

## ARE YOU AVAILABLE?

### Romans 1:14, 15

***“I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.”***

The Apostle Paul possessed the greatest ability that a child of God can possess. What is that ability? Is it sociability? Is it compatibility? Is it accountability? Or is it responsibility? Maybe it is adaptability? Or, how about reliability?

All of these are good and necessary qualities but first and foremost, one must be available to God or these other qualities will not advance God’s agenda. Ability without availability is a liability! The Apostle Paul was available to share the Good News of Jesus Christ to the citizens in Rome. Are you available to give Good News to the citizens in whatever region of the world you live in or wherever God may send?

What does “availability”, as it pertains to God and His kingdom, mean? It means that attitude and posture of spirit that keeps us constantly at God’s disposal, ready to do His bidding whenever and wherever He directs. That is availability. Availability is more than being accessible; availability includes an element of readiness and willingness.

Some are prepared but not available. Others are available but not prepared. Paul, that indomitable servant of the Lord, was both prepared and available. Are we? God can do much with a little providing He has all there is of it! Some make all sorts of excuses about their inability in order to delay obedience. However, God never asks about our abilities or our inabilities but only about our availability. And when He finds a person who is willing to be used, there is no limit to what God can accomplish through that person.

The principle of availability is seen throughout the Bible in the lives of many of God’s servants. But the ones to which I call your attention have one thing in common: they all declared their availability using the same words. In each case at which we shall look, each one said, “Here I am.” At least seven times in the Bible, the phrase “Here I am” is used. What better way to announce one’s availability than to say to the Lord, “Here I am”?

Here are the individuals who announced their availability, “Here I am”:

### **1. ABRAHAM SAID “HERE I AM” – AVAILABLE TO DO THE WILL OF GOD.**

“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “*Here I am.*” Then He said, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him” (Genesis 22:1-3).

Because Abraham was available to do the will of God, even though what God directed him to do was quite out of the ordinary, Abraham set about to follow God's instructions to the letter knowing that God makes no mistakes.

Later, when Abraham arrived on the mountain and had prepared to do what God had commanded, he received further instructions: "The Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "*Here I am.*" And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (Genesis 22:11).

Abraham was so completely surrendered to God that, even though he did not understand all the whys and wherefores, he nevertheless, was available to obey the Lord Who "does all things well" (Mark 7:37). His response was immediate, unwavering, unquestioning, unhesitating and complete.

The result? He was reassured of the great Abrahamic Covenant voiced and vouchsafed by God Himself: "Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:15-18).

Are you available at any cost to do God's will and leave the outcome to Him? Abraham was available to do God's will even though he did not at the time comprehend all that God had in mind. He is a model for those of us who are willing to step out in obedience to God Who is too good to be unkind and too wise to make mistakes. Because he was available to obey to the extreme, he was blessed to the extreme. God always rewards such faith.

## **2. JACOB SAID, "HERE I AM" – AVAILABLE TO WALK WHEN GOD SAYS WALK.**

"Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, '*Here I am.*' And He said, 'Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family'" (Genesis 31:11-13).

On yet another occasion Jacob's availability was tested: "Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "*Here I am.*" So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again" (Genesis 46:2-4). And Jacob obeyed.

Jacob had his ups and downs—his life was erratic. However, in these two instances he was for us yet another example of one who was available to obey God. God said "go" and he arose and went. In Genesis 31 God told him to leave where he was and his response was immediate compliance. In Genesis 46 God said to go to Egypt and Jacob immediately began

his journey. Jacob, in both instances was saying, “Here I am, available for geographic relocation.”

What was the result? The first instance resulted in his deliverance from his conniving father-in-law, Laban, for whom he had slaved for many years without fair compensation. In the second instance, going to Egypt during a famine resulted in the sparing of his entire family clan, seventy in number, and Jacob’s son, Joseph, became vice-president of Egypt. Eventually they all left Egypt rich!

David Livingstone said, “I am prepared to go anywhere for God providing it is forward.” It always pays to go with God! Jacob was available to walk when God said to walk. Are you?

