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## **“HERE I AM BUT DON’T SEND ME!”**

**“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. ... 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; ... Come now therefore, and I will send thee to Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” [Ex. 3: 4, 7, 10-11]**

*I recently visited a government agency where there was a big bold sign, which read, ‘NO VACANCY.’ As I waited in the Reception for my contact, I overheard a supervisor complaining to her boss that there was nobody to type the urgent documents that he had asked for. Surprised, the boss reminded the supervisor that her unit had three secretaries, the maximum allowed by the budget. The supervisor replied, “Yes, on paper we have three secretaries. However, for all practical purposes, we have none. One is on maternity leave, another is on a computer course, and the only one on duty has just called in sick!” That story may not sound strange to you if you work in an organization. If we are true to ourselves, we may agree that we get paid for much more than we work. For example, we get paid for weekends, annual vacations, sick leave, etc. Even on days that we come to work, we do not work for every minute of the working hours, in addition to tea and lunch breaks. Therefore, we may be overpaid compared to our contribution but underpaid compared to our needs! Yes, we are on duty but are we at work? Can you then imagine what we do as labourers in the Lord’s vineyard?*

*We attend services on the prescribed days and times, especially on Sundays. We pay our tithes and vows, and offer thanks. We attend crusades and revivals. We serve on numerous committees in the church. Therefore, by all definitions, we have told God, “here I am, send me.” Now, let Him accept our challenge and that is when the problem begins! That is when we start giving excuses: “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father,” or “Lord, I will follow Thee, but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house” [Lk 9:59, 61]. In the Roman Catholic Church, vocation into the priesthood has dropped significantly because parents no longer encourage their sons into a life of celibacy. In many churches, the commitment to evangelism, charities and foreign missions has gone down. We would rather that God sent others, not us.*

*Happily, we are not alone, because the people of faith in the Bible have passed through similar experiences. For example, Jonah bought a one-way ticket in the wrong direction to avoid God’s call [Jon. 1:1-3]. In today’s lesson, we shall use the story of the call of Moses to understand how we can deal with our situation*

## 1. Background

You will recall that when Joseph became the Governor of Egypt, he used his influence with the Pharaoh to bring his people, numbering 70, to settle in Egypt [Gen. 46:26-27]. They were given Goshen, “the best of the land, in the land of Rameses” [Gen. 47:11]. In due course, the “children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them” [Ex. 1:7]. At that time, the Pharaoh on the throne did not know Joseph. Therefore, he did not hesitate to institute harsh measures to curb the growing political and military influence of the children of Israel.

He first tried harder work but that could not stop them. So, he then ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill every son born to the Hebrews. However, because the midwives feared God, they cleverly refused to obey the Pharaoh’s order, claiming that the Hebrew mothers were so brave that they had their children on their own before the midwives arrived! [Ex. 1:11-19]. Consequently, the Pharaoh now made it the responsibility of all the Egyptians to cast every son born to the Hebrews into River Nile [v. 22]. This was when Moses was born.

Moses’ parents hid him for three months until they could no longer afford the risk. So, his mother put him in an “ark of bulrushes” and cast him into the river. His sister, presumably Miriam, put an eye on him to know what would happen to the fine child. However, by divine coincidence, the Pharaoh’s daughter and her maids came down to the river to wash [the Nile was her swimming pool!]. She saw the ark among the reeds and sent her maids to bring it. On opening it, the child inside wept. Although she recognized him as “one of the Hebrews’ children,” she had compassion on him [Ex. 2: 1-6]. Just then, the child’s sister came forward boldly and offered to call the baby’s nurse. The Pharaoh’s daughter agreed and the child’s sister went to call the child’s mother. The princess then put the child in the care of his mother [she did not know that] for a wage! The princess named the child *Moses*, which means, drawn out of water [vv. 7-10].

Although he was Hebrew, Moses was raised as an Egyptian prince. Therefore, he had the privilege to receive the best education that Egypt could offer. He moved in the circles of the high and mighty, and came to appreciate the enormous political and military strength of the king and his empire. Remember, Egypt was the world’s superpower at the time, just as the United States of America is today.

