

## God's Sovereign Power for Inadequate Servants (Exodus 4:10-20)

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Where do you feel weak or inadequate?

- Ever feel like you're not cut out to serve because of your sin? What do you put off?
- What is it you know you need to do, but don't?
- Hope it goes away or someone else? A task hard for you?
- Maybe it's a physical struggle and ask why God made you that way
  - o a difficulty, perceived inability? A relationship? Your family?
- In the last couple weeks I've heard several parents feeling at a loss or losing it.
- I'm aware of several in this room waiting for a diagnosis
  - o wondering if or how you can face it
- For many here, your stage of life or age can be a real discouragement and demotivator.
- We can all make excuses as to why we're not doing what God calls us to
  - o Bible reading or prayer, not serving, giving, sharing.

God's Word is sharper than any 2-edged sword to cut through all that, so let's open it to Ex 4.

**ME THIS WEEK AT BARNES&NOBLE – CONVICTED I DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO SPEAK ME 23+ YEARS AGO WHEN FIRST ASKED TO SPEAK AT OUR HOME BIBLE STUDY**

- I was convicted by Ex 4, Moses' words at the burning bush.
- If you feel inadequacy, inability, reluctance to do hard things
  - o you're in good company with Moses in his weakness and his bad excuses.
- But we'll see God is gracious to meet him there and not to leave him there
  - o God doesn't let him off the hook--God helps him.
- If you feel tired or too old or troubled by losing faculties, an 80-year-old Moses identifies
  - o but his God has sovereign sufficient power for inadequate servants

**Context: Moses fled for his life 40 years ago, now in the desert God shows up in a burning bush**

In Ex 4:1-9 God gives Moses miraculous powers. <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.*

A few weeks ago Pastor Mark preached on Isa 6, where the prophet says ‘here am I, send me.’ Moses says ‘here am I, send someone else.’ I adapted and rewrote a Scott Wesley Brown lyric:<sup>1</sup>

Please don't send me back to Africa, even if I can turn sticks to snakes  
I'm slow, not quick, with uncircumcised lips, I don't think I've got what it takes  
I'll serve you here in Arabia, in my comfortable shepherding life  
But please don't send me to the Egyptian king, I just wanna retire with my wife

It's funny but sad how we make excuses to not step out of our comfort zone.

- Or even get out of bed early enough to read the Bible and pray.
- Moses feared a government trying to kill him;
  - o our fear in talking about sin is they won't like us on their way to hell (eternal discomfort and pain).

We can't condemn Moses, we need to be convicted by Ex 4 – I am and I needed this message.

- I can't be hard on Moses. Let's remember how hard his assignment was.
- Would you want to go to N. Korea to tell Kim Jong Un ‘Christ said let all Christians and labor camps go to S. Korea’?

Pharaoh was a wicked dictator like that to be told *Yahweh said let my people go, all your slaves*

**If God can move reluctant Moses to do even that, He can move and use us, too!**

I can't look down on his excuses, I've done worse for far less intimidating assignments.

- Let's look up together to God in this text
- and rise up in His strength for Christ's sake and the good of our families who need us to.
- He's with us as we tell the world Jesus is the way, in our town or country or a busy avenue, Africa or Asia (or your workplace or school or any sinner near you)!

Our church needs to do \_\_\_\_\_. Aren't you the church?

Since the pandemic it's harder to recruit

If you're a reluctant servant (or just don't want to) the Lord who helped Moses has help for us!

**If you feel inadequate, join the club, you'll fit in! (seriously, serve)**

**Outline:**

- 1. See Man's Weakness and Sinfulness**
- 2. Trust God's Sovereign Power**
- 3. Obey in Christ's strength**

**First see man's weakness.** Do you see it in v. 12? Moses says ‘*O my Lord, I am not eloquent ...*’ We know from ancient Egyptian writings

- eloquence and rhetoric were prized by Pharaohs. Moses grew up educated in that system
- it may be true he didn't do as well in that class
- or feels rusty speaking Egyptian being gone from Egypt 40 years (don't use it, lose it)?

