

## THE BREAKING OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

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**Scripture:** Exodus 3:1-5, 9-11

### Exodus 3:1-5, 9-11

**3** Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. <sup>2</sup>And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. <sup>3</sup>And Moses said, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."

<sup>4</sup>And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, "Moses, Moses." And he said, "Here am I."

<sup>5</sup>And He said, "Draw not near here; put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground."

<sup>9</sup>now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup>Come now therefore, and I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

<sup>11</sup>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?"

Who am I? now Moses, the bible says, was a man mighty in words and in deeds. This is what you read in the book of Acts 7:22. If you read further on into ch. 4 of Exodus, we see what was transpiring in this conversation between Moses and God, and we'll be surprised to see some of the things that Moses says.

3:11 Who am I?

3:13 They shall say unto me, "What is His name?" What shall I tell them?

4:1 They will not believe me. They'll not listen to my voice.

4:10 O my God. I am not eloquent, and I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.

The man whom Luke was talking about in Acts 7:22 was a man mighty in words and in deeds. Here he says, "I cannot speak. I am not eloquent. I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." Is this the same man? Mighty of speech? Here he says: I'm not eloquent. Mighty in deeds? Here he says: I can't do it. What was transpiring? I would like us to draw aside the curtain and try to look inside at what was happening and what God was doing in the life of this man.

When we go through this conversation between God and Moses, and in particular when we look at what Moses had to say, we might feel that Moses was trying to shirk responsibility. He was trying to run away from the call of God. But is that what was happening here? Was Moses taken by surprise when God appeared to him out of the burning bush? And what was special in that burning bush? It was a flame but it was not getting consumed. It was still green despite being on fire.

So Moses stopped to see, and then God speaks and calls unto him. Was Moses surprised when God called him and said, "I have called you. I have chosen you. I am giving you this work, and you should go unto Pharaoh and bring my people out." Was Moses taken aback? The answer is 'No'. Moses knew fully well that God had called him. If you look at Acts 7:25 it says that Moses supposed that his

brethren would have understood that God had chosen to deliver them through him. That means that Moses knew fully well that God had called him, had chosen him, had appointed that it was he that would bring the Israelites out of bondage. Moses thought that the people would understand, they would know. But they did not know, they did not understand and they refused him, they rejected him.

You know in Exodus ch 2, that Moses intervened when an Egyptian was oppressing an Israelite, and he killed the Egyptian and buried the body under the sand. The next day he intervened when two Israelites were fighting and tried to settle the matter. But they rejected him saying: Who has made you a prince and a ruler over us? You remember there is somebody else about whom it is said: "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." So, Moses was a forerunner of the One who was refused, rejected and despised. Moses thought that they would understand. He had no doubts that God had called him. The problem was Moses perhaps said to himself: I am the man. I have been brought up in the palace, trained in all the learning there is in the superpower of that day which was Egypt. If anybody can do this job, all of us would think it had to be Moses. Probably Moses also thought that since I am the most qualified person, God has chosen me. But that's not how God works.

He calls the most unlikely of people and does the greatest of His miracles through them. In the Welsh Revival for example, He called a coal miner Evan Roberts. He was the instrument that God chose to work out a mighty revival there in 1904-05. Through the ages, he has typically chosen the simple people, the ordinary people. In fact, the bible says that He has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things to confound the mighty. That has always been God's way. He calls out ordinary people and He qualifies them whom He has called. That means He prepares them, He empowers them, He anoints them and He uses them. You don't find God calling the great people or the mighty people, the most qualified, the most eloquent of them. No. in fact, He's called some of the stammerers and the stutterers and made them into mighty revival preachers. He's called people who didn't know grammar. Billy Sunday was a mighty revivalist. You read the history of the church, the most unlikely of people have been used mightily by God. That's how God works.

So God did not call Moses because he was great and mighty. God chooses us from before our birth. There's a mysterious element called the election of God, chosen from the foundation of the earth. When He called Jeremiah, what did He say? Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I chose you. I have ordained you to be a prophet unto the nations. At that point of time did Jeremiah do anything great? He was not even born. So there's a mysterious element of God's election, i.e. God calls people not because they are great or qualified, but He qualifies people whom He has called.

How does He call people? How does He choose? It's a mystery to us. What is it He's looking for? We do not know.

Moses knew he was called, but the problem was he thought that it was through his learning, through his abilities. Because he was a great man brought up in the palace, he would be accepted and then be able to bring the Israelites out of bondage. And obviously he failed. He failed miserably. Not only did the Israelites reject him, but Pharaoh was out looking for him to catch him and kill him because he murdered an Egyptian, Moses had to run away, leave Egypt. The palace of course is forgotten. He had to forget his own people too and run into the wilderness.

