Study of Moses - Part 4

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[0:00] Seeking God's blessing, we'll turn again to the scripture we read, Exodus chapter 3.

And verse 10.
Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. 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?
Now we saw last week how Moses had fled to Midian, and he had settled there with a man called Jethro. And he had married one of that man's seven daughters, a woman called Zipporah.
And when Moses was in the wilderness looking after Jethro's sheep as a shepherd, God met him in a burning bush. And we saw that that was effectively God revealing himself to Moses in a particular way, to call him back to Egypt, to fulfill the great mission which God had for Moses.
[1:35] And that was to redeem Israel out of bondage there. Now the great signal for that to happen was that the king of Egypt had died.

That is recorded for us at the end of chapter 2, just before we have the incident of the burning bush. Now God raises one up and casts another down. The Pharaoh died, had Shepsut I probably, and she, a woman Pharaoh, was replaced by a Pharaoh called Thutmose III, who was in all probability the Pharaoh of the Exodus itself.
Now when he came to the throne, Israel prayed even more. Because it's written that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage.
And they cried, and that cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. So the time came now for the deliverance, and so God calls Moses in the burning bush.
And he calls him to this work, I will send you to Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. Now I laid emphasis last week on the discouragement which Moses must have felt himself personally.
[2:53] Because 40 years previously he had tried to free his brethren, and they did not accept him. So he was very reluctant to go back down to Egypt.

But God encouraged him by the vision of the burning bush, which really taught him that God was always burning in the midst of his own church. And that he would never leave them, and he would never forsake them.
He was still with them in Egypt, and he would bring them out of Egypt according to his promise, and bring them to the land of Canaan. Now what I want to look at with you today is Moses' response to this vision.
How does he respond to the great work which God calls him to do? And not only how Moses responds to this work, but how the Lord responds to Moses' response.
After all, Moses has a response, but God does not leave it there. God deals with Moses until Moses does exactly what the Lord will have him do.
[3:56] And I hope that in looking at these things we might learn something from it ourselves, in the way in which God deals with us. And I hope we'll learn lessons that will prevent us from falling into certain spiritual pitfalls.

So let's look then at the way in which Moses responds, and the way in which the Lord deals with him. Now his first response comes in verse 11 of chapter 3.
Verse 11, And Moses said to God, Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?
Now his first response from that, we would understand to be one of feeling inadequate for the task in hand. He just does not feel sufficient for the work which the Lord has called him to do.

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Now remember, this was a man whom Stephen in the New Testament described as being mighty in words and deeds before he was ever a Christian.
[5:03] I think I mentioned how secular history records that Moses was actually a distinguished man in Egypt. And Stephen verifies that. He was mighty in words and in deeds.

He supposedly led an Egyptian campaign to subdue Ethiopia. But this man in the intervening period becomes deeply conscious of inadequacy and inability.
Forty years in the wilderness, I suppose, have done that. But God's dealings with him have humbled him and brought him to realize that he is nothing in himself.
And that's how he feels. He feels to be nothing. And he says with Paul, really, who is sufficient for these things? Now friends, that's a good thing.
It's a good thing. It's not good if that feeling is so strong that it keeps you back from doing the Lord's work at all. We'll come to that in a moment. But it's still a good thing to feel that.
[6:02] It is good to be really and honestly conscious that you are not able to do spiritual work in your own strength. And that's what he felt. And how does the Lord respond to that?

Well, he responds to it very simply. He says to him in verse 12, Certainly, he says, I will be with thee. I will be with thee.
And is that not a wonderful response? As much as to say to Moses, Moses, I know you are insufficient, but let your sufficiency be in me.
I don't send any person to war at his own expense. I'm not going to put you as a soldier into the field of battle and forget to give you an armor. I'm not going to leave you naked and defenseless.
I am with you. Let that be your strength. Let it be your defense. Let it be your armor and your equipment. Certainly, I will be with thee. And is this not taught to Moses?
[7:02] In the great miracle which he is witnessing there, the fire burning in the bush. And perhaps it's useful to remember that while God is talking here to Moses, and Moses speaking to God, Moses is all the time seeing this bush burning with fire, but not being consumed.

