

Title: **THE MAKING OF A PROPHET**
 Text: Exodus 3:1-10
 Subject: *Moses' Call*
 Date: Tuesday Evening — April 25, 2006
 Tape # Exodus 19

Introduction:

As she was going out the door last Tuesday night, Celeste Peterson said to me, "I sure wish you would write a song about the beautiful feet of those who preach the gospel to us," referring to a passage she has quoted to me more often than any other since the Lord saved her — Isaiah 52:7.

(Isaiah 52:7) "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

HENRY AND DORIS MAHAN

Let me take a little time to give honor to whom honor is due. This will serve as an introduction to my message. On Sunday you had the privilege of hearing Pastor Henry Mahan, a man whose feet have been increasingly beautiful in my eyes for more than 30 years. Shelby and I got to visit with Henry and Doris for a couple of hours yesterday morning. Then, while driving to and from Lexington, after listening to the two great messages Bro. Mahan preached to you Sunday, we spent a little time reminiscing, particularly talking about how the Lord has used our friends in our lives.

I had something on my heart yesterday, that I've wanted to say to Doris for a long time, but wanted to say it face to face. After we had chatted for a little while, I said "Doris, I want you to know how very thankful I am for you and for your influence in our lives. I've lived long enough now to realize what I could not know as a young man, but now do. I you to know what a great blessing you have been and are to me. Only eternity will tell the magnitude of your life's contribution to the cause of Christ and to Henry's ministry. I know that now, because I've enjoyed the same blessing with Shelby by my side, making the same contribution, all these years. Most people are unaware of what you have done and the importance of it. I can't tell you how much I appreciate you and how thankful I am for you."

God brought Bro. Mahan into my life at a critical time. I cannot begin to tell you what a great blessing he has been to me, or how greatly God has enriched my life by his ministry. I know of no man in modern times whose ministry has had such a profound effect as his, not only upon the vast multitudes around the world who have heard him preach the gospel, but also upon the countless preachers and churches he has influenced.

- His Message — "*Christ is all!*"
- His Generosity.
- His Wisdom.
- His Example.

I have said all that, not to extol our friends, friends to whom we owe so much, but because I want to preach to you tonight about **The Making of A Prophet**. I am often asked, "What is the call to the ministry? How can I know if God has called me to preach the gospel?" The answer to those questions is found in many places in Holy Scripture. Tonight, we will look at Exodus 3:1-10 for the answer.

(Exodus 3:1-10) "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even to Horeb*."

(2) And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. (3) And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. (4) And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I. (5) And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground. (6) Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. (7) And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; (8) And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (9) Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. (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.”

Here we have a detailed account of Moses’ call to be God’s spokesman, his response to God’s call, and the responsibility he had as a man called of God to be his prophet to his people.

SALVATION SURE

First, let me state, as clearly as I can, that the salvation of God’s elect is sure. Now listen carefully to I have to say. As I once heard someone say, “Listen now, and hear me forever.”

1. **The Lord our God has decreed from eternity to save a great multitude of sinners for the glory of his own great name; and they must and shall be saved** (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).

They are elected, adopted, and predestinated heirs of God. We do not hedge when it comes to the preaching of God’s sovereignty in grace. Election and predestination are Bible terms in which we rejoice. God’s elect must be saved.

2. **The Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed that elect multitude**, God’s chosen seed, and must have them with him in heaven for the satisfaction of his soul’s travail (Isa. 53:9-12; Heb. 2:13).

The Son of God did not shed his blood in vain. The cross of Christ shall never be discovered a miscarriage. Every sinner for whom atonement was made shall be with Christ in heaven.

3. **God the Holy Spirit sovereignly, irresistibly regenerates, calls, and preserves every sinner chosen by God and redeemed by Christ** (Ps. 65:4; 110:3; John 6:63).

“*Salvation is of the Lord.*” Grace never fails. The Holy Spirit has been sent into this world to savingly apply the benefits of Christ’s finished work to those for whom he lived and died.

4. **Every sinner who comes to God by faith in Christ shall be saved** (John 6:37-40; Rom. 10:9-13).
5. **But no sinner can or will be saved apart from the preaching of the gospel** (Rom. 10:14-17).

(Romans 10:13-17) “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (14) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

- You cannot call upon Christ, if you do not believe in Christ.
- You cannot believe in Christ, if you have not heard of Christ.
- You cannot hear of Christ without a preacher.
- And a man cannot preach Christ, until he is sent of God to preach him.

