



“There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face” (Deuteronomy 34:10).

Face to Face

Central Truth: Communion with God provided the prophet’s message.

L432. Date: December 1985. **Text:** Deuteronomy 34:10-12.

Topic: Fellowship: With God; Preaching: God’s Calling.

The lesson text is an Old Testament passage which is as relevant as today's happenings. It deals with the divine call to the ministry, the spiritual qualifications of the ministers, personal fellowship with God by His chosen people, the duty of service to God, and an example of the lifestyle of a faithful servant of God.

Pursue the study with these statements in mind. “Whom God chooses, He calls. Whom He calls, He qualifies. Whom He qualifies, He uses.” See those principles illustrated in the life of His prophet Jeremiah.

(1) God chose Jeremiah. *“Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations”* (Jeremiah 1:5).

(2) God called Jeremiah. *“The word of the LORD came unto me”* (Jeremiah 1:4).

(3) God qualified Jeremiah. *“The LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth”* (Jeremiah 1:9).

(4) God used Jeremiah *“to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant”* (Jeremiah 1:10).

What was true of Jeremiah is true of every person whom God chooses to use in His service. Hear His messengers today in a spirit of respect and obedience.

I. THE CALL OF GOD'S PROPHET (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18)

“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee . . . ; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deuteronomy 18:15).

There is evidently a Bible teaching that God issues a special call to certain men to be His messengers in each generation. You see it in the experience of Isaiah when he saw the Lord and heard the call, *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”* It is to his honor that he volunteered, *“Here am I; send me”* (Isaiah 6:8).

A special call came to Saul of Tarsus (who became known as Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ). Saul experienced the vision on the Damascus road because God had chosen him *“to bear (God's) name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel”* (Acts 9:15).

Those two calls are but typical of thousands who have experienced the special move of God upon their lives. Each could say, *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings”* (Isaiah 61:1).

I praise God that I have experienced His call upon my life. But there is more to the text than that.

This text refers to the great ministry of the greater Prophet of God, Jesus Christ. Simon Peter quoted Deuteronomy 18:15, 19, and then said, *“Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away everyone of you from his iniquities”* (Acts 3:26). Peter evidently interpreted Deuteronomy 18:15, 19 as a prophecy of Jesus who is *“called of God”* as *“a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”* (Hebrews 5:4, 6). He is the Greater Prophet!

Every person called to the gospel ministry is in the line of fulfillment of prophecy and walking after the example of Jesus Christ. What a privilege to be called of God!

II. THE MORTALITY OF GOD'S PROPHET

God uses ordinary men as His messengers. Prophets (and preachers) are not a special breed of ultra-holy persons. God said the prophet would come *“from the midst of thee, of thy brethren”* (Deuteronomy 18:15). He would be a man with infirmities like all other men. God specializes in doing extraordinary things through ordinary persons.

“Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called”; instead, God has made His own choices so that *“no flesh should glory in his presence”* (I Corinthians 1:26, 29).

People need to be ministered to by humans like themselves. When God spoke to Israel at Mount Sinai with terrible manifestations (thunderings, lightnings, trumpets, and earthquake), the people said to Moses, *“Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die”* (Exodus 20:19). God said that was the right thing for them to say. The prophetic ministry arose to fill the need for people to hear the word of God from other human beings.

The prophet is a man of God, but he is not a perfect man. He has been chosen by God's purpose and claims no special merits of his own.

Even Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, came into the world as a man among men. *“In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people”* (Hebrews 2:17).

III. THE MESSAGE OF GOD'S PROPHET

Here is a most encouraging word from God concerning all His messengers: *“I will . . . put my words in his mouth”* (Deuteronomy 18:18). That means even a finite man can deliver an infinite message; man can speak God's words.

God's prophets have experienced the fulfillment of that very promise. Jeremiah had said, *“Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak.”* After putting forth His hand and touching Jeremiah's mouth, God replied: *“Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth”* (Jeremiah 1:6, 9).

Jonah's commission to Nineveh was to *“preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee”* (Jonah 3:2). Whose message was he to deliver? God's message, the same as every other preacher who lives under the commission, *“speak with my words”* (Ezekiel 3:4). God's messenger must speak no other words than His.

The message is from God, but it comes through men. The divine plan is, *“I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him”* (Deuteronomy 18:18). The greatest challenges of the preacher are to be sure He has God's message, then to be sure that he does not contaminate it in delivery.