Now his first priority was to save his own life, and the next 40 years we find Moses doing nothing. Moses, who had been called to do a great job to lead millions of Israelites – men, women and children, and the bible says along with them there was a mixed multitude as well. I don't know how

many millions were there, but Moses had been called to bring them out. And what was he doing for 40 years in the wilderness? Herding the flock of his father-in-law. You can imagine what would have gone through his mind day after day. Days would have passed into months, into years, and here he was, the man trained. What must have been going through his mind? Was all this a mistake, or have I messed up big time? Can God still do something through me? How many times we have gone through these kinds of struggles. Forty years of doing next to nothing, and Moses was a broken man. Gone was his confidence in his own abilities, in his training, in his upbringing, and the fact that he was the most qualified. All that was gone.

And now God appears to him after 40 years. By now he was 80 years old. That's not the age when you expect to be doing your greatest work. But that's the time God appears to him out of the burning bush and calls him. And what does God tell him? "Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place where on you stand is holy ground." Now you don't remove your shoes before people who are your peers or before those who are your subordinates. In Middle Eastern culture and in many parts of our country also, when you come before a person whom you honor and revere, you just remove your shoes. I have heard that my grandfather was a big man in a village, and when he was walking by, people would stand up, remove their shoes from off their feet and keep standing till he passed by, and after that they would put on their footwear. For us in a place like Mumbai, this sounds absolutely alien to our culture, but that's how the Middle Eastern culture was. You honored people by your attitude, by your actions, and here was Moses, the man who thought he was a big person, he was being told to remove his shoes. Do you realize whom you are standing before? Put off your shoes.

I believe that was the final act in what I call the breaking of Moses. That's the title of my sermon today: The Breaking of the Servant of God. There has been no man or woman in history who has been used greatly by god who has not also been broken by Him earlier. God breaks those whom He calls.

- 1. He calls people by His mysterious election.**
- 2. He qualifies them.**
- 3. He breaks them.**

This breaking is a very important part of the training process that god takes us through. You and I need to be broken before God can do anything with us. I work with steel and we use high strength, low alloy steel to build submarine hulls. That's my specialization. How is the steel strengthened? It is put in the fire again and again and again, a process called annealing, and then tempering and then quenching. You put it in the fire and it is kept there for quite some time, then removed, allowed to cool and again put in the fire. That is how steel is strengthened. And that's what God does with us. You don't use high strength steel to build a vessel which is not going to see high pressures. But the vessel which is going to see high pressures needs high strength steel. And that steel needs to be put in the fire repeatedly. Only then it gets qualified to serve that purpose for which it has been chosen.

That's what God does with you and me. Look at history! Any man or woman that God has used greatly has been broken greatly. He has been passed through the fire of god, through the furnace of affliction, as it were. That is God's way of preparing us for the ministry. He did it with Moses. He did it with Joseph. Joseph also knew he was chosen when he was a teenager. He had those two dreams; he knew that his brothers were going to bow down before him, his parents also are going to bow down before him. But it didn't happen the way he expected it to happen. Before it finally happened, God had taken him through this process. For years he worked as a slave. Then he was a prisoner without any rights. But when God's time came, he called him out. And in one day the prisoner became the prime minister. That's how God works.

He did it with Moses. He did it with Joseph. He did it with David. A teenager was anointed by the prophet Samuel saying, "You are going to be the next king over Israel." And did he get to sit on the throne the next day? No. initially of course, you all know that story of David and Goliath, and then how he was fighting the battle, and he was leading the army. That happened for some time, probably a year or two. Thereafter, Saul became jealous and he sought to kill David. And the next several years of his life, David was running to hide from Saul's wrath. Running, running, running; not knowing who will betray him, not knowing when Saul would catch up with him and kill him, not knowing what would happen the next moment. He has to cast himself on the mercy of God moment by moment, every day of every year. He had learned his lesson to depend upon God – that's how he defeated Goliath. But after that also, he was not yet ready to fulfil God's call upon his life which was to reign over Israel. He was not yet ready. And before he was ready, he had to be taken through this breaking process.

What about Jacob? It's very interesting to study Jacob's life. Jacob was again a very smart person – intelligent, worldly wise, qualified in a way. But he was a deceiver. I would like to read two of Jacob's prayers to point this out.

Genesis 28:20 and following –

<sup>20</sup>And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, "if God will be with me, and will keep in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, <sup>21</sup>so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: <sup>22</sup>and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto you.

When I read this, I wonder: Is this a prayer? or is it a bargain? Jacob is trying to tell God that you do this, this and I will do this, this, and this. Let's have a kind of agreement between ourselves. and you must remember that at this point of time, Jacob knew that his father and his grandfather were serving the living God as opposed to the idols of the world. He had heard his father and grandfather pray. He knew what it was to pray, but he didn't know the God to whom they prayed. He knew about God. He did not know God. And at this time, he was still full of himself. He would have thought: I'm very smart. I cheated my brother of his blessing, of his birthright and I am going to inherit all this.

