

EXODUS

תּוֹמַשׁ גִּבֹּרִים

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Exodus 3:9 - 4:17

The Calling

We are continuing in Exodus today.

In our passage today, Moses is going to finally get a call from God to go lead the Jews out of Egypt.

Now none of us are Moses. Moses was unique in history. As far as important characters in history, the two highest peaks are Moses and then Jesus - those are the two mountains with peaks up above the clouds. Moses was the mediator of the whole Old Covenant, Jesus as God among us is the mediator of the new covenant. None of us will share the weight of Moses' calling or the significance of his role.

But we all have our callings from God.

And often we think of a calling as God leading someone into the ministry: the call to be a missionary or a pastor, the call to start a church or some spiritual endeavor. And it can be that. But God giving a calling to people isn't limited to people going into the ministry.

The call of God on our lives usually looks like the responsibility God gives us. Something he entrusts to our care. A job or career, a family, a major, a need in the church or the community, a person that needs help or needs discipleship. Often the calling consists of the things I have to do and the person I have to be. The clearest parts of the calling of God are usually the core responsibilities of life. We're not Moses, but we are called.

At this point in the story, the Jews have been slaves in Egypt for generations. They've cried and groaned under the heavy burdens and cruel taskmasters, and God knew. He knew all along, so He had raised up Moses as a son in Pharaoh's house to be their deliverer.

But when Moses first left the palace, the timing wasn't right. Moses seemed too arrogant and angry, the people didn't want him to lead, and he was exiled to Midian to learn contentment and humility and to serve as a simple shepherd for 40 years.

But now, as the cries of His people have come up before Him, God has appeared to Moses in the burning bush on Mt. Sinai to place on Moses the tremendous responsibility of going back to Egypt to lead His people out and toward the promised land.

This shepherd would become a great liberator after all, a great leader, a great law-giver. So here's how it plays out. (Exodus 3:9, the Lord says:)

Exodus 3:9-10 And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

So God tells Moses that Moses will be a great leader.

You might expect a great leader to jump at the opportunity. This responsibility would bring with it authority, position, power, and a name for himself. This is a golden opportunity. Any leader with ambition says, "Yes, finally! Finally someone is recognizing my talent and all I bring to the table." Coach is finally putting him in the game.

After 40 years of chasing sheep around the wilderness, finally I'm going to live up to my potential. It's about time.

Exodus 3:11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Moses' response is "Who am I?" 40 years ago, he left the palace, sure he was ready to save the people. And it all imploded and he spent 40 years as a shepherd. Now he says, "Who am I?"

He is reluctant to take on this huge responsibility, he is hesitant, he doesn't want to do it. He doesn't fit the bill at all. He has no confidence at all in being the right guy for the job, he doesn't feel up to it, he's insecure, his time to lead has passed. So he says, "Here am I, not me."

This says something about what it looks like when God gives you a calling in life.

Sometimes we think that if God is in something, doing that thing will come naturally to us, it will fit us like a glove, we'll feel like we were perfectly equipped for the task. "My whole life has been leading up to this," we'll think. And that sometimes happens, but not always, in fact not often. We think that following God's calling is as smooth as going down a water slide, and the difficult things are not part of his calling. But usually the calling of God looks like a pretty intimidating responsibility that God has dropped in our laps.

God is working in our lives and asking us to be faithful to what He is doing.

So take marriage. God joins two people together and that is a calling from God. From the moment you say I do, you know that God has called you to be a husband or wife. Which means you are called to be one when it's easy and when it's hard. But we can hit a difficult stretch and think, "I'm not called to be in a difficult marriage. God wouldn't call me to a life of frustration. I'm not called." But if you're in that marriage, you are. And you might meet that calling like Moses, "Who am I, not me."

Or God has given you a child. And now the child is a toddler. "I don't know how to raise a toddler. I'm not called to this. If you have a toddler you are!" I do not feel called to raising this teenager, but you are if you have one.

Or God has made you a man or a woman. I don't feel called to carry the weight of biblical manhood and all that comes with it, or biblical womanhood and that unique calling. But you have that calling if you are a man or woman.

To go to work or school every day doesn't feel like the adventurous calling from God that we are dying to jump in to. But our feelings don't determine our calling. Moses wasn't feeling it. But God put this in his lap. And we don't always feel great about what He has dropped in our laps to be faithful with. But that doesn't change His calling.

And for those called into vocational ministry, we can't determine our calling with how up to the task we feel. People called to spiritual leadership especially can be really dangerous if they feel like "I got this. I'm the right person for this job." If you wake up thinking "I'm the right person to be speaking for God," you're not.

So we, like Moses, all have some calling. And often we push back with our excuses. And God gives us vital reminders about who He is to keep us in the game.

