

# Here I Am, Send Someone Else

Exodus: Revelation and Redemption

Exodus 4:1-31

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## *Written for Our Instruction*

Please open your Bibles to Exodus 4. This morning we'll pick up where Jordan left off last week. We're going to look at the second part of the dialogue between God and Moses at the burning bush.

When we come to a book like Exodus, it's easy to dismiss it; to think it's not relevant for us. We think, "These events happened over 3,000 years ago. The circumstances were very different from ours. And I'm no Moses!" Now, there's a sense in which the exodus was a very unique event. And Moses is very special in the Bible; we're not him. But Paul tells us the events in Exodus happened as an example for us. They were written down for our instruction (1 Cor. 10:11).

We actually have a lot in common with Moses. He serves as a window into our own hearts.<sup>1</sup> And the task he was given is similar to the Great Commission we've been given by Christ. God called Moses to go to a pagan nation and declare the message of his salvation, so that the nations would come to know him and worship him. We too have been given a message of God's salvation. We're called to declare the gospel to the ends of the earth, so that the nations would come to know and worship God.

But we face a major obstacle in this mission. And we're that obstacle! We're very flawed people. And that's another thing we share in common with Moses. When God called Moses at the burning bush, he said to God, "Here I am" (3:4). That's similar to what Isaiah said when God called him. Isaiah said, "Here I am! Send me" (Isa. 6:8). And so, we expect Moses to also say, "Here I am, send me." But he doesn't. Instead he asks God a bunch of questions and throws up a litany of objections. Finally, instead of saying "send me," he says, "send someone else" (4:13).

Isn't that our attitude sometimes? It's not that we don't want the gospel to go to the nations. It's not that we don't want people to know and worship God. We do. But we're scared. And we feel inadequate. We'd rather someone else go. And so, we start throwing up objections, like Moses.

In chapter 4, Moses gives God three objections. He says that nobody will listen to him, that he can't speak well, and that he thinks somebody else would do a better job than him. Have you ever felt that way? I know I have.

But how does God respond? It's interesting. God doesn't try to bolster his self-esteem. He doesn't say, "Oh no, Moses, you've got it all wrong. You're actually a really great guy. You'll get results. You're a great speaker. You can do it!" No, instead, he wants Moses to have God-esteem. God tells Moses what *God* will do to give him success. He turns Moses' head away from the mirror and turns it toward him. God will provide everything he needs for success on his mission.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae: Genesis to Leviticus*, Vol. 1

This is the message of this passage. When we look at ourselves, it's easy to get discouraged. But when we look to God, we gain courage and confidence. Not confidence in ourselves, but in him.

Our passage this morning deals with three ways we're inadequate for the mission God's given us. And three ways that God provides for our inadequacies.

### **Exodus 4:1-31<sup>2</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." <sup>3</sup>And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. <sup>4</sup>But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"--so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand-- <sup>5</sup>"that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." <sup>6</sup>Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. <sup>7</sup>Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. <sup>8</sup>"If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. <sup>9</sup>If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."*

*<sup>10</sup>But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." <sup>11</sup>Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? <sup>12</sup>Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." <sup>13</sup>But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." <sup>14</sup>Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. <sup>15</sup>You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. <sup>16</sup>He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. <sup>17</sup>And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs."*

*<sup>18</sup>Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace." <sup>19</sup>And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead." <sup>20</sup>So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.*

*<sup>21</sup>And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. <sup>22</sup>Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, <sup>23</sup>and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son."*

*<sup>24</sup>At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. <sup>25</sup>Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" <sup>26</sup>So he let him alone. It was then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.*

*<sup>27</sup>The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses." So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. <sup>28</sup>And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him to do. <sup>29</sup>Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the*

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<sup>2</sup> Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® unless otherwise noted.

*elders of the people of Israel. <sup>30</sup> Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. <sup>31</sup> And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Have any of your kids ever had hand, foot, and mouth disease? I've had a couple of kids who've had it. Well Moses had a kind of spiritual hand, foot, and mouth disease. He had infected hands, an infected mouth, and infected feet that prevented him from being effective in ministry. But God provides three things for Moses to deal with each of these three infections.

## **HANDS (1-9)**

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Let's begin with his infected hands. Moses launches his first objection to God in verse 1. He says, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice." He's basically saying that his ministry won't be effective. The work of his hands won't get the job done. He can't make people believe.

God doesn't argue with Moses. Instead he teaches him a lesson we all need to learn. We can't make people believe, but the power of God can. God gives Moses three signs that will accompany his ministry. They will show that it's not Moses' ministry, it's God's power that will enable people to believe.

These three signs are all related to Moses' hands. First, when he puts the staff in his hand on the ground, it will become a serpent. And when Moses takes the serpent up, it will become a staff again (vv. 1-5). The second sign is the sign of leprosy (vv. 6-8). When Moses puts his hand inside his cloak, it will become leprous. When he puts it in again, it will be restored. The third sign is the river becoming blood (v. 9). When he puts his hand in the water and pours it on the ground it will become blood.