### **3. MOSES SAID, “HERE I AM” – AVAILABLE TO WORSHIP GOD.**

“So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “*Here I am.*” Then He said, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.” Moreover He said, “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face...” (Exodus 3:4-6).

Moses worshipped. He removed his sandals and hid his face as he bowed at the bush ablaze with the glory-glow of God’s presence. Before, Moses had only seen what man can do when man does the best that man can do. He had seen the splendor of Egypt and the glamour and power of Pharaoh. But now for the first time, he begins to see what God can do when God does what only God can do. His response was to worship.

Out of Moses’ worship came the revelation of his life’s work. God said, “Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:10). Moses was never the same after that encounter with God at the bush. There are so very many who are uncertain about their work because they are unstable in their worship.

God seeks true worshippers, and He identifies them as those who “worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). Worshipping God in spirit means that it must be done from the heart. Worshipping God in truth means that it must be done according as God has specified in His Word.

Our worship not only honors and magnifies God, but it is also for our own edification and strength. Worship helps us develop a God-like and Christ-like character. We become like those we admire and worship. Worshipping God in spirit and in truth is a serious matter which must not be taken lightly, for in worship God shapes our lives. When we worship God we tend to value what God values and gradually take on the characteristics and qualities of Godlikeness. Are you too busy to worship regularly? If you are, you are too busy to be entrusted with God’s work.

### **4. SAMUEL SAID, “HERE I AM” – AVAILABLE TO WAIT UPON GOD.**

“The Lord called Samuel. And he answered, *“Here I am!”* So he ran to Eli and said, *“Here I am, for you called me.”* And he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” And he went and lay down. Then the Lord called yet again, “Samuel!” So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, *“Here I am, for you called me.”* He answered, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” (Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him.) And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. So he arose and went to Eli, and said, *“Here I am, for you did call me.....* Then Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son!” He answered, *“Here I am”* (1 Samuel 4-8, 16).

Samuel was a young boy at this time and he had been given into the service of God in the Temple. One night he was awakened from his sleep by a voice. He sat bolt upright in his bed and said, “Here I am.” Five times in the above verses Samuel said, “Here I am.” His response was innocent, sincere and instant.

Notice that God did not instruct Samuel at this time to do anything. He just wanted to talk to Samuel and tell him about the coming judgment upon the family of Eli, the priest. Samuel just listened and waited as the years came and went. He knew that eventually God would perform that which He had promised. As Samuel matured, he became a prophet. One of the characteristics of a prophet is that he waits upon God. He knows God’s time-table and is willing to wait God’s fulfillment.

We are never ready to work for God until we are ready to wait upon God. Waiting upon God is an attitude of soul that leans upon God and learns from God. David prayed, “Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day” (Psalm 25:4, 5). The result is: “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Are you available to wait upon God to do His internal and eternal work in and through you? No time is ever lost waiting upon God—wait on!

## **5. ISAIAH SAID, “HERE I AM” – AVAILABLE TO WITNESS FOR GOD.**

“I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, *“Here am I! Send me.”* And He said, “Go, and tell this people....” (Isaiah 6:8, 9).

Isaiah’s response to the vision and the voice about the vocation to which God was appointing him was three-fold:

- It was one of humility - “Woe is me, for I am undone!” (v. 5);
- It was one of availability – “Here am I” (v. 8);
- It was one of mobility – “send me” (v. 8).

The result was that God did indeed send him with a message of condemnation, not of salvation! Isaiah was to witness of God’s judgment. God said, “Go, and tell this people:

‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ “Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed” (Isaiah 6:9-10).

Isaiah was available to communicate God’s message to a rebellious people. Are you available to be God’s messenger where you live and work? God does not reject sanctified availability!

## 6. ANANIAS SAID, “HERE I AM” – AVAILABLE TO WORK FOR GOD.

“Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “*Here I am*, Lord.” So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight” (Acts 9:10-12).

Ananias was a Christian at Damascus (Acts 9:10). He became Paul's instructor; but when or by what means he himself became a Christian we have no information. He was “a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt” at Damascus (Acts 22:12).

