

## THE CALL OF GOD - PART I

### Exodus 3:1-10

Background:

This Sunday we return to our study in the Book of Exodus. We arrive at a chapter that may be very familiar to you – Exodus 3. No matter your past exposure, familiarity, or understanding of this important portion of Scripture, I invite you to give this chapter your attention.

Call to Worship: A Reading

Scripture Reading: Colossians 1

The Lord's Table: 'Once Your enemy, Lord, now seated at Your Table.'

The grace of 'the King' is so undeserved. Let us 'elevate' our view of God, and reduce our thoughts about self. We did not get to this place by ourselves.

Introduction:

We return to our study of Exodus, the second book of the Old Testament.

We opened the study with the descendants of Jacob, the 'seventy', who were 'providentially preserved' in Egypt; the account is detailed in the closing chapters of the first book of the Old Testament, Genesis. It is more than just an account of twists and turns, it is the story of Joseph, and an account of 'Providence'. As Exodus opens, we find that the group of 'seventy' persons, the Israelites, who stayed in Egypt, have been miraculously 'preserved' by the Hand of God.

Genesis 50:22

"Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years." (NASB)

And in the opening verses of Exodus we learn that the Israelites had, by God's grace, flourished in Egypt over the years, had multiplied and increased, and had grown strong.

Exodus 1:6-7

"And Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them." (NASB)

And the Israelites had increased so much, and had become so strong, that the new Pharaoh that now ruled, became threatened by them, and in 'wrong fear' he oppressed them.

Exodus 1:8-14

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, 'Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply and in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us, and depart from the land.' So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raames. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. And the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them." (NASB)

Pharaoh, still fearful, took further action against the 'increasing' Israelites. He approached the Hebrew midwives, ordering them to put to death all 'male' children born to Hebrew women. But the Hebrew midwives feared their God more than they feared Pharaoh, and did not take the lives of the male babies.

Exodus 1:17

"But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live." (NASB)

Such action makes no sense to the onlooker, for to disobey the king could have dreadful consequences. But we learn that it was a 'pleasing' action to God, and amidst the growing persecution and oppression, God's people continued to grow.

When people with 'right fear', (absolute reverence and awe for God), like the Hebrew midwives had, choose to 'obey' God rather than man, even while 'oppressed', God 'flourishes' them supernaturally. In the case of the midwives, God blessed the women with their own families, because they had 'right fear'.

Exodus 1:21

"And it came about because the midwives feared God, that He established households for them." (NASB)

God has not removed the oppression, but He is moving among the people. We see more of God's 'providence and provision' in chapter two of Exodus, when Moses is born.

Pharaoh has now commanded 'all' his people to 'cast every (Hebrew) son born into the Nile River' Exodus 1:22, but when Moses was born, Moses' mother first "hid him for three months Exodus 2:2 (NASB) and when she could no longer hide him, she prepared a basket for him, a small ark, "and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it, and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile." Exodus 2:3 (NASB) And so, Moses was 'placed' into the Nile, but 'providentially' the baby in the basket is discovered, and ironically, by the Pharaoh's daughter, "and she had pity on him" Exodus 2:6 (NASB). Providence continues to work, for Pharaoh's daughter arranges care for the baby with the mother, provides monetary support for the family in the form of wages for doing this service, and she provides 'royal opportunity' for Moses by adopting him.

Exodus 2:7-10

"Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?' And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Go ahead.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child away and nurse him for me and I shall give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed him. And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, 'Because I drew him out of the water'." (NASB)

This is not human machinations setting this in motion. No. This is what the Lord does in His 'Providence'. He 'prepares the way'. He provides the 'protective care' needed. He makes the 'timely preparations' for the future events that are 'His Great Plan'. His Will is done.

In the last sermon, 'Humiliation's Necessity, Moses, now a grown man, departs from the Courts of Egypt and all his royal opportunities, 'fleeing Pharaoh' in humiliation, and begins his wilderness exile in Midian. (Exodus 2:15) "Moses was willing to dwell with the man (Jethro), and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. Then she gave birth to a son." Exodus 2:21-22a

(NASB) And so God grants Moses a new life here in the wilderness of Midian, and Moses takes on a new occupation, that of a lowly shepherd.