But in v. 1 he's equally if not more concerned about his own brethren: <sup>1</sup> *Then Moses answered, “But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice...”*

So God gives him a confirming sign, a staff to a serpent and back. Look at v. 5:

- v. 5: *'that they may believe that the LORD, the God of **their fathers**, the God of Abraham...'*
- Not Egypt, God of *their fathers*, the children of Abraham
  - The *'they'* who will believe the Lord God appeared to Moses are his Israelite brethren
  - It can be hard to speak God's truth to those closest to us,
    - o especially if they've already rejected it or us.
- If it's hard with your family, don't give up hope and don't give up trying**

Look at ch 2 for the last time Moses tried to speak truth to his Jewish brothers. **2:13** says Moses went out one day, and *'behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?"* <sup>14</sup> *He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"* Then Moses was afraid ... And next verse says Pharaoh wanted to kill him so he fled to Midian.

- 40 years later I have no doubt that memory was vivid and kept replaying and ringing those words in his ears.
- He could get out of Egypt but couldn't get that out of his head
- I know for some of you, harsh or hurtful words from the past still pain and paralyze at times. It shouldn't. But guard hearts, lips.

**What someone said or did may hurt to this day, confess it, and don't let sin keep you away**

But in Ex 4:7 God showed Moses His power to heal a leprous hand in a moment  
Surely He can heal your past as well over time.

But look at 4:10 *'I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant*

- implication is you healed my hand but you haven't healed my tongue in this talk
- End of v. 10 *'but I am slow of speech and of tongue.'*

Whether or not he had a speech impediment, to God it's irrelevant at best or irreverent at worst.

- God tells Moses basically I know how I made you, I don't make mistakes
  - o but *go*, v. 12 and *'I will be with your mouth and teach you what to speak.'*
  - o Even a poor, lisping, stammering tongue can sing God's power to save!
  - o Moses may be self-conscious of a slow tongue but he didn't need eloquence or natural competence, he needed obedience and God's presence to help him speak

Even if he stumbled over words or stuttered, God didn't in 3:18: *they will listen to your voice...*

**Whatever weakness Moses had, he moves to sinfulness in ch 4 and God will get angry**

Moses protests in 4:1 Israel won't believe me or listen

- but Moses isn't believing or listening.
- And v. 10 is a lame excuse because Moses has no problem communicating with God!
- He's not slow of speech when it comes to making objections!
  - o He's quick to speak reasons why he's not the guy to speak!
  - o If he can talk back to God clearly, he can talk to God's people
  - o Moses certainly relays words to Aaron with no problems later in the chapter
  - o Even if something was the matter with his speech or speed, v. 13 is the heart of the matter: *"Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."*

There's no more beating around the burning bush now for Moses. God, just send someone else!

- That can be us ... Maybe you don't speak, you retreat to hobbies, entertainment, etc.
- Maybe you withdraw to your comfort zone
  - o or avoid people or serving or speaking His truth in love to a sinner.

If you neglect what God calls you to, friend, see your weakness or sinfulness, that's #1.

### **Now #2. Trust God's Sovereign Power**

<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 ...

God doesn't downplay or deny his inadequacy or inability without God

- He says I'm sovereign over your mouth, ears, eyes, every aspect of your life
- And I'm with you, implication: trust me.
- I don't need a famous orator; I ask you to be a faithful reporter.
- Report the good news to others.

We've asked Cliff to preach next week more on the gospel and disability

Can you see in v. 11 God is sovereign over whether or not your eyes can see or are blind?

- Who makes the mouth and makes it able or unable to speak (mute)?
- Who makes one deaf or hearing, or hard-of-hearing?
- The answer at the end of v. 11: *Is it not I, the LORD?*
- He claims sovereignty in making whatever ability you have or inability or disability.
- Not sin or Satan, sovereign God ultimately claims responsibility for making body parts and how they work or not in His purpose
  - o **JONI--paralyzed 55 years ago but God uses her mouth (sing, speak, write, paint)**
  - o God used deaf and mute Hellen Keller
  - o blind Fanny Crosby's hymns
  - o Justin Peters still (w/ CP).
  - o We have several special needs here at this church (some you see, some you don't)
    - God specially fearfully and wonderfully makes each one.

Our elders meeting this week discussed an article by ACBC counselor Paul Tautges who writes: "Regardless of secondary causes (genetics, injury...) God—the sovereign God—is always the primary cause. As God made clear to Moses in Ex 4:11, He is never ashamed to take credit for all those who have disabilities. Personal takeaway: We need to trust His wisdom...God fashions each child with his purposes in mind...God's ways are good, wise, and kind...Every child, whether 'healthy' or 'disabled, is of immeasurable worth in God's eyes...each one is priceless"<sup>2</sup>

Wherever we lack (and we all have lack) we need to trust God is with us to help like v. 13

Application: many in this room are losing faculties and most of us will some day.

