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We are going through the book of Exodus, examining the character of Moses. God wants to use this man whom he has prepared, for a great act of salvation: 40 years as a royal prince in the greatest palace, and 40 years as as shepherd in the greatest desert. Now God wants Moses' attention and draws him to a common sight in the desert, a burning bush, but one not consumed by the flames.

This happens to all of us and no one is exempt. In the busyness of life, we may not notice *the burning bush not being consumed by flames*, but God continues to try and catch our attention, to draw us into a dialogue with Him.

As Moses walks closer to inspect the burning bush, God draws him into a posture of worship: *take off your sandals for you are standing on Holy Ground!* The very ordinariness of the location makes the point, it is Holy ground, not because of any special properties, but because of God's presence. This is a recurring theme in Exodus: God is Holy, and only He declares places and people as Holy. God treats us as Holy, **ONLY in our relationship with Him, who is Holy.**

Remember, Moses was an adopted child, brought up by the Pharaoh's daughter, and like all adopted children, at some point in their adulthood, they want to connect with their birth parents, which is what took Moses out of the palace to the place where **his people** lived and worked, and that's where he got into trouble.

Now 40 years on, not ever having met his biological parents, living in exile and estranged from his adopted mother, God has to settle the question which remains unresolved in Moses' heart. *You may not know your father, but I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*" God reveals Himself as the **God of your father**, making it clear that Moses' identity is framed by his being a descendant of Abraham, to whom God pledged Himself by covenant.

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God then reveals His intimate knowledge of what Moses knows and has seen first hand - ***I have seen*** the affliction and suffering of My people... ***I have heard*** their cry ... ***and I know*** their suffering, and I am taking personal charge (have come down) to move them out of their suffering.

This is exactly what God says to us: I have **seen**, I have **heard**, and I **know** (intimate knowledge) of what you are going through - relationships, money matters, health ...whatever you are going through. My Son Jesus the Christ has opened the door into our relationship, and the Holy Spirit is tasked to keep you safe until My kingdom is established on earth!

It is not easy for Moses to digest this new revelation and carry on in life, and he struggles!

When God next says, *Come, I will send you to Pharaoh, that **YOU** may bring my people, the children Israel out of Egypt*, we expect the great Moses to reply, *Yes Sir! Here I am, send me!*

In response to God's call, Moses offers five excuses, why **he** thought he was "**Not the man for the job**". Let's look at Moses' excuses, more importantly God's response to each of them.

As God's people, we have a special calling from God, not to rescue people in physical bondage, but to rescue people from the bondage of sin, the worldview which blinds us from knowing our **REAL** God, the Awesome Creator, Father of us all

Two of our greatest enemies which prevent us from working with God in the work of His kingdom are, **excuses** and **procrastination**. These don't prevent God from accomplishing His plan, rather deprive ourselves from being part of His plan! Too often we find ourselves using the same excuses Moses did.

When God said, *I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people out of Egypt*, Moses offered his first excuse, **Who am I?**

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Moses remembered the Pharaoh wanted him killed, but a new king was on the throne who inherited Egypt's huge army, and they were very able to stop the Israelites' leaving. Will he be welcome at the palace, even though he was once a Royal son? All Moses knows, he is in exile, in a foreign country, working as shepherd for a man whose daughter he has married.

But God is not looking for that Royal Prince to rescue His people; that Prince might have his own ideas! It took God 40 years to prepare his access to the palace, and 40 years to humble Moses' spirit, so that he could be used by God.

God's response was quick and reassuring. *I will be **with** you, i.e. I will encourage and strengthen you, I will protect and defend you. I will also bring My children here to this mountain, and together, you will worship me here!*

Paul wrote to the Romans, *If God be for us, who can be against us?*<sup>1</sup> Despite God's promise to us, we continue to use the same excuse, **Who am I?** *I am not qualified, I don't have the experience, I have other important things to do, I don't understand, and one I hear quite often, I am a nobody; why would God want me?*

The world around us tells us, we are sufficient in and of ourselves; in truth, our sufficiency is of God because God works in us, and through us.

Moses' second excuse is, **When they ask me 'who sent you?', what shall I tell them?** Moses has two doubts and both are based on personal experience: his last conversation with the people of Israel ended with their question, *Who put you Lord over us?* How will he now convince those people he is God's ambassador to Pharaoh, to set them free? Moses' second doubt is, *I have not heard from God all this while. How do I know it is He who speaks?*

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:31

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God responds by introducing Himself by Name: **I AM WHO I AM**. Tell them, **I AM has sent me to you**. God introduces Himself as the absolute, unchanging, eternal One, who is always, **I AM**.

We use the same excuse today, *What shall I say to the people God wants me to meet?* We don't know what to say, nor do we know enough. But all God wants us to say is, *Tell them what I have done for you. If it has worked for you, why shouldn't it work for others?* If a bottle of wine, or a good restaurant gave us pleasure, and we share that news with others, what about the "good news" that has changed our lives? Not worth sharing?

Moses still has doubts: **Suppose they will not believe me?** Moses is looking for some tangible, divine protection - *May I have some of Heaven's Heavy Bouncers with me?* I need proof Lord! Real tangible proof, so that they will believe me.

*You want proof? I'll give you proof!*, says God and God gives Moses **THREE** miracles to show them:

- His shepherd's staff which turned into a snake.<sup>2</sup>
- His own hand which turned leprous and then whole again.<sup>3</sup>
- Water from the Nile which turned to blood.<sup>4</sup>

We hesitate to share the experience of our very **REAL** God for the same reason, **suppose they won't believe me?** The fear of failure keeps us from trying, but God has given us evidence from our own lives to convince people. The Word of God is able to produce faith. *People will believe when they hear your evidence, the evidence of what God through Christ has done in you.*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Exodus 4:2-5

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 4:6-8

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 4:9

<sup>5</sup> Romans 10:17

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We shall examine Moses' fourth and fifth excuses next time. We need time to absorb what is happening in Moses' relationship with God.

Moses' past has conditioned his response to God:

**Who am I?** - I don't know my parents. When I wanted to find out about my real parents, I got into trouble and had to run away because there was a price on my head! I am now a shepherd, working for my father-in-law.

**WHO AM I?**

**What shall I say?** - Have I any credibility left? What will I say to my birth family who gave me up, and my adopted family who chased me away? I don't have any standing before either of these families.

**What if they don't believe me?** - This is my greatest fear - the fear of rejection! I am comfortable where I am; why should I risk what I have if people won't believe me?

To the Church in the Greek province of Philippi, Paul wrote, ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthen me."***<sup>6</sup>

It might sound very glib to say this, but there is more encouragement in this verse than you might first think. Paul wrote these words while facing some of the worst trials of his life. Despite the threat of pain and death he realised, God gives us strength in ways that go beyond the good times and the everything-is-okay moments. The strength of Christ reaches right down into our turmoil and pain. And it's there that we can truly do "all things."

**AMEN.**

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<sup>6</sup> Philippians 4:13