As we begin this week's study, let us pause momentarily to take note of the time and focus as we reorientate ourselves to begin Chapter 3 of Exodus. When Chapter 3 of Exodus opens, Israel now has a history of 400 years. There has been considerable, and fast paced movement through time up to this point, and God's words to Abram have come to pass.

Genesis 15:13

"And God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.'" (NASB)

And time has also passed quickly for Moses. Chapter 2 has covered Moses' first eighty years of life. He was born and lived his first forty years in Egypt, and has now lived another forty years in the wilderness of Midian.

But now, having an appreciation and understanding of the background, our focus in Chapter 3 begins with time taking on a 'slower pace', a moment to moment look, as we consider THE CALL OF GOD. We will consider in this text both The 'Man of God' (Moses), and the Nation of Israel.

In this first part of Chapter 3, verses 1-10, we will see four elements of 'THE CALL OF GOD'.

## **I GOD'S PREPARATION: (vs 1)**

Exodus 3:1

"NOW Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God." (NASB)

There are several important points to note from this verse.

1. Moses is a shepherd, and he is attending to a flock. Stephen tells us in Acts that Moses had been keeping flocks for forty years.

Acts 7:30

"And after forty years had passed, AN ANGEL APPEARED TO HIM IN THE WILDERNESS OF MOUNT SINAI, IN THE FLAME OF A BURNING THORN BUSH." (NASB)

So, Moses has been in Midian now for forty years, engaged as a working shepherd. The world's reaction might well be, 'Wow! Doing the same job for forty years.' But this is 'the preparation'. Moses remains in the same occupation for forty years, tending sheep, leading sheep around in the wilderness, because this is God 'preparing' him for his work ahead with Pharaoh. In the coming days, Moses will lead 'the people' against Pharaoh. Now how would that fly with modern 'worldly prep'? This would not be the chosen way to prepare, for sure, by modern standards, for man does not think this way.

However, Time is 'God's Preparation', and much of it.

2. Note Moses' place. The sheep did not belong to Moses. They were not Moses' own sheep; they were Jethro's sheep. Moses is not even doing this shepherd work for himself. Moses is keeping another man's flock. This makes him an 'undershepherd'. He is a 'steward'; he manages another's property.

The fact that Moses is a 'steward' is key. The world would 'scoff' at this situation; would hold Moses in contempt, that in forty years he had not even managed to start his own flock. What kind of professional preparation is this? But God uses this state of affairs for His own purposes. This was 'preparation' for HIS WORK. This is God, in the background, saying take care of another's flock, and treat it as though it were your own, even though it is not.

3. Note the activity. Moses is 'actively' engaged. He is actively 'shepherding' this flock. He is leading this flock 'now', across the wilderness. He is busy, working, doing the job. He is not biding his time. He is not looking back to his life in Egypt, and lamenting, pondering over the what ifs. He is not looking ahead, dreaming of other things, fussing about future plans. NO. He is living in the now. He is not waiting for a sign. He is not sitting on a rock in Midian, thinking and waiting, pensive. He is busy, getting at it, getting it done, engaged and active, being responsible in the work before him NOW.

It is the 'NOW', by way of preparation. This is what happens every time when one is in God's preparation. What is that man doing 'right now'?

And so, Moses leads the flock to the 'west side of the wilderness', towards Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai. We are told that this mountain is "the mountain of God" Exodus 1:1b (NASB), aptly named given all that is ahead, for this mountain will be the focus of much activity. Ahead, on God's mountain will be: 1. The Giving of the Law. 2. The Glory of God Revealed. 3. The Encounter that Moses has With God.

### **Let us consider God's Preparation: WHEN GOD CALLS, GOD PREPARES!**

1. Moses becomes a 'shepherd', and works the job for forty years, the lowly, dirty, messy job of tending sheep. We learn from Genesis that the job of shepherding is a despised occupation by the Egyptians. Joseph tells his brothers:

Genesis 46:33-34

"And it shall come about when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' that you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' that you may live in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians." (NASB)

And so we see that, ironically, God's Preparation meant more 'humiliation' for Moses. He was given work that no one else wanted. Yet here is Moses, forty years later, and still he is 'engaged'.

