A Study of the Life of Moses   
Sermon # 5  
  
“Excuses Instead of Service”  
Exodus 3:10-15, 4: 1-17  
Dr. John R. Hamby  
  
Why is that we feel that we can offer excuses when it comes to things of the church that would be ridiculous if used anywhere else. Have you ever wondered what would happen if people were as intense and committed and determined about church as they are about sports – or any number of other pastimes. Some years ago Moody Monthly ran a piece which included excuses which a fellow might use for quitting sports.  
“Every time I went they asked for money.  
The people with whom I had to sit didn’t seem very friendly.  
The seats were too hard and uncomfortable.  
The coach never came to see me.  
The referee made a decision with which I could not agree.  
I was sitting with some hypocrites – they only came to see what others were wearing.  
Some games went into overtime, and I was late getting home.  
The band played numbers that I had never heard before.  
The games were scheduled when I want to do other things.  
My parents took me to too many games when I was growing up. Since I read a book on sports, I feel that I know more than the coaches anyhow.  
I don’t want to take my children, because I want them to choose for themselves what sport they like best.” (as quoted by Charles Swindoll. The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart And 1,501 Other Stories. (Nashville: Word, 1998.) p. 189]  
You need to remember that in Exodus 3, we have seen God tell Moses that he has heard the cry of Israel for deliverance and that he is now ready to deliver them. Then the surprise came in verse ten when God said, “Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” We are going to see today that when God confronts Moses with a call he offers, “Excuses Instead of Service.” Have you ever responded that way?   
\*You’re asked to teach a class - the excuses start.  
\* You’re asked to serve in the nursery - the excuses start.  
\* God put in on your heart to share your faith with a friend or neighbor – the excuses start.  
\* You’re made aware of someone with a need that you could provide – the excuses start.  
\* In fact if you’re asked to do just about anything for the Lord and the excuses start. “I’m too busy, I’m already doing this, get someone else.”  
Sometimes our excuses pile up and get in the way of doing something for God. I read a humorous story about some GI’s on furlough that I think illustrates this. “The commanding officer was furious when nine GIs who had been out on passes failed to show up for morning roll call. Not until 7 p.m. 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 over 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, etc. By the time the ninth man reported in, the colonel had grown weary of it.

"Okay," he growled, "now 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 in the road, we had trouble getting through." Excuses! (Contributed by John F. King ) Sometimes our excuses hold us back from accomplishing anything for God.   
Moses had his “reasons” for not following the call of God. Moses begins a series of five reasons to demonstrate sufficient weakness so as not to be responsible for the call which God had given him.   
  
Excuse One – The “Who Me” Excuse. (3:11-12)  
The first excuse that Moses offers is kind of pitiful, but see if it does not sound like something that you may have said to God. Verse eleven says, “But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” Moses no doubt remembers his earlier failures. Stephen relates the story in chapter seven of the Book of Acts, (vv. 23-29), ““Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. (24) And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. (25) For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. (26) And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’ (27) But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? (28) Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?”   
When Moses tried this deliverance thing 40 years earlier, he was neither believed nor listened to. If they did not believe Moses 40 years prior, why should they believe him now. It is a terrible thing to believe that when we speak that no one is going to listen to us or believe us. But the past is redeemable. We may feel that everything is set in concrete. But the truth is that things change. People change. We change. But what Moses had failed to realize is that the people of Israel and he himself are at a different spiritual place than they were 40 years earlier. Moses is terrified of being rejected and feeling like a failure.   
God answered Moses in verse twelve; “So He said, “I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”   
Moses first excuse expressed doubt in himself, his second excuse unfortunately, however, expresses doubt in God.   
  
Excuse Two – “By What Authority” (3:13-15)   
“Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”   
God didn’t ask Moses to go and explain all that he did   
not know about God. He just asked him to go and explain what he did know!!!  
God responses in verses fourteen and fifteen, “And God   
said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (15) Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say

to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’  
God says, “I AM who I AM.” God told Moses it doesn’t have to do with who you are but with who I am. In any conflict it important to know who is sending you into battle.   
What is the reason why so many people are not committed to God, quite frankly, they do not know God. They sort of know about Him. But like the Hebrews in Egypt they have lost track of who God is. He is not a grandfather figure sitting in heaven, merely watching or antics and turning a deaf ear to our language, closing his eyes and winking at our sin. He is not only the giver of life, HE IS LIFE!!!  
When God tells Moses that “I Am who I Am” he is literally saying that “I am He who was, and is and always shall be!” or “I will continue to be what I have always been.”  
  