“The word of this salvation avails not until it is declared in the ear; it must be published, or men cannot hear it; and not hearing, they cannot believe; and not believing, they cannot be saved” (C.H. Spurgeon).

The men and women of this world are perishing all around us for lack of knowledge; and it is our responsibility, yours and mine, to tell them how God saves sinners by his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: All of God's people are missionaries, people sent on a mission. And our mission in this world is to preach the gospel of Christ to all men. Tonight, I am calling for some volunteers, volunteers sent of God, to tell the world about God's dear Son and his saving grace in his Son. I am calling for us to give ourselves up to our Savior, to be used of God wherever and however he sees fit to use us.

GOD'S GIFT

In Ephesians 4:11, the Holy Spirit tells us that Christ's ascension gifts to his church include apostles, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and prophets.

The passage in Ephesians 4 is a quotation from Psalm 68. It is a declaration the accomplishments of Christ as our Mediator. Redemption has been accomplished by the blood of Christ. His resurrection declares that the sins of God's elect, which he bore in his own body on the tree, have been put away by his sacrifice. The Man who died for us at Calvary is now enthroned in glory and has received gifts of grace, gifts which he daily bestows upon his church for the salvation of his people.

(Psalms 68:17-20) “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. (18) Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. (19) Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah. (20) He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death.

These ascension gifts of Christ, as I said a moment ago, include apostles, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and prophets.

- It is obvious that there is no continuing apostolic or prophetic office in a strict sense. The last apostle was Paul, and the last prophet was John the Baptist.
- Evangelists are not itinerant preachers, but what we now call missionaries, church planters.
- Pastors and Teachers are those men called and gifted of God for the work of the ministry, preaching the gospel in a local church, building up the saints in the faith, edifying the body of Christ.
- Yet, because the term “*prophet*” is given as an ascension gift of Christ to his church, it is obvious that the word does not apply in this context to an office that was terminated before the Lord's ascension.

It is very difficult to find anything useful being said or written in our day on the ministry of these men. What is a prophet? The word, as it is used regarding the New Testament era, seems to refer to –

- men with extraordinary gifts,
- men who to have a remarkable understanding of the Scriptures,
- men who have a keen awareness of the times in which they live and the message required to meet the need of the hour.

We know the old definition of a prophet, “a forthteller rather than a foreteller.” We apply the term generally to preachers as spokesmen for God. But here is a distinctive calling separate from that of evangelist, pastor, or teacher.

A prophet, in this distinct sense of the word, appears to be a man distinctly gifted of God to lead his people in crucial times, with boldness and authority, which only God can give. Clearly, there were such men in the early church (Acts 11:27; 13:1). At least six are named in Acts 11 and 13.

(Acts 11:27-28) “And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. (28) And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.”

(Acts 13:1) “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”

There have never been many prophets, at least not many true prophets. But our times cry for such men. Is there not a prophet? Are there none today to stand in the gap and dare to speak for God? Never was the need greater and the supply smaller than today.

The prophet is a voice in the wilderness. It is his business to sound the trumpet, proclaim the Word of God, and press the claims of the sovereign God upon the hearts and lives of men. He does not work on details or set up programs. He does not devise ways and means. Others are gifted along that line. He does not belong on boards and committees. He is a solitary soul and does his best work alone. He is not a parrot, a puppet, or a promoter. A prophet is never a team player. He is not a religious politician. He is a voice, a lone, dogmatic, unrelenting voice.

He is nothing but a prophet. If he tries to be or do anything else he is an embarrassment to himself and to everyone around him. He is not a politician; and he is never popular with politicians either in state or church. He is not cowed by dignitaries. When necessary, he will call Herod a fox, even when he knows it may cost him his life.

A prophet is an unreconstructed rebel, an odd number in a day of regimentation. He has no more patience with mere religion than Isaiah had when he thundered, or Amos when he called on Israel to come to Bethel, or Elijah when he mocked the prophets on Mt. Carmel and mocked their gods. It is the prophet’s business to say what others cannot, will not, or at least dare not say.

The politician has his eye on the next election instead of the nation’s welfare. And I fear most preachers are more politician than prophet. They are more interested in your approval than your soul. They have their eyes on denominational promotion, the next rung of the ladder, a high seat in the synagogue, and being called a rabbi.

