

THE EXCUSES OF MOSES

Exodus 3:1-4:17

Introduction

1. When God appeared to Moses at the burning bush:
 - a. He called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt.
 - b. In response, Moses offered a series of excuses, questioning his ability to fulfill the task.
2. The excuses Moses presented, and God's responses to them, form the basis of our study:
 - a. Today, as God's people, we too have received a special calling.
 - b. While our call is not to lead a nation from physical bondage, it is to deliver a world lost in the bondage of sin (**Mark 16:15; 1 Peter 2:9-10**):
 - 1) Sadly, we often mirror Moses' behavior, making similar excuses for avoiding the work God has given us.
 - 2) To understand Moses' hesitations, let us begin by recalling how God called him:



Exodus 3:1-10:

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of Elohim, even to Horeb. And the angel of Yahweh appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when Yahweh saw that he turned aside to see, Elohim called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover He said, I am the Elohim of thy father, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon Elohim. And Yahweh said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt” (**Exodus 3:1-10**).

Summary Of Exodus 3:1-10:

Moses, while tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro in the wilderness near Mount Horeb, encounters a burning bush that is not consumed. Approaching it, God calls to him, revealing Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God declares that He has seen the suffering of His people in Egypt and heard their cries for deliverance. He commissions Moses to lead the Israelites to freedom and to a land flowing with milk and honey.

With this background of Moses' calling in mind, we shall examine the five excuses he presented to God:

1. Who am I? (**Exodus 3:11**).
2. What shall I say? (**Exodus 3:13**).
3. Suppose they will not believe me? (**Exodus 4:1**).
4. I am slow of speech and slow of tongue (**Exodus 4:10**).
5. Please send whomever else You may send (**Exodus 4:13**).

1. "WHO AM I?" (Exodus 3:11):

Moses, once a prominent figure in Egypt, found himself struggling with feelings of inadequacy when God called him to lead Israel out of bondage. The transition from royalty to shepherd, along with his age and time away from Egypt, led him to doubt his capability and question, "Who am I?" However, God's assurance of His presence was meant to give Moses confidence that the task was not about Moses' ability but about God's sufficiency. This fear of inadequacy is not unique to Moses; it is a struggle many face today. Yet, just as God empowered Moses and the apostles, He offers us the strength and presence to carry out His work.

a. Moses' Humility And Self-Doubt:

- 1) Though Moses was once a prominent member of Egypt's royal household (see Acts 7:21-22):
 - a) He had since become a lowly shepherd (Exodus 3:1).
 - b) Forty years had passed since he had left Egypt (Acts 7:30).
 - c) Now, at 80 years old, Moses was beyond the average life expectancy of his time (Psalms 90:10).
- 2) These factors caused Moses to question whether he was the right man for God's mission. However, God's response was both immediate and reassuring:
 - a) "Certainly I will be with thee..." (Exodus 3:12).
 - b) God's promise of His presence was meant to provide Moses with confidence and courage.
 - c) As Paul later affirmed, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

b. A Common Excuse Today:

- 1) Many still use this excuse, believing they are insufficient for God's tasks:
 - a) While it is true that we are inadequate on our own (Jeremiah 10:23), God provides sufficiency (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).
 - b) Consider how God empowered the apostles - uneducated and untrained men - to carry out His work (Acts 4:13).
- 2) Jesus offers us the same assurance God gave to Moses: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).
- 3) With God's help, we are able to accomplish anything He calls us to do (Philippians 4:13).

Moses' initial excuse of self-doubt was met with God's unwavering promise of support. Like Moses, we may sometimes feel insufficient for God's call, but God reminds us that our sufficiency comes from Him. We are equipped to do His work through His power, not our own, and must remember that, with God's help, we can rise above any excuses to fulfill His purpose.

2. "WHAT SHALL I SAY?" (Exodus 3:13):

When called by God, Moses faced not only self-doubt but also uncertainty about what to say. Anticipating questions from the Israelites about the nature and authority of God, Moses felt unprepared to provide the necessary answers. However, God addressed this fear directly, providing Moses with the precise words he needed to speak, leaving no room for doubt. This feeling of inadequacy in sharing God's message persists today, with some excusing themselves due to a perceived lack of knowledge. Yet, God has provided a clear and straightforward message - the gospel - and equips His followers to speak with confidence.

a. Moses' Fear Of Uncertainty:

- 1) Moses anticipated that the children of Israel would have questions when he came to them:
 - a) They might ask, "Who is this God who has sent you to us?"
 - b) Or question, "Why should we leave Egypt, where we have lived for over 400 years?" (Genesis 15:13).
- Moses felt inadequate, unsure of how to answer such questions effectively.
- 2) God's response to Moses was clear and direct:
 - a) "Thus shalt thou say..." (Exodus 3:14-15).
 - b) God provided Moses with the exact words to speak, addressing any concerns or doubts the Israelites might have.

b. A Common Excuse Today:

- 1) Similarly, some today excuse themselves by claiming their knowledge is inadequate for sharing God's message.
- 2) Yet, God has provided us with what we need to say:
 - a) The message is straightforward: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (**Mark 16:15-16**).
 - b) The core of the gospel is simple and clear: "Christ died for our sins... was buried, and... rose again the third day" (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**); and as Paul determined, "to know nothing... save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (**1 Corinthians 2:2**).

