

Excuses, Excuses

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Date: 28 August 2022

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[0:00] excuses, excuses. We're all very good at making excuses for not doing the things we should do, aren't we? Right from childhood, when we first started making excuses for why we didn't tidy our room, you know, never have my children ever said, okay, it's because I'm lazy.

They always come up with an excuse. It's not just my kids, they learned it from me. We're all so good at making excuses, but it doesn't stop at childhood. Also adults, adults can be very creative in making excuses for not doing the things we should do.

I once heard of a lady who skipped work, called in sick, and then she was later found on the beach, sun tanning by one of her work colleagues, and when her boss found out, confronted her, and she, on the spot, said, no, no, it was a medical emergency.

My doctor said I needed a vital input of vitamin D, and the chemist was closed, and so the only way I could do it is go lie in the sun. You see, we come up with all kinds of excuses to avoid doing the things we should do.

We do it with God as well, though, don't we? If we're disciples, if we're God's people, we are involved in God's work.

[1:17] We are called to be involved in His work on earth. We are called for a purpose, to rescue others from slavery to sin and death through proclaiming the truth of God and Jesus Christ.

But I find Christians are so good at coming up with all kinds of excuses as to why we can't do that. I'm too busy. I'm too stressed.

You don't understand my work situation. I just, I need some time off. I don't have capacity for church things right now. Well, Moses, turns out, was also an excuse expert.

He was just given, we remember from last week, he was given this awesome task to take God's name and God's word into Egypt to rescue Israel, God's people, from slavery in Egypt.

But what's the first thing he does when God starts telling him this awesome task he's been given? He starts making excuses as to why he can't do it. And that's where we are now in chapter four.

[2:25] We read some of Moses' excuses and we read that before Moses could embark on his mission, God actually stops and takes time to listen to each of his excuses, to hear each one and to address each excuse in turn until Moses actually has none left.

And so let's look at his excuses. Let's hear God's responses until we too realize that we don't have any valid excuses not to be involved in the awesome work God has given each of us.

So let's have a look at what Moses says. His first excuse, they won't believe me. They won't believe me. So Moses is tasked with taking God's words to Egypt, but the first thing he says here, after God gives him that commission, verse one of chapter four, and remember he's tasked not just to taking God's words to Pharaoh, but to the Israelites to convince them that God has come to him.

And he says, well, what if they won't believe me and will not obey me, but say the Lord did not appear to you? That's a valid excuse, right? Well, God's response from verse two, the Lord asked him, what is that in your hand?

A staff, he replied. Throw it on the ground, he said. So Moses threw it on the ground. It became a snake and he ran from it. The Lord told Moses, stretch out your hand and grab it by the tail.

[3:50] So he stretched out his hand and caught it and it became a staff in his hand. This will take place, he continued, so that they will believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob has appeared to you.

In addition, the Lord said to him, put your hand inside your cloak. And he gives him this other sign. He puts his hand inside his cloak, he takes it out. It's diseased. He puts it back in, it's healed.

And the Lord says, here's another sign. Pour water on the ground and it will turn to blood. These powerful signs God has given to Moses to do, to reveal who he speaks for.

They're Moses' credentials to the people of Israel and to Pharaoh. That he is speaking actually for the God of creation. This is not just some guy coming up with some ideas.

This is someone speaking on behalf of the God of creation who controls life and death and health and disease and animals and even nature itself. Signs of authority for who he speaks for.

[4 : 50] Much like the miracles of Jesus when he was here on earth. He did powerful signs. In our world, they're not myths and legends, they're real historical events.

He healed people from deadly diseases that they had had all their life. He healed a man born blind who had never seen before. He gave him sight. He calmed a storm in the Sea of Galilee.

And these were not just magic tricks to draw a crowd. These were credentials. They were signs of authority that this is not just another voice. This is not just another religious opinion of hundreds in the world.

But this is truth from the creator of this world and the creator of our bodies. He is now speaking. So sit up and listen. And that's why of all the claims in the world, religious claims, claims of truth, Jesus is the one that we need to sit up and listen to.

We can ignore all the others because Jesus is the one, the only one, who brought actual signs of authority and he proved that he bears God's authority on earth.

[5 : 53] And so listen to him. If you don't believe in who Jesus is yet, I'm glad you're at church, by the way, or I'm glad you're listening to this recording. But if you're not yet convinced in who Jesus is, you actually need a very good reason not to be because it's not for lack of evidence.

And if you're not yet convinced and you don't think there's enough evidence, you need to look into Jesus. You need to read his words. You need to read the historical accounts of his life.

Listen to our God course videos on YouTube or come speak to me or read through one of the Gospels, Gospel of Mark.

