

## Excuses, Excuses - Exodus 3:11-15 - 4:1-17

### Introduction: "Excuses"

Excuses, excuses, you'll hear them every day.  
The Devil he'll supply them, if the church you stay away.  
When people come to know the Lord, the Devil always loses  
So to keep them folks away from church, he offers them excuses.

In the summer it's too hot. And, in the winter, it's too cold.  
In the spring time when the weather's just right, you find some place else to go.  
Well, it's up to the mountains or down to the beach or to visit some old friend.  
Or, to just stay home and kinda relax and hope that some of the kin folks will start dropping in.

Well, the church benches are too hard. And, that choir sings way too loud.  
Boy, you know how nervous you get when you're sitting in a great big crowd.  
The doctor told you, "Now, you better watch them crowds. They'll set you back."  
But, you go to that old ball game because you say "it helps you to relax."

Well, a headache Sunday morning and a backache Sunday night.  
But by work time Monday morning, you're feeling quite alright.  
While one of the children has a cold, "Pneumonia, do you suppose?"  
Why the whole family had to stay home, just to blow that poor kid's nose.

Well, the preacher he's too young. And, maybe he's too old.  
The sermons they're not hard enough. And, maybe they're too bold.  
His voice is much too quiet-like. Sometimes he gets too loud.  
He needs to have more dignity. Or, else he's way too proud.

Well, the sermons they're too long. And, maybe they're too short.  
He ought to preach the word with dignity instead of "stomp and snort."  
Well, that preacher we've got must be "the world's most stuck up man."  
Well, one of the lady's told me the other day, "Well, he didn't even shake my hand."

Excuses, excuses, you'll hear them every day.  
The Devil he'll supply them if the church you stay away.  
When people come to know the Lord, the Devil always loses  
So to keep them folks away from church, he offers them excuses.

We know how to give excuses don't we? Now, I don't know for sure, but the lead character in tonight's message may be the source of our excuse making, because this guy was good at it. We're talking about Moses. Moses, at age 40, thought he could deliver his people from slavery in Egypt but he failed. At age 80, after spending 40 years shepherding in the Sinai desert, God called him to do just that. In **Exodus 3:10 (NIV)** God said, *"So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."* Moses at age 80 was not nearly so ready to be a deliverer as Moses at age 40 was. So he began to offer excuses as to why he was not the one to go for God. So let's examine five excuses ole Moses gave to God.

## 1. Excuse #1: I'm a Nobody (11-12).

God had no sooner said, *"I am sending you..."* than Moses replied, *"Who me?"*

Moses at 40 felt well equipped and anxious for the task. Moses at 80 felt completely inadequate for the task.

Age does that doesn't it? Hopefully the older we get, the more humble we become. When we are young we think we have all the answers. When we get older, we realize we don't even know all the questions. Young seminary students think they understand the Bible. Older pastors realize they'll never fully understand even a small portion of Scripture. Mark Twain said, *"I left home at 18 convinced my father was the most ignorant man I had ever known. I returned at 21 amazed at what the old man had learned in three years."*

At 80, Moses did not feel up to the task. He'd committed murder at 40, and as a result, he faced the consequence of 40 years in the desert. Those years in the desert coupled with the guilt he felt made him feel entirely inadequate for the task. Do you hear it in the question, *"Who am I?"*

But God promised Moses in verse 12, *"I will be with you."*

When God said, *"I am sending you to Pharaoh"* Moses got the wrong idea. He thought God wanted him to deliver Israel. Wrong! God was going to deliver Israel; He was simply going to use Moses to do it. Moses would be a tool in God's hands. A shovel or a rake or a broom or a mop doesn't do the work! The person using the tool does.

God could have used a variety of tools for the task. He didn't *need* Moses. He chose to *use* Moses. He could have sent an angel. He could have placed a burning bush or a smoking pyramid smack in the middle of Egypt and spoke to the Pharaoh directly. God doesn't *need* us. He chooses to *use* us. *He invites us to join Him in His work.*

When my boys were young, I didn't *need* them to do things around the house. I could mow the lawn, wash the car, or take out the trash just fine by myself. But, I knew that if they'd help me, we'd bond. We'd grow together. That's why God invites us to join Him in His work. When we do, we grow close to Him.

Moses asked, *"Who am I,"* but who Moses was, is not the issue. The issue is, who was with Moses. You see, we can have good days and bad days. We have days when we can dream dreams, and days when we can't see past our own noses. We have bright days of certainty and dark days of doubts. But listen, God is with us EVERY DAY.

Let me give you this example. What does a fruit tree look like in winter? Barren? lifeless? If you didn't

know better you would swear it is dead. But when you look at that same tree in the spring and summer it is covered in leaves and fruit. It has to go through a dormant season before the fruitful season.

It's the same with us. Sometimes we are growing. Sometimes we bear fruit. At other times we're dormant, but we're still alive, and God is still working in us and through us.

In fact, Paul tells us that God wants to work in us. In **Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)** he says, "*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us...*" If we'll let God work in us, we can accomplish some amazing things.

Your excuse for not doing anything for God may be, "*I'm just a nobody.*" You may feel totally inadequate right now. But, I'm here to tell you today that we serve a God who is Somebody! He is totally adequate. In Him, you have all you need to do any job He asks you to do. If He's calling you today to get up and get busy, quit using the excuse of "*I'm a nobody who can't.*" Because you are serving a Somebody who can!

## **2. Excuse #2: I Don't Know Your Name (13-22).**

Moses is like us. He didn't want to go because he was worried he didn't have all the answers. He says, when the people ask what is the name of this God, what am I to say?

