

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,
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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 3

EXODUS

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

In the course of our Christian lives, we may feel or think that God is calling us to give up our secular jobs to serve in His vineyard on a full-time basis. How do we know for sure? God's call of Moses in this chapter should help us decipher. If we are so called, then let God work in and through us to accomplish His plan and purpose for His people.

Many of us have been brought up in non-Christian families. As a result, we may have been exposed to some erroneous ideas about God. We may feel that God does not care for us. Or we may feel that God is our chummy pal and that it is all right to approach Him casually. What is the correct attitude?

In this chapter, there is much we can learn about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, about God the Creator of the Universe. Although God is transcendent, separated from us because of His Holiness and Being, He is also immanent, present and acting in the midst of His people.

OUTLINE

A. GOD APPEARED TO MOSES IN THE BURNING BUSH, WHICH WAS NOT BURNT (EXODUS 3:1-6)

1. Moses worked for his father-in-law as a shepherd (v.1)
2. The Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush (v.2)
3. Curiosity drew Moses to the burning bush (v.3)
4. God called upon Moses and made known His identity (vv.4-6)

B. GOD CALLED MOSES TO LEAD ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT (3:7-12)

1. God spoke to Moses about His concern for His people, Israel (vv.7-8)
2. God told Moses that He wanted him to lead His people out of Egypt (vv.9-10)
3. Moses rejected God's commission, at first (vv.11-12)

C. GOD REVEALED HIS NAME TO MOSES (3:13-17)

1. Moses asked for God's name (v.13)
2. God revealed His Name to Moses (v.14)
3. God connected His Name to His sending of Moses to the Israelites (v.15)

4. God connected His Name to the forefathers of the Israelites (vv. 16, 17)

D. GOD ASSURED MOSES OF HIS MISSION (3:18-22)

1. The Israelites would believe Moses (v.18)
2. The king of Egypt would be stubborn (v.19a)
3. The king of Egypt would finally release them after great wonders done by God (vv.19b, 20)
4. God would cause the Egyptians to send them away with much substance (vv.21-22)

COMMENTARY

God Calls A Man to Do His Work

When Moses was in Egypt, he had a burning desire to alleviate the sufferings of his people from oppression and bondage. But he failed. He murdered an Egyptian taskmaster and had to flee for his life.

Forty years had passed since then. God had preserved and provided for him when he fled to Midian. In Midian, he helped the seven daughters of Reuel/ Jethro. Jethro gave his daughter, Zipporah, to him as a wife. Moses stayed in Midian. He tended the flocks of Jethro. Every day he would take the flock out to pasture.

We are told that Moses brought his flock to the backside of the desert and came to Mount Horeb (also called

Mount Sinai). It is called the “mountain of God” because God met Moses there. Later, Moses would bring the Israelites to the foot of this mountain where God would meet him again and give him the Law.

Moses was tending the flock of Jethro when God called him. He was now eighty years old. People today do not expect an octogenarian to lead a revolution for obvious reasons. But at eighty, Moses was strong and able. When he died at the age of one hundred and twenty, the divine record testified, “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.”¹ So he was not an old, weak or useless man.

God, who knows the heart and ability of every man, called Moses to be the leader of His people and to bring them out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Moses was now a changed man. Formerly, in Egypt he was like a wild horse, strong-headed and burning with the desire to deliver his people from unjust treatment. His forty years in the quietness of the wastelands of Midian had tamed and humbled him but his feelings for his people still lingered. Previously, he had acted on his own strength and in his own way. Now he was called by God to accomplish the work in God’s way.

God called Moses by name. God knows each one of us by name. Moses answered, “Here I am” (v.4). God asked

¹ Deuteronomy 34:7 And Moses *was* an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

him to remove his shoes for the ground on which he stood was holy. This does not mean that the place had some intrinsic qualities that made it holy. It was the presence of God. There is a spiritual lesson here for all of us. We need to approach God with the right attitude. God is not someone whom we can casually pat on the shoulder. Many Christians today have reduced God to the level of a contemporary who is expected to be always there to attend to his needs and wants.²

God Is Personal

The Angel of the LORD identified Himself as the God of his forefathers, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (vv.4, 6). This connected God with him and the Israelites who were now in bondage in Egypt. Moses was afraid to look upon God. In other words, the voice was not disembodied. It was a visible appearance of God — a *theophany*.

After identifying Himself to Moses, God revealed His closeness and concern for His people. God expressed that He had **seen** the sufferings of “my people” (note the first person possessive pronoun, used twice, emphatically) in Egypt. He had heard their cry. He knew their sorrows. He wanted to deliver them from their bondage in Egypt and bring them to a good and large land “flowing with milk and honey” -- a fertile land (v.7). These words echo what had been mentioned in Exodus 2:24-25. They

emphasise the wonderful truth that God is not detached from His creation. He is near and in the midst of His people.

God Commissions, God Enables

God commissioned Moses to fulfil His covenant promises with the children of Israel – to deliver them from their bondage and oppression by the Egyptians (vv.9-10). Of course God could deliver them directly. But we will see that God works in mysterious ways. He does not use direct means to work out His plan and purpose. His way is always the best. God called and commissioned Moses to do the job even though he was eighty years old, even though he had tried and failed.