So Moses says, "Who am I?" I'm not worthy of this, and I'm not up to this.

And we might expect God's response to be, "Moses, you're being too hard on yourself. You're totally up to this! You got a PhD, you have life experience, sure you can do this - *you're good enough, you're smart enough, and doggonit, people like you.* You underestimate yourself. You're competent."

But God doesn't call us to replace our insecurities with confidence in ourselves.

Exodus 3:12 He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

God doesn't refute Moses's "I'm not worthy." That's true, Moses. But I will be with you.

God promises his **PRESENCE**.

And when we are faced with the intimidating responsibilities in front of us, God doesn't turn us back to ourselves. He doesn't try to give us a self-confidence boost at all. Convincing weak, frail, fallen people that they aren't weak and frail and fallen only does damage. So God says, "True, this is beyond your abilities, but I'm with you."

And when so much is uncertain, we need to believe this good news that God goes with us. That there is no future for us that doesn't include the presence of Jesus.

Jesus was abandoned by the Father on the cross in our place, which means the abandonment we deserve was already endured, and we have the promise of God with us always.

Hebrews 13:5 "Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

We have this promise of God's presence. And it's interesting that the author of Hebrews connected this to being free from the love of money. He's contrasting false security for the future with true security. We think money will secure us, but it never feels like enough, even if we have a Scrooge McDuck vault full of gold at home - we still aren't secure. Real security comes from knowing that because of what was accomplished on the cross, Jesus will never leave us.

He promises His presence for whatever life has in store for us and as we walk through whatever responsibilities we have. So we can embrace the tasks we're not up to, the load we can't possibly carry, the role we could never fulfill, the task we are inadequate for knowing He goes with us.

Now the conversation continues. Moses is continuing to bring things up to God that God probably didn't think through when He chose Moses. (Moses is still a work in progress.)

Exodus 3:13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

I don't even know the first thing about Who you are!

Theological education in Egypt was lacking - Moses doesn't have a masters in divinity. They've told stories about God for hundreds of years, but there's no written Bible (Moses would get on that responsibility a little later.) His excuse is "I don't know enough."

Exodus 3: 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

So God reveals Himself as "I am," or "Yahweh," The God who is. He is self-existent, He is self-sustaining, He exists eternally. He tells Moses the name of God to use.

Now the Jews had used that name for God before. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all called God by that name. Moses' mother's name was Jochebed, which means "Yahweh's glory." This wasn't totally new info God was giving Moses. He was calling something to remembrance.

God reminds him of his **NAME**, the name the forefathers used.

And a name is a pointer to a person's life achievements. Who a person is is all wrapped up in their name. If I say, "Neil Armstrong," you immediately think of his reputation of being the first man to walk on the moon. If I say Abraham Lincoln, elements of his

reputation come to mind. If I name a movie star like Denzel Washington, movies come to mind, his work comes to mind.

So when God says, "I'm Yahweh," all of who He is and what He has done come to mind. A name brings a reputation and a history. This is the God that Abraham worshipped. And this God made a promise to Abraham that He would bless the Jews, He would make them a great people, that they'd inhabit the promised land.

And here is this God who made a covenant with Abraham saying to Moses, "It's me, I'm that God, doing all I said I would do."

The name of God is powerful. The name of Jesus has power for us.

But it isn't powerful like it's a magic word, or a spell, or an incantation. It's not that if we just keep saying "Jesus" over a situation that will make the situation right, it's not that just saying the word Jesus gives our prayers power when we pray in Jesus's name. It isn't a powerful spell.

But the name of Jesus points to all that Jesus has done for us. To pray in Jesus's name is to pray in confidence in Jesus's reputation - He came and loved us and died for us, and if we are praying to a God with that reputation for being so good to His people we are praying in confidence that he'll provide for the needs we have, He'll answer our cries, He cares.

So when Moses says, "I don't know enough," God reminds him of His name. I am the God who made a covenant with Israel, I work on behalf of Israel, and I am not dependent on you being smart enough.

Moses says, "Who am I," and God says, "Doesn't matter - I am."

The God tells Moses his **PLAN**:

16 Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, 17 and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.'" 18 And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to

him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.' 19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand.³ 20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. 21 And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, 22 but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

God tells in broad strokes everything that's going to happen. God has a plan for this whole thing. Now there are lots of specifics not revealed, lots of trials God doesn't tell him about, lots of bends in the road he doesn't tell him about. But He says, in general, "Here's where this thing is going."

And usually we don't have, in our lives, a vision from God that tells us the details about our specific future. Maybe some do sometimes, I never have. God's calling in my life has always been a need, a responsibility, or a gift to use dropped in my lap. Grace Road is a very different church than I ever would have expected when we planted it 10 years ago. There was never, for me, a dream or vision showing us what we would be.