Now Moses knew the God he was speaking with. The Lord identified Himself in v.6 as "*the God of your father, the God of Abraham... Isaac and... Jacob.*" Moses also knew that after 400 years many of the Hebrews worshipped the false gods of Egypt. He wanted some assurance.

What Moses was really asking was not so much "*What's Your Name?*" but "*What kind of God are You?*"

In vs. 14, God told him His name is "*I Am who I Am*" and Moses was to say to the Hebrews, "*I Am has sent me to you.*"

This is the first revelation of God's name. Names are always important in Scripture.

When God says "*I Am,*" He means: **I Am a person.** I Am not impersonal. I Am someone you can have fellowship with. When God says "*I Am,*" He means: **I Am self-existent.** I have no beginning and no end. We might say, "*I am what I am*" but God says, "*I AM WHO I AM.*" He depends on no one else for His existence.

When God says "*I Am,*" He means: **I Am eternal.** I always have been and always will be.

When God says "*I Am,*" He means: **I Am unchangeable.** What I was yesterday, I am today, and I will be tomorrow. I can be trusted. I will not go away. We may ignore Him or reject Him now, but God still remains.

In vs.15, when He said, "*This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation,*" He was saying that "*I Am*" also referred to Jesus, the Christ.

Didn't Jesus say, "*Before Abraham was, I AM?*" Didn't He also say, "*I am the bread of life;*" "*I am the light of the world;*" "*I am the door;*" "*I am the good shepherd;*" "*I am the resurrection and the life;*" "*I am the way, the truth, and the life?*"

When Moses said, "*Who am I?*" God said it doesn't 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.*"

Perhaps you've offered the same excuses, saying, "*But I don't know all the answers,*" God says to you, "*I am the answer!*" As long as we're aware of who and what we are - nothings and a nobodys, and are aware of who God is - everything and all we need - We can be people God can use.

### **3. Excuse #3: No One will Believe Me (4:1-9).**

Moses left Egypt a prince. Now as an 80-year-old shepherd he is to return. This would be like a young lawyer leaving Washington D.C. and returning 40 years later as a grizzled old wilderness guide.

Imagine him saying, "*Okay people, I'm the answer to your prayers. I'm your man!*" No wonder he said in 4:1, "*What if they do not believe me or listen to me?*" He asks what is he supposed to do if they say, "*The Lord did not appear to you.*"

God gave Moses a sign of His authority. I think Moses was saying, "*God, I believe you, but we are going to need more than this.*" It is as though God says, "*Okay Moses, let's see what you have in your hand.*"

Before, Moses' hand had been young, smooth and well manicured. It had been fit to hold a king's scepter. Now it was aged, and callused. All it held was a rough stick, a "*rod,*" the staff of a shepherd. God told him to "*cast it on the ground.*"

Like Moses, we all hold something in our hands. We all have possessions, abilities and relationships that God knows about, they just don't belong to Him. What He wants us to do with those possessions, is throw them down. Let them go.

When Moses threw the "*rod*" down, "*it became a serpent*" and "*Moses fled from it.*" God told him to "*take it up by the tail.*" Of course when he did, it became a stick again.

The next time we read about the "*rod*" is in v.20 where it is called "*the rod of God.*" It was no longer Moses' rod but God's rod! With it, Moses would bring plagues upon 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.

What do you hold in your hand? You might say, *"Well, I don't have much to offer. I'm not very talented. I'm not very important."* And God says, *"That's good! I can use that!"* God has done some mighty things with a lot less. When He set out to deliver Israel, He didn't use a king's scepter but a shepherd's staff. When He wanted to defeat a giant, He didn't use a king's armor but a boy's sling. When He began to build His kingdom, he didn't choose the wisest and most educated men but simple, uneducated fishermen.

The things you have, your abilities and relationships, simple as they might be, can be mighty tools in the hands of God if you'll throw them down, and let God have them. You might use the excuse that nobody will listen to you, but God says, *"Let Me do the talking, Use what you've got!"*

#### **4. Excuse #4: I Can't Do It (10-12).**

Moses tells God in vs. 10, *"O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past, nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."*

Moses was lying through his teeth. Listen to **Acts 7:22 (NIV)** *"Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action."* Maybe that 40 years in the desert cooked his brain so that Moses forgot how eloquent he was with words.

But the fact of the matter was that Moses didn't need a lesson in *Hooked on Phonics* to get the job done. He just needed to trust God's promise.

God was going to do the speaking, the leading and the delivering. He told Moses, *"I will help you speak, and I will teach you what to say."* It's the same with us. If God has called you to do or say something, you can't use the excuse of *"I can't."* He will equip and empower you to do the job.

#### **5. Excuse #5: Someone Else Could Do It Better (13-17).**

Finally, look at the last-ditch excuse Moses offers in v.13. It says, *"O Lord, please send someone else to do it!"*

Sounds just like a lot of us. When it comes right down to it, we just don't want to do what God says. We've got other things to do, other places to go, other pleasures to pursue. 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!

The funny thing about Moses plea here is that he called God *"Lord"* but didn't want to surrender to His Lordship. Listen, He's either *"Lord of all"* or not *Lord at all."*

**Conclusion:** And that is the crux of the matter of excuses. Anytime we offer an excuse, whether it's for

not coming to church, not serving a position, not witnessing to someone, or simply not doing what God says, we're ultimately not submitting to His Lordship. We may call Him Lord, but is He really our Lord? Not if we continue to offer excuse after excuse after excuse, time, after time, after time.

Just as God called Moses, He is calling each of us to service and obedience. Every time Moses offered an excuse, God answered. Next time, don't offer God your excuses offer Him your obedience.