

Sermon 21, The Promise Reiterated, Exodus 6:28-7:7

Proposition: No matter how often you forget God's promises, they stand, and He will remind you of them as often as necessary.

- I. God Reminds Moses of God's Name and Moses' Calling, 6:28-29
- II. Moses' Final Objection: Uncircumcised Lips, 6:30
- III. God's Promises Reiterated, 7:1-5
 - A. Provision, v. 1
 1. Moses will be a god, v. 1a
 2. Moses will have a prophet, v. 1b
 - B. Direction, v. 2
 1. Speak Everything You're Commanded, v. 2a
 2. Tell Pharaoh to Send Out Israel, v. 2b
 - C. Deliverance, vv. 3-4
 1. Pharaoh's Hard Heart, v. 3a
 2. God's Heavy Hand, vv. 3b-4
 - D. Enlightenment, v. 5
- IV. Moses' Final Submission, vv. 6-7

Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the dialogue between God and Moses was interrupted by the genealogy in ch. 6 last week. We were reminded that Moses and Aaron were ordinary people in whom God's promise and provision ran rampant. Well, this Sunday, we are reminded once again of just how large God's promise and provision really are. We have a way of forgetting what God has told us He'll do. Correction: *I* have a way of forgetting the size of His promises. But this text, in which God comes back and repeats all of His promises to Moses *again*, is here to remind us not only that Moses needed a reminder, but that we do too. Let me put it this way: This is our 21st sermon on Exodus. I have preached nearly 450 sermons from this pulpit, and some of you have been here for pretty much all of them. And yet you keep coming back, and so do I, because we are a forgetful people and we need to be reminded again of just how large Yahweh's promises to us actually are. So let's look at these promises afresh.

I. God Reminds Moses of God's Name and Moses' Calling, 6:28-29

Moses has come a long way from the burning bush and from the first repulse in Pharaoh's throne room. And yet he's still in Egypt and the people are still undelivered. But there came a day in the land of Egypt when God spoke to Moses there. The narrator repeats this incredible fact twice, not because he didn't know how to be concise but because he was still a little awed about it. God spoke to Moses in Egypt! Even after Moses unloaded on Him at the end of ch. 5!

Brothers and sisters, are you amazed that you still hear from God? Is the word of God old hat to you, or would you say, with this narrator, "God spoke to Moses. God spoke to Moses!"

And when God spoke to Moses, He said once more the thing that came up four times in His previous speech, viz., “I am Yahweh.” If there was anything Moses needed to know, that was it. He didn’t need to know who was allowed to perform circumcision. He didn’t need to know what the best method of church planting is. He didn’t need to be instructed on the finer points of the order of God’s decrees, at least not at this juncture. But he did need to remember that his God was and is Yahweh. That was the most important thing Moses could put into his mind at that time.

And, as we saw a couple of weeks ago, this truth remains the most important one a Christian can ever know or think about. The identity of your God is supreme. Above all, you need to know who He is. You need to know His name, Yahweh, the one who is and therefore who can and does keep His promises no matter what.

Moses was reminded of God’s name. Are you? Do you remember that His name is Yahweh, and that means that no earthly or unearthly contingency can possibly touch or change Him? That’s what His name means. He is the one who is, not the one who might be.

But the reminder doesn’t stop there. Don’t you hate it when God and His preachers insist on taking the theological truth out of the clouds and applying it to the sore spots, the spots where you would rather not obey, the spots where the rubber meets the road in a most unwilling fashion? You see, God doesn’t state His name and say “Therefore, Moses, you are homefree. Relax, my friend. Take it easy.” Instead, He states His name and then says “What this means, O Moses, is that you are going to carry my messages to Pharaoh, every word of them, no ifs, ands, or buts.”

Now, you and I are not called to be prophets. In our particular situation, the fact that He is Yahweh does not mean that therefore we must repeat all God’s words to our political superiors. Rather, the fact that He is Yahweh means that you and I are obligated to perform our callings in a way that honors and obeys God. If you fix engines or raise babies or preach sermons or make sandwiches or teach music or operate equipment or whatever else you do, He is Yahweh! And therefore you are required to perform your job according to His standards.

II. Moses’ Final Objection: Uncircumcised Lips, 6:30

But Moses makes his final objection. “You may be Yahweh. You may be Lord, the arbiter and disposer of everything, the self-existent one who created all contingent things and planned all contingencies. But I can’t do this calling!”

