

Place: Lurgan Baptist 23:6:2013

Reading: Exodus 3:11-14 4:1-15

## “ MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD,”

### 4. BEATING AROUND THE BURNING BUSH

The commanding officer was furious when nine GIs, who had been out on passes, failed to show up for morning roll call. Not until 7pm did the first man straggle in. “ *I’m sorry sir,*” the soldier explained, “ *but I had a date and lost track of time, and I missed the bus back. Being determined to get in on time, I hired a cab. Halfway here, the cab broke down. I went to a farmhouse and persuaded the farmer to sell me a horse. I was riding to camp when the animal fell dead. I walked the last ten miles, and just got here.*” Though skeptical, the colonel let the young man off with a reprimand. However, after him, seven other stragglers in a row came in with the same story, had a date, missed the bus, hired a cab, bought a horse, horse died, walked back in. By the time the 9<sup>th</sup> man reported in the colonel had not only grown weary of this ridiculous tale, but he became angry.

And he growled at the 9<sup>th</sup> soldier, “ *Okay, what happened to you ?*” “ *Sir, I had this date and missed the bus back, so I hired a cab....,*” “ *Wait,*” the colonel screeched at him. “ *Don’t tell me the cab broke down.*” “ *No sir,*” replied the soldier. “ *The cab didn’t break down. It was just that there were so many dead horses on the road, we had trouble getting through.*” Isn’t it amazing how many

excuses we can come up with for why things didn’t turn out the way they should ? We also come up with all kinds of reasons why God cannot use us in some form of ministry, from being too young, to being too old, from being too busy, to not being qualified enough. And what may hit us strangely, is that Moses, the great leader who led 2 million people across the wilderness for 40 years, who crossed the Red Sea on dry ground and saw God perform mighty deeds against the Egyptians, this same Moses had all kinds of excuses why God could not use him, why it would be best for God to pick someone else for the job. I mean Moses did rejoice that the Lord promised to deliver His people from their bondage in Egypt. ( 3:7-8 ) God was at last answering prayer. But then came the killer punch. “ *Come now therefore and I will send thee .....*,” ( 3:10 ) Sure, he was consecrated but not totally.

Do you recall how God describes us in the Book of Psalms ? “ *Be ye not as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near unto thee.*” ( Ps 32:9 ) In Egypt, forty years before Moses had acted like the impetuous horse and rushed ahead of God, but now he is acting like the stubborn mule and resisting God. Moses is “ Beating around the burning Bush.” Did you notice the five excuses old Moses gave to the Lord ?

#### (1) “ I AM UNWORTHY,”

“ *Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh .....*,” ( 3:11 ) What a contrast. Forty years before, Moses was so self

confident that he had tried to deliver the children of Israel in his own strength. ( 2:12 ) Now he felt himself so inferior and worthless that he believed himself totally incapable of so great a task. He says, “ *Lord, I am a nobody and therefore unqualified to go to Pharaoh and demand the release of your people.* ” You see, there was,

### **(a) THE INADEQUACY OF MOSES:**

“ *Who am I,* ” Moses may have thought “ *I’m in charge of this flock and they recognize my authority, but they’re not Pharaoh.* ” He may have reasoned “ *I’m over my family and they look up to me, but Pharaoh won’t.* ” “ *Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh.* ” ( 3:11 ) He’s a different man isn’t he ? I mean, forty years ago, down there in Egypt, Moses thought everybody knew who he was, but do you see what those years of isolation have done for him ? Do you see now the humility in his life ? Then he was full of self confidence, now he is full of self doubt. Then it was who I am, now it is who am I. Then he thought he was somebody, now he thinks he is nobody.

Then he had all the answers, now all he has are questions. *Then he was willing and not ready now he is ready but not willing.* Mark Twain said, “ *I left home at 18 years of age convinced my father was the most ignorant man I had ever known. I returned at 21 years of age amazed at what the old man had learned in three years.* ” Hopefully, the older we get the more humble we become. Those years in the desert combined with the guilt he felt made Moses feel totally inadequate for the task. Do you hear it in the question ? “ ***Who am I ?*** ” I wonder, is this there someone

here this .... and that’s the way you feel ? Who am I ? Why I can’t serve the Lord, little old me. I wonder have there been things that the Lord has called on to you to do ? Has He called you to,

Share your faith with someone who needs to know about Christ ?

To help in the outreach program of this church ?

To be exercised in a ministry with boys and girls ?

To confront a fellow believer about sin in his life ?

To encourage someone who is having a difficult time ?

