

Title: **AN UNBELIEVING SERVANT**
 AND HIS EVER GRACIOUS GOD

Text: Exodus 4:10-17

Subject: *Moses' Failure and God's Faithfulness*

Date: Tuesday Evening — January 2, 2007

Tape # Exodus 34

Readings: *Darvin Pruitt and Rex Bartley*

Introduction:

(Exodus 4:10-17) “And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I *am* slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. (11) And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? (12) Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. (13) And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand *of him whom* thou wilt send. (14) And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, *Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother?* I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. (15) And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. (16) And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, *even* he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and

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thou shalt be to him instead of God. (17) And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.”

When Moses was a young man he was chomping at the bit to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage. (In those days, a forty year old man was a young man.) When he was a young man, Moses **presumed** that God had sent him, presumed that **he was ready**, and presumed **he was able** to do the work. **He was zealous and bold**; but he wound up fleeing from the face of Pharaoh like a whipped pup with his tail between his legs (Exodus 2:12-15).

Forty years later, the Lord God appeared to him in the burning bush and said, “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 3:10). When that happened Moses was 80 years old; and **he had learned a few things**. He was not so anxious to go. He was not so confident in his abilities. He had spent forty years, learning that he was weaker than water and as useless as a bucket without a bottom. — “And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee” (Exodus 3:11-12).

OUR SUFFICIENCY

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I have said all that to say this, and you can take it to the bank, — **Any man who thinks he is able to speak for God, able to preach the gospel, able to minister to the needs of God’s people, is altogether unfit for the work of the ministry.** Any man who is chomping at the bit to be a preacher has not been called, gifted, and sent of God to preach the gospel. Any man who is sent of God knows something of the magnitude of the work of the ministry, and knows that the business of speaking for God to eternity bound sinners is a work for which he is **totally insufficient.** He cries with the apostle, “Who is sufficient for these things?”

- Does a sinful man dare to imagine that he can **interpret** the Word of God by his own brilliance?
- Dare a mere mortal think that he can **speak as God’s ambassador,** fetching a message from God himself to deliver to the hearts of men?
- Dare a man presume that he can speak **to the hearts** of men?
- Dare any man presume that **God the Holy Spirit will speak through his lips?**

“Who is sufficient for these things?” — Yet, these are the very things that every man sent of God to preach the gospel does and must do.

THREE WONDERS

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Moses had to learn, he had to be convinced, as every prophet, apostle, and preacher must be convinced, by God himself, that “**our sufficiency is of God.**” And the people to whom he was sent had to learn and be convinced that the work of deliverance is altogether God’s. So the Lord performed three great wonders, signs by which he assured him that his work would be efficacious (Exodus 4:1-9).

The Lord told Moses to throw his rod on the ground. When he did, it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. Then God commanded him take the serpent by the tail. When he did it became a rod in his hand again. **Thus the Lord assured Moses that Satan’s power would be turned against Satan himself.** Hear this and rejoice, children of God. — **The serpent of hell is entirely under the hand of Christ.** When Satan has reached the highest point in his mad career, he shall be hurled into the lake of fire, there to reap the fruits of his work throughout eternity’s countless ages. He shall be eternally crushed beneath the rod of God’s Anointed; and the God of peace shall crush him beneath your heels!

“Then the end — beneath His rod,
Man’s last enemy shall fall;
Hallelujah! Christ in God,
God in Christ, is all in all.”

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Then the Lord commanded Moses to put his hand into thy bosom. When he took it out again, his hand was leprous as snow. God told him to put his hand into his bosom again. When he took it out, his hand was made perfectly whole. His clean hand, placed in his bosom, was made leprous; and his leprous hand placed there was made clean.

What an instructive picture that is! “By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15: 21).

- The first man, Adam, brought in ruin. The second man, Christ the last Adam, brought in redemption.
- Man brought in guilt; and Man brought in pardon.
- Man brought in sin; and Man brought in righteousness.
- Man brought death; and Man abolished death.

Blessed assurance this is! Not only shall the serpent himself be forever defeated and confounded, every trace of his abominable slime shall be eradicated and wiped away by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, who “was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

The third sign was a sign of judgment. Moses was commanded to take water out of the Nile river and pour it on the ground. When he did, the water became blood. All who refuse to bow to the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, trusting him alone for redemption, righteousness,

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and cleansing from sin, trusting him alone as their Savior, shall be forever damned.

