

The Reluctant God - Part 1

by G.W. North

The sermon explores Moses' life, his faith journey, and the significance of God's calling amidst his reluctance.

Duration: 1:28:30

Scripture: Exodus 3:1-8, Hebrews 11:23

Topics: "Moses"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and understanding the timing and purposes of God. He refers to the story of Moses and the Israelites in Egypt, highlighting how God's plan unfolded over a period of 430 years. Despite the Israelites' bondage and suffering, God heard their cries and remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The speaker also emphasizes the need for believers to have a clear understanding of God's work in their lives and to not be influenced by the world around them.

Transcript

...whom the Lord introduced the Old Covenant. My concern does not lessen as the time goes by, moving round. I still find that people persistently think in Old Covenant terms.

Wherever I go, I have to seek to correct it, because I know that if you think in those terms, you'll certainly live what you think. That's completely unavoidable. We know, of course, that Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, as I have said.

And, second to Abraham, I think I might have mentioned this last year, he is the greatest in the Old Testament, and that Abraham was the father of the faithful. And Moses was the man raised up of God, through whom he would establish the covenant that he had made with Abraham, with Israel, in the form of a law. However, we can leave that to future occasions.

Tonight, I want particularly to look at this man from another angle, than the angle of giving the law. And, as usual, when I started to think and meditate in this man's life afresh, I turned to the New Testament. I always do.

The New Testament is the divinely inspired commentary on the Old Testament. And in Hebrews chapter 11, where you might expect me to start, if you can recall what happened 12 months ago, I did exactly the same then, reading about Abraham, this time about Moses, we read in verse 23 of Hebrews 11, By faith

Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he came to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater things than the treasures in Egypt.

For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land. I don't know whether you have noticed the great distance traveled between verses 28 and 29, because 29 is possible because of 28. Through faith he kept the Passover.

By faith they passed through. What that nation owed to one man's faith. Tremendous, isn't it? Now may the Lord make this very, very profitable to us tonight, because we are going to look at this man in a succession of evenings, I trust, in that we shall probably be continuing tomorrow night as well as tonight.

We have some valuable information in that 11th chapter, but we're going back now to Exodus. For you will know that so far it has been a commentary on the story first given in Exodus. Of course you will know that Moses is not only famous because he is the mediator of the Old Covenant, and for the things that we have been reading about in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, he is famous because he wrote the first five books of the Bible as well.

I don't suppose anybody has written so many words as Moses that are included in the Bible, nor one. So if you take the amount of inspired writing that he did, by this he stands head and shoulders above any other contributor to the sacred covenant. And that really is something.

Not that verbosity always points to greatness. In fact, I suppose many of you think it would be far better if I spoke less. But nevertheless, this man was a great man of God.

We'll have a look at that side of it perhaps as we go through. But you will know that we are introduced to this man first as a baby. We were told, of course, in Hebrews 11, that when Moses was born, his parents hid him for three months.

He was born at a time, you may recall, in verse 15 of chapter 1 of Exodus, that the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of one was Shifra and the name of the other, Pur. And he said, when ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women and see them upon the stools, if it be a son, then you shall kill him. If it be a daughter, then ye shall live.

Then she shall live. But the midwives feared God. And did not, as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

And the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women, for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. Therefore God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and waxed very mighty.

And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses. And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born you shall cast into the river. And every daughter you shall save alive.

I think you will agree with me that that was a pretty dreadful time in which to be born. It was during this period that Aaron, his elder brother, was born. Now just whether Aaron was born before Pharaoh gave this charge, for he was three years older than Moses, or whether his parents, who were also Abraham, Moses' parents, you will remember, they were brave about Aaron as well as about Moses, I can't say, but we're not told.

But this I do want to say, it's wonderful if you've got brave parents. It's wonderful if you've got parents of faith, isn't it? It's a glorious heritage into which to come, isn't it? What a marvelous thing it is to have a father and a mother who are prepared to defy the king and the government and all the laws of the land because of faith in God. I'm not trying to breed a spirit of rebellion in anybody.