Moses' initial response was “Who am I” (v.11)³. We should not be too critical of Moses. He was not giving excuses or playing “hard to get.” He had matured and was now a more cautious man. He saw the magnitude of the work. It was a mission that required him to return to Egypt and confront Pharaoh. He would have to face the children of Israel and meet their high expectations. His question was genuine and sincere. The job was a huge responsibility. God told him, “I will be with thee” and assured him that he would be able to bring the people to “this mountain” (Mount Horeb where he had the dialogue with God) (v.12). If God is with us, just as He was with Joseph, there is no need for other help! So even if things do not seem to be heading in the right

² Maxie D.Dunnam, *Exodus* (Texas, Waco: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), 61.

³ This is the first of eight objections/questions Moses brought to God.

direction, be assured that the final outcome will be good. Yea, if God be for us, who can be against us!

Moses was still wary. He posed another problem to God. What if the Israelites demanded to know the name of the one who sent him? God promptly answered, "I AM THAT I AM". Moses should tell the children of Israel that "I AM" had sent him (v.14).

When Moses asked for the name of God, he was not asking for his identity. Moses was asking for the authority by which he should present himself to the children of Israel. In original Hebrew, God's reply was *tetragrammaton*, which consists of four letters: "YHWH". It is akin to the verb "to be". In Revelation, John describes the Lord Jesus Christ as "Him who is, and who was, and who is to come" (1:4).⁴ This is a divine exposition of the *tetragrammaton*, YHWH.⁵ It denotes that God is the Self-Cause, Self-Existing, Eternal God. The name means "I am that which I will be, and I will be that which I am; the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrew 13:8).⁶

God gave Moses specific instructions. He told Moses that when he

met with the children of Israel, he must call "the elders of Israel together". The "elders" of the congregation of Israel does not refer to those who were old. They were the leaders or rulers of the community. They were men who were influential, experienced and wise.

Moses had to tell them that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, their forefathers, had seen their affliction and would deliver them out of their bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land (v.17). God assured Moses that the children of Israel would listen to him. Moses must lead the elders and present themselves before Pharaoh to demand for their release to "a three days" journey into the wilderness" to worship YHWH, the LORD their God⁷ (v.18).

God forewarned Moses that Pharaoh would refuse to release them until God wrought great wonders in Egypt (vv.19-20). God foretold this in order to encourage and strengthen him with the knowledge that ultimately Pharaoh would let them go.

God told him that He would give His people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. The Egyptians would not

⁴ Revelation 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

⁵ The *tetragrammaton* YHWH combined with *Adonai*, the word for "LORD" gives the word "YAHWEH" or the English translation, JEHOVAH.

⁶ Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever. John 8:58 Jesus used this name of Himself (compare John 18:5-8).

⁷ A three-day journey would be far enough from the boundaries of Egypt where they could worship the Lord their God. While this is very short of the distance to Mt Sinai, the expression indirectly means that they would be far away enough to be completely cut off from the cultic life of Egypt. This explains why Pharaoh would not release them, for if he allowed it, the children of Israel would not return to Egypt. Jacob had separated his flock from Laban's flock at a distance of a three-day journey so that the two flocks of sheep would not wander into each other (Genesis 30:36).

send the children of Israel off empty-handed. They would be blessed with gifts from the Egyptians! God can move the hearts of the enemies to be favourable to His people. The Egyptians would “borrow” from their neighbours to give the children of Israel what they asked. The word “borrow” is translated as “request” or “ask as a favour”⁸. The giving would be so liberal that it would be as though they “plundered” the Egyptians.

Is God calling you to serve Him? If you hear the still small voice or the chords pulling in your heart, do not brush it aside. Confront it. Talk to God. Have a dialogue with Him like Moses.

SUMMARY

The theme of this chapter is that God cares and is concerned for His people. He is not a God who is distant. He is near, even in the midst of His people. He knows what is happening to His people. **He sees, He hears, He knows, He empathises with His people, He acts to** preserve, protect, and provide for them. He relates to His people directly without an intermediary – we have direct access to him.

God does His work in and through people He calls. God allows the person He calls to express his mind and heart concerning the matter. The dialogue between God and Moses is an instance. It is like wrestling with God. In wrestling with God when He calls, we will learn more about Him and in the process be encouraged and strengthened.

⁸ In Hebrew it is *sha'al*. Of the 173 times it is used, only 6 times is it translated as borrow, more than 99 times is it translated as “to ask.”

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Exodus 3: 1-6; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Judges 6:11-24

TUESDAY: Exodus 3:7-10; Matthew 15:30-37; Romans 8:35-39

WEDNESDAY: Exodus 3:11-14; John 8:56-59; 18:1-9; Philippians 2:10

THURSDAY: Exodus 3:15-18; Romans 8:31-34; Matthew 28:18-20

FRIDAY: Exodus 3:19-22; Isaiah 46:5-11; Joel 2:21-27

Discussion Questions

1. How would you tie the events surrounding Moses' birth and his adoption by the Egyptian princess to God's eventual selection of him to help His people? What aspects of Moses' character made him an excellent choice?

2. How do we show our awe and reverence when we worship God?

3. God saw the afflictions and sufferings of His people. How does this encourage and comfort you?

4. Moses put up two objections when God called him to lead His people out of Egypt. Are his objections valid?

5. How did God reassure him regarding the power and authority that he would need?

8. How did God reassure him regarding Pharaoh's response?

6. In view of Moses' dialogue with God, what kind of a working relationship can we have with God?

9. What truths revealed in this chapter comfort and encourage you?

7. How did God reassure him regarding the response of the children of Israel?

10. Give a one-sentence title to his chapter