The prophet has no ax to grind, but lays the ax of Holy Scripture to the root of every tree in the groves of the world’s idolatry. He does not know the meaning of the word “compromise.” His subject never varies.

- *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”*
- *“All flesh is grass!”*
- *“Behold, your God!”*
- *“Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!”*

As far as God’s prophet is concerned, the grass is no greener in the next pasture. He seeks no man’s office, position, or honor. His concern is for the will, and glory, and truth, and kingdom of God.

Churches today are looking for scholars, specialists, socializers, and showmen. We need some seers, some prophets who, like Isaiah, have seen God in his holiness, themselves in their sinfulness, and the land in its uncleanness.

The prophet does not pack the house, nor produce impressive statistics. He may get but poor response, but whether they hear or not, those who hear him know that a prophet has been among them. People do not crowd churches to hear prophets. In an age of ear-itch religionists, most everyone calls God's prophets "*troublers of Israel*." And wherever a prophet's voice is heard, trouble, of one kind or another, is sure to follow. Whenever John the Baptist, or the Apostle Paul came to town, whether they preached in the church-house, the jail-house, or the open fields, either a revival or a riot broke out. **Nobody ignores a prophet!**

The prophet is never popular with the Pharisees, and doesn't want to be. Organized religion is never more organized than when it attempts to silence a prophet. — "*Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?*" — "*Ye are the children of them that killed the prophets.*" So said the greatest of the prophets to the Pharisees of his day. From Abel to Zacharias, our Master said, prophets have been stoned while living and honored when dead. Let no one be misled by the monuments men build to dead prophets. They are only the gestures and attempts of one generation to cover up the crimes of their fathers in preceding generations.

The prophet is never popular at home. In all four gospels we read our Lord's pronouncement, "*A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and in his own house.*" But prophets do have their reward, and so do those who befriend them, even with a cup of cold water. God will not overlook the "prophet's chamber," where his unpopular servant has been made to feel at home.

There are not many candidates for Elijah's mantle. His path is not an easy path to follow. There are many ways of getting rid of prophets. John the Baptist's head is not brought in on a charger these days. There are smoother and more skillful ways of silencing lone dissenters like Micaiah in these days of refined malice against God. Some can even be promoted into silence. Success has stopped some mouths when persecution failed.

Like John the Baptist, the prophet is out to pull down the high places, build up low places, and make a way for the Lord.

- His business is not so much theological interpretation as it is burning, penetrating application.
- He does not lecture on mustard, he makes a mustard poultice and lays it next to the trouble.
- Others may comfort when afflicted; but the prophet afflicts the comfortable.

We are trying to accomplish now by pep, publicity, propaganda, and promotion what once was done by preaching.

The woods are full of trained religious professionals, (They call them preachers!); but this age cries for prophets, men in whom the Word of the Lord burns like fire, men who carry and are weighed down with "*the burden of the Word of the Lord!*"

Any young Elisha in line for Elijah's mantle will need the mind of a scholar, the heart of a child, and the hide of a rhinoceros. He may irk those who like to preserve the status quo, for he is a disturber of Israel, but no one else can take his place. Oh, may God raise up some prophets in our midst in this dark, dark day!

Maybe there is sitting before me some Samuels, perhaps there is one who will hear this message long after my name is forgotten among men, who will hear what the Lord says and who will speak what he hears. There is not much prospect as to pay, promotion, or prestige. But there has always been "*yet one man*" who will scorn the hatred of Ahab and seek the honor of God.

Now, look just briefly at Exodus 3:1-10, and I will show you how prophets are made. — **The Making of a Prophet.**

Proposition: If you learn nothing else from this message, learn this – Prophets are made, called, gifted, and raised up by God at the time and in the place where they are needed, to “*prepare the way of the Lord!*”

A MAN OF FAITH

First, understand this. — A prophet is a man of faith. Exodus 3 does not describe Moses’ conversion. He was converted long before this. We are plainly told that Moses left Egypt 40 years earlier by faith, because he believed God (Heb. 11:24-27).

(Hebrews 11:24-27) “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; (25) Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; (26) Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. (27) By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

No man can ever speak for God until he believes God. No man is called of God to preach the gospel who does not know the gospel. No man can follow Christ who does not trust Christ.

Exodus 3 does not describe Moses’ conversion. Hear Moses himself tells us how he became God’s prophet.