### **God's Preparation: WORK THAT NO ONE ELSE WANTED.**

2. Moses is a shepherd for someone else for forty years. He remains 'faithful' in the job, and forty years later he is still 'actively engaged' in the work. This is important, even significant.

Luke 16:10a

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; ..." (NASB)

When God calls, God prepares! God does not miss steps nor make special exceptions in His calling. God is about lasting, sustainable, authentic, 'genuine' preparation. And so, Moses, for forty years, leads sheep, in preparation for the forty years that he will be leading 'God's sheep', the people of Israel.

Imagine if Moses had gone into 'leadership' over the people prior to this proper and 'God made' preparation; if God had inserted Moses into the 'upcoming' job earlier, as in when he had executed the Egyptian, or when he was 'wooing' the ladies at the well. We can be assured that there would have been 'epic' downfall. It took forty years for Moses, by testing, wrestling, struggling, and perseverance; only then was Moses ready to take on 'the job'.

**God's Preparation: REQUIRES TIME AND TRAINING!**

## **II GOD'S PRESENTATION: (vv 2-4)**

Exodus 3:2-4

"And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he (Moses) looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, 'I must turn aside now, and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.' 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'." (NASB)

Verse 2 tells us that 'the burning bush is not consumed', and speaks of 'the angel of the Lord' who appeared to Moses from out of this bush that is 'blazing with fire'. Who is this 'angel of the Lord'? The expression is to be seen again in Exodus 23. We read:

Exodus 23:20-23

"Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him. But if you will truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My angel will go before you and bring you in to the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them." (NASB)

Some suggest that this reference to the 'angel of the Lord' refers to the angel Michael, because of the 'fire'. Others suggest that it is Gabriel, because he brings a 'message'. Others still suggest that this is a 'new' angel that is unnamed. But given the context, and the content of verse 4, where it states clearly, "God called to him (to Moses) from the midst of the bush"

Exodus 3:4 (NASB), we must conclude that this reference refers to THE LORD HIMSELF. The same contextual case, occurring sixty-seven times in the Old Testament, helps to confirm that this is, indeed, The Lord Himself. There is also the definite grammar association to YAHWEH, thus affirming that the reference is to The Lord Himself. And there is the matter of 'forgiving sin'. The Exodus 23 reference states they are not to be rebellious for this angel "will not pardon your transgression, since my name is in him." (vs 21). We know that 'the power to forgive sin is God's territory only, as is confirmed in Mark 2:7 which states, "who can forgive sins but God alone?" (NASB) All of these reasons would be enough to confirm the matter of this angel being The Lord Himself, but there is still one more proof to observe. The 'angel of the Lord' appeared to him "in a blazing fire" from the midst of a bush (vs 2). Throughout the Old Testament 'flaming appearances' are associated with God, even a physical manifestation of the Lord Jesus Himself (second person of the Trinity).

Genesis 15:17

"And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces." (NASB)

This appearance of 'fire' is understood to be the presence of God, there in their midst; God, making covenant with Abram concerning his descendants and the promised land.

Exodus 13:21

"And the LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night." (NASB)

This is God Himself traveling with the people, leading the way to the 'promised land'.

Exodus 19:10-11,16-18

"The Lord also said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ... And it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the

mountain. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently." (NASB)

This was God Himself, descending, coming to the mountain, that the people might see Him, might experience His presence; and He spoke His Law to Moses.

I Kings 18:22-24,26, 29,36-39

"Then Elijah said to the people, 'I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. NOW let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox, and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God,' And all the people answered and said, 'That is a good idea.' ...

Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying 'O Baal, answer us.' But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made. And it came about when midday was past that they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention. ...

Then it came about at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, 'O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O LORD, art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again.' Then fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God'." (NASB)

This was God Himself, answering the prayer of His servant, Elijah, showing Himself via the supernatural, 'the fire of the Lord', that all would know that He was 'the GOD', and that none other compared to Him.

