

4. The flimsy excuses we give to God

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When I was a junior high student in Seoul, South Korea many centuries ago, I had a classmate who had to commute from the outskirts of Seoul by train. Since it took a long time to get to school, he should have left his home early. But being a typical junior high, he didn't. So he always showed up late at the first class. Consequently, he got punished for his tardiness every morning.

Again this particular day, he was late. Our home room teacher got tired of punishing him, so he asked the student, "Give me one good reason why you were late. If it is good enough, you can take a seat without getting punished." The student exclaimed, "The train I was in had a flat tire." The teacher nodded his head and allowed him to take his seat. Then all of sudden it was done to the teacher that the train could not have a flat tire. The student got punished more for his flimsy excuse.

Last week, we have learned that Moses encountered God in the Burning Bush in Mount Horeb in the wilderness. God assured him that He is with the Israelites and He is going to use Moses to deliver them out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

But Moses had several reasons why he was the wrong guy for the job God wanted him to do.

A. EXCUSE #1 - WHAT IF?

Exodus 4:1-9 Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'" 2 So the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod." 3 And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail" (and he reached out 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, has appeared to you." 6 Furthermore the Lord said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom." And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. 7 And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again." So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh. 8 "Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. 9 And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. And the water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land."

The Lord promised Moses that He would be with him all the time. But after that point, and in this passage, Moses' questions show unbelief more than sincere seeking. When Moses made this protest he might as well be saying, "But what if you are wrong, God?" It was good when Moses had no confidence in the flesh. But it is bad that he now lacked confidence in God.

It is not uncommon among the believers of Jesus Christ to have cold feet before we take a step of faith. The excuse we often come up with is "What if". Nothing wrong with preparing everything before the work, but it is wrong to doubt God. Let's ask ourselves when God ever have not fulfilled His promises throughout the history.

Never. We might say, "He didn't do what I asked Him to do." Our requests and prayers might have been completely off from His will. What He promises, He keeps. It is good when we have no confidence in our fleshly capability. But it is bad that we lack confidence in God.

The rod itself was nothing, but in God's hands it became power and authority. God uses what we have, not what we don't have. If we need something to do His work, He supplies them to us.

I can expound this to our finance, too. Some of you might say, "When I have more money, I will give tithe to God." I guarantee you that you won't. If you cannot trust God with your finance now while you have a little, you won't trust Him with more later, because greed kicks in. Tithe and offering are not for God. They are for our faith – trusting God to meet our needs with less. By the authority of the Scripture I can tell you that God meet our needs. He has been doing it in my life.

In v4, we see the faith of Moses when he reached out to grab the snake by tail when God commanded him to. Normally, the snake's tail is not the place to grab. Only the crazy wacko like Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin tries this. I don't do this kind of thing. I might be stupid, but not suicidal. Yet Moses was unharmed. Moses's own hand had killed a man, but in the second miracle God showed him that He could heal the weakness of the flesh and uses Moses for His glory.

Moses is suffering from the self-inflicted failure conscience what he did in 40 years ago. This teaches us a great lesson to us. We shouldn't run ahead of God nor being dragged by Him. We should walk with Him side by side, led by the Holy Spirit to do His work in His way according to His timeline, not ours.

B. EXCUSES #2 - I AM NOT GOOD ENOUGH

Exodus 4:10-17 Then Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." 11 So the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? 12 Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

God had said "I AM" – and all Moses could say was, "I am not!" He was looking at himself and his failures instead of God and His power. In this case, Moses argued that he was not a gifted speaker. But the same God who made the mouth could use it. God does not need eloquence or oratory. He needs only a clean and willing vessel that He can fill with His message.

Even though Moses argued with God that he was not eloquent, I don't believe that his excuse can be justified. Clearly 40 years before this Moses was not slow of speech and slow of tongue. Acts 7:22 says Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.

Maybe he has been talking to his sheep for so long that he might have very limited vocabulary: "Ba-a-a-a-h!"