One of the worst things that Christianity can do is spread the view that all Christianity does is make you a very nice citizen to live with. That's the kind of stuff that's put over. I find, and I've been saying it quite a bit lately, that wherever Jesus Christ went, he caused trouble.

You do realize that, don't you? He would cause as much trouble in the British Isles as he did in Palestine, as it was called then, if he was to come preaching his same glorious truth now as he did then. God save us from the soporific of sitting back and thinking, oh, that's made me nice, I pay my bills, I don't quarrel with my neighbor, I always vote when I should, which I never do, by the way, and I always do this and do that and do the other. Aren't I a nice Christian person? On the other hand, if you're catty or wicked and spiteful and always falling out with your neighbor or the people who live with you, there's still something wrong with you.

But don't let's get the idea that all we're made is nice sort of strokey pussycats that never do anything wrong or anything like that. Jesus Christ was always upsetting people, always, whether it be the Herod or whether it be the Pharisee or the high priest or the rulers of synagogues or people like that. It was always the common people that heard Jesus gladly, so the Scriptures say.

Again, I'm not inciting to rebellion, but let's get some true ideas into our head and not worry about the public image and the testimony. Let's start living for Jesus. He'll take care of us.

And so, when Moses was born, he was hidden three months. Let's read the story. There went a man of the house of Levi and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

She was his aunt, actually. If you want to know where I got that, it's just through reading the Bible. I won't tell you where.

Just keep reading. He married his aunt. And the woman conceived and bear a son.

And when she saw him, that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, we're told he was three months old in the Hebrew letter. That's why you need the divine commentary on the Old Testament.

Because we're not told here how old he was. Same spirit, you see. He was there when Moses was born and he was there when the writer to the Hebrews needed to know Moses' age at a certain time.

Quite simple. And when she saw that this was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes and doped it with slime and with pitch and put the child therein.

And she laid it in the flags by the river Brink. And his sister stood afar off to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river.

And her maidens walked along by the river's side. And when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child and behold the babe wept.

And she had compassion on him and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away and nurse it for me. And I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child and nursed it.

And the child grew. And she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter. And he became her son.

And she called his name Moses. And she said, Because I drew him out of the water. And there we have the opening of the story that we all learned, I'm sure, when we went to Sunday school.

And I could have repeated it in our own language, I'm sure, at any time. What a lovely story. I can remember it from my very early days.

His mother and his father were not afraid of the king's commandment. I do bless God for that. It's a wonderful atmosphere in which a future man of God should be brought up.

A fearless mother. Praise the name of the Lord. Isn't that great? Someone who really believes God.

You know, faith always breeds fearlessness. Always. Why are you fearful? Where is your faith? That's what the Lord said when he was on earth.

What are you afraid of? Faith and fear just can't live together. One has to go. One will break the other down.

Always. And this man then, he had this great and glorious privilege. Wonderful how God was overruling and brought young Moses into the household of Pharaoh via his daughter.

It came to pass in those days, verse 11, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens. And he spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way.

And when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strode together. And he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me as thou killest the Egyptian? And Moses feared and said, Surely this thing is known.

Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

Well, I suppose I could go on reading that. But you will recall we read in Hebrews 11 that by faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king. And here we are reading something which seems to be absolutely contradictory to that.

For he was afraid that Pharaoh would slay him. But the record in Hebrews is talking about something that happened 40 years after when Moses was 80. The second time when he left Egypt, praise God, he left in absolute fearlessness.

God had made a man of him. That's what had happened. He thought he was a man when he was 40 years old.

He was evidently a strong man. We are told that he was skilled in all the arts of the Egyptians. He was a courtier.

He was a prince of the realm. And he went out and he was 40 at this time. You will know that from the little adage that you must have heard, that Moses, 40 years learning to be somebody, 40 years learning to be nobody, and then 40 years learning what God can do with somebody when he's prepared to be a nobody.

You've heard that one, haven't you? Well, that's it. He was a somebody, so he thought. He was rich.

