

“I Can’t < I AM (Part 2)” – Exodus 4:10-12

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[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.welovethegospel.com.]

Take your Bible and meet me in Exodus 4...

Last week Nathan explored with us the last section of this chapter and did an excellent job. Today I want to circle back and cover a couple things I left off two weeks ago and then we will almost be done with chapter 4. If you are a guest with us, let me catch you up. Exodus 3 and 4 describe the encounter that a man named Moses had with God. In a burning bush God manifested Himself and communicated His plan to deliver His people, Israel, from their slavery in Egypt. Part of that plan involved Moses returning to Egypt, a land that he had fled for his life four decades prior, and being the person whom God would use to deliver the Israelites from the mighty Pharaoh. Needless to say, doesn't feel very up to the task. He's terrified.

After a series of questions and answers, Moses begins to make excuses. Two weeks ago I mentioned we could summarize those excuses with three “I can't” statements. We had time to explore only the first that week, which was...

I Can't Convince (4:1-9)

In other words, Moses doesn't believe that the Egyptians or the people of Israel will believe him when he strolls in and starts talking about a conversation he had with a burning bush. He doesn't think he can convince, convert, or compel them to do what the Lord desires. He can't change their minds or their hearts. And Moses is not wrong. He can't. But that wasn't what God was calling him to do. God wanted Moses to obey and carry the message the Lord provided and do the signs the Lord enabled. That was Moses' job. It was God's job to change the heart. Moses was forgetting what his job was and what God's job was. As a result he imagined himself responsible for God's job and knew that he had no power to change the human heart. No wonder he was so scared.

Similarly I labored to show that we are very Moses-like when it comes to evangelism. It terrifies us that God has called us also to deliver a message to people who we don't think we can convince. We can't convert people. We can't convince them. We can't change their heart. So we don't engage in evangelism out of fear. But we, like Moses, have forgotten what is and is not our job. Like Moses we are called to simply deliver the message (in our case, the Gospel) and point to the signs God has given (the resurrection). That's our job. God's job is to convince a person's heart. God's job is to awaken faith. God converts. So we have not failed if we obediently pass on the Gospel and people reject it. We have failed when we don't try. We have to be obedient and trust God to do His part. It's the Gospel, not the Christian, that is the power of God for the salvation of those who believe (Romans 1:16). Our job is obedient proclamation. God's job is conversion.

God reminds Moses of these realities, but Moses is not done making excuses. So here's the next excuse Moses offers up...

I Can't Communicate (4:10-12)

Follow along as I read verse 10...

¹⁰ *But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.”* (Exodus 4:10)

Scholars have long debated what Moses’ speech problem boiled down to. Philip Ryken lays out some of the options nicely.

“Perhaps his problem was psychological: He was too shy to speak in public. Possibly he lacked confidence because he had failed rhetoric back at Pharaoh University. Others have suggested that the prophet was inarticulate because he had a speech impediment. According to the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, Moses stammered and stuttered. Still another possibility is that he was linguistically challenged. During his years as a shepherd he had lost his command of Egyptian, and he was worried that he would get tongue-tied when he went to the royal court... For all we know, Moses may well have had a speech defect or struggled with some kind of language barrier. But what he had was not so much a speech problem as an obedience problem. God had given him a clear and unmistakable calling, but rather than trusting God to enable him to fulfill it, Moses was starting to make excuses.”¹

I think we can all sympathize with this. We’ve all been in situations where we feared we didn’t have the words or eloquence to do any good. We all have failed, for example, to share the Gospel with someone because of this exact fear at some point. So when I hear Moses say this, I get it. Some of you may think that just because public speaking is part of my job that it comes naturally or is something we never experience fear about communicating, but that’s simply not the case. Preachers are uncomfortable in conversations all the time and even in preaching. Sometimes we fear how you will judge us based on the message of the day. What if our delivery was poor one week? What if someone misunderstands what we say and is offended? What if they rightly understand what we say and are necessarily offended? Many pastors have left the ministry because of the pressure of not feeling like you can have a bad day because, if and when they do, they’re sure to hear about it.