Saul, notorious for persecuting Christians, had departed Jerusalem after obtaining a letter granting him authority to arrest any Christians he could find in Damascus. He is to bring them to Jerusalem for trial before the Sanhedrin court. While on the road to Damascus he has a dramatic, life-changing conversion experience. Jesus commands Saul to go to Damascus and wait to be told what he must do. As Saul sits and waits the Lord appears to Ananias in a vision and tells him “Arise and go to the street called Straight and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.”

Paul’s hatred for Christ and His followers was common knowledge. God asks Ananias to go and confront the ringleader of the persecutors. Ananias takes the opportunity to remind God of Saul’s credentials. After all, he has done “harm to Your saints in Jerusalem” and is now ready to “bind all who call on Your name” in Damascus. But nevertheless, perhaps somewhat reluctantly, Ananias went to Saul and had the great honor of laying his hands on him and at that moment Saul’s sight was restored. We then read that: “Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.” Perhaps he sat and learned at the feet of Ananias.

At this point Ananias fades from the story and we hear of him no more. His role in the drama of Acts is small, yet significant. God used this man to further His purposes in launching the ministry of the most influential preacher and churchman in the New Testament.

There are many lessons to learn from the story of Ananias of Damascus and Saul of Tarsus. One lesson is that we should follow the example of Ananias’ availability to accept whatever work assignment God may have for us, even if we do so with a bit of timidity, even when the

task seems contrary to reason, and even when it may appear to be dangerous, for God never sends us to work for Him without going with us!

The big question at this point is, “Are you available to work for God, even if the task is daunting and even appears to be dangerous? We never know beforehand what God wants to accomplish through us. Maybe He wants to use us to minister to another Paul!

## 7. GOD SAYS, “HERE I AM” – AVAILABLE AND WAITING ON YOU!

“Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am’” (Isaiah 58:9).

God, Who asks for our availability, announces His availability! The six instances when Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah and Ananias said, in response to God’s call to them, “Here I am”, are instructive and inspiring models for us, to be sure. However, quite unexpectedly we discover that the greatest example of availability is seen in God Himself! How humbling and yet how uplifting!

This truth is further emphasized as we read God’s gracious invitation: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

**Illust.** In the earlier days of sailing craft, signal flags were used to send messages from shore to ship and from ship to shore. When the captain of a sailing vessel had the ship in a state of readiness to sail, he signaled to the Harbor Master, “Ready to sail and awaiting orders.” Our availability means, “My ship is ready to sail wherever, whenever and for whatever purpose my Master has in mind, and I am awaiting orders.” Have you ever said to the Captain of your salvation, “Lord Jesus, I am ready and available”?

When we place ourselves unconditionally into God’s hands and say in essence: “Not what I wish to be or where I wish to go, for who am I that I should choose my way; the Lord shall choose for me ‘tis better far I know, so let Him bid me go or stay”, then we are in for the greatest adventure that any human can dare to expect or experience!

**Illust.** Years ago, Spain inscribed on her coins the picture of the Pillars of Hercules, which stood on either side of the straits of Gibraltar, the extreme boundary of her empire, with only an unexplored ocean beyond. On the scroll over the pillars was written “*ne plus ultra*”, meaning, “No more beyond.” But afterward, when Columbus discovered America, Spain struck out the negative “*ne*” and left the inscription “*plus ultra*” – more beyond!

Over the life of every child of God is this inscription: “More beyond!” However, what shall be beyond in our future on this earth depends upon our availability to explore the vast oceans of God’s unfathomable wisdom and plans for our lives. Jeremiah 29:11 reveals God’s mind in reference to His children: “I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (ESV).

Can you say:

“Here am I”, there is no reservation to my availability;  
“Here am I”, there is no limitation to my availability;  
“Here am I”, there is no hesitation to my availability;  
“Here am I”, there is no termination to my availability?

Will you say:

“Ready to go, ready to stay,  
Ready my place to fill;  
Ready for service, lowly or great,  
Ready to do His will.”

**JdonJ**