But there are parts of the plan we know. We know:

Habakkuk 2:14 "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

God is going to fill the world with his glory.

We also know God's plan from Matthew 18 to make disciples from all nations, his plan to have a great multitude from all peoples praising Him in the end - Revelation 5. We know that he uses the preaching of His gospel to save people, that He will one day return, that He will make all things new. We know where this is going.

There is a plan. We usually don't know too many specifics, and the more we zoom in on our day-to-day, the more pixelated our image of things becomes. We don't know what God will do with my child's illness, or with the job, or with my career path, or in this conflict in the marriage. But He does have things planned out, and we know that this will end up on a new earth with everything made new. History isn't just running on autopilot, God is steering.

God has revealed to us enough of his plan for us to get to work and be faithful.

Exodus 4:1 Then Moses answered, “But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you.’”

Valid concern.

So I’m gonna go and tell them that I was way up high on Mt. Sinai a bush talked to me and that was God and He says I’m in charge of you now. I’m gonna tell them that? That’s my story?

People today say there has to be some other explanation. There are a number of prominent secular scholars who say this whole burning bush experience must be explained some other way, and that it all can all be explained by knowing that Moses was on a psychedelic trip.¹ They say that the bush was acacia, and it’s a bush that is rich in DMT (a hallucinogenic chemical), so Moses’s “burning bush” was just a trip.

So Moses, you go up high on the mountain and God speaks to you from a burning bush and that makes you the boss? You were high on something! People will look for some other explanation.

So God answers:

Exodus 4: 2 The LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A staff.” 3 And he said, “Throw it on the ground.” So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. 4 But the LORD said to Moses, “Put out your hand and catch it by the tail”—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— 5 “that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.” 6 Again, the LORD said to him, “Put your hand inside your cloak.” And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. 7 Then God said, “Put your hand back inside your cloak.” So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. 8 “If they will not believe you,” God said, “or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. 9 If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water

¹ <https://catbull.com/alamut/Bibliothek/7616docid6743.pdf>

from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.”

So God gives him three miracles he can do to prove that he really had this revelation from God.

In the history of the Bible, when God sends a messenger with a new message from God, new revelation, He always provides miraculous confirmation. He doesn't expect anyone to believe someone who says, "God told me something" unless it can be confirmed.

So prophets were accompanied by miracles, Jesus came doing miracles, the apostles who wrote the Bible did miracles. A major role of signs was to affirm the validity of new revelation from God.

And I believe God still acts in supernatural ways, but our job as the church is not to produce new revelation. We teach the Bible - the revelation that was already confirmed through the apostles and prophets who wrote it. So we can ask God to do miraculous things, but something hasn't gone wrong when we have long seasons without seeing that. Because we're not trying to confirm some new revelation about God. I believe that we are done receiving new, Bible-level revelation from God until Jesus returns.

But the Spirit of God is active in our lives. So it's completely legit to say things like "I feel like God is encouraging me to say something to you. I felt prompted or led by the Spirit to do this thing or give this gift. I think God might want you to know this thing." God leads and can do so with promptings and desires. But we can't say, "This is what God says" like we can with Bible.

For example, Grace Road is pursuing the planting of a second location - something we're spending time on most days, with conversations happening with people selling buildings to try to figure out the best fit. I can say, "I feel like this is a next best step, God may be leading us to do this, this seems like it would be good and it would fit with what God is doing in the world, it would be a good strategic move, it would be good to break us up into two congregations for easier pastoral care and connections, it would be good to have a campus aimed at suburban ministry and one aimed at city ministry." But if God closes every door and it doesn't come together, I wouldn't say we have disobeyed Him. It's not a "word of God" level revelation, and there are a lot of things like that in life.

But the point here was that God was bringing new revelation, He knew Moses would need a sign, and He provided. God provides all we need to fulfill a calling.

I can't raise a toddler. God provides and you do. I can't serve the church with my schedule. But you jump in and God provides and you do. What's really needed for every responsibility God puts in front of us will be provided.

God promises His **PROVISION**.

10 But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue."

So Moses says "I'm not built for this." Leaders gotta speak, and I can't speak. He may have stuttered, "slow of speech" implies a real impediment of some sort.

God, you're telling me to go say all these things. "Saying" is what I'm really bad at. I'm more cut out for a research job. I'd love to maybe research great Exoduses of the past and maybe generate strategies or something? I'm more of an idea man, a behind the scenes guy.

11 Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

God says "The one who is giving you these commands knows better than you do how you are wired, because I made you that way. And I am giving these commands with full knowledge of your unique wiring. These things don't contradict.

God reminds him of his **DESIGN**.

This is so important because what we will do is have a clear command from God, but then a perception of ourself that we allow to trump that command.

