab. I do not speak well. I am not fluent. I did not win any prizes from Toastmasters. I am just a shepherd and You want me to talk to the leader of the known world? You want me to talk to the Hebrews? I am just not the guy to do it."

"Then Moses said to the Lord, 'Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue'" (Exodus 4:10).

When you get into the commentaries here, you are going to get a lot of sanctified imagination from people about how Moses had a birth defect, Moses had a speaking impediment, and all of this kind of stuff. I do not really think that those are accurate, because Acts 7:22 tells us, relative to the first 40 years of Moses life:

"Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22).

I do not think the narrative that he had a speaking impediment is what it is talking about. What it is talking about is that he was afraid to speak up. I am not the only one that thinks this. Here is Ed Hindson in his commentary:

"4:10. Remarkably, Moses raised a fourth objection, bemoaning to the Lord that he was not a commanding speaker, being 'slow of speech and slow of tongue.' In light of Stephen's testimony of Moses' abilities (Acts 7:22), it would seem that a speech impediment was not the flaw that Moses has in mind. Rather, it was fear of intimidation before the Egyptian court and apprehension that he lacked the commensurate eloquence and adequate fluency for the task."³

You want me to go into the royal court? I have been a shepherd for 40 years. They are not going to be impressed with me. They are not going to be impressed with the way I talk. They are not going to be impressed with my speech. To be honest with you, Lord, the whole thing just intimidates me."

I know a little something about this, because almost every day of my life, I am somewhat shocked that God made me a public speaker. If you had talked to me in high school and college—and you can talk to some of my buddies at the time, those that would even say they were still associated with me—public speaking was not something I wanted to do. In fact, do you know what the biggest fear people have next to death itself? It is public speaking.

This is what I would do. I do not know where this came from, but I would get up in front of a group and my brain would just lock up and I could not complete sentences. I was so afraid and intimidated by being up in front of a group. In fact, this is what I would do in college: I would enroll in a class, and I would look at the syllabus the first day of class to see if some kind of public presentation was required, and if it was, I would drop the class and take it with somebody that did not make that a requirement.

It worked actually for a while, but the funny thing about this is that if you are afraid to do something, chances are that is exactly where God wants to use you. I hate to break it to you, but if you are afraid to do X, Y, and Z, and every time you think of it, you just get nervous and say, "I cannot do it, I am not qualified"—it could be anything, like sharing your faith with your neighbor, which you have insecurities and doubts about, wondering, "Have You got the right guy?" and all this kind of stuff—anything God is requiring you to do, if you do not want to do it, chances are that is what God wants you to do.

"Jonah, go preach to Nineveh." Jonah said, "No," and went the other way. We know how that story ended—Jonah got put in timeout and then barfed up onto the seashore. Pay attention to what you are afraid to do, because that could be a sign that that is exactly what God wants you to do. You are the perfect person to do it, because now you have to trust God. If you are completely and totally confident in your abilities, chances are you are going to run the program your way rather than God's way. God picks us at our point of insecurity.

³ Hindson, E. E., & Mitchell, D. R., eds. (2010). *King James Version Bible Commentary for Today: The Most Up-to-Date Commentary on the Time-Honored Text of the King James Version* (p. 85). Thomas Nelson.

I finally said, "I have got to get over this fear that I have." When I was at University of the Redlands in 1985-1989, I enrolled in a speech class where you have to get up and talk. The professor's name was Dr. Southworth. He would time you as you were talking and tell you how long your speech was. He wrote with a red pen—one of these kinds of guys—and would write all this red stuff on your paper. He was actually an extremely encouraging guy.

I get up to do my talk, I finish, and I get my little handout from him. It said: "You were up in front of the class talking for six minutes and 27 seconds." I was stunned. "You mean I got up for six minutes and 27 seconds to talk?" Now you guys are just praying for the day that I would go back to six minutes and 27 seconds. Now it is like you cannot shut me up, but that is that is how God works. That is how God gets us over these fears that we have.