- When you're tempted to complain, remember God here claims to make body parts function or not.
- So when you complain, you ultimately aim that at God.
- The Lord gives and takes away, Job said, blessed be the name of the Lord.

- Failing flesh is part of a sin-cursed world, but a sovereign caring God controls what aspects of the curse affect who and when and where, and who has ears to hear or not.
- In v. 12 God says *“Who makes him mute...or deaf, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?”*

But remember this is the same good God who said in ch 3 I’ve *‘seen the misery of my people... heard them crying out...and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down...I have watched over you/I indeed care...’* (v. 7-8 NIV, 16 NIV/LSB). He’s sovereign with compassion.

- Even when Moses says *‘send someone else’* and God gets angry in Ex 4 ...
  - o His sovereign power shows grace that accommodates Moses’ weakness
    - meeting him where he is by meeting Aaron.
    - God’s sovereignty already has his brother on the way.
    - Aaron will help Moses relay the message

**God knows we sometimes need a brother or sister alongside us for a time**

You might think Moses’ weakness and sinfulness would disqualify him

- or drive God to give up on him and send someone else instead.
- But God chooses and still uses Moses, Jonah, Peter, etc.

<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...*

**Moses asked ‘send someone ELSE’ but God sends someone WITH Moses, both are sent**

What’s interesting is Aaron initially speaks instead of Moses to Israel but both speak to Pharaoh

- Later God tells just Moses what to say to Pharaoh and Aaron’s speaking role fades away
- It should’ve been enough for Moses to go alone trusting God is with him and his mouth
  - o but God patiently gave him Aaron to outgrow his fear and to grow confidence.
  - o A great example for us imperfect children and parents helping our own fearful kids
  - o Bailing him out isn’t always best
    - sometimes he needs wise helps to take initial steps himself.

**In the end of v. 17 ‘you shall do the signs’ is singular, Moses must do it, not Aaron**

Sometimes we need a visible physical reminder of God’s sovereign power and presence. v. 17 met that need for Moses: <sup>17</sup> *And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs.*

- The staff became the visual symbol of God’s sovereign power in the plagues, Red Sea
- And it’s how God first met Moses in his weakness as Moses feared they won’t believe in v. 1. <sup>2</sup> *The LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A staff.”*
- Moses worries what he doesn’t have but God asks what Moses does have.

God can use what you have in your hand.

- What’s in your hand, David? An ordinary slingshot with God’s power to slay a giant
- What’s in your hand, Samson? A donkey’s jawbone with God’s power to kill Philistines
- What’s in your hand, Gideon? A pitcher and lantern with God’s power for a small army
- What’s in your hand, Elijah? A cloak with God’s power to part water and pass the mantle
- What’s in your hand, little boy? 5 loaves and 2 fish that Christ’s power will feed 5,000

God loves to take what's ordinary in the hand of His servant and remake it by sovereign power.

<sup>3</sup> *And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent*

- If God can use a stick like that, he can use a servant like us
  - o If God has power to transform a piece of wood
  - o He has power to transform a person of weakness like Moses or like me or you.

He takes ordinary people and the little we have, even with little faith, and makes it useful, PTL!

Take my life...not a mite would I withhold, take...and use, every power as Thou shalt choose<sup>3</sup>

Amy Carmichael: Give me the love that leads the way, the faith that nothing can dismay

The hope no disappointments tire; the passion that will burn like fire

Let me not sink to be a clod: Make me Thy fuel, flame of God.<sup>4</sup>

End of v. 20...*And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.*

- At the start of the chapter it was the staff of Moses, but now it's 'the staff of God.'
- And this man of Midian becomes a man of God.