Daniel 7:9

" I kept looking  
Until thrones were set up,  
And the Ancient of Days took His seat;  
His vesture was like white snow,  
And the hair of His head like pure wool.  
His throne was ablaze with flames,  
Its wheels were a burning fire." (NASB)

This is God Himself, the Ancient of Days, surrounded in flame, as seen in Daniel's vision/dream.

Exodus 2:2

"And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush;  
and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not  
consumed." (NASB)

So, God 'presents Himself' to Moses; God appears from the midst of a burning bush, and when Moses looks at this burning bush he notes that the bush is burning, but that nothing is being consumed. This is therefore a supernatural appearance. In the wilderness, bushes burn up. The fact that this bush is not burning up grabs Moses' attention. This is out of the ordinary. He focuses his attention closer in the direction of this place where God has made His presence known.

Exodus 3:3

"So Moses said, 'I must turn aside now, and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is  
not burned up.'" (NASB)

Exodus 3:4

"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'." (NASB)

And so, from this 'blazing bush' that is never consumed, God Himself, who has noted that He has Moses' attention, calls to Moses, by name.

## **The Context of the Call of God:**

### **A) The Call of God is Initiated by God:**

This is not Moses initiating the meeting. This is not Moses saying, 'Where are you God?'. This is not Moses reasoning and thinking that he needs a new occupation. This is not Moses approaching God. No. THIS IS GOD COMING TO MOSES.

### **B) The Call of God is No Different Than Any Other Call of God in the Scripture:**

We find example after example of God calling individuals. In each case, God is the 'initiator', and He called them from doing something else.

The Call of Gideon (while he is working):

Judges 6:11-12

"Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress in order to save it from the Midianites, And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior'." (NASB)

The Call of Samuel (while he is sleeping):

1 Samuel 3:1-11

"Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. And it happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see well), and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was, that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, 'Here I am.' Then he ran to Eli and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, lie down again.' So he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, 'Samuel!' So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he answered, 'I did not call, my son, lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him. So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy. And Eli said to Samuel, 'Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Thy servant is listening.' So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Then the

LORD came and stood and called as at other times, 'Samuel, Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for Thy servant is listening'." (NASB)

The call of the prophet Isaiah (by way of a vision)

Isaiah 6:1-8

"IN the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of Him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined!

Because I am a man of unclean lips,

And I live among a people of unclean lips;

For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.'

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken from the altar with tongs. And he touched my mouth, with it and said, 'Behold this has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven'.

Then 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!'" (NASB)

The Call of Jeremiah the Prophet:

Jeremiah 1:4-10,19

"Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,

'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,

And before you were born I consecrated you;

I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.'

Then I said, 'Alas, Lord GOD!

Behold, I do not know how to speak,

Because I am a youth.'

But the LORD said to me,

'Do not say, 'I am a youth',

Because everywhere I send you, you shall go

And all that I command you, you shall speak.

Do not be afraid of them,

For I am with you to deliver you,' declares the LORD.

Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me,  
'Behold, I have put My words in your mouth,  
See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms,  
To pluck up and to break down,  
To destroy and to overthrow,  
To build and to plant.' ...  
'And they will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,' declares the LORD." (NASB)

The Call of Ezekiel the Prophet: (the working priest)

Ezekiel 1:2-3,27-28, 2:1-7

"(On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel, the priest, son of Buzi, in the land the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.)

Then I noticed from the appearance of his loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

THEN He said to me, 'Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!' And as He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me. Then He said to me, 'Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. And I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children; and you shall say to them, ' Thus says the Lord GOD' As for them, whether they listen or not --- for they are a rebellious house --- they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions; neither fear their words nor be dismayed at her presence, for they are a rebellious house. But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious.'" (NASB)

In the New Testament we also find examples of God 'initiating the call'. Jesus called the Apostles, for example, from their fishing jobs. We read:

Matthew 4:18-22

"And walking by the sea of Galilee, He (Jesus) saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him. And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him." (NASB)

And later Saul, the tentmaker, who was looking for anything but a relationship with God, was approached by Jesus on the Damascus Road.