Listen to our sermons on that. You owe it to yourself to look into Jesus if you're not convinced of who he is yet because he has given us every reason we need to believe that he is who he says he is because he brings real credentials, that he is the one who brings truth into this world from God. Just as here in Exodus God gave to Moses when he was tasked to bring truth into Egypt, God gave him real powerful signs of who he speaks for.

[7 : 01] But wouldn't it be great if we could do that? And we could have those credentials, you know, to convince people in the office about Jesus? Hey Bob, you know, this God stuff, it's true.

God's real. And he speaks through his word. You should really come to church. I've been asking you for weeks and you've got no reason not to come, Bob. Come to church. Listen for yourself to what God says. Ah, no, I don't believe in that kind of stuff, eh?

Sorry, I just, I just don't believe. Okay, Bob, just wait right there. You see this stapler? Watch this. Boom. Turns into a pup adder.

Bob runs for his life. You pick it up again, it's a stapler again. Bob, before you go, look at this. Take your hand out. It's disease. Put it back. Wait, look at this.

It's healthy again. Hey, are you going to come to church now, Bob? Now, wouldn't it be great, wouldn't it make our task of sharing the gospel so much easier if we had the kind of power that Moses had, right?

[8 : 07] But we don't. And so we, we make the excuses. And we don't talk about Jesus to our non-Christian friends and work colleagues and the people that God has put into our lives because we say to ourselves, they're not going to believe.

And we already write them off as a lost cause. But that's, that's actually because we don't believe what Jesus says to his disciples in John chapter 14.

That passage that Michiel read for us earlier. Let me, let me tell you again. Let me read it again what Jesus says. John 14, verse 12. Listen to these words. Truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do.

And he will do even greater works than these because I'm going to my Father. Did you hear that? The one who believes in me will do greater works will do greater works than even the miracles Jesus did.

That's what Jesus himself says. Really? Greater works than Jesus? The reason, he says, is because I'm going to my Father. How's that going to help us to do powerful works to convince people of the truth?

[9 : 31] Well, he goes on to explain. And in John 16, verse 7 to 8, he says this, I'm telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away because if I don't go away, the counselor or the advocate, the Holy Spirit, will not come to you.

If I go, I will send him to you and when he comes, he will convict the world about sin and righteousness and judgment.

Do you see what Jesus is saying? Do you see why he says that those who believe in him after he sends the Spirit can do even more powerful things than he did in his miracles?

Because better than miracles to convince people of the truth of God is God himself in the Holy Spirit working internally to convince those he chooses that the words you speak to them are true.

And that's why we don't need miracles today, right? Did you need a miracle before you believed in Christ? No. Because God's Spirit is at work powerfully, more powerfully than when Jesus was performing miracles, more powerfully than when Moses was doing those miracles.

[10 : 44] When we speak about Jesus in the world, when we open the truth of the Bible in a dark world, like as the prophet Daniel says, like stars shining in the darkness, that's what happens when we speak the truth into the world, when we open the truth of the Bible.

When we do that, there is a power at work that we don't realize. As God says through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 55, for just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return there without saturating the earth and making it germinate and sprout and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do.

That's God's guarantee. You know, just as rain falls on the ground and a few days later you see your grass is suddenly greener because it's been doing things and you see these plants just pop up because the rain saturated in the ground and did things there, but you couldn't see it doing things, but it was working to bring growth.

Well, so that happens when we share God's word, when we share the truth of Jesus with our friends at school, with our friends in the office, with the people that God has put in our life, there is work going on there, it is saturating in the ground and God is making it work even if we can't see that.

And so, the excuse, well, they just won't believe me, it doesn't work, does it? It's no excuse. Just like it wasn't for Moses.

[12 : 28] But let's look at the second excuse he comes up with and that is, I just don't have what it takes. Look at verse 10 of Exodus 4. But Moses replied to the Lord, please Lord, I've never been eloquent either in the past or recently or since you've been speaking to your servant because my mouth and my tongue are sluggish.

I don't speak very well. I don't have what it takes. I don't have what you're looking for, God. You obviously got the wrong CV. You know how often I approach people to be involved in ministry, to be involved in the work of the kingdom in a particular ministry at church and they say, I'm not very good at that.

You've chosen the wrong person. I'm not good at that. I don't have what it takes. Well, look at God's response from verse 11. The Lord said to him, Who placed a mouth on humans?

Who makes a person mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? In other words, Moses, don't tell me what you don't have.

I'm not interested in what you don't have because I'll use what you do have even if you think it's not much. You know, we make, we do tend to make excuses by focusing on what we don't have, don't we?

[13 : 59] I don't have the skills for that. I don't have the time for that. My life is so busy. I don't have the energy for that. I'm so drained. Or a favorite excuse, I don't have capacity for that right now.