Moses' fear of uncertainty did not excuse him from God's call, and neither should it excuse us. God supplied Moses with words and wisdom, just as He provides us with the clear message of the gospel to share with others. Our task is not to craft new messages but to faithfully communicate the gospel's simple truth: that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose again for our salvation. With God's guidance, we can trust that He will give us the right words to speak boldly and confidently.

3. "SUPPOSE THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE ME?" (Exodus 4:1):

Moses, having received both his calling and the words to say, still grappled with a fear many face: the fear of rejection. He worried that the Israelites might not believe him or accept the message he was to deliver. This anxiety about being dismissed or seen as a failure prompted God to provide Moses with miraculous signs, demonstrating His power and authenticating Moses' message. Similarly, today, many struggle with sharing the gospel out of fear that others will not believe them. However, just as God provided Moses with signs, He provides believers with the Word and its compelling evidence to give confidence in sharing the message of Christ.

a. Moses' Fear Of Rejection:

- 1) Although Moses had been given words to say, he feared that the people would not believe him or heed his message:
 - a) Was he afraid of failure and rejection by his own people?
 - b) Had he forgotten God's assurance that He would be with him?
- 2) To address Moses' concern, God equipped him with convincing signs to demonstrate His power:
 - a) The Rod: It would turn into a serpent when cast on the ground and back into a rod when picked up (**Exodus 4:2-5**).
 - b) Moses' Own Hand: When placed inside his cloak, it became leprous; when placed back in, it was restored to normal (**Exodus 4:6-8**).
 - c) The Water from the Nile: When poured on the ground, it would turn to blood, showing God's power over nature (**Exodus 4:9**).

b. A Common Excuse Today:

- 1) Many hesitate to share the gospel because of fear of rejection or failure.
- 2) Yet, just as God gave Moses evidence to convince the Israelites, He has provided us with the necessary proofs to persuade honest and sincere seekers:
 - a) The Word of God, which is "able to produce faith" (**Romans 10:17; John 20:30-31**).
 - b) Especially powerful are its evidences concerning the resurrection of Christ, fulfilled prophecies, and the unity and reliability of scripture.
 - With such proofs and assurances, we have no valid reason for not sharing the gospel with others!

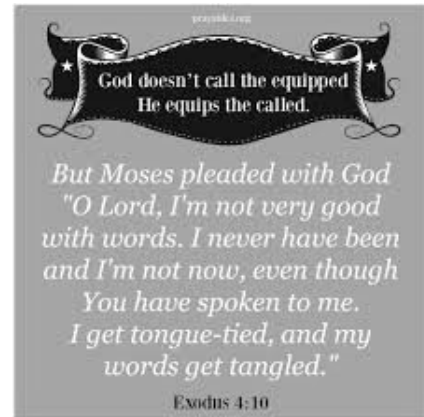
Fear of rejection is a powerful deterrent, but God equips His people with everything needed to proclaim the gospel effectively. Moses was given signs to validate his message, and we are given the powerful evidence of God's Word, fulfilled prophecies, and the resurrection of Christ. With such proofs at our disposal, we can be confident that the gospel is not only true but persuasive to those who are sincere. Therefore, let us not allow the fear of disbelief to silence our proclamation of the truth.

4. "I AM SLOW OF SPEECH AND SLOW OF TONGUE" (Exodus 4:10):

Moses' fourth excuse was rooted in his lack of confidence in his speaking abilities. Claiming to be "slow of speech and slow of tongue," Moses doubted his capacity to effectively communicate God's message. Yet God, knowing the limitations of those He calls, assured Moses that He would compensate for any weaknesses and provide support through Aaron. Many believers today face similar concerns, feeling inadequate in their ability to share the gospel. However, God's power is not limited by human frailties, as seen through examples like the apostle Paul, D.L. Moody, and countless others who have overcome challenges to serve Him faithfully.

a. Moses' Doubt In His Own Credibility:

- 1) Moses protests that he lacks eloquence and is not skilled in speech.
- 2) However, God is not swayed by this excuse:
 - a) God is fully aware of the abilities and limitations of those He calls: "Who hath made man's mouth?" (Exodus 4:11).
 - b) God compensates for any human shortcomings, promising to be with Moses and teach him what to say (Exodus 4:12). Additionally, God arranges for Aaron to be Moses' spokesman (Exodus 4:14-16), who was already on his way to meet Moses (Exodus 4:27).