Acts 9:1-6

"Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And it came about that as he journeyed he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.'" (NASB)

We were not looking for God when God called us. Theologically, we were more than just asleep, we were dead men and women when God called us, 'dead men walking'.

Ephesians 2:1-2a

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world..." (NASB)

Ephesians 2:4-6

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." (NASB)

IN OUR DEATH, GOD CALLED! We were not looking for God, but God moved, and God 'initiated'. In our spiritual death, the 'call of God' was 'initiated'. In Salvation, it is impossible for a dead person to reason and to will and to choose God. Mankind cannot do anything to help himself. He cannot, and therefore God provides the 'initiation', and presents Himself, as we see described in Titus:

Titus 3:4-6

"But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." (NASB)

God moves first when He calls His children. He does this, not because we were looking, or because we reasoned that we should. No. And we see this clearly with Moses. Moses was not out in the wilderness that day seeking God. No. He was tending to 'messy' sheep, Jethro's sheep. And when least expected, GOD MAKES HIS PRESENTATION, clearly and powerfully, and 'initiates' the encounter.

Exodus 3:4

"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.'" (NASB)

God's PRESENTATION demands and enables a response. Moses states in response, three simple words, 'Here I am', which seems to set the table for something further (next week's study).

### **III GOD'S PLACEMENT: (vv 5-6)**

Exodus 3:5-6

"Then He said, 'Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' He said also, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,' Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." (NASB)

The Call of God is also the Call to Holiness. The two go hand in hand. When God calls someone it always is a call to holiness as well. One does not exist with the other. God

'prepares' and 'presents', and the Lord God 'placed' Moses on Holy Ground with a 'call'. But this 'Holy Ground' is not the mountain itself. The mountain is 'Holy Ground' only because God is there. This is an important point to note. God is dwelling on this mountain, and therefore it is holy; because He is dwelling on this mountain it is now the mountain of God. Now it is a mountain set apart; now it is not like other mountains. But it is God who makes it different, God who makes it holy ground.

To be 'holy' means to be 'set apart'. But it is not enough to just be 'set apart'. This call of God in Exodus chapter 3 is not known or remembered for God's 'separating' Himself from man. The text is not saying that God 'separates' Himself from man. God does not say, 'I cannot come to you, Moses. I cannot speak to you, Moses. You are not like me, Moses.' No. Quite the opposite, in fact. God 'places' Moses right into His presence, and then has him stop. God cautions Moses to stop, initially, in order to remove his sandals. So yes, there is 'separation' in the call, but the 'separation' is not the point, nor is the 'holiness'. So, Moses, remove your sandals, for the place you are standing is holy ground, but it is not holy because of the soil. It is holy because God is in this place; God is on this mountain. HE IS IN THIS PLACE, therefore it is holy.

God does not banish Moses. No. God comes to meet Moses. He 'initiates' the process, and He 'initiates' a relationship, an 'intimate' relationship, with Moses in the process. How does He do that, you may ask? He requires that Moses 'remove his sandals'. Be closer to Me, Moses. We suppose that Moses is unworthy in his filthy sandals, but God is 'so other' than Moses, and such a conclusion misses the point of God's call. What is important is what God does not say. God does not say, 'Moses, go fetch new sandals, clean sandals, the best possible sandals.' And God does not say, 'Moses, go get more wood. We need a buffer, Moses, between you and this holy ground.' No. God is saying the very opposite. Let your feet, your skin, touch MY GROUND. This is intimacy. INTO HIS PRESENCE; INTO HIS PLAN.

Separate, yes; separate the filth, and separate the world. This is the call to holiness. Separate, remove the things that hinder the relationship, ie. the sandals. But once separated, draw close to Me. Devote yourself to Me. Devote yourself completely to Me. This is 'holiness', to separate, and draw close to God. The call of God is to 'proximity' to God. Separate yourself from all things that hinder you from coming close to Me. Holiness and drawing close are thereby of the same spirit.

Hebrews 12:1-2

"THEREFORE, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (NASB)

This is intimacy. And a couple of details from the passage confirm this.

