

# Dedicated to God Not Man

by Major Ian Thomas

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*Major Ian Thomas emphasizes the importance of dedicating oneself to God rather than relying on human qualifications, using Moses' story as a cautionary tale about spiritual effectiveness.*

**Duration:** 34:59

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:1-2, Exodus 3:5, Acts 7:20, Acts 7:22, 1 Corinthians 1:27, Philippians 2:12

**Topics:** "Dedication"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the essential principles of the Christian life. He begins by discussing Moses and how he was learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians and mighty in words and deeds. The speaker highlights how Moses was miraculously preserved by God and chosen to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians. He then addresses the audience, reminding them that God is not unconcerned or incompetent, but rather the Lord of the heart and all of history. The speaker encourages the audience to learn from the examples of Hudson Taylor, A.B. Simpson, and George Miller, who were ordinary individuals who qualified in the School of Failure and discovered that apart from God, they were nothing. The sermon concludes with a reference to Moses encountering the burning bush and God reminding him that even something remarkable like a burning bush would eventually burn out, but God is eternal and unchanging.

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## Transcript

I appreciate that many reasons make it impossible for all those who are in chapel in the morning to be in the evening hour, so the evening hours are not intended to be part of the consecutive series that we are pursuing in the morning, but I want each evening to underline some of the essential principles that we are outlining in the morning hour, to be an additional application of the truth, seeking as best we may to see the accumulative evidence of the Word of God, focusing upon the basic principles of the Christian life. In this seventh chapter of the Book of Acts, we're told in verse 22 that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. This is the introduction that we're given to him.

He was exceeding fair, we're told in verse 20, nourished in his father's house three months, and then wonderfully preserved by God's divine intervention for the role that he was to play. Cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him, nourished him for her own son. And having been given all the unusual privileges of his upbringing in a royal household, tutored in his royal privilege, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

Mighty in word and deed, he could match all his words with his deeds. Highly qualified. Seeing one when he was full 40 years old, verse 23, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptians. For he supposed his brethren would have understood how the God by his hand would be delivered. But they understood not.

In other words, at the age of 40, highly qualified, learning in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he took it for granted that because of what he was, and because of what he knew, he would be accepted in the ministry for which he believed God had called him. And this was his fatal blunder. For we discover, as we shall examine the record in the book of Exodus, that at 40 years of age, he had become highly qualified to be completely useless.

Because of his false supposition, he took for granted, and omitted the basic principle that qualifies a man to be used by God. And I thought it would be profitable today, this evening, to examine what it was that Moses did, that in spite of his human qualifications, disqualified him so far as God was concerned. And that is particularly relevant in such a college as this, where there are a large number of Christian men and women receiving excellent instruction, in the most helpful circumstances.

And yet, in spite of all that, there remains the terrible possibility that when you have graduated from this college, you will be highly qualified to be completely useless. If in the course of your time here, or previously, you have not discovered the divine principle that makes you available to God, for God to do God's work, God's way, through you. It would be a very tragic thing, if at the end of your days here at Westmont, you should go out taking it for granted, that because of what you are, and because of what you know, you will inevitably be accepted and used in the purpose for which God, you believe, has called you.

And then discover, to the chagrin of your soul, that you are highly qualified to be useless. And to know nothing but the frustration and sense of futility, and soul barrenness, that plagues so many today, who are in the service of Jesus Christ. Verse 11 of chapter 2 in the book of Exodus.

It came to pass in those days that when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burden. And he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way, and that way.

And when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. There can be no question as to the sincerity with which Moses was moved with compassion, of what he considered to be the need of his own people. But he looked this way, and he looked that way.

The one way he did not look, was God's way. And he made the awful mistake of committing himself to the task, instead of committing himself to God. Dedicating himself to the need, instead of to the one who had raised him for this very hour.

He looked this way, and he looked that way. And he saw no man. He related his actions to men, and not to God.

To himself and to his fellow beings. How easy it is for you and for me to do exactly that. To look for man's approval, or fear man's disapproval.

Moses made this mistake. And the high privilege that he had enjoyed, in being reared in the royal household, and all the scholarship that he had gained in consequence, did not preserve him from this fatal blunder that was to render him totally useless to God or man for forty years. He looked this way, and that way.

And when he saw no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. Became a murderer, instead of a missionary. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together.

And he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me as thou killest the Egyptians? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian.

And for forty years, he was in the back side of the desert. A man whom God had specifically raised up for this particular task, rendered himself on the basis of his own sincerity, on the basis of his own enthusiasm for the task that he considered to be his, completely useless to God or man. Now these things are recorded for us by the Holy Spirit in the Bible for our admonition.

And God would say to us today, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Because you and I are no more exempt than Moses was from this subtle temptation, which is so difficult to discern. For we can so easily be swept along on the crest of the wave of our own sincere compassion, of our own sense of dedication, on the basis of our own surrender, what we consider to be our own duty, and hopelessly fail in our relationship to God that releases his divine action, which alone can make us effective in the fulfillment of the purpose for which God has created and redeemed us.