Like Moses are you making excuses ? Are you saying, “ *I am not worthy ?* ” My .... do you see how the Lord counteracts this ? For over against (a) we see,

### **(b) THE ADEQUACY OF GOD:**

For God says, “ *Certainly I will be with thee .....* ” ( 3:12 ) Moses may have been inadequate, but his God wasn’t. Did you notice the things here that help us to get beyond ourselves ? What Concern. “ *And he said,* ” What Certainty. “ *Certainly I will.* ” What Consistency. “ *be.* ” He changes not. What Companionship. “ *With.* ” What Condescension. “ *With thee.* ” My .... what more can God promise ? Surely, the presence of God should alleviate all our fears. When Christ give the great commission to His disciples, the great promise to encourage to fulfil it was, “ *Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world.* ” ( Matt 28:20 ) In 1896 Glasgow University conferred on David Livingstone the degree of Doctor of Laws. He rose to speak. He was gaunt and haggard as a

result of his life in Africa. His left arm crushed by a lion hanging helplessly at his side. He announced his resolve to return to Africa. Then he added, “ *Would you like me to tell you what supported me through all the years of exile among a people whose language I could not understand and whose attitude toward me was always uncertain and often hostile. It was this promise of Christ, “ Lo I am with you always .....,” ( Matt 28:20 ) on these words I staked everything and they never failed.*” Yet, this didn’t end the conflicts in Moses’ call to a life of ministry. (1)

## **(2) “ I AM UNLEARNED,”**

Moses is saying to the Lord, “ *I just don’t know enough about who you are.*” You see, his first concern was “ *Who am I ?*” But his second concern was “ *Who are You ?*” My Moses is like us. He didn’t want to go because he was worried he didn’t have all the answers. I mean do you see here,

### **(a) A REQUEST TO THE LORD:**

He says, when the people ask what is the name of this God, what am I to say ? Now asking to know about the name of God was a request to know about God, for the names of God declare the character of God. While it was possible that the Israelites, after all the years of bondage, no longer had a proper concept of God, it appears that Moses was disturbed about his own limited knowledge of the Lord. This is the excuse of ignorance. Moses was saying, “ *Lord, I don’t know what to say. Lord, I can’t be your spokesman in this situation. Why, I wouldn’t have*

*any answers when those folk started firing questions at me.*” My .... can you see that this excuse has a familiar ring to it ? Its one, that is mouthed by many Christians today. “ *Lord, I can’t do that because I’ll get into a corner and won’t know how to handle it. Somebody will ask me, ‘ what about the heathen in Africa ? ’ I’ll get tongue tied. I just don’t have all the answers.*” My .... is that your excuse ? When God calls you, to be a vehicle to deliver those who are in bondage to sin. What do you say ? Are you pleading ignorance ? Are you saying, “ *Lord, I would not know how to go about it.*”

During the 1859 revival in our country an unlearned man got saved. He could do nothing more than tell what the Lord had done for his soul. Due to circumstances he went over to Scotland to work in the mills there. In the factory where he worked 1300 men were employed. So great was the impression made upon them by the simple testimony of that man that no less than 600 of them were led to faith in Christ. Like Moses are you saying, “ *But Lord, I don’t know what to say.*” Did you notice that God would not let Moses off the hook for we see here,

### **(b) A REVELATION OF THE LORD:**

Do you see ( 3:14 ) ? “ *I AM THAT I AM,*” come from the same root word as the word “ *Jehovah.*” Now the word Jehovah in the King James Version is normally translated “ *LORD,*” all capital letters. About 300 times it is also translated “ *GOD,*” all capital letters. The actual name Jehovah only appears seven times in the KJV. But what

does it mean ? When God says, “ *I am that I am,*” He means,

I am a **Person**: I am not impersonal. I am someone you can have fellowship with.

I am **Self-Existent**: God does not need anything or draw from anything for His existence

I am **Eternal**: He has always been and always will be

I am **Unchangeable**: What I was yesterday I am today, and I will be tomorrow.

Didn't the Lord Jesus say, “ *Before Abraham was, I am.*” ( Jn 8:58 ) My .... when Moses said, “ *Who am I ?*” God said it does not matter who you are, “ *I am.*” Moses said, “ *I am nothing,*” God said, “ *I am everything.*” Moses said, “ *I have nothing to offer,*” God said, “ *I am all you need.*” Moses said, “ *I am not someone they will listen to.*” God said, “ *I am, I am, I am.*” My .... have you been offering the same excuses saying, “ *But I don't know all the answers,*” God says to you, “ *I am the answer.*” As long as we are aware of who and what we are nothings and nobody's and we are aware of God is, everything and all we need, we can be a people whom God can use. Now are you beginning to see these excuses ? (1) (2) But Moses does not stop there for he says,

### (3) “ I AM UNAUTHORIZED,”

Do you see that in ( 4:1 ) ? Now we are getting a clearer glimpse of the root of Moses problem. Forty years before Moses had presented himself to the people assuming that

they “ *would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them, but they understood not.*”