As he grew close to 40 years of age, he became conscious of the inhuman treatment that the Egyptians meted out to the Hebrews. One day, he killed an Egyptian that he saw unjustly punishing a Hebrew, and buried him in the sand. When he realized that the Hebrews could reveal his crime to the Egyptians, he fled to the land of the Midians, to the home of Reuel (Jethro), a priest, whose eldest daughter, Zipporah, he married [vv. 11-21]. Moses spent another 40 years in Midian as a shepherd, and raised a family. It was during one of his forays into the mountains that he came to the mountain of God, Horeb, where he saw the

spectacle of a bush on fire that was not burnt up. His curiosity brought him into the presence of the “God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” [Ex. 3:1-6].

## 2. Why did Moses resist the call?

When God called Moses, he replied, “Here am I.” Then, God invited him to come closer, and to remove his shoes because he was on holy ground. Next, God introduced Himself. In response, “Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God” [Ex. 3:4-6]. However, as soon as God told Moses of his election as the one to lead the Hebrews out of Pharaoh’s grip, excuses began to pour out: “who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh?” [v. 11]; “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, ... but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue” [Ex. 4:10].

Why was Moses so reluctant to accept God’s call? Here are some reasons, among many others:

### a) *Lack of or insufficient knowledge of God*

Moses was raised as a prince of Egypt. Therefore, he knew more about the idols of that kingdom than about the living God. What his mother and, lately, his priestly father-in-law, Jethro, might have taught him about God looked like fairy tale in the light of the hardship which the children of Israel were passing through in Egypt. Moses demonstrated his predicament in the following words, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, what is His name? What shall I say unto them?” [Ex. 3:13].

A popular experiment in psychology brings a group of patients before two doctors for treatment. They are divided into two groups. Both doctors are given the same medication. The first ‘doctor’ is actually a motor mechanic wearing the outfit of a doctor! His patients trust him and do whatever he tells them. The real doctor in the guise of a mechanic approaches the second group. They do not even pay attention to what he tells them, and they refuse his prescriptions! Consequently, they do not get healed. That is why Jesus told the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well near Samaria, “If thou knewest the gift of God, *and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink*; thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water” [Jn 4:10].

Many of us have a similar problem because “the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” [Dan. 11:32]. Unless we know on whom we have believed, our faith cannot work. When God called Gideon to deliver his people from the hands of the Midianites, he asked Him to “shew me a sign that Thou talkest with me” [Judges 6:17]. Then, he took God through a series of experiments to prove Him! Finally, Gideon exclaimed, “Alas, O Lord God!

For because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face,” and God assured him, “Peace be unto thee; fear not; thou shalt not die.” Gideon built an altar there to God and called it ‘*Jehovah-shalom*’ [the Lord is peace] [vv. 11-24].

b) *Fear of man*

Moses could not imagine how he could fight against Pharaoh and his powerful empire. After all, he had himself escaped from his justice, and going back had humiliation and death in stock for him. In like manner, many of us are used to basic comforts that we believe we cannot let go. Freedom, democracy, power, position, basic necessities of life, etc. Why go and face persecution from Hindu or Islamic fundamentalists when I can enjoy a comfortable ministry here? Why give up the sunshine and fun of the Caribbean or Africa to go to the cold lands in Europe or America? Why give up my Western civilization to go to the jungles of Africa, Asia or Latin America? Why can’t God use me where I am instead of sending me into hostile territory? The truth is that we are afraid of worldly powers or of losing worldly comforts, whereas Jesus has promised us, “be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” [Jn 16:33].

Moses had no reason to fear Pharaoh because God had weakened him before He sent Moses to Egypt. Recall that God had told Abraham, even before Isaac was born, “know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them *four hundred years*; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance” [Gen. 15: 13-14]. The children of Israel sojourned in Egypt for 430 years, and remarkably, “it came to pass that at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even *the selfsame day*, it came to pass, that *all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt*” [Ex. 12:40-41]! In other words, the power and glory of God had moved out of Egypt. From now on, Egypt was a shadow of its old self and, therefore, ripe for destruction. In like manner, by the time God calls us out to do something for Him, He has already prepared the way, for “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, *that ye may be able to bear it*” [1 Cor. 10:13].