So Moses was now for forty years, as long as he'd lived, until he made the blunt, in a backwater, unrecognized, unused, unknown. One can imagine the awful sense of futility that must have overwhelmed him again and again during those forty years of uselessness. Verse 1 of chapter 3, Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and he came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of the bush. And he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. This was a phenomenon, something that immediately attracted Moses' attention.

Here was a bush that burned, and burned, and burned, and went on burning. And he couldn't help but compare himself with that bush. For he, with his own enthusiasm, forty years before, had burned brightly, but burned himself out, within forty-eight hours.

And for forty years had been a heap of action. In the back side of the desert. And immediately, inevitably, he was intrigued by a bush that could burn, and burn, and burn, and go on burning.

And not burn itself out. There must be something unusual, something unique, something particular about this kind of bush. This must be a very wonderful bush.

It couldn't help but solicit from him his highest admiration that it could accomplish what he never had accomplished. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. There was aroused within his heart a holy curiosity.

And so he did a very wise thing. He made intelligent inquiry. And he made a very wonderful discovery.

Now it is because so often there is aroused within us a holy curiosity that is not matched in us by an intelligent inquiry, that we never make the same wonderful discovery. We're tutored in these days to hero worship. In every walk of life, we become fans.

And that is not the least true in the area of Christian activity. And we can very easily be thrilled by an individual personality. There crosses our path some man or woman in whom there is manifestly evident the mighty unction and power of God.

They're transparently genuine. The hand of God is upon them. They speak with an authority that God reciprocates.

Lives are transformed. The spiritually dead are raised to life again. The defeated, helpless, useless, barren Christian is transformed into a useful vehicle of divine life.

Wherever they go, it seems that there is a touch of glory about their path. And we admire them. But we stand back as though this were to be the monopoly of the few, that they had a special call upon the grace of God, that this was something which is not for the common run of men.

Now this is our blunder. This is the attitude of mind that Paul sought above everything else to avoid in those whom it had been his privilege to lead to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the significance of his words to the Philippians when he said, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

In other words, to the Philippians who always wanted Paul to lean upon as their spiritual crutch, who imagined that God had a particular interest in Paul that he did not have in them, he said to these Philippian Christians, All that God has given to me, he has given to you. The Lord Jesus Christ who indwells my redeemed humanity is precisely the same Jesus Christ who indwells your redeemed humanity. What I have, you have.

What I can be by the grace of God, you can be by the grace of God. Work out your own salvation. It is God, not Paul the Apostle, who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Recognize that all the illimitable resources that God has vested in me in the person of his Son, in whom all fullness dwells, are the same illimitable resources that he has vested in you. This is the message of the Bible, that God has chosen the weak and the base and the nothing and the things that are not to confound the things that are. That all God demands of man is his availability to be what man was created to be, the vehicle of the divine light inhabited by God for God, that God might be himself, his size, in terms of what you and I are on earth, in our availability to him.

And what you are, nationality-wise, color-wise, educational-wise, personality-wise, financial-wise, what you are is totally irrelevant. If only you recognize the principle that it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure, that the only ultimate source of divine activity and all spiritual life is God himself. We never seem to learn, for we admire and we seek to emulate, and so seldom take the trouble to find out why.

We read the life of a man like Hudson Taylor, George Miller, Dwight L. Moody, A. B. Simpson, men whose lives have made spiritual history, whose lives have left spiritual repercussions generation after generation.

And we'd like to be like them and do the things they do. And yet the amazing thing is this, we never take the trouble to find out why it is they were what they were, nor how it was they could do what they did.

But instead we mobilize our own resources to seek to emulate the example they set, and are constantly buffeted by a sense of frustration because of our hopeless failure in the endeavor. And the amazing thing is this, that if you introduce yourself to such a company of people who in all sincerity are trying to emulate the lives of others, and seek to introduce them to the principle that made them what they were and enabled them to do what they did, they say with impatience, don't interfere, we're too busy trying to be like them, we don't have time to listen. Now isn't that stupid? Why was Hudson Taylor what he was, and how could he do what he did? Why was A. B. Simpson what he was, and how could he do what he did? Why was George Miller what he was, and how could he do what he did? Were they God's favorites? No, they were men, and these were women who qualified in the school of failure.

They qualified in the school of despair. They were men and women who came to the end of themselves and discovered that what they were apart from what God was, was nothing. And that was the secret they discovered.

It's the secret that you see constantly re-emphasized all the way through the word of God. Moses began by being a failure, this was his school from which he qualified into usefulness. Abraham began by being a failure, that was his school through which he qualified, graduated into usefulness.

Jacob was a hopeless failure, David was a hopeless failure, Elijah was a hopeless failure, Isaiah was a hopeless failure. It's in the school of destitution, it's in the school, the bitter school of self-discovery, that finally you graduated to usefulness. When at last you discover the total absolute bankruptcy and degradation and degeneration of what you are, apart from what God is.

