

## EXODUS 3:11-22

### INTRODUCTION

Last time we looked at Moses call, as a young man in Pharaoh's household Moses may well have dreamed of leading The Israelites out of captivity and into the Promised Land. He had tried to take matters into his own hands when he was 40 years old but his attempt ended with the death of an Egyptian and his own exile from Egypt. He fled to Midian where he met Jethro and married one of his daughters.

Since that time he has been working quietly looking after Jethro's sheep. God was teaching him patience, his character was being shaped but now his time has come to be God's man. God called him out of the burning bush, he was to be leader of God's people, He was to go to Pharaoh and speak God's word. Perhaps as a younger man Moses would have relished this moment but now he is 80 years old (Acts 7:30) and perhaps the prospect seems a little more daunting than before.

Whatever the reason Moses is now reluctant to be God's man to lead Israel and in this section that we are looking at I want to deal with two questions that Moses asked God. Then the next time we look at this book we will continue on into chapter four and look at three more questions. Most of these questions seem quite sensible at first sight but I want to suggest that they are only excuses for not obeying the voice of the Lord.

#### 1. WHO AM I? (v 11)

Moses received his orders from the Lord (v 10) now in reply, Moses raises the question who am I? He obviously felt very inadequate for the task, he was now 80 and I suppose he thought he didn't have the same strength that he once had, and leading the people out of Egypt is going to be physically very demanding. However, his biggest concern was that he did not feel worthy of carrying out such an enormous task.

What lies behind Moses question is the thought 'I am not able to do this, this is just too much Lord.' Now distrusting ourselves is not a bad thing, asking 'who am I' is a good thought to have for as soon as we think that we are the right person for the task and wonder why it has taken God so long to ask me to do it then you can guarantee that defeat is just around the corner. However 'who am I' can also be used as an excuse for our failure to trust God; it can be used as an excuse for unbelief.

The right response to God's call is who am I but by the grace of God I will trust in you O God and I humbly will obey your word. I have seen false humility used as an excuse for our failure to serve God. We are all asked to serve him, God knows that we are not worthy or able for such a task, but that is how God gets all the glory, for as we humbly obey and trust in God then God by his grace empowers us so that we can serve him and are used by him to accomplish his purposes. When people see God at work through us then they will praise God and glorify his name that He can take someone like me to accomplish his purposes. But for Moses his 'who am I' is simply an excuse for not obeying God's call. Now his excuse is understandable even if we cannot agree with it.

Moses was probably afraid to go back to Egypt because after all he had to flee for his life from Egypt and even though the Pharaoh who had threatened his life is now dead this new one does not seem any more favourable towards the Israelites for they are still in slavery. What if this new Pharaoh carried out the previous edict to have Moses killed? But poor Moses seems to have forgotten that he was not being called to succeed in his own power but in God's power.

That is why God assures Moses of his presence (v 12). What God is saying to Moses is; 'Moses you are right you are not able to do this task in your own strength but Moses I am with you and

therefore you can do it (Philippians 4:13).’ You are not on your own Moses I am with you. What a comfort this is to us, we have received God’s call to salvation and now we are called to serve Him. It might be that we are being asked by the Lord to do something and we think we are not able to do. But if God calls us he equips us and he does so by his presence so that we do not do anything in our own strength but in the strength of the Lord. Our enemy the devil might put many difficulties in our way but we can rest assured that God is with us and therefore will empower us to do his work.

There are Christians who use this sort of excuse for their failure to obey the Lord in evangelism. It might be God wants you to do some door to door work; you might have done it in the past but now feel unable to do it because you think you are inadequate.

We’ll be assured God is with you. It might be Children’s work or personal work or whatever that God is calling you to do but you are refusing to do so because you feel so inadequate. Well here is the good news God says I will be with you. This very same promise comes to us today through the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:20) if there is any of us here today who feel inadequate to carry out a task which the Lord has called you to then you should remember this great promise from the Lord Jesus.

This means that His power is with us as it always has been with his people. His grace is available to us so that we can obey Him and serve him in our everyday lives. In order to assure Moses further God promises him a sign (v 12). Moses will bring the people out of Egypt and they will come to this same mountain where God called Moses (Mount Sinai) and when that happens then it will be a sign to Moses that He is doing what the Lord desires.

This sign is fulfilled in Exodus chapter 19 but the thing that I want us to notice is that the sign is only given and fulfilled after Moses steps out in obedient faith You see that is how God works, he calls us and we might have many fears and doubts we might actually make excuses why we should not obey the Lord but it is only as we step out in faith that the Lord assures us that we are doing what the Lord desires. Let me illustrate this from my own experience concerning my call to the full time service.