There is also a healthy fear that comes with the job. We are entrusted with opening God’s Holy Word and communicating it to a new generation. We will be judged more severely, according to God’s Word, based on how faithfully we do that. This is why on my better days I recognize that God has not called me to entertain you, but to communicate God’s Word faithfully and accurately (even if that is not deemed entertaining). God will not measure our ministry based on the size of our church or how comfortable we keep the flock. God’s measures by the ruler of faithfulness. May it never be rightly said of us that we were unfaithful to the text, even if it is often said that we are horrible at preaching. So what if God calls a pastor to push a people beyond their comforts and preferences? Then he will have to choose between the glory and security that comes from men more than the glory and security that comes from God. He will have to take to heart the beatitude and count himself blessed and even when he is reviled and slandered in the rear (Matthew 5:11). There is One greater to whom he must give his account one day. The weight of has been crushing many a Sunday for me. I can honestly say that’s why I put so many hours into preparing for teaching. But that doesn’t mean I never fear standing before you. That doesn’t mean I’ve never been tempted to sugarcoat some truth in God’s Word for your sake or mine. And that doesn’t mean I’ve never scanned the horizon and felt utterly inadequate for the task. That doesn’t mean I’ve never said to God, “I can’t.”

The point is that we all know that feeling. Maybe it plays out differently in your life, but we all have had callings and conversations we feel ill equipped to manage. Our tongue feels as heavy as lead. Our knees quake. The strongest antiperspirant is vanquished just by the thought of it all. The anticipation blisters our stomach. Yet we can’t escape the call. It’s ever-present in the backdrop, sounding in every quiet moment. “Proclaim the message,” it calls out and we think, “*Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech and tongue*” (Exodus 4:10). Just like Moses, we echo back, “I can’t.”

So we can see ourselves in Moses, can't we? And if so, we're not alone. When Isaiah heard the summons of God, he cried out, "*Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts*" (Isaiah 6:5; HCSB). When Jeremiah was appointed as a prophet, he responded, "*Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth*" (Jeremiah 1:6). The prophets have been protesting their failing tongues ever since Moses started the trend.² So we are in good company, but that doesn't make our resistance good and right. Not at all.

In fact, buried beneath Moses' objection is a subtle slap in the face. What do I mean? Well, Moses' complaint in verse 10 amounts to a criticism against God. He's objecting to how God made him. When God made him, God didn't make him fit for such a task. So Moses' complaint about his abilities (or lack thereof) could be received as a criticism against his Maker. Of course, the irony of it all is that Moses is complaining that he doesn't speak well enough to confront the mighty Pharaoh, but apparently he speaks well enough to argue with the Almighty God.

What is more Moses is aware that God can remedy his deficiencies. God can give eloquence. Moses acknowledges this in verse 10—"*I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant...*" In other words, "I've never been a good speaker in the past and I doesn't seem like you've given me the ability in the present." It strikes me as a little passive aggressive. He's not just being critical of how God has made him but also of the fact that God has withheld certain things from him. "I was broke when you made me and you haven't fixed me in the last five minutes since we've been talking."³ In other words, "It's kind of your fault, God."

Now I'm not saying that Moses intended to insult God. In fact, I don't even think the thought occurs to him. He's just complaining. He's just thinking about himself. He's not thinking about how his words could sound to others. But friends we are guilty of the same thing, probably more often than we realize. How often do we complain about ourselves or our lives? How often do we complain that we can't do certain things that others can do with ease? How often do we fail to acknowledge that we were fearfully and wonderfully made by a loving Father? How often do we complain about the circumstances of our life without acknowledging that they have been sifted through the loving hands of our sovereign God? Have you considered how much of your complaining might be as irreverent in God's ears as Moses is being in the scene? Are we insulting our Maker by the way we moan? We are. As one commentator put it, "Every time we complain about our personal limitations, what we are actually doing is insulting the God who made us."⁴