  
  
Excuse Three -The “What If’s”” (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.’”  
In the King James Version Moses’ third excuse began with the words, “What if…” and it is was totally hypothetical. Moses’ response was, “But what if they ask me a question that I don’t have an answer to?” Have you ever used that as an excuse for not sharing your faith, “I would but I am not an expert on the Bible, they might ask me a question that I do not know the answer to.”   
What ifs are victory killers, zeal quenchers. Excuses will   
relegate us to second best. Moses was so concerned about what might happen, he didn’t hear what God said would happen.  
God gave Moses three proofs:  
First, his Staff turns to a serpent and back again (vv. 2-4). “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.”  
It is important to note that God did not ask Moses to use something that he does not have. God asks Moses, “What is in your hand?” God uses what we have, and has never demanded from us what we do not have. We will never know the full potential of what can be done until or unless we are willing to offer it to God. God is not looking for ability, he is looking for availability.   
When God calls we are tempted to put our assets and abilities in one column and limitations and liabilities in another to determine if we can indeed do what God has called us to do. God is not interested in that. God often allows us to enter a place where we feel confident and when we flounder and fail, and then he puts us into an area where we feel inadequate and were are forced to depend on him, we discover that he uses us.   
God’s command to Moses is simple, “Throw it down.” Okay that’s simple. And he throws it down. Because of his obedience it becomes a serpent. And now the LORD says, “Pick it up.” Now that is difficult enough but God says, “Pick it up by the tail.” Now everyone knows that

is not the way you pick up a snake. (Actually I don’t pick them up at all!) Now that was difficult but Moses obeyed and the snake again became a rod, and his faith is strengthened. (We will look at the significance of these miracles later when Moses appears before Pharaoh.)  
Next, Moses is given the signs of his hand being made leprous then clean again (vv. 6-7) and the ability to turn water into blood (vv. 8-9).   
God has thus far revealed himself to Moses, told Moses of his desire to deliver the people, has promised him success, and given him three signs that the people will believe him. Despite all this revelation, it is not enough for Moses.   
  
  
Excuse Four – “But Lord I Don’t Speak Well”   
(4:10-12)  
“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.”   
Moses now says, “I am not an eloquent speaker and I talk funny. He may have been slow of tongue but he seems fast enough with the excuses. That seems odd in the Stephen indicated in Acts chapter seven and verse 22 that Moses in his first forty years of his life in Egypt was a man “mighty in words and deeds.”   
The LORD responses to Moses in verse eleven and twelve: “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.”   
Our inadequacies are not problem for God, he made us the way we are. But if we no not make ourselves available then God’s plan for our lives cannot go forward.   
  
Excuse Five – “Send Someone Else” (4:13-17)  
“But he said, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.”  
No matter what, signs or no signs, whether God promises to be with him or not, Moses does not want to go! This last objection was not based on even the slimmest shred of a reason. Moses just does not want to do it. Moses is simply putting his foot down and telling God, “No!”   
Exodus 4:14 “Then the LORD’S anger burned against Moses...” Put this down in your notes, get it in your head, sink this truth into your heart. God becomes angry at our excuses. His blessings are withdrawn from those who whine. It is not because the Lord has patience for four question but five is one too many. Moses is refusing to trust God’s answer. When Moses begs God to send someone else, he is in effect telling the Lord, “I don’t trust you.” This angers God.   
The Lord’s anger burned against Moses. The sin of excuses will someday come to judgment. Standing before our Judge - our excuses will be all gone; we will be standing in naked truth.  
Not only do excuses angers God, they also cause discouragement within the body of Christ. Excuses force the few to carry the weight of the many. Satan will use this as a wedge to bring division and discouragement.   
We do not need someone else to do what God is calling us to do. If we let others do what we are afraid to do we probably letting them do what God is calling us to do. Have you ever stopped to realize the harm you are doing when you retreat in fear?  
In the later part of verse fourteen God says to 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. ….”  
God accommodated Moses’ lack of faith, but the compromise was less God’s best. Moses was God’s man for the job but he told Moses that his brother Aaron would be allowed to assist him. Once the children of Israel left Egypt, Aaron got his brother and the children of Israel – into serious trouble. It was Aaron who led the children of Israel in making an idol while Moses on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments.  
God’s perfect will is always better than His permissive will!  
  
Conclusion  
Now we see the breakthrough. Moses finally responds in Obedience! Exodus 4:20: “So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.” Moses ultimately did as the Lord asked. Think of the lives that he touched because of his obedience. Over 2 Million Israelites under Moses eventually walked out of the land of slavery. When we walk in obedience, we too will touch the lives of those around us. Let me leave you with this final thought, Dr. B. J. Miller once said, "It is a great deal easier to do that which God gives us to do, no matter how hard it is, than to face the responsibilities of not doing it." – (MBI’s Today In The Word, November, 1989, p.11) The cost of obedience is nothing when compared with the cost of disobedience.   
Can’t or Won’t? Christians need to be very careful which one they choose. Although we often choose to say we can’t it really is a case of I won’t. Is your excuse “I can’t” or “I won’t?” Let face facts when we refuse to follow the Lord, it is because we won’t…we disobey because we choose to… not because we have to. The sooner we accept the truth the sooner we can make a change.   
Intricately involved in God’s calling, is God’s Plan. Now listen carefully to what I am about to say or you may not understand. God has a plan but He never expects you to carry out the plan. He is going to see that it carried out. He simply wants you to make yourself available as His instrument. After all it is His reputation that is at stake, not yours.