TENDING SHEEP

The second thing I want you to see is this. When the Lord God called Moses to be his prophet, he was tending sheep, he was faithfully doing that which God had put into his hands to do.

(Exodus 3:1) “Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb.”

Moses was a shepherd, and appears to have been a shepherd for a long time. His job was tending the flocks of Jethro. By the arrangement of Divine providence Moses was a shepherd. The Lord made him a shepherd to prepare him to be a shepherd. It was the work of a shepherd...

- to feed and water the sheep.
- to guide the sheep.
- to seek and save the sheep who got lost.
- to protect the sheep.

It took a man with unique qualities to be a shepherd. His heart had to be both tough and tender, hard and compassionate, disciplined and soft. In addition to this, the shepherd had to spend a great deal of time alone out in the countryside. While alone, he could, of course, just allow his mind to wander about from thought to thought or he could utilize the time to worship God and learn of him. That appears to be what Moses did. For forty years he worshipped and served God as a shepherd. All the while God was preparing him to be a prophet.

Those men who are called of God to be prophets are men who are willing to do anything he puts in their hands to do for his glory, men who are found faithfully serving him where they are. — No man is called of God to be a prophet in Israel who does not know what it is to worship and serve God where he is.

(Jeremiah 3:15) “And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”

(Jeremiah 23:4) "And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD."

GLORY REVEALED

Third, a prophet is a man who has seen the glory of God in the face of Christ, a man to whom and in whom God has revealed the glory of his grace (vv. 2-3).

(Exodus 3:2-3) "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. (3) And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."

When God calls a man to be his prophet he causes that man to be possessed by "*the good will of him that dwelt in the bush.*" His life is lost in the cause of the gospel. He surrenders everything to the cause of Christ, and is utterly consumed by it.

Illustration: "*Is there not a cause?*"

God's prophets are men separated unto the gospel.

- **Separated by the call of God and the revelation of Christ** (Gal. 1:15-17).

(Galatians 1:15-17) "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, (16) To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: (17) Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."

- **Separated by determined purpose** (Rom. 1:1).

(Romans 1:1) "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God."

That man whose life is consumed with "*the good will of him that dwelt in the bush*" seeks to make the gospel of Christ and the glory of Christ the thing that determines everything about his life.

- A pastor doesn't need to wear tailor made suits; but he better wear one that is clean and pressed.
- He doesn't need to drive a new car; but he ought to drive a clean one.
- He doesn't need to live in the largest or finest home; but his house ought to be clean and well-maintained.

CALLED

Fourth, the prophet is a man who is called of God to be his prophet, personally and distinctly called and sent of God for the deliverance of his people. We see this in verses 4-10. Beginning in verse 4 and going all the way through verse 10, the one speaking is Christ himself, the God of Glory who appeared to Moses. Here Moses is telling us how he was called and why.

- **First, the Lord called him** (vv. 4-5).

(Exodus 3:4-5) "And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am I*. (5) And he said, Draw

not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground.”

- When he called him to be his prophet, **the Lord Jesus identified himself with his people**, as if to say, “Moses, I am trusting to your care the people I have loved, chosen to be my own, and redeemed with my blood” (v. 6).

(Exodus 3:6) “Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.”

“*And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God!*” — I understand that. “*Who is sufficient for these things!*”

- **Third, the Lord Jesus assured Moses that he is ever tender and affectionate regarding his people** (v. 7).

(Exodus 3:7) “And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;”

God’s elect are the apple of his eye. That means they better be the apple of my eye!

- **Then, he promised Moses that he would save his people, exactly as he had said he would** (v. 8).

(Exodus 3:8) “And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.”

- **With that blessed word of assurance, God sent Moses to deliver his people** (vv. 9-10).

(Exodus 3:9-10) “Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. (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.”

Moses had a mandate from God! He was sent to Pharaoh and to Israel with the authority of God upon him, confident of “*the good will of him that dwelt in the bush.*” And you know the rest of the story. Moses brought Israel out of Egypt. God brought Israel out of Egypt with the high hand of sovereign omnipotence and the stretched out arm of mercy, by the hand of his servant, his prophet Moses. Oh, may God yet be pleased raise up prophets in this generation! May he be pleased yet to give prophets to his church!

(Ephesians 4:12-16) “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (14) That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: (16) From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Amen.