As if that would not be bad enough, we may be hurting the people around us. I remember once going through a difficult season in ministry and life, I probably was a bit depressed, I was certainly feeling isolated and like I was running on fumes, so I did what came most naturally—I complained. I vented to people around me. People like my wife, some of the leaders in the church who were serving with me in the trenches as well. It occurred to me sometime later that as I was complaining about my life, and how it felt like the people around me were failing me, and how alone I was feeling, and how rotten my life was (I mean it was an Elijah-esque rant, with a dash of some of Isaiah's "Woe is me!"), that I was actually hurting the people around me. Why? Because the people to whom I was whining about my life were part of said life. They were people who sacrifice for me. Invest in me. Were there for me in my weakness. Loved me. And here I was, ironically, in my complaining, making them feel like they were part of the problem, like they had failed. How could they have felt any different? They were a big part of my life and I had just unloaded on them how lousy my life was.

Of course, that wasn't my intent. I needed to talk through these things (as do you), but I hadn't really given any thought to how the way I was complaining might register to those around me. I was actually pushing them away. Hurting them. Insulting them. I didn't realize it because I was so preoccupied with the way I was

feeling that I couldn't see the blessings God had placed around me and I couldn't see that my complaining was actually compounding the very problems that I was lamenting. Selfishness does that. It takes away our perspective. And we all do this. We all have been oblivious to how we do this. And I suspect that Moses, likewise, didn't really consider how his complaining sounded to God...but he's about to...

Take a look at how God responded to Moses' mouthing off. Look at verse 11...

¹¹ Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? (Exodus 4:11)

God is reminding Moses that He made the man. He's fully aware of his abilities and inabilities. He needs no reminder. He didn't fail to take those things into account when He called Moses into service. They may be real deficiencies, but there is real purpose behind them. Moses' has yet to grasp that God delights in using us in our weakness. Why? Because then the world will know God deserves the glory, not us.⁵ His grace is sufficient and his power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). So that's what God is saying. "Your mouth belongs to Me. Your stutter is Mine. I made you. I will use you. I am sending you. Your business is obedience. The results are not your business; they're Mine."⁶

Ultimately, therefore, Moses' objections are not just irreverent, but irrelevant.⁷ That's why God now sets aside the objection and tells Moses to get on with it. Look at verse 12...

"Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." (Exodus 4:12)

Notice again that God doesn't try to boost Moses' self-esteem. He doesn't tell Moses that he's a better speaker than he realizes. He never evaluates Moses' speaking abilities at all. Instead, God again lifts Moses' gaze. He reminds Moses that he is not alone. God will be with his mouth. God will teach him what to say (cf. Jeremiah 1:4-10). And if you backtrack a few verses you see that God has already told Moses what to say. He's dictated the speeches for Moses. God doesn't look for orators. God wants reporters.⁸ Did you hear that? What matters is not that you can say things eloquently. What matters is that you have something to say.

It may surprise you that the Apostle Paul was not generally regarded as a good speaker. The Corinthians didn't think much of his abilities. They considered him a bad preacher. They said, "*His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account*" (2 Corinthians 10:10). Paul himself admitted to them that he was "*unskilled in speaking*" (11:6). Yet who would deny that Paul was the most effective Christian preacher and missionary in history? How is it possible to have such deficiencies and be regarded as so effective? It must mean that the power was not to be found in Paul but in the message Paul proclaimed, however ineloquently. And this Paul confessed...

"Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power...And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:1-5).