He was educated. He was a courtier. He was in direct line of succession to the throne, no doubt.

Just where he stood in that line of succession, I don't know. But also he was strong. He knew all the arts of Féلودisé, no doubt.

And he could do this and do that. And he just went up and he killed this Egyptian when he saw him fighting one of the Hebrews. Just killed him.

Buried him in the sand. And then, as a result of that, he had to flee out of the land. And that began a 40 year spell when he learned to be a complete nobody.

This is how it all started. Of course, he may have thought he was a somebody a little bit when he married a wife. We'll learn about it, shall we? The priest of Midian had seven daughters, verse 16.

They came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away. I suppose they were anything but gentlemen.

But Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock. You see, he wasn't afraid to take on all the shepherds on his own. You've got to understand this character that you're dealing with.

He wasn't afraid to take on all those shepherds, however many there were. There must have been at least two. It's in the plural.

But he took them on. And when they came to Reuel, their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon today? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and also drew water enough for us and watered the flock. And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.

And Moses was content to dwell with the man. And he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter. And she bare him a son.

And he called his name Gershom. For he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land. And it came to pass in process of time forty years.

Hmm. Do you think he was a patient man? I want to tell you this. No man can be great until he's patient.

Did you know that? Patient. In process of time, the king of Egypt died. And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage.

And they cried. And their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage. And God heard their groaning.

And God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel and God had respect unto them. Now Moses was keeping 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. 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. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. 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. And he said, Draw not nigh hither. Put off thy shoe from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. 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. Fascinating, really, isn't it? I found it so today. Wonderful, wonderful truth.

If I was to say to you, why did God call Moses, you may think of quite a few verses that may answer the question. But the real reason, I think, why God called Moses is revealed to us here. You will remember that at that bush, Moses went in for all sorts of arguments with God.

Now look, here's the thing. When God calls you, when God speaks to you, there comes a point in your experience and in your thinking where you have to divide between what is genuine in your response and what is not genuine in your response. Now that is a big thing that you find in this man, Moses.

And if I was going to give a title to this particular talk, anyway, tonight, I think I would call it Moses, a Reluctant God. Moses, a Reluctant God, you may think. That may sound surprising to you, but that is precisely why God called him, and he said so.

This is why, of course, when we think of a man like Moses, sometimes we say, oh well, of course, he was the Old Testament counterpart of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great mediator. And therefore, he did attain to some outstanding heights because he was specially chosen of God. That's absolutely true, of course.

But each one of us has to remember this, that in some sense, you, as humble as you are, if you are a true child of God, are called to represent God on the earth to someone, to some people. I hope you have

realized this. What a tremendous thing it is for the Lord to speak to us and call us this way.

Turn with me to chapter 7. The Lord says unto Moses here, See, I have made thee a God, the Pharaoh. I have made thee a God, the Pharaoh. Now go back with me to chapter 4. And we're at a time in this great, shall I say, calling and commanding the interview, if you like, at the bush, when we're told about God in verse 14, that he got angry with Moses.

He hadn't been angry until this moment of time. But at this point, he's got very angry with Moses. Let's read it.

The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses. And he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee.

And when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth. And I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people. And he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth. And thou shalt be to him instead of God.

But Moses was proving to be very reluctant to become a god. And you might well think, well, I would think so too. Doesn't that bespeak his modesty? No, it doesn't.

It bespeaks a false humility. Let everybody take this deeply into their heart. There is humility.

There is modesty. There is that which is false humility and mock modesty. When God really calls you, remember that he doesn't just call you and I to make us safe.

He calls us so that we may do something for him on this earth. If only this would sink into the hearts of every man and woman. You, if you know the call of God in your life, you are, if I may say this, earmarked for something.

You know what we mean by this earmark, don't you? It's taken from the way that slaves were made in these days. That they were led to the doorpost and they were marked in their ears. Their ears were pierced with an awl to the doorpost.

And they were marked as slaves for life. Well, that's the whole thing. Now, when you've been called God, you are, to use the modern term, earmarked for God.