I don't know, maybe that makes it sound more professional. I don't have capacity. You know God's response to that? Who gives you capacity for anything?

Who gives you energy? Who made time itself? Is it not I? Don't you think I can give you what you need to do the work that I've called you to do?

Of course I can. If you're just willing to give the little that you have even if you think it's not much, God will make it work. That's what he's saying to Moses. Moses. And God will give you what you need when you give him what you have.

And so the excuse, I don't have enough of this or that just doesn't work with God, does it? And so by this point in the story, God has answered all of Moses' objections, but he's still not happy.

[15:10] And so now he just comes to the point of saying, verse 13, please send someone else. It's like he's run out of excuses and now the truth comes out, Lord, I don't want to go.

I want you to send someone else. And that kind of is an excuse as well, his final attempt that surely there are people better than me. Surely you can find someone else for this.

So let's look at excuse number three, there are people better than me. And God's response, well now he's starting to get angry. Now this is serious. Verse 14, the Lord's anger burned against Moses.

Do you know that's the first time in the Bible the Lord's anger is said to burn against someone. Interesting, isn't it? I mean, God's brought wrath on Sodom.

He's obviously bringing justice to Egypt, but this is the first time in the Bible that it's said that his anger actually burns against someone because it angers God when his own people continually push against doing the awesome work that he's given us to do.

[16:16] Then God gets angry. And yet, even in his anger, he is gracious to Moses because he makes a concession for him. Look what he says. Look at how he answers Moses.

Basically says, yes, you don't have what it takes, Moses, but that doesn't mean you're not going to do it. All it means is that you're not going to do it alone.

from verse 14. Isn't Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, he's on his way now to meet you. I love that.

He's on his way already. God's already set it up. God knows exactly what Moses is going to say. And he will rejoice when he sees you. You will speak with him and tell him what to say.

I will help both you and him to speak and will teach you both what to do. And that is what swings it for Moses. From this point onwards, now he starts.

[17:16] Now the next thing he does is he gets up and starts the mission that God has given him. This is what swung it for him. Not the powerful signs God gives him to do.

Not the divine assistance that God promises, but simply to just have someone else with him. Isn't that so human of Moses? I just don't want to do it alone.

And you know, despite the power that God gives us in his spirit to do his work and to live the life and the purpose that he's called us to, despite the divine assistance from heaven that he offers us, sometimes we just need someone else alongside us to do it.

Isn't that right? And God knows that. And that's why he gives you the church. Brothers and sisters, to make up for your deficiencies.

Because we all have deficiencies. Our faith is never what it should be. Just like Moses. He was actually so human. I love that about this. We learn the humanity of Moses here.

[18:24] Even though he goes on to do great things for God, he's just so doubtful and his faith is so flagging and God knows that about us. And none of us actually have it in ourselves to do God's work, to be salt and light in the world.

To stand for Jesus, to make disciples. And that is why God gives us other Christians. To help us. To bring what they have to the table.

To make up for what you don't have so that the skills and the abilities that you have can make up for what they don't have and so that together we're all able to do God's work that we can't do alone because we're doing it together.

Because we're a band of brothers and sisters. It's like that old series I used to watch years ago, Band of Brothers. I think it was Steven Spielberg who directed it. And it was a pretty heavy real series about this band of U.S.

soldiers in World War II fighting against the Germans in Europe. And what struck me about that series was there were no heroes. There were no Rambo's. None of the soldiers had amazing bravery or amazing skills but they got the mission done because they were doing it together.

[19:31] They were a band of brothers. And it's the same with God's people and the mission that he's given us to do. None of us can do it by ourselves. None of us are brilliant.

None of us are heroes. But we have each other. That is a concession God made to Moses and it's what he gives to us to do the work that he's called us to do. And so there's much more in this chapter that we're going to study in growth groups this week.

But for now I just want us to see from what we've seen in chapter 4 of Exodus that when God calls us to do his kingdom work he also gives us everything we need to do that work.

Just like he gave to Moses. Not only the power and the provision to make our poor efforts effective but he gives us his people so that we don't have to do it alone.

And so stop with the excuses and get stuck in. To the awesome kingdom work that God has given us the privilege to be involved in. Let's pray.

[20 : 37] Lord we thank you for just revealing the hesitations of Moses in your word and how we relate so much with that.

But we thank you also that just as you provided him with everything he needs to do the work you've called him to do. You have provided us with your power in the Holy Spirit.

With your provision to use what little we can give and with your people that we don't have to do it alone. Thank you for everything you've given us to do your work and now help us to actually step up and do it.

Help us to go out into a new week ready and willing to do what you have called us to do to bring truth into a dark world and would you use our efforts for your glory in Jesus name.

Amen.