UNBELIEVING RELUCTANCE

Now, I want you to see Moses' response to these three wonders. **Up to this point, his reluctance seems to have been the commendable reluctance of sincere modesty.** But Moses was still reluctant to do what God commanded him to do. **He said**, "Lord, send anyone you want to, anyone but me. I cannot go back to Egypt. I cannot deliver Israel." We see his reluctance of unbelief, by which he provoked God to anger in verses 10-17.

"And **Moses said unto the LORD**, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." (v. 10). — When the Lord God himself said, "I will be with thee," that was the infallible assurance of Moses' security and success in reference to everything for which he was sent. If an eloquent tongue had been necessary, Jehovah had declared, "I AM!" — Life, eloquence, wisdom, might, energy, everything is contained in that exhaustless treasury. — Read on...

"**And the LORD said unto him**, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou

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shalt say” (vv. 11-12). — Profound, adorable, matchless grace! Grace worthy of our God! There is none like unto our God, whose patient grace surmounts all our difficulties, and proves itself sufficient for us in all our needs, even when the need arises from our unbelief and sin!

“I the LORD” ought to silence forever the reasonings of our carnal hearts; but the rebellion and unbelief of our hearts is not easily subdued. The monstrous unbelief and rebellion of our hearts rises again and again, like a thousand headed snake, to the disrupt our peace and dishonor our Savior, who is ever Faithful and True, ever full of grace, and ever ready to help!

If the Lord is with us, our very deficiencies and infirmities are for him but an opportunity for the display of his all-sufficient grace. Moses’ lack of ability, his lack of eloquence should not have troubled him. But that is easy enough to say, when you are not being sent to confront the most powerful king in the world!

GRACE ALL-SUFFICIENT

Like Moses, you and I need to learn not only to know our weakness, and, in our weakness, to rely upon our Savior’s all-sufficient grace.

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(2 Corinthians 12:8-10) “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. (9) And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

Let us ever remember that God’s grace in Christ is sufficient for us for everything and at all times. —

- Sufficient to accomplish all his saving purposes!
- Sufficient to pardon, justify, regenerate, sanctify, and preserve us!
- Sufficient in every time of need!
- Sufficient in health and sufficient in sickness!
- Sufficient life and sufficient in death!
- Sufficient in judgment!
- Sufficient to present us faultless before the presence of his glory forever!

Read Paul’s words in verse nine again. — “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” — It is only when we are brought to acknowledge our weakness, infirmity, frailty, nothingness, and insufficiency that the power of Christ and his all sufficient grace rests upon us.

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The moment we flex our muscles, straighten our backs, lift our chins and say, “I can do this,” we are in trouble.

YOUR MOUTH

The knowledge of all that the Lord had revealed to him, both by word and by the wonders he performed, and all that he had experienced of God’s free grace, should made Moses confident, and should have enabled him to overcome his unbelief. Still, rather than upbraiding him, the Lord said, “I will be your mouth” (vv. 11-12; Proverbs 16:1; Psalm 124:8; Isaiah 32:4; Jeremiah 1:6-9; Matthew 10:19; Luke 21:15).

(Psalms 124:8) “Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”

(Proverbs 16:1) “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD.”

(Isaiah 32:4) “The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.”

(Jeremiah 1:6-9) “Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child. (7) But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever

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I command thee thou shalt speak. (8) Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. (9) Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.”

(Matthew 10:19) “But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.”

(Luke 21:15) “For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.”

He who made man’s mouth could fill it with the most commanding eloquence, if such were needed. But our poor, unbelieving hearts place far more confidence in an eloquent tongue than in the One who created it! We want learned, well-educated, highly respected preachers, men who are able to present the gospel with intellectual argument and irrefutable logic. **The one man who had such abilities in the New Testament**, made it his determined business never to employ them, “lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5).

(1 Corinthians 1:17-31) “For Christ sent me not to

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baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. (18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (20) Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (21) For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (22) For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (25) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (26) For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which

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are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence. (30) But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

(1 Corinthians 2:1-5) “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. (2) For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (3) And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. (4) And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: (5) That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

PROVOKED ANGER

Next, we read that Moses provoked the Lord to anger, by his persistent unbelief (vv. 13-14).

(Exodus 4:13-14) “And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand *of him whom* thou wilt send. (14) And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses.”

