

“HERE I AM... SEND SOMEONE ELSE”

I. Introduction

- A. This passage is a continuation of what we began to study last week in Exodus 3, where God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and called out, “Moses, Moses!”
1. Moses responded to that call with the words, “Here I am.”
 2. This may not seem very significant, but it is interesting that we see the same pattern at a number of other places in the Bible.
 3. In Genesis 22, when God tested Abraham by commanding him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, he called out, “Abraham!”, and Abraham responded by saying, “Here I am.”
 4. In Genesis 46, when God appeared to Jacob in a vision and instructed him to go to Egypt, he called out, “Jacob, Jacob”, and Jacob’s response was, “Here I am.”
 5. In 1 Samuel 3, when the Lord called Samuel to be his prophet, Samuel said, “Here I am.”
 6. And in Isaiah 6, when Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”, he said, “Here am I! Send me.”
 7. These passages show us that when the Lord calls his covenant servants, the proper response on their part is to be ready to receive his Word and do what he commands.
- B. The burning bush theophany differs from these other passages in an important way.
1. While Moses initially responds to God by saying, “Here I am,” when he finds out what God is calling him to do he says, “Send someone else.”

2. This stands out, because Moses is being commissioned as God's prophet here.
 3. And Moses is not just one prophet among many others.
 4. Moses will end up being the greatest prophet of the entire Old Testament.
 5. As it says at the end of the book of Deuteronomy, "there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face." (Deut. 34:10)
 6. Moses was an extremely important figure, but in this text the emphasis is upon his weakness.
- C. As we study this passage today, we will look at it in three sections, corresponding to the three protests that Moses offers up in these verses:
1. "They won't believe me." (v. 1)
 2. "I am not eloquent." (v. 10)
 3. And, "please send someone else." (v. 13)

II. "They Won't Believe Me"

- A. In Moses' first protest, he says that the people to whom he is being sent will not believe him when he tells them that God has sent him.
1. Now, remember, God has already told Moses back in chapter 3 that the elders of Israel would believe him.
 2. The fact that this dialogue goes any further than verse 1 testifies to God's great patience and grace.
 3. Moses is arguing with God here, and God is actually engaging in the argument!

- B. We can certainly understand why Moses would have trouble believing what God was telling him.
1. He remembered what happened forty years earlier when he tried to deliver his people from their Egyptian oppressors.
 2. They said to him, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?"
 3. While God hasn't used the words "prince" or "judge" in his burning bush encounter with Moses, he is clearly setting Moses in a position of authority over the people of Israel.
 4. He is sending him as his spokesman, his prophet.
- C. God responds to Moses' first protest by giving him three signs that will authenticate his claim to be a prophet sent by God.
1. This is the purpose of the Bible's signs and wonders.
 2. They accredit those who claim to speak and act for God.
 3. They also confirm what God has said.
 4. Notice that God first tells Moses what he is going to do and only after that does he give him the signs.
 5. As one commentator explains, "The God of the Bible is a God of words before deeds, a God of verbal revelation, who speaks and then acts to confirm what he has said." [Motyer, 75]
- D. The first sign involved turning Moses' staff into a serpent and back into a staff again.
1. In light of Moses' occupation, this was probably a shepherd's staff.

2. This underscores the fact that while the Egyptians despised shepherds, God will use one who serves in this lowly vocation to strike terror into their hearts.
 3. The serpent was probably a cobra, which was associated with one of Egypt's gods.
 4. Egyptian kings also wore crowns that featured a cobra with raised hood on them.
 5. By giving Moses power over this snake, God was demonstrating that he has power over Egypt.
- E. In the second sign, Moses' hand was made leprous and then made well again.
1. Leprosy was prevalent in Egypt.
 2. It was an incurable disease.
 3. God's ability to afflict Moses with this disease and then immediately heal him further demonstrates his power over Egypt.
 4. It may also symbolize something about Moses himself.
 5. In the Old Testament, leprosy made a person unclean and hence ceremonially unfit for communion with God.
 6. In this sign, God afflicts Moses' body with leprosy.
 7. And take note of where the leprosy comes from.
 8. Moses' hand becomes leprous after placing it upon his own breast.
 9. Moses is the source of his own contagion.
 10. It could be that this underscores the fact that while Moses is weak and unworthy, God is able to overcome this.

- F. The third sign will involve turning water from the Nile river into blood.
1. The Nile was central to Egypt's life and religion.
 2. The annual flooding of the Nile ensured the fertility for which Egypt was famous.
 3. The Nile was the source of Egypt's great wealth.
 4. Most of the population lived in close proximity to the Nile.
 5. They even worshipped the Nile as a god.
 6. The fact that God is able to take this source of life and turn it into something that symbolizes death further demonstrates his sovereignty over Egypt and its gods.
 7. Taken together, the three signs confirm the Word that God has already spoken to Moses.
 8. They demonstrate that God will be able to deliver his people from their bondage in Egypt.

III. "I Am Not Eloquent"

- A. We turn now to Moses' second objection, where he protests that he is not eloquent enough to be successful in what God is calling him to do.
1. Once again, we can understand where Moses is coming from.
 2. While he was raised and educated in Pharaoh's palace, he has been away from Egypt for forty years.
 3. He is just a simple shepherd now.
 4. Who in the world is he to stand up to Pharaoh?