Moses knew, of course, that His servants’ failure to be circumcised highly displeases God. He knew that God would actually kill someone for failing to carry out this rite. And so he quickly drags it in as a description of his lips. “My lips are uncircumcised.” What? Obviously, he doesn’t mean it literally. The lips have no foreskin that can be removed. Rather, it’s as though he is saying “My lips are not dedicated to your service, God. My lips are not adequately set apart for a calling of this magnitude. They aren’t up to the job.”

Yes, that’s a problem. And it’s a problem to which all of us can relate. God is calling me to disciple my children, but I don’t know enough Bible, theology, and basic spiritual practices that I can pass them on! I can’t even find the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments, never

mind explain to my children why we don't support radical environmental causes or what baptism means. Or maybe God is calling you to service in the church, but you won't give up your porn habit. Maybe He's calling you to service in the state, but you refuse to run because you "hate politics." What you can be sure of is that if you're a member of this church, He's called you to serve in this church. If you're married, He's called you to disciple your wife. If you have parents, He's called you to honor them. If you have children, He's called you to raise them. If you have a job, He's called you to honor your boss and work hard for your employer.

And that means that whatever your excuse is, it is illegitimate. If your lips are uncircumcised, get 'em circumcised! If your Scripture knowledge is weak, get in there and study! If your ability to understand and care for your wife is limited, start learning how to be a better husband. If your ability to honor your parents is impeded by the trainload of bitterness towards them that you drag around with you, then unhook those cars and let them fall over the cliff of forgiveness. And so it goes.

Moses' final objection is a way of saying, "God, I'm not able to do what you think you've called me to do. I am not holy enough to represent you to Pharaoh." If you haven't felt this feeling, brothers and sisters, you most likely aren't holy enough to handle Pharaoh. Here's what I mean: If you think you're definitely dedicated enough to shepherd your wife, submit to your husband, train your kids, serve your church, bless your boss, and make your Lord proud, then you don't understand the difficulty of what you've set out to do. You're going to need an awful lot of holiness to do all of those things well. But the fact that you lack that holiness is no reason to back out; instead, it's a reason to get busy acquiring that holiness!

God had already given Moses a bunch of promises directly relating to his mouth, his speaking ability, etc. He doesn't mention those again here. Instead, He essentially tells Moses "Your inadequacies are totally irrelevant. Let me tell you what really matters: My provision, direction, deliverance, and enlightenment." In other words, "Moses, you think you are disqualified by these un-dedicated lips. But actually, the qualifications for success were never about you; they were always about me and what I could and would do for my people."

III. God's Promises Reiterated, 7:1-5

So God doesn't say "Your lips are too circumcised" or "I will be with your lips." He simply moves on, going back to the "I am Yahweh" stuff that is the real issue. And when you know that you're inadequate for your calling(s), go back here too. Return to the identity of the one who called you to do it! His name is superior to your inadequacy.

A. Provision, v. 1

God's first promise is pretty impressive.

1. Moses will be a god, v. 1a

This is a bold and daring metaphor, and it's the only time it appears in the Bible, unless you count the Psalm that says "You are gods, but will die like men." But this is the only time an individual is told that he will be a god. Once again, the modern translations add the comparative "like," but that "like" isn't there in Hebrew. The KJV "I have made thee a god to Pharaoh" is perfectly accurate. Some commentators say "Sure, the text says that, but the next verse shows

that all it means is that Aaron's commission to speak to the people on Moses' behalf has now been enlarged, and he can also speak to Pharaoh in Moses' behalf. It sounds cooler than it is." Maybe. That could be the case. But it's still a case of God's provision. Moses gets to be otherworldly, exalted oracle who delivers words of unstoppable power from on high. God provides! Moses thinks his lips are not dedicated enough to God; God says "Actually, you are a god as far as Pharaoh is concerned."

2. Moses will have a prophet, v. 1b

Anyway, the condition of Moses' lips doesn't matter, because they won't be needed. God will deliver His messages to Pharaoh through Aaron, who functions as Moses' prophet just as Moses functions as God's prophet. The official channel is such that Pharaoh is not one degree separated from the Almighty, but two! He's not even high enough to get words directly from the prophet. It's rather like the situation in which we are. You and I know we're not exalted enough to talk to the president. But we're not even exalted enough to talk to the White House Press Secretary. We are definitely two degrees of separation from the president.

Anyway, God is highlighting His provision for Moses' calling. Moses will be raised so high above Pharaoh's status that it might make Moses dizzy!