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Moses became the meekest of men; but this was not an expression of meekness and humility. Let us ever seek grace to “be clothed with humility.” But, that cannot be called humility which refuses to obey God’s will, walk in the path his hand marks out for us, and do what he has commanded us. **Moses’ problem was fear; and fear is never identified with true humility, only with the pretense of humility.** The fact that Moses provoked the Lord’s anger, by this makes it clear that he was not speaking in humility.

Unbelief is not humility, but pride. It refuses to believe God because it finds nothing in self to make faith reasonable. That is utmost expression of pride. If, when God speaks, I refuse to believe, because of something in myself, or the lack of something in myself, I make him a liar (1 John 5: 10)

- When **God promises salvation** to all who trust his Son, and I refuse to trust him because of anything in me, or the lack of anything in me, I make him a liar!
- When **he declares his unconditional love** for me in Christ, and I refuse to believe because I do not deem myself worthy of his love, I make him a liar and exhibit the utter pride of my heart.
- When **he asserts his care** for me and bids me cast all my care on him, and I refuse, I make him a liar.

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- **Our acceptance with our God is altogether in Christ, because of Christ, and for Christ's sake.**
- It has nothing to do with anything in us, or the lack of anything in his.
- His mercy, his love, his tender care, his grace, his protection, are all unconditional!

Christ got what I deserved, that I might have what he deserves. It is only when self is set aside that humility begins. Finding redemption, life, righteousness, and salvation in Christ alone, finding grace, mercy, peace, and acceptance with God in him alone, we begin to learn something of humility before God, but not until then. Then, and not until then we begin to sing from our hearts, — “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake” (Ps. 115: 1).

GRACIOUS STILL

Thank God, Moses' story does not end with those words, “The anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses.” Though provoked to anger, the Lord God was gracious still (v. 14; Psalm 103:14).

(Exodus 4:14) “And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, *Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet*

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thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.”

(Psalms 103:14) “For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.”

Instead of being the singular voice of God to Israel and the sole instrument of their deliverance, Moses was got the “privilege” of having Aaron’s help — Aaron who mocked him because he had married an Ethiopian! — Aaron who led Israel to worship the golden calf!

Moses was a highly honored servant of God. He “was verily faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after” (Heb. 3: 5). And I dare not say more about his failure than God has said. Yet, I cannot say less. Because he refused to believe God, because he provoked the Lord to anger, Moses forfeited the great dignity God had put upon him when he made himself known and made his good will known in the bush, because “the anger of the LORD was kindled against” him.

What a warning this passage ought to be to us! No doubt, the fellowship of a brother is most valuable — “Two are better than one,” whether in labor, rest, or war. The Lord Jesus, in sending forth his disciples, “sent them two by two,” because unity is always better than isolation. Still nothing was gained, there was no greater

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virtue or efficacy in Aaron's mouth than in his, no greater work was done because Aaron accompanied him, and much evil was the result. We are all more ready to trust anything than the Lord our God and his gracious Word! — How much we lose by our unbelief! — What dignity we forfeit! — What evil we cause!

(Isaiah 48:17-19) “Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I *am* the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go. (18) O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: (19) Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.”

“The anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses;” but when I read the rest of verse 14 and those following, I cannot help remembering, Paul's words to the Romans (Romans 5:20). Up to this point, we have been reading about Moses, Moses who represents the law; and from the law we can expect nothing but frustration, failure, and sin. But where sin abounds under the law, grace much more abounds through Christ.

(Romans 5:20-21) “Moreover the law entered, that

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the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

That is what I see set before us in the Lord God providing Aaron for Moses in verses 14-17.

(Exodus 4:14-17) “And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, *Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. (15) And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. (16) And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. (17) And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.”*

- Aaron was Moses’ near kinsman, his brother. — Christ is our near Kinsman, our Brother.
- Aaron came to Moses gladly. — Christ comes to us gladly.

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- Aaron was Moses' high priest. — Christ is our High Priest.
- Aaron made atonement for Moses. — Christ made atonement for us.
- Aaron was Moses' mediator. — Christ is our Mediator.
- Moses put words of law in Aaron's mouth, and words of grace (Numbers 6:22-27) — And the Lord God put both words of law and of grace in the mouth of our Savior, law to be honored by him and grace to be bestowed by him (Psalm 45:2). — Aaron could speak well, but not in comparison with our blessed Savior!

(Psalms 45:1-2) “To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves. My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer. (2) Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.”

(Numbers 6:22-27) “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (23) Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, (24) The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: (25) The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious

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unto thee: (26) The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (27) And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.”

(Romans 5:20-21) “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Amen.