And the Lord had wonderful things in his heart for this man. To be a God? Now you will know that this required much preparation. It really did.

Eighty years God had been preparing this man. Eighty years. Oh, I suppose we all think, well, I don't know.

If I'm only going to be prepared till I'm eighty, what's going to happen? Well, this, as you know, was in days when men lived well over a hundred years of age. You will know that. Moses himself lived to be a hundred and twenty.

So let's put it this way. Two thirds of his life, you decided when you were going to die. Let's say you die at seventy-five.

Fifty years of your life training you for something. Hmm, wow. That doesn't mean to say that you're not called of God before that.

It doesn't mean to say that people with eyes to see cannot already see that God's marked you out for something. I know whom God has marked out. When I move around, I see people, not only in this fellowship.

Please don't come to me and ask me if you're one of them, because I won't tell you. But in other places too, I know those upon whom God has put his hand, that if they will go through with God, God has some real purpose for them in this world. That's it.

Alas, alas. I have seen that the thing that goes with the purpose of God isn't balanced in the life of the person concerned. For we read here of God's hand and how he preserved this man from babyhood, you will know, through the pluck of his mother and through all the ways in which he was taken to the Egyptian court and trained to be a great courtier, at least in Egypt, if never coming to the kingly throne.

Remember, Moses heard way back in the desert that the king of Egypt was dead. I don't know whether he said, I wonder if I would have been the next king if I'd stayed there. Thank God that we read that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the children of God.

He had the reward. He paid great attention to the recompense of the reward. The raw reward of what? Investment of his money? No, investment of his life, by faith.

For that is the thing that answers to God. God has a purpose. God chooses.

God calls. And then Moses is up to you. And the writer to the Hebrews says, Yes, by faith, Moses.

That's right. What a tremendous thing when this really happens to a man. God must find corresponding faith in the heart of every one of us.

Unless, whatever the call, no man will fulfill it. No man will achieve the end. That's why at the end of his life we find old Paul saying, I'm forgetting.

I've put the things behind. That's Paul. Because he knew how easily he could have missed the high calling of God.

Because people don't come to the glorious exercise of faith. Now we know, because we've already seen, that Moses made his mistakes. He went out, as we've already said, and he just went, used his ordinary strength.

He knew, perhaps used his knowledge of martial arts or whatever it was. He would have been well trained, and just slew the Egyptians. Moving in his own strength.

There was a sense, if we may use the word, Moses was a murderer when he started. So he could have lost his life for that. And justly so.

He would have been in the king's dungeon for a while, and then he would have been executed. There's no doubt about that. And you'll know afterwards he wrote a law which said, Thou shalt not kill.

God had changed that man. Hadn't he? What God can do for a man when he really gets hold of him. He takes out the fleshy endeavors.

He takes away the self-striving. He takes away the pride. He takes away everything.

For this man, Moses, he was brought up in the lap of pride. This was the very thing, you will remember, that characterized the next pharaoh that went to the throne. The pharaoh who died in the Red Sea.

That's the son of the pharaoh that died. Moses heard about his death when he was in the backside of the desert. Could have been a Barabbas, you know, taking Moses' place.

I don't know. The Scripture doesn't make it clear one way or another. Moses could have put his thumb in his mouth or stuck away in some dungeon cave and said, I ought to have been on the throne of Egypt.

That was my place. And so on and so on and so on, you see. But he didn't want it.

Not then. God. God had gotten hold of him.

I don't know whether you and I are ever really prepared to let God get right hold of us. Moses will already have known that it was through his mother's and father's faith that he was alive even. He would have got hold of that all right.

He would have been told that before he was finally delivered to the princess as her son. He knew that. But, beloved, isn't this the tragedy with so many? We don't fulfill the very laws of our birth.

We don't go through. But Moses did, you see. You do know, don't you, that when you were born again, you were born again through somebody's faith.

Somebody believed for you. Somebody prayed for you. Somebody was prepared to stand against you being snatched up by some crocodile out of the Nile God's mouth.