b. A Common Excuse Among Christians:

- 1) Some today echo Moses' excuse, claiming a lack of eloquence or ability to speak effectively. Yet, this did not hinder the apostle Paul, who wrote:

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).
- 2) Others have also overcome speech challenges to serve the Lord:
 - a) There are those who have conquered speech impediments to preach the gospel boldly:

D.L. Moody, a well-known preacher of the 19th century, faced significant challenges in his speaking ability. Lacking formal education and struggling with grammar and pronunciation, he was often mocked for his unpolished speech. Some would openly criticize and ridicule his sermons, pointing out his mistakes and questioning his abilities. Despite these challenges, Moody was determined to serve God and share the gospel. He did not let his speech impediment or the scorn of others hinder him. Instead, he relied on God's strength, trusting that God could use him, regardless of his shortcomings. In time, his passion for evangelism and his dedication to the message of Christ made him one of the most influential evangelists of his time.
 - b) One example is of a person who, despite stammering, faithfully preached whenever possible.
- 3) Even if we struggle with public speaking, we can still contribute by arranging for others to share the gospel, as Cornelius did by gathering his family and friends to hear Peter (Acts 10:24, 33).

Moses' perceived lack of eloquence did not disqualify him from God's calling, and neither do our own shortcomings. God often uses those who seem inadequate to accomplish great things, demonstrating that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Whether by speaking boldly or supporting others in proclaiming the gospel, every believer has a role to play. The examples of Paul, D.L. Moody, and countless others show that God can and will use willing hearts to spread His message, regardless of their abilities or limitations. Let us trust in God's sufficiency rather than our own inadequacy, stepping forward in faith to fulfill His calling.

5. “PLEASE SEND WHOMEVER ELSE YOU MAY SEND” (Exodus 4:13):

Moses’ final excuse was the most revealing: a plea for God to send someone else. Beneath all the previous objections lay a deep reluctance to accept God’s calling. When confronted with Moses’ hesitation, God’s patience reached its limit, and He made clear that Moses was obligated to fulfill his mission. This resistance is not unique to Moses—believers today may also cover their unwillingness to obey God with various excuses. At the heart of such reluctance is a desire to pass God’s call to someone else, which can provoke His displeasure, as it did with Moses.

a. Moses’ Reluctance Revealed:

- 1) At its core, Moses' excuses were a smokescreen - revealing that he simply did not want to accept God's calling.
- 2) Once Moses’ reluctance was exposed, God’s patience wore thin:
 - a) The Lord's anger was kindled against Moses (Exodus 4:14a).
 - b) God’s instructions in Exodus 4:15-17 - highlighting the word “shall” - show the seriousness of Moses’ obligation and God's displeasure at his unwillingness.

b. A Warning For Believers Today:

- 1) We, too, can offer excuses that act as smokescreens to cover our unwillingness to obey God’s calling.
- 2) Deep down, we may desire that God use someone else for the work.
- 3) Our hesitance reveals that we are often unwilling to do what God has asked of us.
- 4) But we must remember that God’s anger is kindled against those who fail to live up to their calling, just as it was with Moses (Matthew 25:24-30; James 4:17).

Moses' reluctance reminds us that God’s calling requires obedience without hesitation. When we hide behind excuses to avoid fulfilling God’s purposes, we risk incurring His displeasure, as seen in the parable of the talents and the admonition to do what is right (Matthew 25:24-30; James 4:17). We must examine our own hearts to see if we are resisting God’s call and resolve to step forward in faith, trusting that He equips those He calls. God desires willing servants who respond wholeheartedly, without asking for another to take their place.

Conclusion:

1. Moses eventually overcame his excuses and answered God's call:

- a. Empowered by God's presence, he returned to Egypt (Exodus 4:18-20).
- b. With God's help, he led the Israelites out of their bondage, fulfilling God’s promise (Exodus 12:41-42; Psalms 105:26-43).

2. But what about us? How will we respond to God’s call in our lives?:

- a. Will we boldly proclaim the gospel to those in spiritual bondage, trusting God’s power to work through us? (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).
- b. Or will we, like Moses at first, hide behind excuses, risking the displeasure of God for neglecting our calling? (Matthew 25:24-30; James 4:17).

The choice is ours, but let us resolve not to be hindered by excuses.