B. Direction, v. 2

But God's promises don't stop there. They continue by giving Moses precise instructions.

1. Speak Everything You're Commanded, v. 2a

In what may have been rather a rebuke after the bricks without straw debacle, God insists that Moses must speak everything he's told. Sure, it may be a rebuke — but again, it's a blessing! Moses doesn't have to wonder what he's going to say. His encounters will continue to be scripted. Can you imagine, parents, how wonderful it would be if God provided this kind of script for child-raising? "When she says 'No!' and spits her peas on the floor, here's exactly what you say and do. When he comes home and tells you that his girlfriend is pregnant, here are the words to say. Here are the steps to take." Wow! We would love this kind of direction in our calling as parents, spouses, church leaders, and the list goes on. But this is the direction God gave to Moses.

2. Tell Pharaoh to Send Out Israel, v. 2b

In addition to the step-by-step instructions, God also gives Moses the larger objective. The overall point is to tell Pharaoh to send out Israel.

Again, you have that in your calling. The overall objective in every calling is to glorify God and enjoy Him there. The specifics of that vary from calling to calling. But the objective remains the same.

C. Deliverance, vv. 3-4

God's promise goes further yet. He promises deliverance.

1. Pharaoh's Hard Heart, v. 3a

The deliverance begins with Pharaoh's hard heart — or better, Pharaoh's hardened heart. God has already said that He would harden Pharaoh's heart. Insofar as having a hard heart is a sin, the phrase can make it sound like God causes Pharaoh to sin. That is not what's being said here. The

point is not that God forces Pharaoh to sin. The point is rather that God gives Pharaoh all the rope he needs to hang himself. God will give Pharaoh all the stubbornness he wants. God will give Pharaoh all the ability to stand against God's might that Pharaoh could ever dream about wanting. God will not force Pharaoh to use that ability — but He did decree that Pharaoh would use that ability, even telling him later "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show my power in you and that my name might be great in all the earth."

God's promise, in other words, is not that everything will be hunky-dory for His people. God's promise is almost the opposite of that. God promises that He will give Pharaoh the wherewithal to sin, and that Pharaoh will use it against the children of Israel.

2. God's Heavy Hand, vv. 3b-4

But though Pharaoh's heart is hard, God's hand is heavy. It's so heavy, in fact, that it will succeed in crushing Pharaoh and all his might. God plans to show many signs and wonders in Egypt, so many that though Pharaoh won't listen, the people will come out anyway.

This, too, is God's usual method. Sometimes He softens the hearts of enemies and converts a Saul of Tarsus. But generally He strengthens enemies so that crushing them is a more impressive feat when He does do it.

This is God's promise for you in your calling too! Not necessarily signs and wonders, or the death of your enemies, but rather, that His Kingdom will come and His will be done despite the most powerful human and demonic opposition possible. Do you trust this? That doesn't mean that the opponents will easily give up or give in. God will actually be giving them all the rope they need to hang themselves, all the strength they need to take a bite out of his people's neck, all the ink they need to write their own ticket to Hell. It's not a trap; rather, God treats the wicked just like they deserve.

D. Enlightenment, v. 5

God's final promise relates to enlightenment. The overall point here is once again His name, His identity. "Moses, you're forgetting that I am Yahweh. By the time I'm done here, all of the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh." Pharaoh didn't know Yahweh. He's about to learn!

Do you trust that God is so working things that the whole world will know Him? That His name will be great in all the earth?

The goal of the Exodus was for the fame of God's name. That's the goal of your salvation too. If you think salvation is primarily about your psychological well-being, you are mistaken. Actually, the goal of your salvation is to glorify God. And you will be psychologically whole when you live for His glory.

IV. Moses' Final Submission, v. 6

Moses finally figured that out. V. 6 says it twice: Moses and Aaron obeyed God in everything! Whatever He commanded, they did. We won't hear any more objections from Moses. He got it. He realized that salvation and exodus were about God's name, not about Moses' problems and questions. Do you know that? Do you get it? You should. You must. And if you don't, go back to Jesus. His name will be great. Praise Him, magnify Him, and do what He tells you. And then you'll know His promises and His provision, and you can glorify His name some more.

We saw that Moses and Aaron needed the promise reiterated. They were 80 and 83, respectively. No matter how long you've lived in God's service, you can forget who He is and need a reminder. And when you do, He'll give it to you. So submit to Him! Amen.