There was a big political protest on my campus. I was a conservative, as you can imagine, and it had to do with the stuff that happened with Gaddafi, you might remember in the 1980s, and Reagan took out Gaddafi's family and things of that nature. I thought it worked pretty well. We did not hear from Gaddafi for several decades of terrorism following that. There was this huge protest of all of these liberal students, egged on by their professors, who were demonizing Reagan. It was an open mic, and I got up to the microphone and started defending Reagan. I was explaining that the terrorism had to be stopped. Just like that, I became known as the conservative spokesperson on campus. When people wanted to join the Young Republicans they all came to my door. I was not even the president of Young Republicans, so I had to send them elsewhere; but I got that notoriety just like that. It is a funny thing how God works, how He keeps putting us into places of insecurity.

I remember our youth pastor would say, "All right, we need someone to close in prayer. Andy, can you get up and close in prayer?" I just hated it when he said that, but I got up and closed in prayer. God just pushes you on, pushes you on, pushes you on, until the point where I am standing behind this pulpit. God does neat things in our lives, particularly when we do not want to do them. If you do not want to do something and you are afraid of doing something that is perfect, you are the perfect person, because that very well could be the area where God wants to use you.

It is like when I got the job offer here in Houston at the College of Biblical Studies, and I said to my wife, "We might be going to Houston," and my wife says, "We will never go to Houston." In my mind, I said, "Well, that is where we are going. Of course, God dealt with her, and He dealt with me over the course of time.

Whenever you are going to tell God, "I am not going to do this," that is probably what you are going to do. You might as well lower the guard now and relax and enjoy the ride, because whatever He calls you to do—public speaking, service, financial giving, whatever your bent is—God will get you ready for it. He is really good at it.

Moses did not want to open his mouth because he was intimidated, I believe. God gives a response (Exodus 4:11), and it is an amazing response.

"The Lord said to him, 'Who made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?'" (Exodus 4:11).

"Why are you afraid of what is going to come out of your mouth? I am the one that gave you the mouth." "Well, Lord, I am tongue-tied. I get tongue-tied easily." "Who gave you your tongue?" "Well, Lord, I have got some kind of weakness." Because of that verse, people think that Moses had a speech impediment. I am not necessarily on board with that, but they think it because of Exodus 4:11. "Who gave you the impediment?" Just like with all of these other miracles, God is revealing His complete and total sovereignty over the very things that we look at—our weaknesses that make us feel afraid.

We have a parallel passage in John 9:1-3 about God making people deaf and mute.

"As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples said to Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?'" (John 9:1-2).

They were the first TV preachers, preaching the prosperity gospel, a heresy that goes all the way back to Job's friends. "You are a bad boy, so bad things happen to you. You are a good boy or girl, so good things happen to you." This is a horrible doctrine, because the poor person that has the weakness, the impediment, the disability, the handicap, or whatever you want to call it, now has to go through life with a self-righteous person telling them that they put themselves in that predicament through bad behavior. This is the prosperity gospel.

One of my great heroines of Christianity is Joni Eareckson Tada. You know her story. She experienced a tragic diving accident as a teenager, and was incarcerated in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the neck down. If you listen to her talk, she says, "You would not believe the number of self-righteous Christians who have told me that I am in this condition because I do not have enough faith, or I have been disobedient, or there is some kind of sin." She says, "They do not understand that it is this wheelchair that gives me my platform. I can speak to the whole world because of this wheelchair." But countless Christians, having a very shallow theology, have told her that she put herself in that wheelchair. It was not just your diving accident, it was some kind of sin in her life. "God did this to you."

People have this mentality that if someone is sick, deaf, mute, blind, then they brought it on themselves. The Book of Job refutes that whole thing because none of Job's friends were right. What happened to Job dealt with the conversation between God and Satan in heaven that Job did not know anything about.

"Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him'" (John 9:3).

In other words, in this case (not in every case), God allowed this man to be born blind because He knew that Jesus, His Son, would come and give sight to this blind man in John 9:1-7. This is Christ's sixth miracle, or sign, out of seven, performed so that Jesus could be glorified. There are those cases where God actually causes some kind of sickness, some sort of infirmity, some sort of disease for a purpose that is bigger than one's immediate comfort. This is the sovereignty of God. God can and does work in this way.

Paul would not have been the man that he became, had it not been for his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:1-10), where he pleaded with the Lord to take it away. A lot of sanctified imagination on what the thorn in the flesh was. I do not know what it was, but it hurt. That is what a thorn does—it was uncomfortable. He kept saying over and over again to the Lord, "Take it away. Take it away. Take it away." Each time God said, "No, My grace is sufficient for you. It is the thorn in the flesh which makes you dependent upon Me, which allows Me to release My power through you." Thus we have two-thirds of the New Testament epistles today, because of the thorn in the flesh. We have the missionary journeys that Paul went on, because of the thorn in the flesh.

Whatever it is that is bothering you, that does not seem to go away could actually end up being your best friend, when you think about it as a Christian. It keeps you close to the Lord, because your problems—and we all have them—are going to do one or two things to you: they are going to make you bitter or they are going to make you better. The same sun that softens also hardens. There are a lot of people that are not being used by God because they are mad at God, and they shut themselves off from Him. That is not the right response of a Christian to trials.

Rather, we should say, "Lord, what do You want me to learn through this? How am I going to grow in intimacy with You because of this?" When you start talking that way to the Lord, the Lord says, "We got something going now, because now I can use you beyond yourself." I think that is what it means when it says that God makes people mute, deaf, blind. That is why the man was born blind (John 9).

Let me give you the other side of it: Is every person that is deaf, mute, blind, disabled, handicapped that way because God made them that way? I do not see this as a universal rule. Does it happen here in Exodus 4? Yes. Does it happen here in John 9? Yes, but does it always happen? I am not going to say that. I am not going to put myself in the place of God and tell every person that is struggling with something that God made them this way.

The truth of the matter is, when you look at the whole council of God's Word, we are living in a world right now that is three times removed from the design of God. Do you realize that? This is a problem with singing the song "This Is My Father's World." Is it? You mean to tell me that cancer and disease and heartache and heartbreak and death are what God designed? That is not biblical at all to think that way. This is God's creation, but we are thrice removed from His original design.

"For the anxious longing of creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God [the angels]. For the creation was subject to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth until now. And not only this, but we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:19-23).

Do you know that there is something wrong with your body? That is why you have to keep injecting it with caffeine all the time. I did that this morning. Why is that? Because my body is slowing down. The creation is in a state of travail, and it has nothing to do with mother getting mad at us. Earthquakes are going to happen in this fallen world. Towers are going to fall on innocent people. Jesus actually talked about that in Luke's Gospel. Things are going to go wrong in the physical body. God said that they would after the fall.

*"By the sweat of your face
You will eat your bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).*

You came from the dirt; you are going back to the dirt. "But I drink all that green stuff every morning." "Fine. You have a bunch of green stuff in a body that is going back to the dirt. Congratulations." It is irreversible. Diet and exercise may postpone the inevitable, but do you want to go over the cliff at 75 or 65? That is what diet and exercise will do for you. We should diet and exercise, I am not against that, but it is not some kind of miracle cure that reverses the curse that God said the human race and the physical cosmos would be in post-fall.

A lot of people, they see the first wrinkle, particularly if they have made a lot of money as a celebrity or an actor or an actress, and they are ready to kill themselves. Not the Christian.

*"Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying,
yet our inner man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16).*

The body is not what it once was, but Jesus' is at work on the inside. That is why I do not lose heart.

