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“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).

Overcoming Complacency

Central Truth: You must never be at ease when others are in need.

L213. Date: March 1994. **Text:** Exodus 3:1-6.

Topic: Complacency; Moses.

Have you ever met God in the daily affairs of life? In the midst of your regular work, has God become so real that you were overcome with His presence? Moses did; so can you. Jesus said the pure in heart would “*see*” God (Matthew 5:8). They will “*see*” Him in the midst of life's ill experiences now and see Him in fullness in eternity.

Moses' work as a shepherd seemed to satisfy him for years. It appears that he gave up hope of being of any service to God or to His enslaved people. He was satisfied with his comfortable condition as keeper of his father-in-law's sheep. So for forty years he did nothing significant for God. The greater tragedy is that he seemed content to continue that way.

Moses was unproductive because he had become complacent. The needs of the Hebrews in Egypt were as great as they were when he killed the Egyptian forty years before. But he had “lost his fire” as a deliverer and was content to remain a shepherd.

Guard your spirit lest you become complacent. Never become so busy with daily affairs that you do not serve God. Get involved personally in His work in the world. Do not be satisfied with your comfortable condition when others have needs which you can help meet. Avoid complacency as you would a plague!

The Meaning of Complacency

Look at the word complacency. It means “with — to please,” or “to be pleased with.” It means to be satisfied with your self and/or your circumstances. It is a state of satisfaction, smugness, and contentment.

Complacency is the enemy of productivity. It wants to “let well enough alone.” It resists “making waves” or “stirring up the nest.” As long as nothing very bad is happening, complacency is willing to let things continue as they are. Complacency is a form of laziness. It resists rising up and expending energy. Therefore, the complacent person will not invest himself in serving God by serving people. Woe to the Christian or the church who becomes satisfied with things as they are and loses a vision of things as God can make them.

The Causes of Complacency

Why would a Christian ever become complacent in the work of the Lord? How could he be content with the ordinary after he had seen God do the extraordinary? Look at the life of Moses, shepherd over the flocks of his father-in-law, and see reasons why he was complacent. You may be affected for those same reasons. Disappointed expectations may cause complacency. Moses was taught from infancy that he was a Hebrew. His birth mother may have planted the idea in his young mind that God had put him in the palace as the son of his adoptive mother to prepare him to deliver Israel from Egypt. He came to manhood with a burning passion to rescue his oppressed nation. He failed miserably in his attempt to assist the Hebrews. (Remember how he killed the Egyptian who was abusing a Hebrew?) Imagine his disappointment when he was exiled from Egypt and spent forty years as a shepherd. That might produce a complacent spirit in anyone.

The disciples of Jesus were disheartened when He was crucified. They returned to their business as commercial fishermen (John 21:1-3). They were hesitant to believe that He had risen from death because He had not met their expectations (Luke 24:19-21). Guard your own spirit. In times of disappointment you may give up and become complacent, also.

Loss of privileges may cause complacency. Imagine what it was like for Moses, a prince of Egypt, to keep sheep in the desert. A man “*mighty in words and in deeds*” (Acts 7:22) was content to be his father-in-law's son-in-law, with no ambition greater than that. When Moses lost his privileges, he lost his hope.

Contrast the spirit of the apostle Paul. When he was imprisoned and no longer able to travel in ministry, he wrote epistles that became books of the sacred Scriptures. The fact that you change circumstances does not mean

that you cannot continue to serve God. Change the type of service if you must, but keep on serving God.

A task below one's abilities may lead to complacency (Acts 7:22; Exodus 2:21-24). Employers are aware of that fact. They are careful that an employee is not over qualified for a job. He will not do his best under such circumstances.

Consider Moses. He was considered a great man when he lived among great men in Pharaoh's palace. His speeches were moving, and his accomplishments were astounding. But now he is a shepherd of a flock of sheep which belong to someone else. He is a "nobody" when compared with his former life. How easy it is to slip into a spirit of complacency in which life just rolls by. Don't let it happen to you!

The approval of one's peers may cause complacency (Exodus 2:16-22). Moses married a daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian. She was content for her husband to keep her father's sheep and to give her two sons. Jethro was content for his son-in-law to watch his flocks and give him two grandsons. No one expected more of Moses than he was giving; so he became complacent in spirit.

You must remember that it is never enough for people to be satisfied with you. As a Christian you must repeatedly evaluate your life in the words of B. B. McKinney's song: "The question comes to me, / As I think of Calvary, / Is my Master satisfied with me?"

