

Introduction:

How many times have we heard about **Isaiah 6:8**? Oh, you may not remember the reference, but I'm sure you'll remember the statement when I say it. How many times have we had lessons on evangelism, teaching your neighbor, and offering invitations, and we were beaten over the head with the example of Isaiah? God needed someone to go to the Israelites, to teach them about their sinfulness and the coming judgment. He wanted someone to call them to repentance (though they would never listen) and He said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And Isaiah jumped up as an example to us all saying, "Here am I! Send me." Have you heard that sermon? I have. I've even preached that sermon. But all the while, I was ticked...ticked at Isaiah for making me look bad, ticked at the preachers for making me feel guilty, ticked at myself because it's just not that easy for me. I know most of you won't believe me because you see me here on Sunday's preaching sermons and teaching Bible classes, but I'm just really not that comfortable just talking to folks. You should just watch me sometime when I'm not preaching or teaching a class. I'll stand in the back and exchange pleasantries with folks as they enter or leave. I'll go to someone if I have a question or need to pass on some specific information. I can introduce myself to guests and carry on a brief polite conversation. But there always comes a point where everyone else is in their groups talking and I'm just kind of wandering around because I'm just not comfortable walking up to folks and starting a conversation. Get outside this building and it becomes a dozen times worse. Add in trying to start a spiritual conversation like inviting someone to an assembly, a Gospel meeting, to a class, and I'm out of my depth. Get me in a Bible study that has been set up and I can talk for hours. Ask me to invite someone out there to consider a Bible study, and I'm sunk. Then I hear about Isaiah, and to be honest with you, I'm not motivated at all by him. In fact, I just want to punch him in his eye. People who find that kind of work easy and then come around making the rest of us feel guilty just irritate me. Don't you want to just hit them? The fact is, when God asks "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" I'm not the guy stepping forward. I'm like those tv shows when the Sargent has all the Privates lined up, asks for volunteers, and all but one of them step back. I'm one of those guys stepping back. I'm not saying, "Here am I! Send me;" I'm saying, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." Anyone else ever feel like that?

But I've learned that we're not alone. In fact, we're in pretty good company. In fact, one of God's greatest leaders started out in that exact spot. Perhaps I never really noticed it because some of the other translations don't make the statement quite as clearly, but look at **Exodus 4:13**. In the ESV, God has called Moses to go tell Pharaoh to let His people go and after debating with God and making excuses, Moses finally says, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." Some of the translations make it seem almost like Moses had said, "Do this by whomever you will," as if Moses is saying, "If I'm the guy you've chosen, then so be it." But that isn't what he was saying, and I know that because of God's response in **Exodus 4:14**, "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses..." But wait, isn't this the guy who goes into Pharaoh and leads God's people out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, and to the brink of the Promised Land? How did this guy who is stepping backwards turn into that guy stepping up to the plate? Let's find out together.

Discussion:

- I. Moses hadn't always been a coward.
  - A. We know the story of Moses. He was brought up in Pharaoh's palace. But according to **Exodus 2:11-12** and **Acts 7:23-24**, Moses went out to look on his people, the Hebrews. He saw one being mistreated and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian and hiding the body. But, the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting. He tried to intervene, to get them to treat each other properly. Instead, they turned on him, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" (**Exodus 2:14**, ESV). Notice the way Stephen describes it in **Acts 7:25**—"He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand" (ESV). **Exodus 2:15** says Moses fled in fear for his life.
  - B. Let's make sure we fully grasp what happened here. Moses stepped up to the plate. He said he would deliver Israel. He volunteered. He had the background to do it. He had the training to do it. He had the strength to do it. Surely God would do it by his hand. Surely everyone would be able to see that and fall in line behind him. But they didn't, and God didn't, and therefore, Moses couldn't. The fact is being the person who steps up and says, "I can do this, I'll get it done," may not be the best place to begin. Even Isaiah didn't actually begin there. Before we get to **Isaiah 6:8**, see him in **vs. 5**—"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips..." (ESV).
  - C. Instead of leading an exodus, Moses fled. He spent the next 40 years as an abomination to his upbringing (cf. **Genesis 46:34**), becoming a shepherd. He settled into life as a failure. That is the Moses we meet in **Exodus 3**.