You know how I say to you frequently that what we win people with we win them to? That's what Paul's saying here. He didn't want them to be won with the wisdom, eloquence, or speaking abilities of men, but with the power of God. That's why he preached the Gospel. That's why he resolved to preach nothing but Christ and him crucified. And that, friends, is why we too must be Gospel-centered. We want people to be

won with the Gospel, not with the attractiveness of our personalities or the brilliance of our wisdom. Our personality and wisdom will always fail and if people are won with those things then they will be gone the moment our scars and flaws and foolishness is exposed. But the Gospel will not fail. The Gospel is the power of God. Win a person with that and the walls can be caving in around us and God's people, by God's grace, instead of running away may yet be singing,

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blessed assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul...
It is well, it is well with my soul...⁹

That's why Paul preached the Gospel. That's why he proclaimed the Son of God has come, been sacrificed in our place on the cross, and raised from the dead so that salvation could come to us through faith in Jesus the Savior. That's why he welcomed any sinner willing to turn from sin and trust in Christ's cross and empty tomb to secure their forgiveness and eternal life. That's why this message was ever on his lips, as it should be ever on ours. He came in weakness, but he chose to depend on God's power. That's exactly what Moses needed to do—embrace his weakness and depend on God's power. Speaking abilities are useful, of course, but that's not being denied. The point is that speaking abilities are not essential for communicating the Gospel. Paul and Moses may have lacked ability, but at least God had given them something to say—a powerful message of deliverance and hope.¹⁰ The same is true for us.

One of my heroes is Charles Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers. He was certainly eloquent. But have you ever heard the story of his conversion? At age 15, he was walking to church as he did every Sunday, but on this particular day there was a horrible snowstorm. For shelter, he retreated into the Primitive Methodist Chapel on Artillery Street. The usual preacher was kept from being there because of the storm, so some lay leader stepped in by necessity without any preparation. Here's Spurgeon's account,

“At last a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now it is well that preachers be instructed, but this man was really stupid [his words, not mine]. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was—‘LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH’ (Isa. 45:22). He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimmer of hope for me in that text... When he had...managed to spin out about ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, ‘Young man, you look very miserable.’ Well, I did, but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, ‘And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.’ Then lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, ‘Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but look and live!’ I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought...I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, ‘Look!’ what a charming word it seemed to me. Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, ‘Trust Christ, and you shall be saved.’ Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered...”¹¹

The great Charles Haddon Spurgeon converted when someone like you preached a sermon they had five seconds to prepare. Imagine that? Big snowstorm in East Texas keeps everyone from getting to church, including the pastor (I guess it wouldn't have to be a big storm in East Texas... a couple inches would probably do it since most around here are not accustomed to driving in snow). But you showed up. Everyone's looking around wondering if they should just leave. The storm prevents that, so they reason someone could at least get up and read some Scripture. You draw the short straw. How comfortable are you feeling? Not very. You're probably saying under your breath, "*Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent... I am slow of speech and tongue.*" You get up there. You babble on, reading and re-reading the text, until you run out of things to say ten minutes later. You look up and notice some kid covered in snow you've never seen and you think, "That kid probably thinks I'm a stupid moron." And, as it turns out, he does! But it doesn't matter because one word from text you read grips his heart. God awakens faith. Spurgeon becomes a child of God. Who says you have to be eloquent? Spurgeon was converted by a man he could hardly find anything good to say about except the fact that he read the text. That was enough.

God wants messengers, not necessarily orators. The message is more important than the man. The word God provides more important than the woman on whose lips it's found. "Indeed," writes Ryken, "in some mysterious way the very limitations of a preacher or personal evangelist are often essential to the effective communication of the gospel... this is not an excuse for evangelists to become anything less than the very best communicators they can become. But it helps to know that even our weaknesses can be used for God's glory." This is why Paul says, "*We have this treasure [i.e., our knowledge of Christ] in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us*" (2 Corinthians 4:7).¹²

God can strike straight licks with crooked sticks.¹³ In fact, that was one of the lessons God was teaching with Moses' staff. In verse 2, God asked Moses, "*What is in your hand?*" Moses answers, "*A staff.*" God didn't ask the question because he didn't know the answer. He asked the question because He wanted Moses to acknowledge the ordinariness of the object. It's just a shepherd's staff. Nothing special. And yet God then does extraordinary things through that ordinary object. That's an object lesson for Moses (and us). God can take ordinary things and do extraordinary things through them.¹⁴ So next time God calls you to do something extraordinary and you are feeling so ordinary, remember the staff. Remember the ineloquence of Moses. Remember the stupidity of the man God used to awaken faith in Spurgeon. And remember that God can use you too.

