

## Moses The Preacher

## Exodus 4:10-17

Which Bible character has more of their spoken words recorded than any other? The answer might surprise you—it's Moses! Think about all his words recorded in the first five books of the Bible, as well as elsewhere. According to one word-counter, it's over 120,000 words. To give you a measure of the number, Jesus has just over 30,000 spoken words recorded in the Gospels. Yet, according to his own testimony before God in Exodus 4:10, he was unable to speak! Despite all the impressive things God had shown him at the burning bush, nothing had changed in that regard—he says so directly to God.

But he could not have been more wrong in his assessment, going on to become the most prolific recorded preacher in the Bible. Think of the book of Deuteronomy alone, which is almost entirely the record of Moses' preaching! What God made known through Moses is the very foundation and ground of all that we need to understand, even today, if we are ever to grasp the Bible's message as a whole.

Why does this matter? Because it shows us the central importance of the word of God. It reveals God's great purpose through the most blessed of his servants in the Old Testament—to make his word known. While Moses was a mighty performer of signs and wonders, a great leader of people, a wise judge, and a brilliant administrator, all of that is secondary to his highest calling—to be a preacher of the word of the Lord.

We see the same thing in the life of Christ. What signs he performed, what wonders he displayed, what judgments he gave, what leadership he exercised, what wisdom he manifested—yet all of this was mere context, background, introduction. His great and central and vital ministry was to preach the gospel (Mark 1:14-15; 35-39).

What was the great priority of the apostles? They also performed signs, displayed wonders, gave judgments, exercised leadership, and manifested wisdom—but again, it was preaching Christ and his gospel that concerned them more than anything else (1 Corinthians 1:21-24; Romans 1:15-16). Apostles, Jesus, Moses—their great priority was preaching the gospel.

What about us? Have we lost our way in evangelical churches? Have we made other things more important in the life of the church than preaching? Things that are good and necessary in themselves, but if they displace preaching, they become at best a distraction and at worst a form of idolatry? Even signs and wonders were only given to Moses so that his preaching would be known as genuine, straight from God. The signs without the preaching would be worse than a distraction—they would be idols, worthless barriers to the knowledge of the Lord, just as we see with so many self-proclaimed miracle-workers today. Moses was, first and foremost, a preacher of the word, and in our churches, we are called to be the same.

### 1. The Preacher's Calling

Moses was called to speak to the people in the name of the Lord (Exodus 4:1, 9-12). He was not called to act out, or to mime, or to share, or to discuss, or to contribute to a pool of ideas with the hope of adding something helpful—he was called to preach! The form of conveying the message is just as important as the message itself, as we read from 1 Corinthians 1:21. It is God's chosen vehicle of making known his will to his people.

We see the same in the life of Jesus, and it caused him so much trouble and brought him into conflict with the religious leaders. He was not merely contributing something further to the wisdom of the Rabbis—he was proclaiming the word of God with authority (Luke 4:16-22).

Why is it that preaching is being sidelined today? Why are Sunday evening services, where preaching was once central, being replaced with discussions and sharing sessions? Why have midweek opportunities to gather and hear preaching been replaced? Why is more and more evangelism focusing on anything and everything other than the preaching of the gospel?

Not only is this trend failing to produce the lasting conversions we long to see, but it's also making preaching less important in the view of young men, meaning fewer preachers are being raised up in our churches. Of course, there is a place for other methods of reaching people with the gospel, but do we see those as preparatory, serving the great objective of bringing them under the sound of preaching? Moses, like Jesus and the apostles, was called to speak forth the word of God—that must be our priority too.

## **2. The Preacher's Remit**

The preacher is called to speak forth, not his own words, but the words of the Lord. This is both definite (he is to speak the words that God gives to him) and restricted (he is ONLY to speak God's words). This is very clear in Exodus 4:12 and 15-16. Christ himself came to preach the word of his Father—nothing less, nothing more, nothing other (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; John 12:44-50). And so it is with the preacher today. He expounds ONLY the Scripture and ALL of the Scripture. That's why he proclaims all of the doctrines of Scripture—no doctrines added, and none taken away. Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 9:16-18. Moses' remit, like Christ's and every preacher's, was to proclaim the word of the Lord.

## **3. The Preacher's Enabling**

The God who commands his word to be proclaimed also grants enabling for that proclamation. This is perhaps the greatest emphasis of Exodus 4:10-17. God is the creator and has the power of physical and practical enabling of the voice (v10-12). He is also the Lord of providence, bringing Aaron to support Moses (v13-16), and empowering him with signs and wonders (v17). Moses has all he needs. As Joseph Parker insightfully said, Moses' objection—"I am not eloquent"—amounted to saying, "If I were eloquent, I would succeed." But the work has nothing whatever to do with the eloquence or ineloquence of Moses. All is in God's hands. As God said to Moses, so he says to every uncertain preacher today (v11-12).

## **4. The Preacher's Power**

Because of this enabling, the preacher has real power. There is an unbreakable chain of power connecting the preacher to God himself (v15-17). Paul outlines the chain that links the words of the preacher today to God in heaven, 2 Timothy 1:8-2:2. When the preacher preaches, he preaches not only about Christ, but Christ himself, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:14-18; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2:13).

## **5. The Preacher's Inevitability**

Nothing could prevent Moses from preaching. Though he resisted and objected, it was useless. He was going to preach. The similarities to Jeremiah's calling (Jeremiah 1:4-9; 17-19) are striking. And the pattern finds its fulfilment in Christ, who could not be silenced until he had spoken all the words of the Father (John 12:49-50; 17:1-5). Even death could not silence him—he rose, ascended, and sent his Spirit to carry on the preaching of the word (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:7-8), which continues even today, and will not cease until all that God has chosen, come to hear his call, and are inevitably, and gloriously, saved.