## II. Moses at the burning bush.

- A. I don't know about you, but I've heard and read the story of Moses at the burning bush so often, I miss the details. In fact, I miss how much he sounds like me. Do you have the same experience with Moses?
- B. In **Exodus 3:7-9**, God explains that He has heard the crying and groaning of His people. He has come to deliver them from their bondage, oppression, and slavery. In **Exodus 3:10**, God reveals His great plan saying to Moses, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (ESV). And isn't this parallel to what God has said to us? He has heard the crying and moaning of the people of the world trapped in the bondage of sin. He has come to us declaring that He has come to deliver them saying, "Come, I will send you to the people that you may bring them out of their sins." And I do exactly what Moses did.
- C. *Excuse #1*: "Who am I?" (**Exodus 3:11**). Who was Moses? He was a failure, a has-been. He tried once; no one would follow him. He couldn't get the job done at 40; why would he be able to get the job done at 80? He couldn't get the job done when he was banking on his upbringing as an Egyptian prince; why would he be able to get it done as an Egyptian abomination? Do you ever ask this? I know I do. Who am I to teach someone the gospel? Who am I to talk to a stranger about Jesus? Who am I to talk to my family members? I'm nobody. Worse, I'm an awful sinner. Who am I to spread the gospel? Surely, God knows better than to try to use me. Hasn't God seen how badly I've messed up? Hasn't God seen what a loser I am sometimes (a lot of the time)? Who am I?
- D. *Excuse #2*: "I wouldn't know what to say" (**Exodus 3:13**). Moses didn't say it exactly like that. He asked, "What am I going to say when they ask who sent me?" Have you ever made that excuse? I know I have. I wouldn't know how to start a conversation like that. I wouldn't know how to conduct a study if I had the opportunity. I wouldn't know what to say if they asked me about \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with a question you don't know how to answer). I wouldn't know what to say. Surely someone else is more qualified than me.
- E. *Excuse #3*: "Who's going to listen to me?" (**Exodus 4:1**). That's a biggie. After all, I'm no one of significance. Why on earth would I ever go up to someone and try to talk to them? Who would listen to me? I'm no one special. I'm no one worth listening to. So I hand them a card asking them to come to an assembly, who's really ever going to do that? So I invite them to read or study the Bible, who would possibly do that with me? Who's going to listen to me? Surely, God should just send someone else.
- F. *Excuse #4*: "I don't feel comfortable talking to people" (**Exodus 4:10**). We all just think we're the only ones that feel that way, but isn't that exactly what Moses said? He wasn't eloquent. He wasn't a man of words. He didn't feel comfortable talking to people. I get this one. I mean, sure, I can preach a sermon and conduct a class, but hand a card to a neighbor and tell them about an assembly? No way. I'm a deer in the headlights. My palms start sweating. I get overheated. I start to tremble. Do you know the feeling? Most of the time, I let the moment pass.
- G. *Excuse #5*: "Please, just send someone else" (**Exodus 4:13**). There it is. The culmination of all my excuse-making. Surely someone else is more qualified, more eloquent, more comfortable, more knowledgeable, more available, more known. Don't send me. Please, send anyone but me. Have you been there? I have.

## III. What changed?

- A. Who knew that Moses understood what it is like to be us? Who knew that Moses understood exactly what we feel like every time someone in the church comes out with a new plan for inviting folks to our assemblies or designs a new card to pass out? Who knew that Moses understood exactly what we feel like when the Gospel meeting flyers are put on the back table and one of the elders says, "Invite your friends, family, and neighbors"? Who knew that Moses understood exactly what we experience when one of the elders gets up and announces we're having a special lesson so invite your friends and family? But there he is making our excuses better than we do. And this is shocking. Because this isn't the Moses we know and love. This isn't the Moses who went in to Pharaoh multiple times saying, "Thus says the Lord." This isn't the Moses who led Israel out of Egypt. This isn't the Moses who led Israel through the Red Sea. This isn't the Moses who appointed judges in Israel. This isn't the Moses who climbed Mount Sinai and met face to face with God as the rest of the people huddled in their camps in fear. This isn't the Moses who stood toe to toe against Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and came out on top. This isn't the Moses who led the people in victory against Sihon and Og. What changed? How did this excuse-making Moses turn into the Moses who did all of that? And how can we make that change?
- B. Fortunately, there is only one key. Gratefully, we don't have to go through years of training to make the same kind of change Moses did. If we can learn one very simple lesson, we can do exactly what Moses did. I believe the key is found in the psalm the Israelites sang when God delivered them through the Red Sea in **Exodus 15:1-18**. What changed Moses?
- C. Listen carefully. **Moses ceased to believe he was alone and began to believe God was with him.** Read that sentence again. It changed everything for Moses and can change everything for us. Notice what God repeatedly said as Moses made his excuses. In **Exodus 3:12**, "But I will be with you..." (ESV). In **Exodus 3:16-17**, God explained He would be the one bringing the Israelites out. In **Exodus 4:5**, God gave Moses signs so "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” (ESV). In **Exodus 4:11-12**, God said, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak” (ESV). When God finally conceded and sent Aaron to Moses, He said in **Exodus 4:15**, “...and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do” (ESV). God said it to Moses over and over and over again. And finally, Moses believed it and that made all the difference.