As though the Lord is saying, Moses, the whole purpose of the vision which you are seeing is this, that I will not leave you defenseless. I will never leave thee. I will never forsake thee.
And if God be for us, then who can be against us? It's as though the Lord is saying this to Moses, never you mind saying, who am I?
You concentrate on who I am, as the Lord, the great I am. You might be weak, but I am strong. And if God be for us, then who can be against us?
And is this not the great lesson that we need to learn in our Christian lives? There are many things which the Lord requires us to do. He requires us to be witnesses to himself, to speak about him daily, to testify to him.
[8:12] He'll ask some to present. He'll ask some to pray. He'll ask some to take an office in the church. He'll ask someone else to organize an event, or a conference, or something of that kind, or to participate in it in one form or another.

And you feel that perhaps you're not able, you're not worthy, you're inadequate. And you can't do it. You haven't got the strength to do it, or you haven't got the presence, or whatever. Is it not sufficient for the Lord to say, I am with thee?
And Paul learned that. That without Christ he could do nothing. But he learned at the same time, I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me. God will equip you to do what he asks you to do.
And then he has a second thing. Moses doesn't leave it there. He says in verse 13, now I know we looked a little at this last week, but let me just refer to it again.
In verse 13, Moses said to God, Behold, when I come to the children of Israel, and I shall say to them, The God of your fathers hath sent me to you, and they shall say to me, What is his name?
[9:19] What shall I say unto them? What shall I say unto them? Now, as I explained last week, I don't think that means that Israel had actually forgotten who God was.

That would be impossible. They still had Joseph's coffin. They had many praying people in their midst who were waiting for the Redeemer. It doesn't mean that. What does it mean? Well, it meant that they were looking for some kind of credentials from Moses.
As though he had suddenly fallen out of the sky, as far as they were concerned, after being away for 40 years. And he says, I am here to deliver you. And they're saying, Well, give us a sign that God is with you.

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What is his name? Give us an insight into the person or work of the Lord that will prove to us that he has sent you, and that he has commissioned you. Now, I think it's the same thing that's concerning Moses at the beginning of chapter 4.
If you look just quickly forward at chapter 4 and verse 1, look at what Moses says there. Here's another, but here. Moses is objecting again. But, he says, They will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice, for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.
[10:40] Now, there's Moses. He's bringing up the difficulties. The first difficulty is himself. He's not good enough. And the second difficulty is, is this, How will they know that I have seen thy glory?

How will they know that thou hast sent me to redeem them out of Egypt? Now, the bottom line here is that Moses is just afraid. We'll come to that in a moment. But he's putting all kinds of things up as possible objections.
And so, God gives some marvelous signs to Moses to demonstrate to Israel that God indeed appeared to him.
Now, we read those signs together in chapter 4. And there were three signs. The first sign involved the rod. Moses was to throw the rod onto the ground.
When he threw the rod on the ground, it became a serpent. And then Moses was to pick up the serpent by the tail. The second sign was this. He put his hand to his chest.
[11:41] And when he took it back out, it was leprous. He put it back to his chest and took it out. And it was restored just like his other hand. And the third sign he was to perform to Israel was this.

He would take some of the water of the river Nile and pour it on the ground. And when it poured on the ground, it would become blood. Now, all these signs are what we could call preaching signs. And I think it's always very important to understand this. When God gives a sign of this kind to his people, there's a reason for it. He doesn't just arbitrarily choose something and say, well, here's a spectacular thing to show.
He deliberately chooses certain things that are designed to convey spiritual instructions. They're not naked power signs, but they are didactic.
They teach. They have something to say. They're preaching signs. Now, what are these preaching signs? Well, let's take first the rod. Moses says, what's that?
[12:48] God says, what's that in your hand? Moses says, a rod. Now, that, I would assume, would be his ordinary shepherd rod. The rod that he was using to shepherd the sheep and which in later years he would use to shepherd God's people.