3. God is calling each one of us to respond:

- a. If you have not yet obeyed the gospel, will you set aside excuses and come to Christ today? “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).
- b. If you are a Christian, do not delay in fulfilling the work God has entrusted to you. As Paul wrote, “Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Today is the day to answer God's call, trusting that with His help, we are sufficient for any task He places before us (Philippians 4:13; 2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

Summary:

- 1. Overcoming Self-Doubt And Inadequacy:** Moses initially doubted his ability to fulfill God's calling, feeling unworthy and insufficient for the task. However, God reassured him of His presence, reminding Moses (and us) that God equips and strengthens those He calls (**Exodus 3:11-12; Philippians 4:13**).
- 2. Trusting God's Message And Power:** When Moses worried about what to say and feared rejection, God provided both the message and miraculous signs to confirm His authority. Similarly, God provides believers today with His Word and evidences to confidently proclaim the gospel (**Exodus 3:13-4:9; Mark 16:15-16**).
- 3. Avoiding Reluctance And Excuses:** At the heart of Moses' excuses was a reluctance to accept God's call, ultimately asking God to send someone else. This serves as a warning to believers not to hide behind excuses, but to respond willingly to God's call and fulfill His purposes with faith and obedience (**Exodus 4:13-17; James 4:17**).

Applications:

- 1. Embrace God's Call With Confidence:** When God calls us to serve, we may feel unworthy or inadequate, like Moses. However, instead of dwelling on our weaknesses, we should trust in God's strength and presence, knowing He equips those He calls (**2 Corinthians 3:5-6**). Embrace each opportunity to serve with confidence that God is working through you.
- 2. Prepare To Share The Gospel Boldly:** Just as Moses was given God's words to speak, we have been entrusted with the message of the gospel. Rather than hesitating out of fear of not knowing what to say, rely on the simplicity and power of God's Word (**Romans 1:16**). Be prepared to share your faith boldly, trusting God to provide the words and wisdom needed to reach others.
- 3. Respond To God's Call Without Excuses:** It is easy to fall into the trap of making excuses to avoid God's calling, whether due to fear, insecurity, or reluctance. Reflect on areas in your life where you may be avoiding obedience, and commit to responding to God's call wholeheartedly, without delay or excuse (**James 1:22**). Seek to be a willing servant, ready to do God's will, wherever He leads.

Questions:

1. What was the first excuse Moses gave when God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt?
2. How did God respond to Moses' excuse of inadequacy?
3. What concern did Moses have about speaking to the children of Israel?
4. What signs did God give Moses to demonstrate His power and confirm his message?
5. Why did Moses claim to be "slow of speech and slow of tongue"?
6. How did God address Moses' concern about his speaking ability?
7. What is the deeper issue behind Moses' final excuse: "Please send whomever else You may send"?
8. What was God's reaction to Moses' continued excuses?
9. How does Moses' reluctance serve as a warning for believers today?
10. What assurance does Jesus give to believers that parallels God's promise to Moses?

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Questions & Answers

1. What was the first excuse Moses gave when God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt?

Moses questioned, “Who am I?” doubting his worthiness and ability to fulfill God’s mission (**Exodus 3:11**).

2. How did God respond to Moses’ excuse of inadequacy?

God reassured Moses by promising, “Certainly I will be with thee,” indicating that His presence would empower Moses (**Exodus 3:12**).

3. What concern did Moses have about speaking to the children of Israel?

Moses feared that the Israelites would question his authority and ask, “Who is this God who sent you?” (**Exodus 3:13**).

4. What signs did God give Moses to demonstrate His power and confirm his message?

God gave Moses three signs: a rod turning into a serpent, Moses' hand becoming leprous and then being restored, and water from the Nile turning to blood (**Exodus 4:2-9**).

5. Why did Moses claim to be “slow of speech and slow of tongue”?

Moses doubted his ability to speak effectively and feared that his lack of eloquence would hinder his message (**Exodus 4:10**).

6. How did God address Moses' concern about his speaking ability?

God assured Moses that He would be with his mouth and teach him what to say. Additionally, God provided Aaron as a spokesperson for Moses (**Exodus 4:12-16**).

7. What is the deeper issue behind Moses’ final excuse: “Please send whomever else You may send”?

Moses’ final plea revealed his reluctance to accept God’s call, showing that he did not want to undertake the mission (**Exodus 4:13**).

8. What was God’s reaction to Moses’ continued excuses?

God’s anger was kindled against Moses, emphasizing the seriousness of His call and the obligation Moses had to fulfill it (**Exodus 4:14**).

9. How does Moses' reluctance serve as a warning for believers today?

Moses’ excuses act as a reminder that we, too, may resist God’s call by hiding behind excuses. Such reluctance can provoke God’s displeasure, as it shows unwillingness to obey His commands (**James 4:17**).

10. What assurance does Jesus give to believers that parallels God’s promise to Moses?

Jesus promises His followers, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” reassuring believers of His constant presence and support as they fulfill His mission (**Matthew 28:20**).