Moses had to discover, he had to discover that forty years of fine physique and Egyptian scholarship could never be a substitute for that for which man was created, God himself. Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight. Why the bush is not there? And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called.

When did God speak? While he stood? At a distance? Full of admiration? No, God didn't say a word. When he turned aside to see, God called. Maybe some of you are wondering why it is that you have never had an urgent sense of cause.

Why in your Christian life there's no real driving sense of direction. Why you don't have a deep, spirit-born conviction of the purpose for which you have been redeemed, and for which you are honored. You have no sense of target.

Why is it? Why is it that your Christian life is still just drifts? Why is it that you're just one of the ulcer ramps? Why is it that as a Christian your life is still colorless? Why is it that you remain a spiritual non-entity, though you admire the mighty in the things of the Spirit? Because you've never turned aside to see. It's the inevitable consequence of spiritual idleness that has never taken time out to find the reason why. It is when Moses turned aside to see that God called him.

I know that there are many men and women in this college who will never know God's call to their lives. Who will never discover the divine secret of spiritual effectiveness. I know there are many men and women who will go through all the excellent training here at Westmont and will go out to remain spiritual

non-entities and to know the oblivion of spiritual uselessness.

No matter what distinction they may attain to in this world, no matter how much they may be acclaimed by their fellow men, they will go down in the annals of the only history that counts, heaven's history, as those who did not count, either for God or man, out to find the reason why. God uses men. They will be too busy.

And they will never turn aside. And God will never speak. When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush.

And he called him by name, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here I am. God said, Draw not thy hither.

Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover, he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

God in so many words said to Moses, Moses, you think that this is a very remarkable bush. You have done a wise thing in making intelligent investigations. For you imagined that because this bush in itself was something peculiar, something wonderful, something unusual, something unique, it could burn and burn and go on burning and not burn itself out.

But you're wrong. You're quite wrong. You see that bush over there? That beautiful looking bush? It could have been that bush.

You see this bush? This scruffy, scraggy looking thing? It could have been that bush. Because, you see, Moses, any old bush will do. Any old bush.

If only God is in the bush. If this bush were depending upon itself to sustain the flame, it too would have burnt itself out in a matter of hours, and it too would have been as you have been for forty years, a heave of ashes. And yet, the nature of the bush is totally irrelevant if only God is in the bush.

For our God is a consuming fire. The trouble with you, Moses, is this. That forty years ago, when you were learning in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, when you took it for granted that you would be accepted on your own merit, you looked into the mirror, and gazing in admiration at yourself, you thought, huh, some bush.

That's some bush. And you burned yourself out. And you have been for forty years, all that you could ever become, by virtue of what you are, a heave of ashes.

Now take your shoes off your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. You are in the presence of God. I have surely seen the affliction of my people, verse seven, which are in Eden.

I have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey, unto the place of the Canaanites. I have not been unmindful of the needs of my people.

But forty years ago, you acted as though everything depended upon you, and nothing depended upon me. You acted as though I was totally unaware and totally unconcerned. And instead of your committing yourself to me, you committed yourself to the needs.

I am neither unconcerned, nor am I incompetent. I am the Lord of the heart, and the Lord of all history, and the forever you were thought of most. Over four hundred years ago, I discussed this very situation with your forefather Abraham, whose God I am.

I told him then, four hundred years ago, exactly what would happen to his people before Isaac had ever been born. I told him how they would be delivered by the hand of a deliverer whom I would raise up. And you have to learn that I am totally competent as the eternal God for all my eternal purposes.

And the sooner you stop trying to bring me down to your level, and by faith step up to my level, you will step into the eternal relentless purpose of a God who is completely adequate to implement his own will. And Moses said to God, verse thirteen, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I am that I am. Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am the eternal present, who knows the end from the beginning.

I am hath sent me unto you. And all you need for the eternal purpose of the eternal I am is to know that I am. Become available for me to do my will, my way.

And don't forget, any old bush will do. Did you ever make this discovery? Have you ever come to the place where you realize that all that you can produce at your best is ashes? Did you ever come to the place where you presented yourself for what you are, nothing, to be filled with what he is, everything. And to step out into every new day, conscious that the eternal I am is all you need for all his will.

This is the forgotten tense of the church of Jesus Christ. We live either in the past tense or in the future. We say either Ebenezer hitherto hath the Lord helped us, or we say Maranatha, the Lord promised, but we do not say nor do we act on the basis that El Shaddai, he is enough for me.

He is enough for me now because of what he is, and that's all I need to know. For to me to live is Christ. Not want, not will.

All I need is what I have, and what I have is what he is, my life. Who does not give me strength, he is my strength. Who does not give me victory, he is my victory.

Who does not give me wisdom, he is my wisdom. Do you understand the principle? Christ is. Nothing less than that.

You cannot have more, you don't need to have less. And every day can be the glorious fulfillment of the divine end. Approving of that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

As you present your body, any old bush, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. For God to be what he is, in you, making you what only God can make you to be, man, as God intended man to be. The human vehicle of the divine life, implementing the divine will.

Now let's pray.

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