Now, the Lord said to him, throw it on the ground. And he does that. And immediately, by the power of God, that rod is transformed into a writhing, living serpent.
And I would guess that it would be one of the most destructive or a poisonous kind of serpent. Moses recoils from it. But God says, take a hold of this serpent by the tail.
And when he does that, it's transformed back into a rod. Now, what's all that about? Well, let's think of the spiritual symbolism here. You can begin with a serpent.
What is a serpent? Well, I'm sure the serpent automatically in your mind brings back the image of the devil. The serpent symbolizes sin and the father of sin or the author of it who is the devil, the one who brought sin into the universe.
[14:06] Now, even more specifically, it speaks of the devil working through Pharaoh. You may remember a few weeks back I referred to Pharaoh's ensign or Pharaoh's symbol that the Pharaoh had on his headdress.

Part of it is a serpent, a writhing serpent. Now, that again tells us who is at work behind the throne. It is the devil himself.
He is using Pharaoh to crush the people of God and to obliterate the male seed out of existence. So then, the serpent symbolizes the power of evil which is rife in the world.
And in that connection, notice this interesting expression at the end of verse 3 in chapter 4. Verse 3 says this, Cast it on the ground and he cast it on the ground and it became a serpent and Moses fled from it.
Now, I wonder why that happens. I suppose you would say, well, that would be an obvious thing just to flee from a poisonous serpent. But, again, it has something to teach.
[15:17] And I think what it is teaching is this, is that Moses himself is afraid of the power of evil. And who can't understand that?

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Once you encounter evil head on, once you encounter the real force of darkness and what the devil is actually able to do and the strife that he's able to stir up, the malice that he's able to awaken in the hearts of people, once you encounter the depravity which he can work in the very heart of man, it is something to be afraid of.
It is a poison and it is a great evil let loose in the world. Oh, my friends, that we would understand that better. The evil of sin, the power and the sheer destructiveness of sin in this world.
The depths to which it can sink, the power which it can exert, its blackness and vileness. Moses fled from it. Now, I don't know and I wouldn't like to be dogmatic about this but I would like to suggest this as being the case.
When Moses left Egypt the first time, we're nowhere told that God had told him to flee Egypt. We're not told that and I wonder if Moses in that way was being disobedient.
[16:43] I know in the great overall plan of God it was God's permission and God's purpose for Moses to go into the wilderness to be taught and disciplined but still should he have fled, should he have left, should he have run away?

Well, there's a little text that makes me think that he shouldn't and that text is this, it comes in Hebrews and it speaks of the Passover or the Exodus when Moses actually took God's people out. We're told this that Moses forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king. In other words, when he left Egypt at the head of two and a half million Israelites he was just not afraid of the wrath of Pharaoh.
Now I wonder if that's a contrast with what happened 40 years before when he forsook Egypt fearing the wrath of the king because it's quite obvious that Moses ran away terrified of Pharaoh. And so I wonder if this whole incident with the serpent brings before us that Moses recoiled when he saw the power of evil and he recognized that there was hostility against him in Egypt he ran away he left his post and he deserted his station.
[18:01] Now my friends we can all understand that in one way or another. You're in difficulty and suddenly you discover there is real evil here or there is a real hazard and you're prone perhaps just to turn your back on it or to run away from it.

Now that might reap you more problems in the end I have no doubt it will but the power of evil is an alarming thing and many times we feel just like running away in one way or another from it.
And I have no doubt that Israel were the same in Egypt they were afraid of Pharaoh they were afraid of one Pharaoh after another and they thought their bondage would never come to an end.
So what does God say to Moses? Well he says grasp a snake by the tail. Now you know that that's the way in which snakes are handled anyway if you see an expert snake handler you'll know that he will just go for the tail of a snake.
but what made Moses strong to do this well it was the Lord. The Lord gave him strength to grasp the tail of the serpent and when he grasped the tail of the serpent not only was the serpent unable to bite him but it was turned back into a rod in his hand.
[19:21] Now what was that supposed to teach Moses? Well it was just this Moses you need not be afraid of the power of evil.

