

# HERE AM I, SEND ME

## 1. Call to Serve

These are the words of the Prophet Isaiah. They consist of two separate parts. The first is, "here am I," and the second is, "send me." He said these words in response to the enquiry of God, " Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Isaiah had just received the grace of repentance. As a young man he had lived, as many of his contemporaries, in a life of sin. He attended the services in the temple of the Lord, and there his conscience became awakened. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts," he said.

He, like all who have tasted how gracious God is, experienced that love for sinners which is comprehended through the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. It is written in II Cor. 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Isaiah became a new man. The direct fruit of this experience was a willingness to share it with his friends and neighbors.

## 2. Here Am I

Isaiah's apparent willingness to enter into God's service contrasts with that of both Moses and Jeremiah. God called Moses from a within a burning bush. Moses, like Isaiah, responded, "Here am I." The circumstance, however, was different. Moses was raised as a prince while he lived his childhood in Egypt. Of him it is written, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11: 24 - 26). A mission was already prepared for him, namely, to lead God's people out of slavery.

It appears, however, that Moses was not as eager to go as Isaiah. He used many excuses to fight against this mission. We, like him, are very reluctant to approach those who are still in the bondage of sin. We would want someone else to do it. But God responded to Moses' objection of being a slow speaker with the answer, " Who hath made man's mouth? Now therefore go, and I will be thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say " (Exod. 4:10-12).

Similarly, Jeremiah hesitated to obey the call to service. He agonized over his insufficiency to comply with the requirements of the service as he saw it. This is a common trait of those whom the congregation places into any position of service. But whatever the office, the scriptural words in II Cor. 3: 5 and 6, apply, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

We believers are more often like Moses and Jeremiah, if and when approached by the congregation to enter into God's work.

Three examples of former saints have been presented. What lesson is to be found in these examples? We are encouraged to believe as we find ourselves. Likewise we are encouraged to serve with the gifts and measure of faith given to us. Whether willing or reluctant, these men were obedient and faithful until the end of their lives. They had faithfully served with the gift allotted them by God. Another example is the Apostle Peter, who while in a Roman prison awaiting execution, demonstrated his faithfulness to his calling, writing, "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me" (II Pet. 1:13,14).

In one sense, Isaiah's calling was different than ours. He received a direct call, as I believe Luther calls it, to be God's prophet. He had a sincere desire to share this joy with his past friends, and his fellow countrymen. While he had participated with them in the pleasures of the flesh, he now hoped that they, like he, would see the error of their ways. Isaiah's desire was a good fruit of living faith.

### **3. Be Ready Always to Give an Answer**

These words are found in I Peter 3: 15: "But sanctify the lord God in your hearts: and be always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." The confession of faith is centermost to revealing this hope which is in us to outsiders. This confession occurs in two ways: by our manner of life and with our mouths.

Our manner of life, our demeanor, our speech patterns, and our dress, works powerfully to attract the attention of those who are seeking. It is fitting to repeat what is written in Col. 3:1, - 3, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ. " We read from II Cor. 3:2, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men."

This was the situation with young Joseph, when he was transplanted into Egypt. He provides an excellent role model to all. He was read and known of all men in his new environment. We read in Genesis 39:3, "And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." Because of this, Joseph was placed into a position of trust.

Joseph was ready to give an answer when he was confronted with temptation by Potiphar's wife and confessed his faith in word and deed. Enticed by her to commit adultery, he answered, " How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

It is important that we confess our faith with our mouth as well. God's Word teaches and encourages us to do so. In Romans 10:10 is written, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Another quotation from II Tim. 4:2 is applicable to the mission field where all believers are engaged in their place of watching. This reads, "Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

The intent of all these scriptural admonitions is to encourage us to fulfill the mission command of Jesus, which is, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20).

#### **4. Opportunities in Daily Life**

Two recent incidents illustrate the way that the message of the gospel is spread through the confession of individual believers. In the first, a young man who had been seeking for salvation for five years, had made his acquaintance with two believing girls. As I have heard it, this man had a lingering question: "Where can I find Jesus? Where is He?" Servants of God, as these girls were, can never know the circumstance in which he or she may be called upon to help a seeking soul find Jesus. They had, during their normal conversion with him, mentioned their intention of traveling to the winter services in Florida. They invited him. He came there. There he found a good and gracious God. He received the grace of repentance. Those who witnessed this scene have described the joy of the finder which was evident in the young man.

Most of us have heard of the second example, which has resulted in the birth of a small flock of believers in Ecuador. This, too, began from an incident which involved a few believing girls who were able to, by their fruits of faith, reveal to a young man the living hope within them. The net result was that this young man was converted, later become engaged to and married a believer, and through his efforts introduced the servants of Jesus to many of his family and neighbors in his native land. Many there received the gospel in the same manner as the Thessalonians, of whom Paul writes: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe"(I Thess. 2:13).

#### **5. Not with Excellency of Speech**

Continuing this thought of communicating such noble and holy matters to unbelievers, it is uplifting and instructive to consider Moses' self-evaluation, when he was called. In Exodus 4:10–16 is written, " And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or 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 what thou shalt say. And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him, whom thou wilt send. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he saith, is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee, and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words

in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do."

Likewise Jeremiah received an answer from God when he resisted the calling. We read of this from Jeremiah 1: 6–9: "Then said I, Ah, Lord God' behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then 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."

These admissions of lacking in speech are in accord with the words of Paul, who wrote these words; " And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God " (I Cor. 2:1–5).

An encouraging example for us who often feel too inadequate to confess our faith is found in John chapter 9. There we hear how Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth. The Pharisees, seeking to discredit Jesus because He had healed on the sabbath, questioned this man as to the manner of his healing. This man had not yet comprehended the doctrine of living faith, as his answer reveals, but it contains his simple and powerful confession of what Jesus had done for him. He said, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25).

## **6. The Gospel of God's Kingdom**

It is of vital importance to understand that salvation can only come about by the PROCLAMATION of God's children, who have been sent to preach this gospel. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Then Paul asks, " How then shall they call upon 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? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Paul answers this question, by quoting Isaiah, his representative and teacher in this matter. In Isaiah 52:7 is written, "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!" To all this, the Apostle concludes, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The feet of those who preach the gospel are highlighted in these references of Paul to the Romans, in paraphrasing Isaiah. This order of grace has been preserved from Isaiah's time to ours.

## 7. Conclusion

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8). So clearly spake the Prophet Isaiah concerning this way. Yet, so few there are who find it. Preachers of every age have known disappointment. Isaiah had to lament, following some years of tenure in this work, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1).

The Apostle Paul concluded, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4; 3,4).

We hope that those on the outside of God's kingdom would receive the gospel with faith. It is our prayer that we would all have the heart of Isaiah to accomplish the will of God. Jesus acknowledged how great is the work before us. He said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38).

*Quentin Ruonavaara  
Introduction for Speakers & Elders Meeting  
LLC Summer Services – Minneapolis  
July 1, 2000*