- D. Consider Moses’ prayer following the golden calf incident. In **Exodus 33:1-3**, God commanded the people to leave Sinai and head to the Promised Land, but He refused to go with them. He would only send His angel before them. Notice Moses’ plea in **Exodus 33:12-16**. He basically said, “If you won’t go with us, don’t send me with them.” Moses understood something. If God wasn’t with him, he was nothing. If God wasn’t with Israel, they were nothing. If God did not go with them, they couldn’t get anywhere. What made the difference in Moses’ life? He ceased believing he was alone and began to believe God was with him.
- E. Perhaps nothing proves this more than the exception that proves the rule in **Numbers 14:39-45**. The Israelites had refused to believe God was with them and could get them into the Promised Land. So they weren’t going to go up. God rebuked them and pronounced judgment on them. So they decided they would go attack. Notice especially **Numbers 14:42**. “Do not go up, for the Lord is not among you, lest you be struck down before you enemies” (ESV). What happened? They went up and they were struck down. Why? Because God was not with them.
- F. Consider **Psalms 91**. It appears to me to be written by Moses either during or shortly after the time of the plagues. Whether or not that is the case, it demonstrates the change having faith in God’s presence will bring in us. We will recognize we have nothing to fear. God will care for us. Even if people reject and torment us for spreading the Gospel, God is on our side. We have nothing to fear. God is our refuge.

#### IV. But be aware...

- A. As we consider this point of faith, we need to be aware that even though God is with us, He will not always do things the way we expect. And Satan will use that as a trap to get us to quit relying on God. In **Exodus 5**, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and asked for the freedom to take the people for a three day journey into the wilderness to worship their God according to His law. Pharaoh refused. But even more than that, he decided to make an object lesson out of this. He said if the people had time to take this journey out of their work schedule, then they must have too much time on their hands. So he made their work harder. He bore down on them by making them get their own straw to make the bricks and then beating them for not meeting the quotas. The people came to Moses in **Exodus 5:21** and said, “The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants...” Put the emphasis on the word “you.” Not just anybody, but “you, Moses,” you have done this. Wrapped up in that word was the accusation that Moses most feared. He wasn’t the man. He couldn’t do it. All he had accomplished was making things worse. And now everyone hated him.
- B. No wonder he turned to God and prayed, “Why did you ever send me?” (**Exodus 5:22**, ESV) Don’t just rush through that sentence. Put the emphasis on “me.” “Why did you ever send *me*?” This is as if to say, “I told you so, LORD. I told you I wasn’t the guy. I told you no one would listen to me. I told you I wasn’t comfortable speaking to people. I told you the whole plan would fail if you sent me. Why didn’t you send someone else?” Do you see what Satan was doing in this? He wanted Moses to believe God wasn’t with him and Moses even gets there because he also says, “...and you have not delivered your people at all” (**Exodus 5:23**, ESV).
- C. Do you know what God’s response was? God said, “Trust me. I’m with you. Keep going to Pharaoh. I’ll work it out.” See **Exodus 6:1-8**. The people didn’t believe (**Exodus 6:9**), but Moses did. This faith made the difference.
- D. So, be aware. When you believe God is with you, He won’t do everything exactly the way you expect Him to. Don’t let Satan use that to hinder your faith. God is with us. We will succeed. Let’s do His work.

#### Conclusion:

And so, this leaves us with one question. God has said that He has heard the groaning of all these people under their sins. He has called us to go to them and proclaim the message of their salvation. We have all kinds of opportunities. We can invite them to our assemblies and classes. We can bring up spiritual discussions. We can invite them to read the Bible with us. We can ask them if we can pray for them. So, here is the question we need to ask, “If we really believe God is with us, what will we do?”