- B. God responds to this protest by reminding Moses that he doesn't need human eloquence.
1. God is the one who created the human mouth.
 2. He is the one who makes people mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind.
 3. Moses does not need to worry about speaking eloquently.
 4. He only needs to speak the message that he is given.
- C. This is something that we need to take to heart today.
1. God does not need flashy and impressive preachers of his Word.
 2. Of course, some preachers are more gifted than others, and we can be thankful for the blessings that we receive through their ministry.
 3. At the same time, we need to remember that a man does not have to be a celebrity in order to be used of God.
 4. A sermon does not have to be delivered by an exceptional or famous preacher in order for you to benefit from it.
 5. The plain explanation and application of God's Word is sufficient.
 6. The same principle holds true with regard to your witness for Christ.
 7. God does not need witnesses who are able to answer every conceivable objection.
 8. He only calls you to testify to the truth that he has revealed in his Son.

- D. We need to remember that God's Word is powerful.
1. It is more powerful than anything else in this world.
 2. The gospel message "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." (Rom. 1:16)
 3. "The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing," but to those "who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1:18)
 4. Remind yourself of this every time you hear the Word preached.
 5. Think about it every time you open your Bible.
 6. Always be ready for God to work through his Word.

IV. "Please Send Someone Else"

- A. We turn now to Moses' third protest, where he asks the Lord to send someone else.
1. This time, Moses is not merely expressing doubt over his qualifications.
 2. He is expressing an unwillingness to obey God.
 3. God has just reassured Moses by saying, "Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."
 4. Yet Moses responds by asking to be excused from the assignment.
 5. His response is similar to that of the prophet Jonah when God instructed him to go and preach against the city of Ninevah.

6. It is no wonder that our text tells us that “the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses.”
- B. While God was angry with Moses for his unwillingness to obey, his anger was that of a Father toward a disobedient child.
1. It was an instance of what the Westminster Confession calls God’s “fatherly displeasure” toward his children.
 2. God was displeased with Moses, but he responded to him with patience and mercy, not wrath.
 3. This is a picture of how God deals with our weaknesses.
 4. As Alec Motyer writes, “The mercy of God understands our weakness and meets us in our frailties; the sovereign magnificence of God fulfills his own purposes without adjustment or alteration -- from beginning to end... The Lord knows our needs before we ask (Matt. 6:8). And even when what we ask is a manifestation of distrust, he still bothers with us and provides for our needs.” [Motyer, 80-1, 83]
 5. Of course, this doesn’t mean that God spoils his children.
 6. Even though he makes a concession here, he does not give Moses exactly what he asks for.
 7. Moses is still going to be the instrument through whom God will speak his message.
 8. Aaron will simply be one more link in the chain.
- C. Another thing to note about God’s response to Moses is how it teaches us something about God’s providence.
1. It may be that Aaron was coming to find Moses in order to tell him that the Pharaoh had died.

2. But it was the Lord who worked through those circumstances to cause Aaron to be at hand when he was needed.
 3. God anticipated Moses' objections about his eloquence and prepared Aaron to be a good speaker.
 4. God anticipates our needs.
 5. He knows what we need long before we ask for his help.
 6. He begins to meet our needs long before we are aware of them.
 7. Even now, your God is causing events to fall out in such a manner that everything will be in place to provide help that you don't yet realize that you will need.
- D. God also reiterates that he is the one who will teach Moses and Aaron what they are to say.
1. He will put his Word in Moses' mouth and Moses will in turn put that Word in Aaron's mouth.
 2. This is an important passage for understanding the nature of biblical prophecy.
 3. A prophet only conveys the words that he is given by God.
 4. He says exactly what God would say if he chose to speak directly.
 5. This is why we believe that God speaks to us today through his written Word, which was produced by men who "spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21)
 6. This is why we hold the Bible in such high regard, insisting that it is without error in everything that it says.

7. Holy Scripture was not produced by men but by God, who worked through men to give it to us.
- E. Another thing to note about what God does here is that Aaron's eloquence is inconsequential.
1. God says to Moses, "I know that [Aaron] can speak well."
 2. Aaron apparently had gifts that Moses felt that he lacked.
 3. But Aaron still needs to be taught what to speak by Moses, who will himself be taught by God.
 4. Aaron is only going to be a mouthpiece for Moses.
 5. He stands as an illustration of what a prophet does.
 6. A prophet speaks the words that are given to him by God.
- F. Our passage ends with another mention of Moses' staff.
1. This staff brackets the passage.
 2. It was mentioned at the beginning and it is again mentioned at the end.
 3. Moses' staff will continue to feature prominently in the chapters that follow.
 4. God gave it as a token to reassure Moses of his presence and power.
 5. In this sense, it was somewhat like a sacrament, serving as a tangible confirmation of what the Lord had promised.

V. Conclusion

- A. Moses was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, but his prophetic commissioning was not exactly an inspiring scene.

1. He is a reluctant prophet.
 2. Instead of responding to God's call with an eager "Send me," he said "Send someone else."
- B. Moses' flaws and weaknesses point us to the supreme Prophet of God: our Lord Jesus Christ.
1. Jesus is the figure who was foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy 18 when he said, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you."
 2. Jesus is a better prophet than Moses for many reasons, but the reason that stands out as we consider this particular text is the fact that Jesus responded to his Father's call with perfect obedience.
 3. As the writer of Hebrews puts it, "when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" (Heb. 10:5-7)
 4. Jesus was perfectly devoted to doing God's will.
 5. And it is by his obedience that we are counted righteous in God's sight.