



The Lord is My Strength

God's Training Program

Exodus 3

- Exodus 2:25 KJV

25) And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto *them*.

- Exodus 3:1 KJV

1) Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb.

- Who here remembers 1968?

- Remember what you were thinking about then?

- Remember what kind of person you were?

- We know some details about the story of Moses that help us really put ourselves into the story

1) We know that it has been 40 years since Moses first attempted to deliver his people from the bondage of the Egyptians

2) We know that Moses is now an 80 year old man

- Those two facts are very helpful in us understanding how Moses has changed, and how he is going to react when God finally calls him

- First of all, where is he?

- After 40 years of living out in the desert, where does God chose to reveal his magnificence and power to Moses?

- *“the backside of the desert”*

- What an odd place for God to display His glory and His magnificence

- “*The backside of the desert*” is a euphemism in Hebrew for a place of quietness and simplicity, and it is also a literal reference to the place where Moses was
- The chapter just before this closes with Moses fleeing for his life and in a very sad situation
- Yet we know that that situation was part of the Plan of God, because God was going to take Moses and mold him into a usable servant
- We know that from a human standpoint, Moses was already highly qualified
- He was learned in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians and mighty in word and deed
- Remember that Moses went out with that idea in mind, and God had to show him that in order to be effective for God, a man must come to the place where he realizes that whatever he has is not really his
- That place was the backside of the desert
- And it took 40 years for God to teach Moses what he needed to know
- 40 years!
- Since 1968!
- God’s training program is quite different than the one we would plan isn’t it?
- If we were looking for a man to deliver Israel from the hand of Egyptians, and we found a man who was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and mighty in word and deed, a man who had turned down the throne of Egypt a couple of times and who had led the Egyptian army in victorious campaigns, we would immediately put him in the position of leader and let him deliver the people that same day
- As we look for God’s Training Program in our own lives, then, it’s reasonable to think that it’s probably not going to appear in the manner that we expect it to
- We need to recognize that God does use education, and God does use talent and ability and position in life to which we may have been born, but never settle for the fact that those things alone make us what God wants us to be
- God's training ground often includes so much more than that
- Another interesting thing to notice about this training that Moses received during these forty years is that nowhere in the Scripture are recorded the details of what took place during that forty years
- We just have chapter 2 closing with Moses running for his life, going to a place and sitting down on a well and meeting a woman who became his wife

- Then the scene shifts and in chapter 3 we pick it up again
- It's only because of Stephen's Defense in Acts 7 that we know that it is forty years later
- For forty years, God was training him in the backside of the desert, but no details are given
- Notice another thing about the location of this display of God's glory...
- Not only was he on the backside of the desert, but we read in verse 1 that he was keeping the flock of his father-in-law
- I think that is designed to indicate to us the humility that was involved in this training program
- This man is 80 years old, and he's been living out in the desert for 40 years
- He is a very capable, intelligent, well-schooled man who is mighty in word and deed
- And he doesn't even own his own sheep!
- He is just keeping his father-in-law's sheep
- We need to recognize that God's training program may include a humbling time, and God's training program may be a humbling experience
- Our tendency is to look at this with a human viewpoint, and we tend to look at someone's status in life and think, "My, he must be a great man of God. Look at the position he has"
- God's training program may be a quiet, behind-the-scenes, humbling kind of experience
- Exodus 3:2-3 KJV
 - 2) And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.
 - 3) And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.
- This is the first written record of God's appearing to Moses
- It is a solely unique form of appearance
- No where else in Scripture do we have God appearing in any manner similar to this
- The effect seems to be underplayed in the passage

- It seemed to have quite an impact on Moses, and changes his life dramatically
- “I will turn aside, and see this great sight” kind of undersells what he must have felt
- That is developed more specifically in the next verses
- There are two things that are revealed in this display of God’s holiness
- Exodus 3:4 KJV

4) And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I.

- I want you to notice clearly the time of this revelation of God's holiness to Moses
- You notice how that is worded in verse 4: “...when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see...”
- The burning bush was there
- It was burning, and yet not consumed
- I think what was taking place there, on the basis of what I have read of men who are familiar with that part of the world, was something like we would experience in our part of the country of a tumbleweed that was ignited by a lightning strike
- It was probably something that was fairly common, something that was not unheard of that Moses had undoubtedly seen before, and yet this particular burning bush had something special about it
- It burned and was not consumed
- Probably, as Moses walked up to it from a distance, he realized, having seen this thing before, there had been plenty of time for it to have been burned up completely, and yet it kept on burning
- As he got closer to it, he saw that the material of the bush was no smaller and the fire kept burning
- He knew that there was something special about this
- Even though it occurred in the mundane affairs of life, in that humble experience through which he was going, this was something special
- Notice how God responded to that: “...when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see...”

- I believe that there are many people whom God is not able to use because they do not turn aside to see when God wants to reveal Himself to them
- They are going along, their eyes are so much on their mundane experience---perhaps it is a feeling of bitterness; perhaps it is a feeling of boredom, or whatever it is--- that they are not looking for God, and they do not see Him when He appears miraculously to them
- God uses men who are looking for Him
- When God saw that Moses turned aside to see, and THEN God spoke to Him
- I wonder, are we so caught up in the frustration of our existence that we miss the appearance of God in our lives?
- Are we so caught up in the mundane and the ordinary, that we don't even turn aside to see as the Lord speaks to us?
- God wants men and women who will walk through life with an open eye and with an expectant ear, even in the mundane and ordinary affairs of life
- When God saw that Moses turned aside, He spoke to him
- Then, in verse 5, notice not only the time of the revelation, but notice the truth in the revelation:
- Exodus 3:5 KJV
 - 5) And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground.
- Moses was going to be the friend of God
- Moses was going to be the man with whom God talked face-to-face
- As we progress through our study of the life of Moses, we are going to see that in a unique sense, Moses communicated with God and Moses knew God in a way that other men never knew Him
- Other men knew God intimately and personally, and God has provided for us to know Him intimately and personally, but Moses was a man who REALLY knew God
- Perhaps because of God's plan for Moses and perhaps because God knew that Moses was going to know Him so well because God knew that Moses was going to respond to the opportunities that God gave him, God wants to make it clear to Moses right from the beginning that even though he is going to know God intimately, God is still a holy God