You need not fear it if you are going to war against it in my strength. When I am with you you will overcome the power of evil.
You will overcome. Forget that. We sometimes forget it. We are so paralyzed by darkness that we feel we cannot resist it. But John says greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.
Remember when the disciples came back from preaching and they came back exultant and they said to Christ behold even the devils themselves are subject to us.
We cast out devils in thy name. And is that not what God will enable every single Christian man woman boy and girl to do? If you go out in his strength will he not enable you in one way or another to subject the power of darkness?
[20:28] Look, if God gives you a sword of the spirit which is the word of God if he gives you a shield of faith if he gives you a helmet of righteousness if he gives you the belt of truth if he gives you all these things you're not going to be empty handed you'll have a trophy or two you'll go out and you'll do your own work against darkness and it does not matter how dark it is you will cut through it and you will conquer by God's strength and when Paul wrote his letter to the Romans he was writing to them when they were suffering many kinds of persecution and Paul said to them one of his last words in chapter 16 right at the close he says the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your heel shortly that again is a marvelous text he's telling the church that he says you're conscious

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of the serpent but God will bruise or crush him under your heel shortly you can resist the power of darkness if God is on your side and that's what Moses was taught now the second sign well let me just change the order of the next signs there's the water and there's the leprosy let me take the water first chapter 4 verse 9 it shall come to pass if they will not believe also these two signs neither hearken to thy voice that thou shall take of the water of the river and pour it upon the dry land and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood on the dry land now take water from the river he was obviously to put some kind of vessel inside the river and take out water now when you're speaking to an

Egyptian and someone who's going down to Egypt and you use the expression the river you only mean one and that is the Nile just as if someone in Glasgow said he's down beside the river you would be referring to the Clyde well so here you're referring to the Nile Moses to take its water to pour it and it'll become blood now this is a preaching sign as well what does it mean well first of all the Nile was for Egypt the source of everything they had it was the source of their life it's what made them a great nation Egypt is surrounded by desert countries and Egypt itself would be a desert country were it not for this spectacular river that coursed down through it the river Nile which made it such a fertile place and that's why they honoured it as divine it was the river of the gods and to them it symbolised the power of their gods and they venerated it and gave it religious honour they worshipped it the Nile as a god the source of their blessings but what was
God going to do to it well he was going to take it and change it to blood what does blood speak of blood speaks of death blood speaks of judgment God is going to take their life and turn it to death or he's going to take their blessings in other words and he's going to transform them into a curse he will take the very things that they're glorying in and boasting in and he will transform them into a means of death to them now this actually came about in Egypt especially in the plagues now we'll come to the plagues in a while in a few weeks time but the plagues teach this again they teach the greatness of God compared to the powers of darkness everything Egypt looked to
God turned sour for them in the plagues to show that he is the author of blessing he is the author of life and he is the author of death it is in his hand to bless and it is in his hand to curse I am the Lord he says to Isaiah I kill and I make alive I create light and I create darkness now it's a remarkable thing but very often you find that people who are militant against God's people and people who are militant and full of enmity against the church in a mysterious way have their very blessings turned into a curse the things they glory in perhaps their riches their wealth their houses their possessions their attainment their popularity their power their influence these things are turned in God's providence against them in a particular kind of way that causes you to say behold it is the work of God I saw the wicked great in power spread like a green bay tree and then suddenly they are not God cuts them down and the things they glory in become their shame how many people do you see living a life of pleasure wallowing in certain sins and finally these sins bring into their bodies and into their souls symptoms and signs that show that these very things have killed them the things they glory in have been turned and become their curse and become their shame oh what a fearful thing it is my friends to live in sin and to live in disobedience and the Egyptians would live like that just as the Romans did and the Greeks did and they would wallow in their immorality and how often fearful plagues would break out amongst them that was reaping the fruit of their own sowing and their very blessings or the things that
[26:53] God had originally given us good things became a curse to them and how many things there are just like that you look at the world today look at our generation perishing caught in one sin or another and with almost every one of them you can step back and say yes there's a gift of God in that was it not God that made the fruit of the vine was it not God who gave us even wine to drink at the Lord's supper or for how many people has that blessing become a curse what about the gift even of one man and one woman coming together was that not a part of God's gift in the world the two shall become one flesh for how many has that blessing become a curse and consumed them if you do not take your blessings from God they will become the judgment of blood upon you and so the Nile itself was to be turned into blood and this was to remind