Exodus 3:6

"He said also, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." (NASB)

God explains to Moses that He is the God of his father. He is not a foreign god. No, He is the God of Moses' line, of his own family. He is not a stranger. He is known. And in fact, He is known to Moses. Moses' response is to hide his face. He does not do so because of intimidation. Moses hides his face out of awe, out of inspired intimacy. Moses is in a 'place' that he has never been before. Moses has been 'called', and now he is in an 'intimate place' with God; he is now 'intimate' with His God.

Sinclair Ferguson describes this holy 'intimacy' as being like 'physical intimacy' for the first time between a bride and groom, "that moment of nakedness when they have to fight the recoil to look away".

This is the 'call' to holiness and intimacy: Be separate, and fully devoted to God.

#### **IV GOD'S PROMISE: (vv 7-10)**

Exodus 3:7-10

"And the LORD said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. And now behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I

have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." (NASB)

I know their sufferings. I have 'surely seen' their suffering. For sure, God is aware of what is happening to the people in Egypt. God is not absent in Israel's plight. God is not too busy to be aware. 'I know the affliction of My people', He assures Moses. And the people's plight moves God to do something in light of His Promise, the promise given long ago to Abraham.

Genesis 15:13-16

"And God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions. And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.'" (NASB)

This is The Promise that was given, first to Abraham, and Abraham was assured that this was a 'sure thing'. "KNOW FOR CERTAIN", God told him, that your descendants will be afflicted for four hundred years, but that I will bring judgement on the nation that does this to them, and I will ensure they are returned to the land of promise, the Promised Land, the land I am giving them. AND GOD DID NOT FORGET THIS, HIS PROMISE. He remembered His people, and He remembered His promise to them. This very fact is recorded in Scripture.

Exodus 2:23-25

"Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel and God took notice of them." (NASB)

The 'call of God' to Moses was made as a means of PROMISE FULFILLMENT, first for deliverance, and then for the land. God had 'promised', and here begins the 'promise fulfillment' with the calling of Moses.

'THE CALL OF GOD' IS ALWAYS MOTIVATED BY 'THE PROMISE OF GOD'. This was true of Moses, but it is also true of us as well. The 'call' of salvation, that is, the 'call on our lives' is always 'prepared' by God, 'initiated' by God, 'presented' by God, and it 'fulfills a promise'. But our salvation is based on a 'different' promise than the promise that God made to His people back in Genesis 15. God has made many promises, and we benefit from them for they flow out from the 'divine big eternal promise', a promise from the Father to the Son, a Trinitarian Promise, a gift to the praise of His Glory.

Ephesians 1:10b-14

"the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation --- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory," (NASB)

It is not about our glory. It is about His Glory. It is a promise from God the Father, to God the Son. There is a 'grand plan', a grand gift, and we are granted a viewing of this master plan when the divine curtain is pulled back giving us access to the prayer of the Son to His Father. These are the words of Jesus, to His Father God, which refer back to this grand plan and gift.

John 17:1-2,6,9,11,24

"These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee, even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life.... I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word..... I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou has given Me; for they are Thine; ... And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee, Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are... Father, I desire that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.'" (NASB)

He has predestined and provided an inheritance, through Jesus Christ. We are 'called and chosen' as a 'promise from God the Father to the Son. He speaks of 'those whom You gave Me' and 'may they be with Me where I am'. Such a gift! Therefore, we want to 'ELEVATE THE PERSON OF GOD' for everything that is going on in our life is part of the Grand Plan, and is rooted in the eternal Promise of the Father to His Son. God has made us part of this Big Plan. He invites us to come and be part of His plans. Here he speaks to Moses, sharing His plan of action.

Exodus 3:10

"Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." (NASB)

'COME, AND I WILL SEND'.... This is a promise backed by the Almighty God. It 'caps' the 'call of God'. 'You will go to Pharaoh and rescue My people'.

So far, there has been no word from Moses to this point, yet there is irony in this, for Moses has much to say, as we will see, next week.

Benediction:

Romans 8:28

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (NASB)