( Acts 7:25 ) They rejected Moses saying, “ *Who made thee a prince and a judge over us ?*” ( Ex 2:14 ) Moses still remembered the stinging words and the forceful hand that had “ *thrust him away,*” ( Acts 7:27 ) and now forty years later feelings of fear that had long been repressed suddenly surfaced and overwhelmed him. “ *They will not believe me not hearken unto my voice.*” ( 4:1 ) You see,

#### (a) MOSES WAS SO UNBELIEVING:

I mean do you see what God says in ( 3:18 ) ? But now look at what Moses says in ( 4:1 ) “ *Moses, when you go they are going to listen.*” “ *Right, Lord, but what if they don't listen.*” I can't help but wondering if somewhere inside of that bush, God was saying, “ *Didn't the man hear what I was just saying.*” Do you know what the problem was ? Moses was in his mule mode and you can't reason with a mule. My .... unbelief is so serious but its basically saying, “ *God you are a liar.*” (a) Yet,

#### (b) GOD WAS SO UNDERSTANDING:

For knowing Moses fears He says, “ *Let me show you what I am able to do.*” Do you recall what Paul says ? “ *The Jews require a sign.*” ( 1 Cor 1:22 ) And from now on Moses will experience God's power and work miracles. Now these three signs God gave to Moses meant three things.

### 1. AUTHENTICATION:

The rod became a serpent, the serpent became a rod. Why ? “ *That they may believe that the Lord God .... hath appeared unto thee.* ” ( 4:5 ) God doing wonders to authenticate Moses. This was, by the way, the same reason for the miracles of Christ and the miracles of the apostles, they were primarily for the purpose of proving that He was indeed the Messiah and they were indeed the apostles.

## **2. COOPERATION:**

Moses said they would not believe ( 4:1 ) God said they would and they did. ( 4:31 ) Do you see those three signs ? They all picture cooperation. The rod cast down became a serpent and Moses “ *fled from before it.* ” ( 4:3 ) And, of all things, he was instructed to pick it up by the tail. You just don’t pick up snakes by the tail, but as Moses cooperated with God, the serpent cooperated also. ( 4:4 ) The sickness of leprosy also cooperated with God’s strange healing process as Moses obeyed. ( 4:6,7 ) The Lord even promised that the stream known as the Nile River would cooperate and turn to blood if necessary. ( 4:8,9 ) The lesson learned was that as Moses cooperated with God, the people would cooperate with Moses. My .... could it be that you are at odds with your fellow believer because you are not obeying the Lord ? (1) (2)

## **3. DEMONSTRATION:**

I mean what a demonstration this was of the power of God.

### 1. The Rod: Showed God’s Power Over Something External:

Did you know that the centre piece of Pharaoh’s head dress was a raised cobra ? You see, the Lord was just assuring the Jews that He was greater than Pharaoh and the snake gods he worshipped.

### 2. The Hand: Showed God’s Power Over Something Internal:

The Lord was just showing Israel that He had the power to rescue them from the leprosy of bondage and make them a people again.

“ *And the Lord said unto him, what is that in thine hand ?* ” My .... what do you hold in your hand ? You know, God just uses whatever you’ll make available to Him. Like Moses, we all hold something in our hands. We all have possessions, talents, abilities and relationships that God knows about, they just don’t belong to Him. And what He wants us to do with those possessions and talents is to throw them down. Let them go. You know the next time we read about the rod is in ( 4:20 ) do you know what its called now ? “ *The rod of God.* ” My .... it was no longer Moses rod but God’s rod. With it Moses would bring plagues on Egypt, part the waters of the Red Sea, strike the rock in the wilderness and watch water come forth. With God’s rod Moses would win victories over all his enemies. My .... what do you hold in your hand ? You might say, “ *Well I don’t have much to offer. I am not very talented. I am not very important. And God says, “ That’s good I can use that.* ” When He set out to deliver Israel He did not use a King’s Scepter but a Shepherds Staff. When He wanted to defeat

a giant He did not use a Kings Armor but a Boy's Sling. When He began to build His church He did not use the wisest, most educated men but simple unlearned fishermen. My .... the things that you have, your talents, your relationships, simple as they may be can be might tools in the hands of God if you throw them down and let God have them. Are you using this excuse that no-one will listen to you ? God says, "*Let me do the talking, use what you have got.*" Do you see his 4<sup>th</sup> excuse ?