Each of these signs point forward to what God will do through the plagues. And they all have significance in dealing with God's power over Pharaoh's power and pride and over Egypt's prosperity and false worship.<sup>3</sup> But we'll deal more with that when we come to the plagues in a couple of weeks.

For now, I simply want to point out that these three signs show that it's not the work of Moses' hands, but the hand of God that will help people to believe. Moses says people won't believe him. God says repeatedly that through his power they will. He works miraculously to save *and* to enable people to believe.

The same is true for us today. We can't make people believe the gospel. But God can. He is powerful to save. He has worked great signs and wonders in Christ, especially through his death and resurrection. And throughout redemptive history, as the gospel goes forth, it has been accompanied by great signs and wonders. Think of the book of Acts! And God works in the hearts of people to grant them the gift of faith and repentance.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. James K. Bruckner, *Exodus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series

Gospel ministry is not about our power. It's not about our hands. It's about the mighty hand of God. We simply need to be willing to trust God and obey him in taking his gospel message to the nations.

God will empower the work of our infected hands. He will also empower our infected mouths. And that brings us to the second part of our passage this morning.

## **MOUTH (10-17)**

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In verse 10, Moses lobs his second objection to God's call on his life. He says, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." God has called him to go and speak to the elders of Israel and to Pharaoh. Moses questions God's wisdom, because he isn't a good speaker. But God teaches him a lesson we all need to learn. We don't have extraordinary gifts, but God is with us and sends others with us.

I remember when Maggie and I first started dating, she was taking Public Speaking 101 in Ahearn Hall at K-State. I went over to her house to visit her one day and she was laying on her front porch crying as she anticipated her first speech. It was quite dramatic! She was waylaid with the fear of standing in front of people. When the day came, she actually did so well she was asked to compete in a campus-wide speech contest. But in spite of her abilities, she declined the invite. She was simply too afraid.

The number one fear American's have is public speaking. It actually ranks higher than the fear of death. I know that was true for Maggie. She would rather die than get in front of people and speak. And I bet if you asked people in the church what their number one fear is, it would be sharing the gospel with someone who's not yet a Christian. The fear of rejection is probably the driving fear behind the fear of speaking.

That was Moses' fear too. He was afraid of rejection. He was afraid people wouldn't believe him. And so, he says to God, "I'm a horrible speaker. Don't send me to announce the good news of your salvation. Send someone else. I've got mouth disease. My speech is infected."

### ***God is with us.***

He's basically saying, what we often say, "I'm not gifted." But God says, it's not about your gifts. It's about my powerful presence (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17).

In verse 11 God essentially says to Moses, "I'm sovereign over all mouths and all eyes. Don't you worry about your mouth!" In verse 12 he says, "I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." This is the second time God's promised Moses he'll be with him (cf. 3:12).

This promise continues to us today. In the Great Commission we're told that Christ is present with us until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). The Holy Spirit gives us words to say. The Holy Spirit empowers our proclamation of the gospel. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. The whole point is that it's God's power not ours that makes our ministry effective. God's with us.

### *God sends others with us.*

But not only is God with us. God also sends others with us. Moses gives his final objection in verse 13. He says, “Please send someone else.” God doesn’t grant him his request. But he does provide Aaron to go with him. He says he’ll be with Moses’ mouth and Aaron’s mouth (v. 15). And when God provides Aaron, Moses finally stops arguing.

God was angry with Moses for his lack of belief and his unwilling heart (v. 14a). But he always intended to send Aaron with him. At least that’s how I read the text. Aaron was *already* on his way to Midian to meet Moses before this dialogue ever began (v. 14b). I think God planned for Aaron to be a part of the mission. It wasn’t plan B. God also planned for the elders to go with him to talk with Pharaoh (3:16-17).

There’s an important lesson in this for us. God’s plan was always for a *group* to carry out God’s purpose. Moses is God’s special servant. But he was never to be a lone ranger.<sup>4</sup> In the same way, none of us are called on mission alone. The Great Commission has been given to the church. That’s why we say at First Free that one of the marks of a maturing disciple who loves the lost is an active partnership with the church in sharing the gospel.

We need God to be with us in the mission. It’s his powerful presence that makes our message take. But we also need the church. We need partners in proclamation. God provided the church as a way of encouraging us and strengthening us for the task.

So, we’ve seen how God made provision for Moses’ infected hands and mouth. Let’s now look at how he made provision for his feet.

### **FEET (18-26)**

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After Moses is done with his excuses, he decides to go to Egypt. Throughout verses 18-26, we see the word “go” repeated. He goes to Jethro and asks if he can *go*. Jethro tells him to *go* in peace (v. 18). Then the Lord says to him again, “*Go* back to Egypt” (vv. 19, 21). So, Moses and his family *go* (v. 20). His feet are moving. But there’s something that gets in the way of his feet. Something that prevents him from going. Or rather, there’s *someone* who gets in his way. It’s God!

And as we trace this story, this is what we learn. We can’t go share God’s salvation until God has saved us. Why do I say that?