Schaeffer: 'Consider the mighty ways in which God used a dead stick of wood...we are limited and weak in talent, physical energy, and psychological strength [but] we are not less than a stick of wood...[and] can become useful in God's hands...if the little is truly consecrated to God.'<sup>5</sup>

Paul told the Corinthians '*I did not come with eloquence ... I came in weakness and fear, and with much trembling...But God chose...the weak...to shame the strong.*' '*who is adequate for these things?... Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants...*'<sup>6</sup>

Sinclair Ferguson: 'It is misleading to say that God accepts us the way we are. Rather, he accepts us despite the way we are. He receives us only in Christ and for Christ's sake. Nor does He mean to leave us the way He found us, but to transform us into the likeness of His Son.'<sup>7</sup>

**That moves from Trust His Sovereign Power, to 3rdly finally: Obey in Christ's strength**

I believe who Moses is ultimately seeing and hearing in the bush is God the Son, not the Father.

In v. 1, the end of the verse is about how Israel will believe the LORD appeared to Moses.

- Moses can't see God the Father. He tells Moses in 33:20 '*no man can see me and live*'
- Moses couldn't have God the Father appear to him and live, so who appeared in v. 1?
- Jn 1:18 says no one has seen God at any time but God the Son has revealed Him to man
- Whenever God appeared in a way men could see him and live it's the Son, not the Father
- The Lord who says *I Am* in Ex 3 is the same Lord Jesus who says *I Am* in the NT
  - o In Ex 4:11, the Lord makes the mute, deaf, blind
  - o in the gospels the same Lord Jesus makes them speak, see, and hear
  - o So as you read Ex 4 think of Christ who strengthens us to do what He told Moses

Like v. 12 Jesus promised His disciples He would be with them and teach them what to speak.

**As He sends us out, His Word promises power, not a staff, but the Spirit with us to the end**

Like v. 16 He sent them out two-by-two as He knows we need each other and to work together.

If you look at v. 19 He says “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.” So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey... Sound familiar?

- Mt 2, Joseph, wife and son fled to Egypt when Herod tried to kill baby boys like Pharoah
- An angel said to go back ‘for those who sought the child’s life are dead’ (v. 13-21)

**Ex 3-4 is a preview of the gospel and part of the Word of Christ (more on that next time)**

If you haven’t yet obeyed the gospel, God commands everyone everywhere

- repent<sup>8</sup> of your sin and trust Jesus as your Lord=sovereign Master.
- Jn 3:36 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*
- He said in that chapter unless you’re born again, you can’t see the kingdom.
- The unregenerate are all spiritually disabled, blind, deaf, dead till we’re born again.
- But Jesus is mighty to save!

**Rom 5:6 says when we were weak/powerless/without strength Christ died for the ungodly**

Christ Jesus said apart from me you can do nothing.

- But by dependent faith I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me
- I can fear no evil, He is with me, His rod and staff they comfort me.

-Jesus said obediently *here am I*—He didn’t say ‘send someone else’ because no one else would.

-Jesus knows what it’s like to have His own people reject Him, even His own literal brothers.

-Heb 4:15 says Jesus can ‘*sympathize with our weakness...tempted as we are yet without sin.*’

-He says ‘child of weakness, watch and pray...the flesh is weak’--and He felt that in the garden.

**-But He’s risen at the right hand of power to give strength to His inadequate servants**

2 Cor 12:9 Christ ‘*said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*’<sup>10</sup> For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

We sang: Jesus what a strength for weakness, let me hide myself in Him  
Tempted, tried, and sometimes failing, He my strength, my victory wins  
Hallelujah, what a Savior!<sup>9</sup>

Let that encourage us in our inability and insufficiency, Jesus is all-sufficient and all-sovereign. Whatever we have in our hand, let’s use it for His glory, and speak of His gospel more boldly. As we see weakness or sinfulness, let’s trust His sovereign power and obey in Christ’s strength.

<sup>1</sup> Scott Wesley Brown, “Please Don’t Send Me to Africa.”

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tautges, “12 Pillars: A Theology of Disability for Parents of Children with Disabilities,” <https://chronic-joy.org/12-pillars-faith-parents-disabled-children/>

<sup>3</sup> Frances Havergal, “Take My Life and Let it Be.”

<sup>4</sup> Cited by Swindoll, *Moses*, PAGE ?

<sup>5</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *No Little People* (1974), reprinted in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, 2nd ed., 5 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 3:8

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:1-4, 1:27 NIV, 2:16, 3:5-6 NASB.

<sup>7</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ*, p. 154.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 17:30 says God ‘*commands all people everywhere to repent.*’

<sup>9</sup> J. Wilbur Chapman, “Our Great Savior.”