So for example, God calls us to community - to sharing life with other Christians. But I am an introvert. People aren't my thing. They exhaust me. So community isn't for me. But my perception of myself doesn't trump God's calling. The God who commands us to know one another and love one another and care for one another also made some of us introverts. And commanded introverts to know, love, and care for one another. My

perceived wiring doesn't trump God's commands, because the one who made the command is the one who made my wiring too.

Or God calls us to abstinence before marriage. I'm not made for that. That wouldn't be healthy for me. God made you, and gave the command. He knows what is best for you, and that isn't trumped by how you think you're wired.

I'm a workaholic. I can't rest, I can't sit still. I always have to be working on something. But God commands you to rest. 1 out of 7. Moses will get to that soon. The God who wired you for diligence and productivity and hard work also commanded you to rest. And your perceived wiring doesn't trump that.

I'm not made for commitments (to family, to church), I don't like to be tied down. I'm not cut out to be a parent but now I have kids, I wasn't made for this. God gave you those kids, which is God giving you a calling, and our perception of ourselves doesn't trump that.

My marriage is rough. My spouse and I are so different, it's not abusive but we don't get along well, we don't see eye to eye on things, the spark is gone. The wiring of my unique marriage is different. God says, "Who made your marriage?" The one who commanded you to lay down your life for that person.

I have a lot on my plate right now. "Who made your plate?"

So God calls us, and we often say, "I'm not an extrovert, I'm not wired for that, I'm not, I'm not, I'm not, and He says, "I am."

Exodus 4:12 Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." 14 Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses...

So now Moses says, "Here am I Lord, send someone else." And God is angry. So Moses is in a bad place. To have the anger of the creator of the universe focused on you, like sunlight light focused through a magnifying glass, is terrifying. This is gonna be bad, we think.

This is where God incinerates Moses. But that's not what happens:

and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. 15 You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. 16 He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. 17 And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs.”

His anger burns and in response he doesn't kill Moses like we might expect. There's no blast wave that comes from the burning bush and consumes Moses. God's anger is kindled and He provides Aaron.

GOD PROVIDES A SUBSTITUTE

He says “he will be your mouth...what's his will be yours.”

This is God's grace. Moses is being treated better than he deserves here (just as we always only will be.) And God provides someone to come stand in Moses' place and do what Moses cannot do, so that that doing of it could be credited to Moses.

This is a great picture of the gospel! Because who among us could say, “I've obeyed, I've fulfilled my calling! I've done all that was required of me, fulfilled every responsibility, I've left nothing undone.” We've all fallen short.

And the anger of the Lord does burn against us.

But God provides a substitute.

Someone better than Aaron, the friend that sticks closer than a brother.

And Jesus comes and lives the perfect life we were called to. But still he dies. And made it so that all of his perfect obedience, His perfect response to the Father's calling, His perfect taking up of responsibility all gets credited to the account of those who trust Him.

His mouth is our mouth. His obedience is our obedience. His righteousness is our righteousness.

And we all faced his wrath and punishment. BUT GOD SENT SOMEONE ELSE! And our sin, our reluctance, our cowardice, our hesitancy, is all nailed to Him. Our sin becomes His and His righteousness becomes ours.

So the first and right response to a message like this is not “I haven’t fulfilled my calling, so I’ll do more and try harder.” When we see all we have done that’s wrong, and all the right we have left undone, the first place we run is to the Savior. We confess to him our failures and our weakness and our fears and our needs. And because He was condemned He can say to us like He said to the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do I condemn you.” But then He says, “Go and sin no more.”

Go, and I will be with you. Providing for all you need. Fulfilling my plan through you. Giving you the power of my name and all that I am channeled for you. Keeping every promise, and guaranteeing you no future where I’m not fully with you.

Exodus 3:10-4:17

The Calling

I. God's Calling (Exodus 3:9-10)

II. Reluctance (Exodus 3:11)

III. God Equips with:

A. His presence (3:12)

B. His name (3:13-15)

C. His plan (3:16-22)

D. His provision (4:1-9)

E. His design (4:10-11)

F. His Substitute (4:12-17)

For discussion in small groups:

1) How do we discern God's calling?

2) Are there aspects of His calling that are valid for all Christians? Only for some?

- 3) To what degree does God tell us His plan?
- 4) How is it significant that God has designed our limitations?
- 5) In what ways do we sometimes believe our unique design trumps God's commands?

PPT

Exodus 3:9-10

Exodus 3:11

Exodus 3:12

Hebrews 13:5

Exodus 3:13

Exodus 3:14-15

Exodus 3:16-22

Habakkuk 2:14

Exodus 4:1

Exodus 4 :2-9

Exodus 4:10

Exodus 4:11

Exodus 4:12-14

Exodus 4:14-17

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