Moses and to remind Israel that the Nile was not God the devil is not God God is God and they were to learn that and to remember it now the third sign is this it involves leprosy in verse 4 of chapter 4 the Lord said to Moses put your sorry verse 6 put your hand into your chest now he probably put it underneath his garment and when he pulled it out it was white it was the worst form of leprosy and the Lord said put it back in and when he took it out the second time it was clean just

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like his other hand now I left this one to the end because I think there are two possible meanings that this could have and I will just leave it to yourself as you feel guided by the Lord in this respect maybe both are included but let me first say this one maybe this was to teach
Moses and Israel that true power did not lie in Moses own hand he was going to wield a rod but if the people were prone to say Moses is a god when Moses was to show them that his hand was leprous white that's what came from his heart notice the hand goes to the heart out it comes leprous I am a man like you I am a sinner like you the power of the miracle is the power of God now that may be personally I would rather take it another way and the way that I would rather take it is that their fundamental problem was not Egypt but their own sin now I think we always need to learn that we need to relearn it constantly that whenever we come into trouble that our problem is not really say with the person that's giving us trouble or the providence that's giving us trouble very often the problem is our own sin that took us there and
I think that is what's being taught Egypt but to look for redemption from sin put your hand to your chest take it out it's defiled why because out of the heart of man proceeds all adulteries all fornications evil thoughts and so on these things proceed out of the heart and you need a cleansing and then take your hand back if your heart is clean your hand shall be clean if your heart is leprous your hand will be leprous if your heart is clean your hand shall be clean in other words your whole life flows from your heart make the tree good Christ said and the fruit of it shall be good make it good at the root and the fruit shall be right if it is bad at the heart the fruit shall be bad and is this not such a vital lesson true religion flows from the heart how can my hands be clean how can my feet my walk be clean my eyes my ears my whole life how can it be clean by my heart being clean by coming to
God and being washed inside by having the Holy Spirit of truth cleanse me inside and I shall be cleansed so wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow but if the heart is bad then the hand shall be bad what does the psalm say who shall ascend into the hill of God that man whose heart is clean whose heart hands are clean whose heart is pure and unto vanity who hath not lifted up his soul nor swore deceitfully O Israel turn to me forsake your sins turn to me in your hearts don't just turn to me with your groaning lips but turn to me in your hearts and your sin will be dealt with and that's a bigger problem than Pharaoh now these are remarkable signs Moses says I'm not good enough God said I'll go with you Moses said how will they know that I have met with thee and
[32:34] God said show them the rod show them the leprosy show them the water now you would have thought that that would have been it you would have thought Moses would have said well I'm going down to Egypt to do the work of the Lord but he doesn't look at chapter 4 again and verse 10 this is Moses next response and it's almost remarkable to read chapter 4 I am not eloquent neither heretofore nor since hast thou spoken to thy servant but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue now this is even more particular in the first place he said I am not adequate but now he's focusing on one thing particular and he says how can I speak to anyone especially in the court of Pharaoh where I have heard people speak in the past I'm not fit to stand in a court

I'm to speak I cannot speak he says I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue now that means the word means heavy I've got a heavy tongue and I'm slow of speech and what did the Lord say who made man's mouth he said who makes the dumb or the deaf or the seeing or the blind have not and I will teach you what to say now is that not a word of encouragement as well who made your mouth you say well I'm not fit to do that I can't speak I wish I could speak like that person I would do it who made your mouth isn't God able to make you speak if God gives you the words never you mind how slowly you speak them never you mind how well he speaks and if he speaks well then sometimes it doesn't matter too much what he has to say he's a good speaker so he's a good preacher some other times you might say well he doesn't speak very clearly and so you don't really listen to what he has to say
Moses was a slow speaker and he felt himself to have a heavy tongue but the Lord gave him the words and that was what mattered it's the words that matter you know very often sometimes God sends out a person to speak and perhaps he won't dazzle you by his form of speech if you listen and if you ask for the Lord's blessing and if you ask to receive the word through that man's mouth you will recognize if God's word is in that man's mouth and that is what matters if that man has signs that he has spoken with God and God has spoken with him and God has given him a message then listen even if the tongue is slow and even if the mouth is slow I made your mouth and I'll send you out and very often we fear that we just wouldn't know what to say well doesn't Christ

