

## EXODUS 3: 1-10

### INTRODUCTION

Let me just very briefly remind you of the story so far. As we studied chapter 2 we saw that God has demonstrated that he has already begun to act on Israel's behalf by raising a deliverer in Pharaoh's household. Moses is forced to flee to Midian because of his own rashness but behind it all God is working out his purposes and he has a further period of preparation for Moses to endure.

Moses had some understanding that God was going to use him one day to rescue the Israelites (Acts 7:25) but Moses now had to learn a hard lesson, he had to learn to be patient and wait for God's time for his work to begin. We know practically nothing about the years that Moses spent in the household of Jethro because they are skimmed over in only a few verses in Exodus. We know that he got married and had at least two children Gershom (2:22) and Eliezer (18:4).

Apart from that we know very little about Moses' circumstances in Midian except that it seems that he settled well into the life of a shepherd. Near the end of his time as a shepherd when he was 80 years old we read about his dramatic call to God's service.

### 1. MOSES CALL

Chapter 3 opens up with Moses tending the flock of his Father in law. Moses had been looking after sheep for the previous forty years (Acts 7:30). Day after day he had toiled in the heat of the desert land. Moses had gone from a position of royalty in Egypt to a lowly shepherd. This must have been particularly humbling for Moses because the Egyptians despised herding flocks as an occupation (Genesis 46:34).

To the world that judges things on mere outward appearances it would appear that Moses is a tragic figure, it is a riches to rags story. He has lost his position of power and authority, his fame and riches and is now carrying out the most menial of tasks. But to God all earthly authority, power, riches and pride are mere chaff that the wind drives away. For here is a poor shepherd who will be used by God to deliver his people and is better known today as a consequence than many of the Pharaoh's in Egypt at that time.

This lowly work of shepherding is in fact preparation for Moses, as he will one day have to shepherd God's people. Moses came to Horeb, which is another name for Mount Sinai. Moses was quietly going about his work when something remarkable happened.

God spoke to him and called him to be the leader of God's people and to be the one who would lead the people out of Egypt. The sight he witnesses is an amazing one; he sees a bush on fire which was not an unusual sight in the desert but what was unusual is that the bush did not burn up, it was not consumed. Now although this was an amazing sight the question that arises in my mind is the meaning of this event. Why did God use it to call Moses?

It could be a picture of the circumstances of God's people at the time. They were in the fire of Egypt but God was not permitting them to be destroyed. It may also illustrate the way in which the Lord was going to deal with the Israelites in Egypt. He will purify them through the fire of trials but he will not destroy them. The bush may simply be making a statement about the Lord himself, that he, like that bush, cannot be destroyed.

As Moses draws closer to have a look, God speaks to him probably through the angel of the Lord, which was in all likelihood a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. God calls him by his name and Moses responds with a 'here am I.' He was willing and eager to listen and to obey. But before

Moses could hear what God was going to say to him he had to be reminded who this God is that is speaking to him he is Holy (v 5).

God now speaks to Moses, so let us notice what he says to him.

**a) He identifies Himself as the God of your Father (v 6).** He is the same God that appeared to the Patriarchs and called them to follow him. God wants Moses to recall the promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 15:13). Moses responds to God's disclosure of himself by hiding his face, he is overcome with the awesomeness of God. I want you to notice that God says, "I am the God of Abraham etc." But Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are long dead so how can God say 'I am' does he not mean I was.

The truth is that here is an indication that although these people are dead they still live. Here is the first hint of resurrection. In fact it is this verse that Jesus quotes in his debate with the Sadducees regarding the validity of the resurrection (Mark 12:26). Jesus argument is that God who appeared to Moses at the burning bush is the God of the living and not the dead. The Patriarchs must still be living which according to Jesus is an argument in favour of resurrection.

**b) He identifies his knowledge (v 7 & 9)** - The NIV says 'I am concerned about their suffering;' but the Hebrew word is one that means to know intimately. God is aware of Israel's circumstances he sees the affliction of his people he hears their cries he is intimately aware and concerned about their plight.

