

THE CALL OF MOSES

TEXT: EXODUS 3

Introduction:

1. “Of all the great men whom God raised up in Israel, there is none whom the nation regarded with a more profound veneration than Moses” (Adolph Saphir).
2. God had an important work for Moses to do, and for this great work Moses had to be prepared.
3. Acts 7:22 says, “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.”
4. But “all the wisdom of the Egyptians” was not sufficient for the great work the LORD had prepared for Moses.
5. Moses had to learn the wisdom of God, and to do that God had to take Moses out of Egypt and put him on the backside of the desert for forty years (cf. Acts 7:30).
6. And it was there on the desert that Moses died to self.
7. God cannot really use a man until he learns to die to self.
8. One day someone asked George Muller the secret of his service. He answered: “There was a day when I died, *utterly died* – died to George Mueller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will – died to the world, its approval or censure — died to the approval or blame even of my brethren and friends – and since then I have studied only to show myself ‘approved unto God’” (*George Muller of Bristol*, Pierson).
9. AT Pierson, who wrote an excellent biography of George Muller (*George Muller of Bristol*) said, “when he (Muller) died to self and the world, he reached the self-surrender of Moses.”
10. Tending flocks on the backside of the desert seems an unusual way to prepare a man to lead more than a million slaves out of Egypt, but God says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8, 9).
11. Many of God’s greatest preachers received their preparation out in the wilderness – Elijah, Ezekiel, and John the Baptist. The apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 1:16 and 17, “I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia.”

12. CH Mackintosh described the great value of Moses' preparation on the backside of the desert – “that sacred spot where nature is laid in the dust, and God alone exalted. There it is that men and things—the world and self—present circumstances and their influence, are all valued at what they are really worth. There it is, and there alone, that you will find a divinely-adjusted balance in which to weigh all within and all around. There are no false colours, no borrowed plumes, no empty pretensions there. The enemy of your soul cannot gild the sand of that place. All is reality there. The heart that has found itself in the presence of God, at ‘the backside of the desert,’ has right thoughts about everything. It is raised far above the exciting influence of this world’s schemes. The din and noise! the bustle and confusion of Egypt do not fall upon the ear in that distant place. The crash in the monetary and commercial world is not heard there. The sigh of ambition is not heaved there. This world’s fading laurels do not tempt there. The thirst for gold is not felt there. The eye is never dimmed with lust, nor the heart swollen with pride there. Human applause does not elate, nor human censure depress there. In a word, everything is set aside save the stillness and light of the divine presence. God’s voice alone is heard—His light enjoyed—His thoughts received. This is the place to which all must go to be educated for the ministry; and there all must remain, if they would succeed in the ministry” (*Genesis to Deuteronomy*).
13. This is all contrary to the world’s way of thinking. Genesis 46:34 says, “Every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.” But God in His infinite wisdom and grace used a despised shepherd to lead His people out of bondage in Egypt.
14. And when the forty years in the desert were expired (cf. Acts 7:30), the LORD appeared unto Moses (Exodus 3:1-5).

I. GOD’S CALL

1. Moses was in the presence of God Himself (Ex. 3:1-4).
2. At the burning bush, God transformed Moses from a desert shepherd into the leader of a great nation – the nation Israel.
3. Moses was the greatest leader up to the time of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Moses lived in Midian for 40 years, but the Midianites are no longer around. But Israel is still around, and Jews (and Christians) everywhere revere Moses the man of God.
5. The LORD spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. It was a literal burning bush (the fire “was not consumed” – 3:2), and yet there is much symbolism in this burning bush.