In verses 24-26 we come to one of the strangest episodes in Exodus. Just after God told Moses multiple times to go to Egypt. Just after God took gracious and painstaking steps to convince Moses that he’ll be with him on the way. Just then, God met him on the road and sought to put him to death. How strange.

How do we make sense of this? Much ink has been spilled over this question. Sure, it’s complicated. But I’m not sure it’s as perplexing as everybody makes it out to be. Context is king. And the context throws light on this strange episode.

You see, right before God sought to kill Moses, he told Moses that Pharaoh wouldn’t let the people go. And he told Moses what to say to Pharaoh when he wouldn’t let his people go. Look at verses

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary

22-23. “Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, ‘Let my son go that he may serve me.’ If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.”

This threat to kill Pharaoh’s firstborn looks forward to the tenth plague, when God did strike down the firstborn in Egypt. But during that plague, God made provision for Israel. If they would cover their doors with blood, he would pass over them. Their sons would be saved.

God makes a distinction between his children (whom he loves) and his enemies (who hate him and hate his people). That distinction was marked by blood. The blood on the doors during the Passover. But before all of that, it was marked by the blood of circumcision. God made a promise to Abraham, a covenant with him. And that covenant was marked by circumcision. God’s people were distinguished from all other people by circumcision.

So how does this context help us understand why God is seeking to kill Moses?

Here’s how one theologian put it.

*Look at it this way: It is night. Moses has just been told to warn Pharaoh that his firstborn son may be killed, because Israel is God’s firstborn son. But Moses’s own son has not been circumcised, which is the nonnegotiable mark of divine sonship for Israel. Moses has neglected God’s commandment and now stands outside the mark of sonship, under the same judgment as Pharaoh. So, not for the first time, a woman comes to Moses’s rescue: Zipporah circumcises their son and puts the blood on display, “covering” Moses with it so that the Lord will not kill him. His son’s foreskin becomes the Passover lamb, spread over the beams of his house at nighttime, and Moses is saved.<sup>5</sup>*

We’ve seen over the last two weeks that Israel’s redemption was all grounded in God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Circumcision was a way to align yourself with these promises. It was an obedience that signified faith in the gospel (cf. Gal. 3:8). But Moses hadn’t circumcised his son!

So Zipporah circumcises their son. Then she says to Moses you are a bridegroom of blood to me (vv. 25-26). I don’t take this to be resentment. I think she’s delighted that her husband wasn’t struck down by God. She’s delighted that Moses has been saved by blood.<sup>6</sup> Or maybe that their marriage is now marked by covenant faithfulness to God.<sup>7</sup> There’s a quick lesson in this for us as well. We can’t minister to the household of God until our own household is in order.

But there’s a much bigger lesson. Romans 10:15 says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But before we can have beautiful feet, we have to have our “feet” covered in the blood. God is basically saying to Moses, “You can’t go in my service until you’re right with me.”<sup>8</sup> How can you tell others about God’s promises if you don’t believe the promises?

Here’s the point: We can’t go share God’s salvation until God has saved us. We can’t announce deliverance from slavery and death, until we’ve trusted the God who delivers! Moses’ main inadequacy was lack of salvation. But God provided!

<sup>5</sup> Alastair Roberts and Andrew Wilson, *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing Themes of Redemption through Scripture*

<sup>6</sup> Alec Motyer, *The Message of Exodus: The Days of Our Pilgrimage*, *The Bible Speaks Today*

<sup>7</sup> Bruckner

<sup>8</sup> Motyer

So let me ask you a question this morning? Have you been covered in the blood of Jesus? Jesus is our Passover Lamb. It's only through his blood shed on the cross that we can be forgiven, delivered from death, and given eternal life.

Have you believed this good news and been forgiven of your sins? If not, today is the day. At the end of our passage, Moses and Aaron went to the elders of Israel and told them the good news (v. 30). And they believed. And they worshiped God (v.31). I'm declaring the good news to you today too. Will you believe? Will you worship God? Then will you trust God as you go on mission?

*[Prayer and Closing Hymn]*

## **EPILOGUE**

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Originally Abdel Gonzalez was going to preach this morning, but we had to make changes to the schedule. Abdel is the pastor at Genesis Church. The reason I originally chose Abdel to preach was because I see so many parallels between the lessons we learn in Exodus 4 and his life.

Abdel has been used by God in amazing ways. He has been faithful in sharing the gospel. And many have come to believe through his ministry both before and after he became a pastor.

But from the world's perspective, Abdel has many inadequacies. He doesn't have formal education for ministry. He has a significant problem with his speech—English is not his first language and he has a stuttering problem. And if that were not enough, both he and his wife Holly have been diagnosed with fibro myalgia. But God has called him to be a minister of the gospel. If anyone has legitimate excuses, it's Abdel. But Abdel has said to God, "Here I am, send me."

It's not because he has confidence in his abilities. It's because he has confidence in his great God. And God has worked in his ministry in great might. God uses flawed people so that he will get the glory.

I want to encourage you today. Don't look to your own abilities. They will certainly discourage you! Instead look to God. That's where you'll gain courage and confidence.