So instead of complaining about our individual or corporate weaknesses and deficiencies, we should celebrate the assurance that God is with us too.¹⁵ Jesus walks among His churches.¹⁶ Instead of complaining about what we don't have within us, we should be faithful to serve with whatever God has entrusted to us (cf. the Parable of the Talents; Matthew 25:14ff). We should obey and live that we too might hear the master say one day, "*Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter the joy of your master*" (25:21, 23).

God made us and entrusted us with the right stuff for the calling He's placed on our lives. He doesn't make mistakes. And that includes our disabilities. Remember what God said to Moses. "*Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?*" (Exodus 4:11). Even disabilities like blindness, muteness, and deafness have divine design. We might think of the story of Jesus healing the man born blind in John 9. Here it is:

"As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' ³ Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.'" (John 9:1-3)

It wasn't arbitrary. It wasn't owing to sin. It was so that God could use that man to be a trophy of His grace and a display of His power. It was to glorify God. It was so that he might say to others (as he did), I don't

know much about Jesus, but “*One thing I do know...I was blind, now I see*” (9:25). And while God may not always heal, He never wastes. He never makes mistakes. There’s always design and, therefore, we should seek to glorify God with our abilities, inabilities, and disabilities alike.¹⁷ They’re all meant to glorify God.

I’ll close with a couple illustrations of the latter. The first comes from the life of Donald Grey Barnhouse, who was the pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia decades ago. He was actually conducting services at another church, where the wife of the host minister was expecting to deliver their first child any day. The final evening of services rolled around and the host minister was nowhere to be found. Barnhouse knew immediately that the woman must have gone into labor. And she did. What he didn’t realize is that the child was born with Down syndrome. The host minister was devastated.

Barnhouse eventually arrived in his presence and greeted him. A conversation ensued. “Dr. Barnhouse, our child is a *mongoloid*.” That was the terminology of the day. He continued, “I haven’t told my wife, and I don’t know what I’m going to tell her.” And here is Barnhouse’s reply, “My friend, this is of the Lord.” He turned in his Bible to Exodus 4 and began to read, “The LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth, or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or the blind...have not I the LORD?” The new father asked to see the passage himself. He read it. Reread it. Ruminated on its words. Again Barnhouse spoke up, “My friend, you know the promise of Romans 8 that all things, *including the mongoloid child*, work together for good to those who love the Lord.”

The new father returned to his wife at the hospital where she had grown worried by his absence. He comforted her and said, “My precious darling, the Lord has blessed us with a mongoloid child.” She was puzzled and asked, “Where did you get *that*?” and he began to share God’s Word with her as Dr. Barnhouse had done with him. Later the woman called her mother to share the news. “Mother, the Lord has blessed us with a mongoloid child. We don’t know the nature of the blessing, but we do know [the child’s] a blessing.” Meanwhile, all the medical personnel watched all of this play out. The following Sunday, seventy of the hospital nurses attended that man’s church. Thirty of them came to faith in Christ by the end of the service!¹⁸

Here’s another historical example. There is a famous 17th century, English poet named John Milton. He was most famous for his blank-verse epic poem called *Paradise Lost*. It was his *magnum opus*. Yet many of his greatest works came after he had lost all of his sight. He was blind. There were seasons where he lamented his inabilities, just like Moses. Eventually his perspective changed. He wrote a sonnet titled, “On His Blindness.” In that sonnet he wrestled with the removal of his “one talent” and his fear that he would have nothing of value to offer the Lord one day. But eventually he settled on this answer.