**c) He identifies his course of action (v 8)** God now declares that he will intervene and act on behalf of his oppressed people. God has come down to intervene in the situation and to implement his plan. That plan is to free them from slavery and take them into the Promised Land, a land that is more than adequate to satisfy the needs of his own people (v 8). But how was God going to do it. He was going to do it through Moses (v 10); Moses was going to be God's instrument for accomplishing his purposes.

God's people were going to be delivered by God, but Moses was the human means that God was going to use in order to bring deliverance upon the people of God. So God calls Moses, but his call is not in the form of a question it is a command.

Moses has no choice in the matter "so now, go" is the command (v 10). God has chosen Moses even if Moses hasn't chosen God, Moses is to shepherd God's people and lead them out of the land of Egypt and into the Promised Land (although as we know he didn't quite get that privilege). But he had no option he could not wriggle out although as we will see next week he did his best to do so.

## 2. RELEVANCE OF MOSES CALL

In many ways this call of Moses was unique. We cannot expect God to speak to us through a burning bush today for we have God's word recorded for us in Scripture and we have his final and complete word in Jesus Christ. However there are some similarities between this call and the call that we receive from God. God first of all calls us to salvation no one comes to salvation unless God calls them we did not choose him but he chose us (John 15:16)

God also calls us to serve him sometimes in a full time capacity in which we may sense a specific call but generally we are all called to serve God. Now these two calls the call to salvation and the call to service are not really two calls at all. When you are called to salvation you are called to serve Him as your Master, Jesus Christ is not just your Saviour but your Lord and Master. I want to look at these two calls together.

## a) Call To Salvation & Service.

i) **God changes circumstances in order that we might heed his call.** - Before Moses received this specific call to be Israel's leader and deliverer he had to undergo a complete change of circumstances. He was in Pharaoh's household and now he is in the desert. Once he was a Prince and now he is a shepherd. But this is how God works in some people's lives in order that they might be in a position to hear and obey God's call.

I heard of a man who was very wealthy he was in the finance business, but sadly the temptation to play with other people's money was too great and so he began to be involved in fraud. At first he felt bad about it but when he got away with it he began to do it again and again. But of course it was not long before he was caught and sacked from his job.

The police got involved and eventually he went to prison. In prison he began to read the bible in the cell and to cut a long story short he heard God's call to salvation and responded with repentance and faith. While this man was in the finance business he had a neighbour who was a Christian who often tried to witness to him and invited him to church. But he had no time for that 'religious stuff' was his reply.

But you see what happened God brought him low, God was working to bring him to the position where he would not only hear God's call but also respond to it.

Often God changes our circumstances in order that we might be in a position to respond to his call to serve him full time. With some people God creates restlessness in their souls or sometimes it's a family bereavement that causes people to think of Christ. At other times we change jobs or move home or develop new skills and although we might do it because we think we will benefit from such changes God may well be changing circumstances in order that we might listen to his call to serve him. It could be that we are not serving him, as we should; we always are making excuses for our failure to be committed to Him.

It is not beyond God to change our circumstances quite dramatically if necessary in order that we might realise and respond to God's call to service.

ii) **God call comes in the midst of our daily routines** – Moses was going about his business as a shepherd as he did every day for the past forty years. The day that Moses was called started like every other day except on this day God intervenes and calls Moses. When it comes to salvation it is the same, it is through the ordinary routines of life that God comes and intervenes and calls people to salvation. Here is a housewife going about her daily chores.

There is a knock on the door a young lady is visiting from the local evangelical church. After listening and asking questions for some time the housewife invited the church lady in and for 3 hours they talked about the way of salvation. The Christian lady left but that night the housewife got no rest in her soul. God was calling her to salvation and God's call cannot be resisted and at 4 am the next morning the housewife repented and believed. What started out as an ordinary day ended up being a salvation day? But that is how God works he breaks into the routine of life and calls his people to himself. The same is true in his call to full time service or his call to a greater commitment in service to him.