You know that, don't you? If you don't, you'd better learn it. You've disappointed someone if you haven't gone through. You've broken someone's heart if you haven't gone through.

You know that, I hope. For that's why you were born of God, to say nothing of how God feels about it. I know the way there in the backside of the desert for 40 years, those dragging years, as they went by.

God dealt with that man, didn't he? God absolutely dealt with him. And I hope also you've learned this. I know that we're told we're saved to serve, and that's true.

And I know that there are plenty of people who urge us and urge us and urge us on to do this and do that. God forbid that they should stop their urgings, lest we sink back into a sort of a slough of nothing. But God called this man, Moses, away and stuck him right back there in the backside of the desert, altogether out of it.

And there he just had to sit among the sheep and learn. That's what he had to do. Patiently, patiently, patiently wait, patiently wait.

I wonder if his parents had said to him, you know why you're at the court, Moses, don't you? I guess you're there for God. God saved you to serve him there. You know, you're really a man come back from the dead, Moses.

You were only a boy, but you were supposed to be dead. Your life belongs to God, Moses. You know that.

Oh, the ingratitude. How many tears are shed in heaven over that awful ingratitude that fills the hearts of so many people on earth that want to live for themselves instead of for God. But let us learn from both the Lord Jesus and Moses that it isn't in the sort of headlong rush of fleshly energies, it isn't in the application of your skills, it isn't that in which you've been trained.

Whoever would have thought that Moses the courtier would have become a shepherd. Whoever would have thought, Moses, you're wasting your talents. What are you doing here? And he followed the sheep.

We've all been blown to pieces by men and women who said, well, man, with your talents and abilities, you ought to be doing this, doing that. You see, puffing up the ego, inflating people above what God wants them to be. Blessed is the man that can walk in absolute humility if he knows he's called of God and pay no attention to the things that puff up the flesh, but will walk steadily on so that God can take him from the lowest if he wants to put him in the highest without us all coming out and saying, oh, well, we're all brought from the lowest to the highest.

Lowest, pittest, no. That's blunting the point of the sword. The whole thing is that Moses was probably brought from lowest to, as I've already said, the gaping jaws of some crocodile in the Nile.

That's why his sister was watching over him to see that he wasn't snatched. We can talk about that, but here is the thing. How many of us have been raised to the heights to which Moses was raised? How many of us have then been prepared to go and be a nobody and a nothing? Just like Jesus, of course.

Moses had to go the way. Seeing that he was going to be a mediator, he had to be like the mediator, Jesus. Thirty years he spent scraping up shavings off the floor and things like that.

Thirty years. But look, God has made of him the chief shepherd. Amen.

I wonder how many of us have got shepherd-like qualities or intentions, who really care. Perhaps in his heart, old Moses groaned and thought, why was I trained like this? Why would all this time and money and power spent on my education and background, why have I got all this? And here I am. I can remember a young man who always comes back to my mind in my very young days.

Well, I'm perhaps not so very young. What would I have been in my twenties, I guess? You mustn't call that very young now, must you? But this was a long while ago to me, except that life has gone so quickly, it's only seen as yesterday. And I can remember him coming to the place where I was employed at that time, before I was made a God, into starting my own business, before the war.

I mean, the second war, you know, that most of you can remember. Most of you can't remember, I mean. And the thing, I can remember him coming and he was doing a certain thing and with language that I wouldn't repeat to you, he said, here am I, I've got my BSC and this and it's going on, and I'm pushing, doing this, doing this, and in his heart he was rebelling against his circumstances.

I think within three months he was dead. He died a rebel against his circumstances, against all sorts of things. He didn't want to listen to the gospel.

What a glorious thing it is, beloved, to know the hand of God on your life. Do you know it, son? Do you know it, daughter? If not, you can carry on and do what you want, I guess. But a man who believes he's

called of God and the hand of God is on him, he cannot do any other than go on with the moulding hand of God in the circumstances of his life, changing him.

He can't do any other. He's got to be changed. This is the thing we learn from Moses.