The absence of a challenge may cause complacency. It took no special skill for Moses to be a shepherd. His training in all the learning of Egypt was unchallenged by the flock. His ability to do great deeds hardly was required in the desert pastures. He probably thought his usefulness to God was finished. So he contented himself to remain as he was, and complacency filled his spirit.

Review those five causes of complacency and apply them to your own life: disappointed expectations, loss of former opportunities, a task below your ability, approval of your peers, and the absence of a challenge. Have any or all of those things come to pass in your life? Has a spirit of complacency settled upon you so that your service for God is weak and largely ineffective? If so, take heart. There was a remedy for complacency then, and there is one now.

The Remedy for Complacency

Moses was a complacent shepherd until the experience of the burning bush (Exodus 3). Six things happened which shattered his complacency and

set him on the course of his life's work. His experience can be your experience. Here is how you can overcome a lethargic self-satisfied spirit which rests at ease while needs are all around. Note some effective principles.

Meet personally with God (Exodus 3:14). It may have been simple curiosity, or perhaps a desire to protect his sheep, that caused Moses to turn aside and investigate the bush that was burned but was not consumed. As Moses drew near the bush, God spoke to him, and Moses was never the same. The message was (1) a call to reverence: *“Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground”* (Exodus 3:5). Then there was (2) an identification of God: *“I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”* (Exodus 3:6). No one can meet God personally and remain smug and stale of spirit. His presence banishes complacency.

Experience true worship of God (Exodus 3:5, 6). Worship always precedes service. The reason we are so poor in our services is that we are shallow in our worship. Have you ever hidden your face before God? Have you ever felt unworthy to stand because His presence was so real? It is when we are filled with fear in His presence that we experience no fear in the presence of people.

There is the remedy for complacency of spirit. Meet God. Stand in the awe of His presence. Fall upon your face before Him. Hear Him speak to your heart. Then you will never be the same person again. Complacency will be replaced by enthusiasm.

Know the purpose of God (Exodus 3:7-10). Moses thought he had lost his chance to be the deliverer of the Hebrews forty years before. But God was not through with him. God recommissioned Moses with three statements: (1) *“I have surely seen the affliction of my people, . . . and have heard their cry”*; (2) *“I am come down to deliver them”*; and (3) *“I will send thee.”* Moses hesitated to attempt a task at which he had already failed, but he had no question about the will of God for the rest of his life.

Get clear in your mind what you are to be doing for Jesus. As long as you are uncertain, you will lack commitment. Knowing God's purpose for you will replace complacency with commitment.

Make a commitment in faith to God (Exodus 3:11, 12). *“Who am I that I should attempt a job like that?”* Moses asked God. His great deeds of forty years past were forgotten. God's assignment was astounding. But God called for faith in the words, *“Certainly I will be with thee.”* That exercise of faith was essential to Moses' effectiveness in service.

Receive the enabling of God (Exodus 3:13—4:17). Moses offered four

excuses why he could not obey God. (1) Lack of spiritual knowledge: “I do not know Your name.” God said, “*I AM THAT I AM.*” (2) Unbelief of the people: “They will not believe me.” God gave two miracles to encourage faith. (3) Personal inability; “I am not eloquent in speech.” God said, “*I will be with thy mouth.*” (4) Unwillingness: “Send someone else.” God was angry at Moses' refusal, but He promised that Aaron would stand with Moses through the ordeal. You will find your excuses empty and your limitations supplied as you step out in obedience to God. Then you will be complacent no more.

Do the will of God as best you know how (Exodus 4:18). You will find encouragement in the way as you obey your Lord. Moses lived and worked for forty years under the commission he received at the burning bush. He had to face great trials, but the Lord was with him through them all. So will He be with you. Believe it and live by it.

You can become so involved in making a living that you forget to live. Service to God is the greatest thing in life. It gives a meaning to life which you can find nowhere else. Moses was eighty years old when God called him. You are never too old to serve your Lord. Be done with complacency. Take up your cross daily and follow Jesus.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is complacency?
2. How might a complacent spirit be recognized in your life?
3. How does complacency affect your church?
4. What causes an active Christian to become complacent?
5. How does Paul's example challenge you to overcome complacency?
6. How can you have a personal meeting with God?
7. How can you know the purpose of God for you?
8. How can you receive God's personal enabling?
9. How can you help others overcome a complacent spirit?
10. How has this study profited you personally?