

Bimonthly Encouragement to Sudanese Christian Workers

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No. 8 September 2010

God keeps His promises, even when it doesn't appear that He is.

Just after I sent out the previous "Encouragement" I was very encouraged myself. I was invited to preach at one of my home churches. For the first time since losing my voice-box to cancer, I preached for 20 minutes, using my implanted valve to "voice" my words. I was very nervous. Graciously God blessed many of my friends through the message *and* simply by seeing me standing in the pulpit to preach! It took a lot out of me. I took three days to recover – but it was well worth it.

Reading Exodus 4:10-12; 6:10-12; 6:28-30, and putting them alongside Acts 7:22: "Moses was powerful in speech and action", I have wondered what exactly was Moses' "slowness of speech and tongue" or "speaking with faltering lips"?

From Bible commentaries I discovered four main ideas –

1. Moses could have been *uncomfortable* using a language that was not his first language (something many Sudanese can identify with).
2. Moses may have been admirably *humble* in saying he was not worthy of the role to lead God's people, as Numbers 12:3 would indicate.
3. Moses may have had a *physical speaking handicap*, such as a stutter or a cleft palate, (as I have had with my artificial voice since 2006). There is a Jewish Midrash – tradition – in which Moses' mouth is burned by coal as a test by Pharaoh's advisors about his future leadership.
4. Moses was simply being *unwilling* and disobedient.

We don't know which of these views is accurate. We can form our own idea. We do **know from Scripture** that God kept His promise to Moses, "I will help you speak and will teach you what to say", Exodus 4:12.

In the New Testament Stephen told the Sanhedrin that God made this chosen person into a man "powerful in speech and action", Acts 7:22.

God's ability should encourage and strengthen everyone of us today.

You are where God has called you, doing what He wants you to do, but not everything is going well:

- At least some of your own people reject you, Exodus 2:14; 5:20-21.
- Opposition from authority gets worse, Exodus 5:2, 4-9.

- Some of the things you have worried about are now happening, Exodus 3:11; 4:1, 4:10.
- Worst of all, God does not seem to be able to keep the promises that He gave to you when you first started out on this course for your ministry, Exodus 5:22-23.

When Moses said to God, “Why ever did you send me to do this?” God replied with a promise, a revelation and a commission:

1. **God’s promise...** Exodus 6:1 “Now you will see what I will do..” Should you leave the big city and start again in your home village? Should you leave the small church where you are, to pastor a large and more willing congregation somewhere else? Is it right that you want a different calling to the one God has already given you?

“Now” indicates that God’s timing is the right timing. It is also the best timing, no matter what else we think!

“What I will do” shows that it is God who will do the saving and sanctifying work. We can only facilitate. After that, we must take on trust the promises of God.

2. **God’s revelation of Himself...** Exodus 6:2 “I am the LORD”. When we are engaged in God’s work, we must be careful never to let that work take the place of God Himself in our lives. I personally know what a danger this is. It becomes more and more a danger as the work gets bigger and more successful.

God repeats to Moses that He is the saving God. He reminds Moses that He is the God from history. He is the God of Covenant promise. He is the God who cares more about people than any man ever could, Exodus 6:5. *How we need to keep a right understanding of God uppermost in our hearts at all times.*

3. **God commission to God’s man...** Exodus 6:6 “Therefore say..” Moses is told by God what he is to say to his own people. Seven times in verses 6-8 God says “I will” do something. Twice – the first and the last statements – God reminds people who He is, “I am”. It is Moses’ task to *explain and apply* this to the people God has given to his care. Moses takes God’s message into his own heart, and then he tells the people.

If the account finished here, everything would be OK. But it doesn’t! Verse 9 says, “they did not listen because of their discouragement and cruel bondage”.

And so the scene is set for the great confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh, between God and other gods, between God’s people and other people, chs.7-12. The result of that is summed up in Exodus 15:1-2, “I will sing to the Lord for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. **The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation. He is my God and I will praise Him**”.

God did keep His promise then. God does keep His promises today. So let us keep serving Him with all of our abilities. And where we lack the ability, we can be sure He will provide for us, in one way or another. God is true to His word and to our calling.

Pastor Colin Salter. (Please share these thoughts with others and refer them to my website for more study resources!).