IV. THE RESPONSE TO GOD'S PROPHET

“It shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him”

(Deuteronomy 18,19).

There are two parts to the message of God to mankind. (1) The messenger must deliver it faithfully. (2) The hearer must receive it humbly. It is proper to pray for both the preacher and the hearer.

Each hearer is responsible to receive the word. Then each is responsible to respond to the word. Jesus gave a parable of the soils which shows the different responses people give to the Word of God when they hear it. Some ignore it; some respond superficially; some are influenced but soon turned from it; and some live by it so as to produce great fruit (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23).

The same response was common in ancient times. Many would come to hear the prophet and *“enjoy his message.”* But God said, *“Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not”* (Ezekiel 33:32). God will call such careless hearers into account.

V. THE LIFESTYLE OF GOD'S PROPHET

Moses was one of the greatest prophets known in the Old Testament time. *“There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face”* (Deuteronomy 34:10). In Moses, we can see the kind of man God wants each of His messengers to be.

A. Live in personal fellowship with God. Moses knew the Lord *“face to face”* (verse 10). When Moses entered into the tabernacle in the wilderness, the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle. *“The LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”* (Exodus 33:11). Thank God for those faithful messengers of whom God said, *“My covenant was with him. . . . The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity”* (Malachi 2:5, 6). To such a messenger He is *“a God at hand, . . . and not a God afar off”* (Jeremiah 23:23). You can trust the message of a man like that.

B. Practice faithful obedience to God. Moses did all that *“the LORD sent him to do”* (Deuteronomy 34:11). There is no better example of faithful obedience than that.

Read Exodus 3:1 — 13:22 and note how Moses obeyed God in preparing the people to come from Egyptian bondage. Often he was misunderstood by his own people. Commonly he was rejected by the ruling powers of Egypt. He was insulted by priests of the current pagan religion of Egypt. Yet, he remained faithful to God.

The book of Hebrews reports that Jesus Christ *“was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house”* (Hebrews 3:2).

What a faithful man Moses was to be equated to Jesus Christ like that! What an example for us. Blessed is the congregation today whose messenger from God (the pastor-teacher of the church) is such a faithful man.

C. Minister in the power of God. Moses witnessed and worked *“all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt,”* even showing *“great terror . . . in the sight of all Israel”* (Deuteronomy 34:11, 12).

Half-hearted singing, powerless preaching, unconvincing appeals, and perfunctory service are as disgusting to God as they are to us. May God give us some men who can say in truth, *“Truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD”* (Micah 3:8).

Powerful living and witnessing is the normal Christian life. The coming of the Holy Spirit guaranteed it to us (Acts 1:8). Those who bear the gospel message should expect God to bear them witness with demonstrations of His divine work (Hebrews 2:3, 4). A sin-darkened world will take note of such a ministry among them in these days. Spiritual power does not come by numbers or by organization, but by the Spirit of the living God living in and working through us (Zechariah 4:6). *“Be filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18).

D. Be a public witness for God. Moses witnessed *“to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land . . . in the sight of all Israel”* (Deuteronomy 34: 12). *“Israel”* was the people of God, the equivalent to Christians today. But *“Pharaoh, . . . his servants, and . . . his land”* were all pagans, the equivalent to the unsaved around us today. But Moses witnessed before them all. He was a public witness for God.

God's messenger must not be afraid of the face of any person, for God is with him (Jeremiah 1:8). He lives under the commission, *“Go and tell this people”* (Isaiah 6:9). Thank God for those who take a public stand for Him.

What is said in Deuteronomy 18 and 34 about the prophet can be said about the preacher today. And what is said about the preacher is equally applicable to the rest of God's children.

How should a Christian live? He should live with a personal relationship with God, in faithful obedience to God, ministering in the power of God, and giving a public witness for God.

Let us respect the messenger through whom God speaks to us today. And let us respond correctly to the message He gives.

Questions

1. What does Jeremiah teach us about God's special call?
2. What evidence is there of a divine call today?
3. How can people who have not received a special call serve God?
4. Why does God speak to people through human beings?
5. How does God put His words in the preacher's mouth today?
6. What response should be given God's message by the preacher?
7. How can one serve in the power of God?
8. How will you be a public witness for God this week?