It starts out as an ordinary day but perhaps through our bible readings or through reading the newspaper or through prayer or through friends we sense God's call to obedience in service coming to our hearts. What starts of as a normal day ends up having eternal consequences?

iii) **It is God who calls** – It is always God who calls people unto salvation it is always God who takes the initiative, all we do is respond to that call, but even that response would not be possible if

God did not give his grace to enable us to do so. We as sinners would always reject God; we will always reject his call to salvation unless God regenerates our hearts and enables us to respond to his gospel call. Likewise it is God who calls us to be his workers in a full time way.

Someone said that you should never enter the gospel ministry without a clear call of God. I don't know who said that but I'm sure it is generally right for there are times in the ministry when the only thing that you have to fall back on is the clear call of God. But that call has to come from God, but when it comes we have to respond to it. Sometimes we might try to fight it but we never win, therefore if God calls you into full time service then do not fight it or do not try to ignore it but humbly submit to it and bring glory to God.

**iv). It is God who comes down to rescue (v 8)** – In verse 8 Moses is clearly told that God will come down to rescue the Israelites. Unless God does so there will be no salvation. Well we can clearly apply this to ourselves can't we? When Jesus came into this world of ours it was God coming down to rescue us. We needed to be rescued not from the hands of the Egyptians but from our sin and from the eternal consequences of our sin. We cannot save ourselves just as the Israelites couldn't save themselves and we are just as much in bondage as they were.

We are in slavery to sin, sin is our master and we cannot break free. Is there anyone here who feels like that today? You have tried to break free by your own strength but have failed and feel trapped. Well here is the good news God came down in Jesus to deliver you from sin. To do that he had to pay a heavy price with his own life but he did it for you if you will heed his call and in repentance and faith turn to God. The Israelites cried out to God for help (v 9) God heard their cries and came to their rescue well in the same way if we cry out to God for mercy then he will come and rescue us from sin, He has already done all that is necessary for our salvation in Jesus so cry out to him, admit you are a sinner and are under the slavery of sin. If you do that then God will apply the work of Jesus to you and grant you forgiveness and freedom in Christ.

If you do that then you are only able to do so because God in his sovereign grace called you to salvation. Not only to salvation but also to service for we are saved to serve. God not only came down to rescue us and save us from sin but he did so to take us to heaven. Just as he would lead Israel from bondage of Egypt to the Promised Land so God leads us from bondage to sin to our heavenly home. You can be sure that if God calls us to salvation then he will take us to heaven.

He will not fail in his purpose and we can rest secure in his love and grace towards us no matter what life throws at us.

**v) God calls sinners to salvation through ordinary people.** – Although it was God who rescued the Israelites and saved them from the hands of the Egyptians he did so through the means of Moses. In just the same way although it is God who saves people through Christ it is He alone who calls people unto salvation yet he chooses to use ordinary people like you and me to do so. Moses received God's command to go (v 10) he had no option and so every Christian is commanded today to go and it is not optional for us either (Matthew 28:19). It is a wonderful privilege to be commanded by God and to go and preach the gospel. It is our God given task to follow our Master and go in order to share the gospel with others. As we go God calls people to salvation and to service.

We must not miss this point, he could call people to salvation without us but he allows us to play an active role in the building up of his church. Therefore are we going, sharing and proclaiming the gospel to others. It is God's command and although we might make excuses as Moses did we cannot wriggle out of it. To fail to share the gospel with others is disobedience it is sin. If every one of us who are Christians here today obeyed this command then who knows what might happen.

God may in his great wisdom call someone to repentance and faith through your words of witness, who knows but that person might one day go on to become a great missionary for God with many coming to faith through their endeavours. We simply don't know it is God's purpose that he calls sinners to salvation but he chooses to do that using us as his means. In that way he gets all the praise and glory and we get encouraged and blessed as we see God using us with all our limitations for his own glory.

Amen