V11 is a rather difficult passage of Scripture. God declares that He is the One who has created the mute, the deaf and the blind. He takes responsibility for these physical handicaps. I don't know why He does or how He does. I am not about to question Him. God has a purpose in all things.

I have a friend who is the pastor of Calvary Chapel West Houston in Houston, TX. He has a son who is a Down Syndrome. Even though the child may not act like other normal kids, in their parents' eyes he is wonderful and precious. It is a difficult to comprehend the sovereignty of God and He doesn't expect us to do so either.

While Moses was busy making excuses why God couldn't use him, he missed a great lesson in God's message: God is sufficient for us, no matter what real or imagined inadequacies we have.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

C. EXCUSES #3 - LET SOMEBODY ELSE DO IT

Exodus 4:13-17 But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send." 14 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said: "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. 15 Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. 16 So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God. 17 And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs."

Finally, Moses is done with excuses and declares the real state of his heart. Benjamin Franklin once said, "It's common for men to give pretended reasons instead of one real one." God was not angry when Moses came up with all the lousy excuses, but God was angry when he was just plain unwilling.

All of us are called to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people around us. It is not a job for pastors, preachers, evangelists, elders and deacons. All of us. But many people are gun shy about it. The real reason is because they don't want to face rejections from the ones they might evangelize. Bringing that person to Christ is the Holy Spirit's job, not ours. Our assignment is simply becoming a vocal chords for God in words and deeds.

All of us are called to serve one another. Some people think that they shouldn't have to. I call them spiritual snobs in the church. You don't want to be in that category. Because if you do, you are the one who is going to miss out the words from Jesus, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Aaron did turn out to be a source of problems for Moses. Aaron instigated the worship of the golden calf, fashioning the calf himself and building the altar himself. Aaron's sons blasphemed God with impure offerings. At one time, Aaron openly led a mutiny against Moses. How tragic that Moses was willing to trust a weak man of flesh instead of the living God of heaven!

D. EXCUSES #4 - A HAPHAZARD ATTITUDE

Exodus 4:18-31 So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace."

19 And the Lord said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead." 20 Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand. 21 And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. 22 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. 23 So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.'" 24 And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. 25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!" 26 So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"--because of the circumcision. 27 And the Lord said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him. 28 So Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him. 29 Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. 30 And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. 31 So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped. Moses had God's promises, the miraculous signs, and the assistance of his brother Aaron. Yet these verses make it clear that he still was not ready to walk by faith.

V24 puzzles many people and make them to wonder why God would try to kill Moses after He called him to deliver the Israelites from Egypt. It is because of Moses' haphazard attitude toward God's call.

- 1) He didn't tell his father-in-law about the true nature of his trip to Egypt. He was not much of a testimony to Jethro.
- 2) He didn't circumcise his son. God demands that this be set right before Moses enter Egypt and begin to fulfill the call of God. How could he lead Israel if he was failing to lead his own household in things spiritual?

Probably Moses' wife Zipporah objected to the circumcision. Circumcision was designed to teach the Israelites to have no confidence in the flesh. The flesh was to be cut away, and each Israelite was to place his trust in God.

It is important that husband and wife worship and work together for the Lord. Two people should be as one to serve God together, not a hindrance to each other.

You may say, "I am not married." Then, don't be a hindrance to yourself. Just follow God with all of your heart.

If you are the one who has been standing in the way of God and your spouse, take this as a warning from God, please. You need to be right with God. God may have spoken to you time after time through your spouse, yet you are not listening. You might have been insisting on your worldly ways to your godly spouse. Stop before God takes an extreme measure against you or your spouse.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) It is good when we have no confidence in our fleshly capability. But it is bad that we lack confidence in God.

2) We shouldn't run ahead of God nor being dragged by Him. We should walk with Him side by side, led by the Holy Spirit to do His work in His way according to His timeline, not ours.

3) God is sufficient for us, no matter what real or imagined inadequacies we have.

4) God doesn't get angry with us for our inabilities, but our unwilling hearts.

5) It is important that husband and wife worship and work together for the Lord. Two people should be as one to serve God together, not a hindrance to each other.