### 3. How did Moses overcome his reluctance?

Since it is God Himself who recruits labourers into His vineyard [Matt. 9:38; Jn 15:16], it is His responsibility to prepare us for the assignment. In that regard, He is the best human resource manager that I know! He will programme you from your mother’s womb [Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15], and your life experiences, even before He calls you, are in line with His plans. So, at the point that He calls you, all that you may be able to do is resist. You cannot refuse! That is why He is very patient with us as we fight our losing battle. For some people, like Jonah, God may take a dramatic step to bring us back to where He wants us. Jonah boarded a ship going to Tarshish so as to flee from God’s call for him to go and preach to Nineveh, the

great but wicked city. God caused a great storm that tossed the ship to and fro. The shipmaster cast lots, which fell on Jonah. He confessed his sin and asked them to cast him into the sea for the storm to abate. They did so, but the merciful God constructed the first submarine [the Bible calls it “a great fish”] to swallow him and land him in Nineveh. After that, nobody taught Jonah to realize that “they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy” [Jon. 1: 1-17; 2: 8].

In the case of Moses, he had plunged from power as prince of Egypt to simplicity as the shepherd boy of Midian. He was already hungry for justice for the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, but he could not imagine what human force could break their yoke. Now, face to face with God Himself, Moses was not prepared for what he was told, that he was the human instrument that God was going to use. Reluctantly, gradually, Moses yielded to God’s call. Here is how he did it:

a) *He attended the ‘school of faith’*

To some of us, God has given the gift of faith, being one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit [1 Cor. 12:9]. For most of us, however, faith is a fruit, being also one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit [Gal. 5:22]. For a fruit to emerge, the plant has to be nurtured from seed to harvest. Therefore, faith can be cultivated and nurtured into a fruit.

God took Moses through an orientation programme on faith building. He told Moses to throw his rod on the ground. He did and it turned into a serpent. Moses fled from it! Then, He asked Moses to take the snake by the tail. He did and it again became a rod in his hand [Ex. 4:1-4]. Next, God asked Moses to put his hand into his bosom. When he brought it out, it was “leprous as snow.” When he put it back, in accordance with God’s command, and brought it out, it became normal again [vv. 6-7].

In spite of all those miracles, Moses still had doubts about his ability to accept the call. He complained about his stammering. God replied, “Who hath made man’s mouth? And who maketh the dumb or deaf or the seeing or the blind? Have not I the Lord? Now therefore, *go and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say*” [vv. 10-12]. Was Moses convinced yet? No! “And he said, O my Lord, *send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send*” [v.13].

God was angry with him all right, but He helped Moses’ faith by giving him Aaron as his spokesman, “this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs,” and by ensuring that all the men who sought his life in Egypt were dead [vv. 14-17; 19].

b) *The people of Israel accepted Moses as the deliverer sent by God*

Whatever God demonstrated to Moses in the burning bush had no human witnesses. Therefore, he still stood the chance to be rejected by his people. God made it easy for him by speaking to Aaron (in Egypt) to go into the wilderness to meet Moses. There, in the “mount of God,” Moses narrated his call and mission to Aaron, his eloquent brother. As soon as they arrived in Egypt, Aaron gathered the elders of Israel in whose presence Moses demonstrated the new powers that God had granted him. The people believed, bowed their heads and worshipped God [Ex. 4: 27-30].

c) *God continued to reassure him throughout*

Moses was discouraged when the signs and wonders did not persuade Pharaoh, especially as his own people had also rejected him for making their burden heavier [Ex. 5:1-21]. He questioned God for not delivering the people [v.23]. In reply, God reassured Moses, “Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: *for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land*” [Ex. 6:1].

d) *Miracles water faith*

By the time that God had sent ten plagues, Pharaoh had no choice but to let the children of Israel go, saying, “go serve the Lord, as you have said, ...and bless me also” [Gen. 12:31-32]. After the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, Moses sang, “Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, *doing wonders?*” [Gen. 15:11]. Moses had become a man of great faith!

#### 4. Lessons

The following need to be noted:

- a) It is true that salvation is by grace, not by works [Eph.2: 8-9]. However, since “we are labourers *together with God*” [1 Cor. 3:9], it means that we are saved for a purpose, namely, *to work for God*. That is why when Jesus returns as King and Judge, He will say, “Behold, I come quickly; *and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be*” [Rev. 22:12].
- b) It is a rare privilege for God to call us, and since “many are called but few chosen” [Matt. 20:16], we should not play with our chances.
- c) It is not a weakness to express fears and doubts when we are called. However, we should turn them to God who alone knows how to guide us to victory and success.
- d) We cannot jump at God’s blessings but ignore His call. It makes our worship incomplete and ultimately unfruitful. So, as we sing, let us all say, “*Here I am, send me!*”