The truth of the matter is, our world is three times removed from its original design. This is a big deal because people are going to ask you, "You claim to worship an all-loving

God. My grandson just died of cancer. Can you explain that to me?" Most Christians have no idea how to answer that. They are caught flat-footed. There is a very simple answer to it: this world is not the way God designed it. In fact, it is three times removed from the original design of God because of the creature's rebellion against God.

The first time the world was altered was in Eden, at the Fall of man. Pregnancy became difficult, lifespans were cut back, and making a living became difficult. It was altered again at the Flood, the worldwide cataclysm. It was altered a third time at the Tower of Babel, where God took the universal language and confounded it.

The world that we are sitting in now is the post-Tower-of-Babel world. The soil that your feet are standing on as you go through life, has been changed three times. Therefore, you cannot blame everything that is wrong in the world on God. People are going to be born blind in this altered world. People are going to be born deaf. Biological and genetic problems will occur, but you know what? We have hope because it is going to be changed three more times for the better.

We will have a season with the Antichrist, but then we will have the Kingdom. Even in the Kingdom Age, the curse is not permanently rolled back. It is restrained, but there is coming the Eternal State where evil itself will not exist (Revelation 21:4). The world that we are living in today is a total abnormality; it is outside of what God designed. If you want to know what normal is, then read Genesis 1 and 2—that is normal. If you want to know what normal is, read Revelation 21 and 22—that is normal. Everything else is an abnormality. Everything else is an experience that should not be.

That is why I am having a hard time with going up to a blind, deaf, or mute person and saying, "God made you that way because He wanted to do a miracle through you." Can God do that? Yes, He does, but I am not willing to say every deaf person, every blind person, every mute person, every disabled person is in that state because God put them in it. A lot of things happen because we are living in a world that has been cursed.

If you want to understand the Christian worldview, and the best I know, it is unique totally to Christianity, no other worldview can say this: that evil is bound. It is bound between Genesis 3 and Revelation 20. It gets its heyday only for a season, but then God is going to recycle things back to how they were in Eden in the Eternal State—from a garden to a city with a cross in between.

Jesus loves us so much that He actually entered into our suffering to fix the problem. Do you want to put Christianity up against another world view? Give me any other worldview that teaches something like that. Do you realize that with the Bible, you have the greatest book in the world that explains these things like no other thing can explain them? That is how you answer the question, "You claim to serve a loving God, and yet some tragedy happened in my life." The answer is: We are three times removed from what God created because of our own sin.

Objection number one: I am inadequate for the task (Exodus 3). God says, "You have My presence." Objection number two: I do not have any authority. God says, "I am the self-existent One that will be with you." Objection number three: Unbelief. God answers through three signs. Objection number four: I do not have the gift of gab; I am a poor speaker. The answer from God is his sovereign answer, "Who gave you your mouth? Who in certain circumstances can create impediments?" Objection number five: Get somebody else.

Have you ever reached that point with God? "God, You got the wrong guy. Get somebody else." Well, you are going to see in Exodus 4:14 that God is not happy with it.

"Then the anger of the Lord burned against Moses..." (Exodus 4:14).

We have so many excuses, but eventually you just run out and God will not accept them anymore. Maybe you are like that here today. Maybe God brought you here so you could hear the gospel and be saved. It is just one excuse after another: "I cannot do this. I cannot be like that." God says, "We are done with excuses. No more excuses. You know enough, and what I want you to do is to trust in the work of My Son," which is the only thing we can do to be saved.

I trust that there are many, many men and women, boys and girls, within the sound of my voice that even now can hear that and place their faith in the Savior so as to be saved. You can do it now, even as I am speaking. It is not something you have to walk an aisle to receive, raise a hand to receive, vow to try harder to receive, go to church to receive, give money to receive. It is a private encounter between you and the Lord, where you hear the truth and you respond to it by putting your complete trust for your eternity and the safekeeping of your soul into Him.