*God doth not need
Either man’s work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o’er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.*

It’s that last line that grips me. “They also serve who only stand and wait.” Do you see what he’s saying? Maybe our greatest abilities have been lost, stripped away by old age or failing health. Maybe each ability has given way to disability. Maybe the only ability we have left is to stand and wait. That may be all we can muster. But let us do our standing and waiting for the glory of God. Better to offer what little we have, even if that is only waiting in faith, than to give ourselves over to despair and complaint for the rest of our days. If all we can do is stand and wait on the Lord, then let us do our standing and our waiting in faith and for the glory of God!¹⁹

Let’s pray...

¹ Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Preaching the Word; Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 114;

² Ryken, 114.

³ John Piper makes a similar point in a sermon: "Moses knows that God can take a person with no eloquence and then give it to him, changing him into an eloquent, persuasive speaker. So look what he says in verse 10: 'I am not a man of words, either heretofore or since thou hast spoken to me. Not only is my whole past a history of timidity and verbal incompetence, but the whole time we have been talking, nothing has changed. I don't feel any more like a man of words now than when you met me at the burning bush. If you want me to be your spokesman, you must make me eloquent. You must prove to me ahead of time that my mouth will not freeze on me. We've rehearsed the rod-into-stick trick and the leprous hand trick. Now let's rehearse my lines. Prove to me that my mouth will really say what you want it to.'" This statement was made in a sermon titled, "Who Made Man's Mouth?," which he preached to Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on August 1, 1982.

⁴ Ryken, 116.

⁵ Merida, 30.

⁶ As worded by David Strain, in a sermon preached on October 19, 2014, at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi, called "Anyone But Me!"

⁷ This "irreverent" and "irrelevant" language seems to be adopted by several authors, I'm not sure where it originated. E.g., Ryken, 115-116; Merida, 30-31; et al.

⁸ Merida, 30.

⁹ A verse from the famous hymn, "It Is Well With My Soul," penned by Horatio Spafford and composed by Philip Bliss.

¹⁰ Ryken, 115.

¹¹ Iain Murray, ed., *The Early Years* (London: Banner of Truth, 1962), 87-90.

¹² Ryken, 115.

¹³ Years ago I read that figure of speech somewhere and used it in a sermon, but I can't remember now where the phrase comes from.

¹⁴ "God used the stick to show Moses how he can use something ordinary to accomplish his extraordinary purpose. By giving this sign, God was saying, 'Look, Moses, if you have your doubts, let me show you what I can do. That stick there—let me show you what I can do with *that!*' Later God used Moses' staff to bring plagues on the Egyptians, to part the sea, and to bring water from a rock. If God could do all that with a stick, imagine what he could do with Moses! And imagine what he might be able to do with you! In a wonderful sermon entitled 'No Little People, No Little Places,' Francis Schaeffer pointed out that in order for it to become an instrument of divine power, the staff of Moses had to become the rod of God (see Exodus 4:20, where it is called 'the staff of God'). Schaeffer went on to say: 'Consider the mighty ways in which God used a dead stick of wood. 'God so used a stick of wood' can be a banner cry for each of us. Though we are limited and weak in talent, physical energy, and psychological strength, we are not less than a stick of wood. But as the rod of Moses had to become the rod of God, so that which is *me* must become the *me* of God. Then I can become useful in God's hands. The Scripture emphasizes that much can come from little if the little is truly consecrated to God.' What Moses learned from the stick was that in order to be used for God's glory, he had to place his life in God's hands. To use Schaeffer's expression, when we become the *we* of God in every aspect of our being, in every area of our lives, then God will use us for his great glory." Ryken, 109-110.

¹⁵ E.g., Matthew 28:20.

¹⁶ E.g., Revelation 1:13.

¹⁷ Merida, 30.

¹⁸ That illustration is also given by Philip Ryken (33) and is drawn from Terry L. Johnson, *When Grace Comes Home: The Practical Difference That Calvinism Makes* (Fearn, Ross-shire, England: Christian Focus, 2000), 53-54.

¹⁹ This illustration too is owing to Ryken (34).