- I am troubled from time-to-time by the tendency that I have to bring God down to my level
- It is a wonderful truth that we can know God personally
- He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother
- He is the One who has told us to cast all of our cares upon Him for He cares for us
- Those are wonderful and thrilling truths, but at the same time, God wants us to remember, as He wanted Moses to remember: ``Take your shoes off. This is holy ground. Moses, you are in the presence of Almighty God. Don't take it lightly."
- We are in the presence of Almighty God
- We should never take that lightly
- Moses saw that point clearly...
- Exodus 3:6 KJV
 - 6) Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.
- Moses knew clearly that this was God, and he responded properly
- He hid his face
- He recognized the holiness of God
- Notice in the beginning of verse 6 the tradition that God stresses. He said, ``I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob..."
- Throughout the Old Testament, we find references like that, and because we find them often, we tend to overlook them, but God includes those references often to remind us of His tradition of faithfulness
- God wants to continually remind us of the promises that He gave to the forefathers, and the importance they should hold in our lives
- Tradition can be a bad thing, and tradition of men is something that Scripture tells us to avoid, but isn't it wonderful to look back on the tradition of God's faithfulness?
- God was going to put Moses through some difficult days
- Moses was about to face terrible rejection and terrible frustration and terrible difficulty; and again, before he began, God wanted Moses to remember, ``I am the God of

your fathers. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

- The holiness of God is wrapped up in the tradition of God's faithfulness, and God wants us to remember that too
- Not only was this a revelation of God's holiness, but it was also a revelation of God's helpfulness
- This is recorded for us in verses 7-8
- Exodus 3:7 KJV
 - 7) 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;
 - 8) 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.
- I'm sure that the Israelites in Egypt were really begin to wonder if God actually did hear their cries or see their affliction
- I'm sure that some had even started to wonder whether or not there even was a God
- But, God knew their sorrows
- God hears our cries
- Not only did he know their needs, but he had a plan to meet those needs
- It was going to be years before God's plan was fulfilled
- God wasn't saying, "I am going to do this by tomorrow afternoon"
- It was going to be years before it was all fulfilled because God had to work with the rebelliousness of men
- God had to allow them to play out their plans before He could put His plan into effect
- God's plan was long-ranged, but God said, "I know their needs and I will do something about it. I am come down to deliver them."
- God has manifested Himself to us just as clearly in His Word, and the promises in His Word are just as confident for you and me

• Exodus 3:9-10 KJV

- 9) Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.
- 10) Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

• Notice how the emphasis is on God's power, not the strength of Moses?

- "I am come down to deliver them"
- "I will bring them up out of that land"

• And especially in Verse 10:

- "I will send thee unto Pharaoh"

• God wants Moses to know, "Look, Moses, you tried and you failed, now I am going to deliver the people out of bondage."

• Notice how the power of God works through people

• God could have chosen many ways to deliver the Israelites out of their Egyptian bondage

• He could have sent a band of angels to just destroy the Egyptian civilization, or He could have appeared personally and led them out of their bondage, but instead He delegated a man: "I will send *thee* unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people," and for whatever reason, this is always God's method

• God, in His wisdom, to His own praise and glory, has chosen to use men to express His power

• Exodus 3:11 KJV

- 11) And Moses said unto God, Who *am* I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

• Notice how God has been saying, "I am going to do this," and I am going to do that, and I am going to use you, but I am going to do it," and in the face of all that, Moses says, "Who am I that you should use me?"

• This actually shows us how well Moses has learned his lessons there in the desert

• Now Moses is a mature man of God

• Now Moses is aware that if it is ever going to be done, God is going to have to do it

- God can really use the man who recognizes that fact
- God uses men who recognize that they are only usable as God uses them
- God uses men who are not dependent on their own ability and background and training
- Notice the promise in verse 12:
- Exodus 3:12 KJV
 - 12) And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this *shall be* a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain
- God gives Moses some reassurance of the fact that this would be completed, and it would be accomplished through Moses
- You WILL do this, and when you do you will return to this very mountain and serve Me
- Exodus 3:13-14 KJV
 - 13) And Moses said unto God, 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?
 - 14) 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.
- What an odd question?
- Isn't their only one God?
- Wouldn't the Israelites know who the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is?
- Isn't that typical?
- God Himself has been speaking to Moses and reassuring him, and Moses asks, ``What are people going to say, God?"
- It is just as foolish for us, isn't it?
- God's promises are to us
- God speaks to us
- God promises to be with us
- And we are worried about what people will say

- In verses 15-22, we see that God's mission is described
- God doesn't pull any punches with Moses
- He tells him how hard it is going to be
- He said, "Moses, Pharaoh is not going to let them go"
- But His reassurance is wonderful down in verse 20:
- Exodus 3:20-22 KJV

- 20) And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.
- 21) 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:
- 22) But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

- "Moses, there are some rough days ahead, but I am going to bring you through. I am going to bring the victory."
- "It's all God's doing, Moses, but you are the man I want to use."