I rebelled and the issue was money, but God proved himself month after month during my bible college training. You see we so often miss out on many blessings from the hand of the Lord because we do not step out in faith.

## 2. WHAT SHALL I TELL THEM? (v 13)

Moses raises this second objection to his call. When he returns to Egypt Moses understands that the Hebrews will want to know the name of the God who sent him. In bible times people’s names were very important for a name signified who the person was. If you knew someone’s name then you knew a great deal about him or her. The person’s name expressed his or her character. This same principle applies to the gods of various nations. Different names express aspects of that god’s character.

The God of the bible is known by various Hebrew names Elohim = strength or might. Adonai = Lord, Master. Moses had known the Lord for a long time. His parents had taught him about the Lord and 40 years earlier his faith in the Lord had led him to give up the privileges of life at Pharaoh’s court for the hardships of identifying with God’s people (Hebrews 11:24-27). Yet now he asks the Lord what is his name?

It’s not that Moses or the people had forgotten God’s name but it seems likely that what is being asked is; what name Moses did he use when he appeared to you, for remember names were very important, it would confirm that it was truly God who appeared to Moses. Once again God

responds to Moses question (v 14). God reveals his name as Yahweh or I am who I am. The name means 'being I am who I am.' The name signifies first of all that God is self-existent that He determines his own existence and He is independent of anything else for his being. He is autonomous of creation.

Secondly it means that He is unchanging he is the same yesterday and today and forever. And finally his name implies the eternity of his being; he has always been and always will be. I don't have time to go into this but you can see the significance of Jesus 'I am' sayings in the New Testament. Jesus is claiming I am the great eternal unchanging self existent God. Now in revealing this name to Moses and then to the Israelites God was teaching many lessons here.

God is telling Moses I have always existed, he is the same God of your forefathers, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and I am the God of all my people of every generation not only in the past but in the future (v 15). Now let's set this in the context of Moses excuses and fears. He is being called to do a task that he feels unable to do, he has no confidence in his own ability to carry it out but now he is being told that the God who has promised to go with him is none other than the God who proved himself time and time again to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

He is the self existent, eternal and unchangeable God. We need to remember that as well, God has called all of us who are saved to service. We might have many fears and excuses that we use so that we can get out of our call to serve our Lord and Master. But God brushes all those excuses aside, by promising us his presence and who is this God that is with us?

He is eternal and unchanging, He is everywhere present, He is the all seeing and all knowing God and this is the God that is with us. Now what excuses have we for failing to serve him, as we should? The truth is we have none for our God is the great 'I am;' yet we still make excuses time and time again for our failure to serve him and to be committed to him and His church. Our God is the God who made a covenant with Abraham and committed himself to all who believe in Abraham's God.

The events of the bible should be an encouragement to us for the God who was with Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul to name a few is the same God who is with us. He has not changed in any way, He is not less powerful and although his ways of doing things may have changed, His character and person has not changed in any way whatsoever. Therefore if He proved himself to all of these great saints of the past then why do we make excuses for our failure to heed his call to serve?

We all need to step out in faith and trust our God and then watch as we experience his grace and mercy towards us as we seek to serve him. Now the Lord further encourages Moses and continues to make it easy for him to obey by telling Moses what is going to happen in the coming years. God graciously outlined the whole story of the Exodus in verses 16-22, and he ended it by saying that the children of Israel would leave Egypt loaded down with great possessions given to them by the Egyptians.

This was exactly what God had promised Abraham (Genesis 15:14). God instructs Moses to go (v 16) and tell the elders who were the leaders of the people that God (Yahweh) sees their plight. God has witnessed all their suffering and now he is going to act. The God is the "I am" who always existed and always cares for his people. What words of comfort to Moses who is afraid and not wanting to obey the Lord. Moses I care for you and all my people I am with you now go Moses.

My dear friends have you been holding back on serving the LORD have you been making excuses why you are not committed to his cause or why you are not involved in this or that aspect of his work? Then be assured God is with you and He cares for you and although like the Israelites there

are many trials and difficulties ahead, God's purpose for you is to bless you, use you and ultimately to bring great glory to his name through you.

So let's not make excuses, if we have been holding back in our service let us today renew our commitment to our God and let us go and serve him remembering that we go in his power and with his presence. The great 'I am' is our God today, so do not make excuses but boldly step out in faith as together we seek to trust him and serve him in order that glory is brought to his great and worthy name

Amen