6. In the Bible, fire represents the presence of God, and the glory of God, and the holiness of God, and the power of God.
7. The LORD led the Israelites through the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.
8. Exodus 24:16, 17 says, “And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.”
9. On the Day of Pentecost, “cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of the disciples” (Acts 2:3).
10. Up on Mount Carmel, Elijah prayed, “Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again” (I Kings 18:37).
11. “Then the fire of the LORD fell... And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God” (I Kings 18:38, 39).
12. Hebrews 12:29 says, “For our God is a consuming fire.”
13. The “angel of the LORD” (Exodus 3:2) was the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus (“Christophany”).
14. Genesis 16:7 says “the angel of the LORD” found Hagar by a fountain of water in the wilderness. We know from Genesis 16:13 that this “angel of the LORD” was the pre-incarnate Christ, because it says, “And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?”
15. And then a little later on, in Genesis 21:17, we read, “And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven... And God opened her eyes...” (21:19).
16. In Exodus 3:4 the angel of the LORD is referred to as both “Lord” and “God.”
17. The angel of the LORD appeared unto Moses “in a flame of fire,” i.e., the Shekinah glory was manifested in the burning bush.
18. Before Moses could be sent forth on his important mission he had to first behold the ineffable glory of God.
19. The LORD told Moses to take off his shoes (Ex. 3:5). This is a great lesson on the holiness of God. Unfortunately, most churches today have forgotten this lesson.
20. God reminded Moses of His holiness, and His covenant-relationship with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (3:6), and His great compassion (3:7), and His purpose (3:8).

21. God revealed Himself to Moses as “the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 3:6).
22. The Lord Jesus Christ referred to this, and added, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt. 22:32).
23. Moses was afraid and hid his face from God (Ex. 3:6). Acts 7:32 says, “Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.”
24. The fear of God came over Moses.
25. “And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites” (Ex. 3:7, 8).
26. God was assuring Moses that He would deliver the Israelites. All Moses had to do was trust and obey (3:9, 10).

II. MOSES’ RESPONSE (3:11).

1. At first, Moses was very reluctant to answer God’s call (3:11-14; 4:1, 10). Moses asked, “Who am I that I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?” (3:11).
2. We see the unbelief and the reluctance of Moses, when the LORD called him from out of the burning bush.
3. What a change after 40 years in the desert! Moses the bold and confident young man who had been brought up in Pharaoh’s court, and “was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds,” was now timid.
4. God’s word and God’s promises overcame Moses’ reservations. When Moses asked, “Who am I that I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?” (3:11), the Lord answered, “Certainly I will be with thee” (3:12).
5. The same God who promised Moses has given us His promise too.
6. Our Lord said, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:20).
7. In Hebrews 13:5, the Lord says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”
8. First Moses asked, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?”
9. Next, he asked, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you;

and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?” (3:13).

10. “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (3:14).
11. The “I AM” at the burning bush is the Lord Jesus Christ, who said:
 - “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35).
 - “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).
 - “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).
 - “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5).
 - “I am the door” (John 10:9).
 - “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14).
 - “I am the Son of God” (John 10:36).
 - “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25).
 - “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).
 - “I am the true vine” (John 15:1).
12. “And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Exodus 3:15).
13. “LORD” is Jehovah. The LORD told Moses, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the LORD (Jehovah) God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever...”
14. We know that Jehovah God is the Lord Jesus Christ (Isaiah 40:3; cf. Matthew 3:3; Joel 2:32; cf. Romans 10:13).
15. He is the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending... which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8).

III. MOSES’ COMMISSION (3:15-22)

1. When the LORD commissioned Moses, He also told him what to expect: God would deliver them from Egypt and bring them into the Promised Land (Ex. 3:15-17).
2. They would approach the king of Egypt and ask to be allowed to take a three-day journey into the wilderness to worship God (3:18).
3. But the king of Egypt would not agree to that (3:19).
4. This would result in the LORD stretching out His hand of judgment upon Egypt (3:20). The LORD was going to demonstrate that the gods of Egypt were false gods, and that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was the true God of heaven and earth.

5. Moses lacked faith at this point (cf. 3:11; 4:1, 10, etc.), but the LORD's words were words of assurance (cf. 3:12) – "I have surely visited you... And I have said, I will bring you up... And they shall hearken to thy voice... And I am sure... And I will stretch out my hand... and after that he will let you go... And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty" (Ex. 3:16-21).
6. The LORD wanted Moses to understand exactly what would happen – even Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to let the Israelites go (3:19).
7. All Moses had to do was believe God. All Moses had to do was do what God told him to do and everything would be all right.

CONCLUSION:

1. The LORD gave Moses a commission. He was to deliver the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt.
2. And the Lord has given us a commission. He told us, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16).
3. We are surrounded on every side by people that are in bondage to sin. Our responsibility –our commission – our privilege is to reach them with the Gospel that Jesus saves.
4. Second Corinthians 5:18 says that God "hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."
5. Sinners are at enmity with God. The only way they can be reconciled to God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:17-21).