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say that the Holy Spirit will put our hand to the plough just because we don't have enough faith we don't have enough faith
I'll say a little about that just in a moment is Moses finished with that no he isn't he says the most remarkable thing of all this is his last complaint his last objection in verse 13 and he said oh my Lord send I pray thee by the hand of him whom thou wilt send that's a little obscure reading it there what Moses is actually saying is this send someone else that's what he say send someone else he's gone through it all I'm not good enough they won't believe me I can't speak and last of all he says send someone else I read a book once yes I read a book once and the title of it was called here am I send error and of course that is very often our attitude we act as though we're ready to do our thing but when it comes to the crunch we say send someone else that was
Moses he stood right at the beginning and he said here am I Moses Moses God called him at the bush and he said here am I but by the time God has finished speaking what he's saying is send someone else now this is the first time I noticed this that God's anger is kindled God hasn't been angry with Moses up till now at all he has as it were patiently listened to Moses difficulties and objections it's only when Moses says get someone else to do it that's when the Lord when the Lord's anger is kindled verse 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 he's coming forth to meet you and when he sees you he will be glad in his heart you shall speak to him and put words in his mouth and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you what you shall do now there's something very important
[38:10] Egypt to save the Israelites from Egypt it is Aaron who speaks and it is Aaron who performs the signs you look right at the end of this chapter chapter 4 verse 30 and Aaron spoke the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people it was Aaron who did it he spoke the words and he performed the signs what does that tell you well I think my friend what it tells us is simply this that Moses missed a blessing because of his disobedience he missed a blessing because of his disobedience he missed the privilege of speaking the word and he missed the privilege of performing the signs because he said send someone else now I'm sure that that didn't last forever that

Moses would have been then given the words and that he would have led the people and so on in other words this wasn't something that followed him all through his ministry but it was something that was there at the beginning he missed the greatest blessing in the sense of bringing this word to his own people and performing the signs that was to be very careful when we refuse anything that we are asked to do in the Lord's cause now I'm not going to take a kind of high ground that I can't follow myself and say to you that you must do absolutely everything that you're asked to do in the Lord's cause neither I nor anyone else can do that but what I want to say to you is I to very carefully examine the reasons why you decline to do something in the Lord's cause I could examine it very very carefully and if it comes down to pride if it comes down to unbelief if it comes down to fear of men or fear of evil or persecution or any of these things don't give way to it do it because a blessing is in it and if you don't do it you will miss out on a blessing some people don't believe in missing a blessing
I do personally believe that you can miss a blessing that you can put a good thing by yourself by not being in the place of duty I believe that we must have a fatalistic view on things we should believe that that you can miss it all his difficulties but when he said no he lost out on something and we should be very careful of saying no in the Lord's cause but God overcomes it all and already Aaron is on his way out to meet him in the wilderness now Moses probably told Aaron 40 years ago where he was going and where he was heading and the Lord maybe spoke to Aaron in Egypt and Aaron recognized that the time had come for Moses to come back and he goes out into the wilderness to meet with Moses and these two are going to meet for the first time in 40 years and
God is going to send them down to do his own work in Egypt but before Moses can go there is still one more problem in his house with his wife and child that has to be dealt with and we'll see next week God willing how the Lord deals with that may he make us willing in his own service let us pray O Lord our God we pray to be ready to do thy work in spite of what we feel concerning ourselves we are frail and weak and we are inadequate in ourselves but Christ is our sufficiency and if we look to thee then we know that thou wilt equip us for everything which we do in thy name and for thy sake and how we thank thee for thy sustaining of us since we first professed thy name and all thy people have reason to thank thee for that thou hast never left us nor forsaken us and now

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O Lord do thou part us with thy blessing forgiving all our sins for Christ's sake Amen

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