#### (4) " I AM UNFIT,"

Look at ( 4:10 ) Do you see what was Moses was saying ? He was saying "*I am not a fluent speaker.*"

##### (a) *Moses Talks About His Communicative Skills:*

He's saying, "*Lord I can't get my thoughts together. And even if I do get them together I can't get them out. Lord, you know that I have been keeping company with sheep for all these years. All I am good at now is 'baaa, baaa, baaa.'*" Like this man that was getting ready to bail out of an airplane and he said, "*I'm a little shook up about this.*" He said, "*What do I do ?*" And they said, "*Oh, it's very simple. You just jump out, count to ten, pull the ripcord.*" So as he went hurling toward the ground he passed another man and somebody heard him say, "*T-t-t-t-two.*" Being slow of speech can be a problem. By the way, I think Moses was lying through his teeth. Listen to what Stephen says, he "*was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and in deeds.*" He was powerful in speech and action. Maybe that 40 years in

the desert cooked his brain so much that Moses forgot how eloquent he was with words. But the fact of the matter was that Moses did not a lesson in elocution to get the job done. I wonder can you identify with Moses this .... ? Have you ever found yourself with an opportunity to speak for the Lord, perhaps to testify, you have felt the nudge of the Holy Spirit whispering "*Go ahead,*" but then your flesh shrinks at the thought. The excuse is, "*Lord, I don't have the ability. I can't pull it off. I can't cope with that kind of thing. I'm not a preacher.*" Do you see again how gracious the Lord is with Moses ? (a) Then,

##### (b) *God Talks About His Creative Skills:*

Do you see ( 4:11-12 ) ? That's some verse for the faith healers isn't it ? Do you see what God's saying ? That He made man's mouth and He made man's mind and He is able to give man what He needs when He needs it. My .... time and again God is reminding Moses of His sufficiency. You see, when God calls us to do something, He enables us to do it. *He is sufficient as the Creator, the Enabler and the Teacher.* The Lord says, "*Moses I will give you the necessary words as you need them.*" My .... in light of this, how can you say, "**I can't.**" For God will enable you, empower you and enlighten you. The question is. Are you prepared to trust Him ? Now in ( 4:14 ) it almost sounds as if Moses is saying, "*All right, I'm ready to go.*" Sadly that's not what he meant. Instead it's another excuse. By the way have you got them ? "**I am Unworthy, I am Unlearned, I am Unauthorized, I am Unfit, and now finally,**

## (5) “ I AM UNWILLING,”

Do you what he says in ( 4:13 ) Another translation puts it like this, “ *Oh, my Lord send I pray some other person.* ” In other words, “ *anybody but me Lord.* ” My .... how much does God put up with ? He had settled every difficulty Moses had faced, and yet Moses still wasn't ready to serve. Can you see,

### (a) ***THE RESISTANCE OF MOSES:***

You see, the mask is now off. Moses no longer disguises his rebellious attitude under various excuses. He now plainly tells God to get someone else. I wonder, does this sound like us ? You see, when it comes right down to it, we just don't want to do what God says. We have got other things to do, other priorities to pursue, other places to go. My .... there's always another “ *somebody,* ” that's more convenient, more trustworthy, more equipped. We'd rather just slip away and let somebody, anybody do it, just not me. I wonder, is that you ? (a) And then, there was,

### (b) ***THE ASSISTANCE FOR MOSES:***

Aaron. God is going to send Aaron to assist Moses. But the compromise was less than the best for brother Aaron was not always a help to his brother. My .... beware of second best. How many men have gone into a business partnership and lived to regret the day that they chose that partner ? God was saying to Moses, “ *All right, all right,*

*have it your way Moses. I'll send Aaron too, but it wasn't my best Moses. The day will come when you will wish you'd followed my call on your own. You don't really need Aaron, all you need is Me.* ” The funny thing about Moses plea is he called God “ *Lord,* ” but he did not submit to his Lordship. My .... He's either Lord of all or not Lord at all. Is this not the crux of the matter of excuses ? You see, any time we offer an excuse for not coming to church, not fulfilling a position, not witnessing to some soul, or simply not doing what God says, we are not submitting to His Lordship. You may sing it, “ *He is Lord,* ” but is He really your Lord ? Dr. Graham Scroggie spoke on one occasion on the Lordship of Christ. At the close of the service he was approached by a young lady, a believer whom God had spoken to in the service. “ *And why don't you surrender,* ” enquired Scroggie. “ *Well,* ” she said, “ *I am afraid I should have to do two things.* ” “ *What are they,* ” asked Scroggie. “ *I play the piano in the concert hall and I afraid that I would have to give that up.* ” “ *And the other ?* ” “ *I am afraid that God would send me to China as a missionary.* ”

Opening his Bible at ( Acts 10:14 ) Scroggie read Peters words “ *Not so Lord.* ” “ *Now,* ” said Scroggie, “ *I want you to cross out the words ' not so,' and leave the word ' Lord,' or else cross out the word ' Lord,' and leave ' not so.'* For two hours that girl struggled. When Scroggie returned he looked over her shoulder and saw the tear stained page but the words “ ***not so,*** ” were crossed out. With a radiance in her eyes she left and went home repeating to herself the one word “ *Lord.* ” She was now His disciple and He was truly her Lord. What about you ?