Birthright and blessing. I don't know whether you have pondered about this. The birthright gives you a double portion of the possessions, property. What about the blessing? Jacob, smart as he was, he knew about God's call to Abraham, the father of all nations. "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." He knew all of this and he wanted to steal that blessing that God said would come to Abraham and Abraham's seed. He wanted that also in addition to the property. And he stole it and thought: I've done it. I'm very smart. So here he is trying to smartly drive a bargain with God. Fast forward many years. And we find Jacob returning to the same place from where he had run away. And now he is going to meet his brother Esau. And he also heard that Esau is coming to meet him with 400 men riding on horses, obviously to kill him, take vengeance on him.

Let's see what Jacob has to say.

Genesis 32:9-12 <sup>9</sup>And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, 'Return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you: <sup>10</sup>I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which you have shown unto your servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.'"

<sup>11</sup>Deliver me, I pray you, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. <sup>12</sup>And thou said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

What do we find Jacob doing here? For the first time in his life perhaps, Jacob is praying. Earlier he was bargaining; now he is praying, he's pleading. He's pleading God's promises, he's confessing his unworthiness. He's confessing his fear and terror of his brother and saying, "Lord, save me." Then of course comes the Peniel experience, where the angel of the Lord, who is the pre-incarnate Jesus wrestling with him. Jacob had to go through this process of breaking. He went on to become a mighty man after this process. His breaking consisted of being cheated, being deceived by a greater deceiver, which was Laban and then being broken at the prospect of meeting Esau and then the breaking at the hand of the Angel of God.

Every one of these people – Moses, Joseph, David, Jacob, and there are many, many more. Every one of them who went on to become a mighty man was taken by God through this process of breaking. There's been no man, or woman, who has been used by God, who has not been broken and humbled greatly. And you will also notice that this seems to be an essential part of what God does with you and me. It is essential that you and I are broken before he can use us.

### **Why is this breaking required?**

I can think of at least two reasons.

#### **1. To learn to depend on God alone.**

Before you are broken, you depend upon your own abilities, like Jacob. He thought he was very smart; he has stolen the birthright and all the property. He has stolen the blessing and whatever was to come to Abraham in the future. So when you are not broken, you depend upon yourself, your thinking, your brilliance, your intelligence, your wisdom, your physical strength, perhaps your bank balance, your good job. These are the things that you depend on. After you are broken, you no longer depend on these things. You depend upon God.

What is the difference? As long as you're dependent upon yourself, your ability is severely limited. If you depend on your bank balance, what will you do once the balance runs out? If you depend upon your physical strength, what will you do if a person who is stronger than you comes up? If you depend upon your intelligence or your wisdom, what do you do when one smarter than you turns up? You are limited. You can't do anything. You are defeated.

But when God calls you and me and when He called all these men, His plans are always higher than our own plans. His thoughts are higher than our own thoughts. Isn't that what He says in Isaiah 55? "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are My ways above your ways and My thoughts above your thoughts." He doesn't call you and me to do small, small things. He calls you and me to do impossible things. He's a God of the impossible. With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible, including passing a camel through the eye of a needle. We can't even understand how it will happen. But I suppose God can expand this. He can reduce that. and the camel goes through the eye of a needle. Nothing is difficult for Him.

Forget about impossible. "All things are possible if you only believe" he said to the father of the possessed boy. The God that we serve, the God whom we worship, is a God whose reserves are limitless. His wisdom is beyond compare. Not just beyond compare, it's infinite. Not just that he's the smartest one, He's got infinite smartness. Let me put it this way. His power is limitless, understanding is limitless. And best of all, His love is limitless. That's the God whom you and I serve. And this God, when He calls somebody, He doesn't call them to do small, small jobs. He calls them to be superstars. It could be in a small way.

For instance, I read about a sweeper who made a mighty difference for God. All around him were grouchy workers, grumbling all the time. but here was this man, smiling, singing, whistling as he went about his job of sweeping the streets. And people who saw his would wonder. In fact, one or two of them came and asked him: What is it that you find so interesting in your job? You seem to be happy all the time whereas I have got this great job and big house and wonderful car and everything else and I seem to be miserable. And that gave the sweeper the opening to speak of his Savior.

God puts us in different situations. He's got a different plan for each one of us. He's a God of variety, but He's got a big plan which is far beyond your thinking and my thinking. And the only way we can fulfil that plan is by learning to look beyond our limitations and learning to not only look to God but to draw sustenance from this infinite God. The widow's flour never ran out. Her oil never ran out. And that prophet's wife who brought so many vessels from the neighbors, the oil didn't run out till all the vessels were filled. God's resources are immeasurable. God's plan is far bigger than anything that you can comprehend. And this God whom we serve, is able to do exceeding abundantly above that we ask for think. (Ephesians 3:20).

And this God is calling us. You think He'll call you to do small things? He calls you to do what you cannot do. That's something great about our God. When you feel that you can do it, He says No, you are not ready. Why? because your dependence is on your own ability. And the plan that I have for you is such that you cannot accomplish it. as long as you are limited by your own resources.

So, the first reason why he takes us through this process of breaking is He wants us to bring us to an end of our self. He wants us to learn to draw upon Him. And they the sky is the limit. You can do what is impossible because you serve the impossible God, and He enables you.

## **2. To keep us humble.**

There's something perverse about human nature. That success gets into our head. if God lifts you up, the head also starts swelling. That's something very typical of every person. And God has to break us to keep us humble. Remember Apostle Paul? He was given a thorn in the flesh. He says very clearly "to keep me humble because of the greatness of the revelations that God has given me."

Moses had been taken through this process. And when finally he was broken, God says, "Come, I will send you. Now you are ready." And Moses is saying No, Lord. I can't do it. The same man who knew he was called, who was trained, who knew everything. He was trained in wisdom, in battle, in warfare. He was trained in all there was to train a prince with. At that point of time, Moses tried to go out in his own strength; he failed miserably. And now, after God took him through this process of breaking, Moses says, Lord, I can't do it. I tried to help two Israelites; they also rejected me. How can I bring out millions? They will not accept me. And finally, who am I that I can do this job? Lord, it's beyond me. I can't do it. When Moses said that, he was not trying to shirk responsibility. These are the words of a man who was broken. Then God says, now you are ready. Come, I'll send you. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. God sends Moses, and the rest is history.

Church history is replete with example of men and women of God who were taken through this process of breaking. And when they came out on the other side, they did impossible things. That's how the church has been built through the ages. Small things or rather insignificant people. Some of

them barely literate, like Evan Roberts, a coal miner who was used in the Welsh revival. Stammerer and stutterer, D.L. Moody was not a great and eloquent speaker, but how God used him to bring in lakhs into the kingdom. Billy Sunday's grammar was very peculiar. But that was not a hindrance for God's work.

God uses the most unlikely of people whom we would disqualify. If some of them were to come for an interview, they would get disqualified in the first round. But I don't know what God saw in them, but He called them. He prepared them, took them through this process of breaking, anointed them, empowered them and said: now you go. What great things they have done! They built a church.

A fisherman like Simon Peter. Failure? He would have been rejected by anybody. When he had to stand up for His Master, he rejected him three times. Such a man, do you think there's any future for such a person? But he was brought back. He was reinstated. And that same man could win 3000 souls in one morning. What all he went on to do. The history of the church is full of people such as these. I know, for example, of drunkards, of dacoits whose lives have been turned around. They went on to become mighty for God. The most unlikely of people, when they put their lives into the hand of God, when they respond to the call of God and say, "Lord, have your way with me," God first takes them through this process of breaking. He prepares them, empowers them, fills them with His Holy Spirit and then He does great things through them.

In the book of Daniel, we read, "They that know their God shall do great exploits." How can you do great exploits as long as you are limited by your own resources? And unless you are broken, you will never even begin to draw on God's infinite resources. That is the work that God did in the life of Moses, in the life of all these men that we just mentioned. How do you think David defeated Goliath? If he had depended on his own strength, he couldn't have begun that battle. the giant was huge in size. He would have blown up a David. But David had learned to depend upon God. He knew that with God, nothing is impossible. Not one Goliath, if an army of Goliaths had come, David would have still won. Because he had learned to call on the name of the Lord. That's all that you and I need to learn if you want to live the Christian life, if you want to be fruitful in the work of God. The only thing that you and I need to learn is to depend upon God. It's easy to say, very difficult to put into practice. Because we find it difficult to let go. We like to depend upon our abilities.

May the Lord enable each one of us to respond to this call of God, to put our lives into His hands and say, Lord, You take me through this process. Break me, prepare me, fill me and use me. Lord, I'm yours. And like Jacob prayed: you do this for me and I will follow You. No! that's not prayer, that's bargaining. But like Jacob in ch 22 – Lord, remember your promises. Lord I'm not worthy. Lord I'm scared. I can't do it. but Lord, for your sake, for your name's sake and for the promises' sake, do it. That is prayer.

May each one of us respond in like manner to what God wants to do with us. And then this little church will become a powerhouse for God. May the Lord bless you.

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