He's got to be. Seldom are we changed in circumstances of our own choosing because we choose the lush and the nice. It's not hard enough to change us.

If you want to sharpen steel, for instance, my wife was saying to me the other day, I don't know when she did it, she said, I've lost our chopper. She wouldn't know what that is, I'm sure. She wasn't speaking in Acts.

We specially ordered it from a dear man in Lanark. It was a southern tool. They said, we don't have these in Scotland.

I thought, well, have we come to educate them? But anyway, they got us this particular thing and it was never any good after I got it. Not because it was Scots, because he had sent to England for it. But it never fulfilled its purposes.

I'm a man of wood, as you know. I don't mean I'm made of wood. I'm only made of hay and stubble, I'm sure.

But the whole thing is this, that in our wood business, they had to be almost razor sharp and we could never get this. And you know that in order for an axe head or something like that to be sharp, it's got to go on a hard, rough wheel. No good putting it in butter.

But that's what you're all doing. If you're not careful, you're choosing the butter. And God can't make of you what He wants to make.

He can't. You say, I'm cold. You say, I'm this.

You say, I'm that. But you're not called that. You're called what God sees.

That's the calling. Paul couldn't even put a name to it. I must come into the New Testament.

On earth, they called him an apostle. But on this he said, it's just a high calling of God. I don't know what it is.

I'm reaching out for that. Still going. You see, it's that trouble.

People are prepared to settle down in this and that and the other. And God can do no other in the end but allow them to. For He needs the cooperation of faith.

Now when God starts to work on a life, He works in this context. Are you ready now to look into chapter 2 with me? Verse 23. In process of time.

Process of time. What are the processes of time, Lord? Preparation of the scene. He had to eliminate this Pharaoh.

Pharaoh died. And then he saw what the reaction was in Moses' heart. Did he think he ought to be sitting upon the throne of Egypt? Was there regret there? Dissatisfaction with his life? I wonder.

I don't know. As I sometimes say, I'll ask them when I get there and find out. Here then is the truth.

And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage and they cried and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage and God heard their groaning and God remembered His covenant. Alright. Now here's the big thing.

When God calls you, and listen, He wasn't ready yet to call him, not by a few hours. Not by a few hours, shall we say. Moses was now 18.

You see, about. Okay, we won't be precise a few days. Moses was now 18.

But God had preserved him 80 years before for this moment. Two thirds of his life had passed away. Now here is the thing.

This is why some people will never be any good to God. God will always be good to them. Now don't misunderstand me.

That's His nature. We can talk about grace and sing about grace and God grant we do it more and more. But you see, there you are Moses.

You're sitting out there. You're sitting out there. 80 years ago, I moved on your behalf.

I moved for this. And it was all done in the perfect timing of God. Did you know that? Alright, this is what we'll see.

Keep your finger in there. We have to see it in Exodus chapter 12. Verse 40.

Now the sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt was 430 years. And it came to pass at the end of 430 years. Listen, even the self saying day.

Utter precision. It came to pass. All the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.

That's what God was moving for. He'd got something in His heart that He had said 400 years beforehand. He'd done something 80 years beforehand.

So far as Moses couldn't. Oh, beloved. These purposes of God.

Oh, the patience of God. Lord, make me a patient man. Not a lazy man.

Not a lazy man. Moses wasn't lazy. He was working.

He was learning the art of shepherding. He'd got to be a great shepherd. He'd got to be more than that.

He'd got to be a great general. He'd got to be more than that. I could go on and go on.

I'll leave you to do some thinking along that realm. We may touch upon these points as we go through. God remembered that He'd made with Abraham.

And God was preparing this man to be a man of the covenant. Hallelujah. What a marvellous thing it is.

He wasn't just preparing him to be a nice, gentle shepherd. Though it was true. It's written of him in the book.

But Moses was the meekest man in all the earth. You wouldn't have thought so, would you? He came out and in one blow killed an Egyptian. One blow might have been two.

What had God done with him in 40 years? I'll tell you. God had made him a man of a covenant. A man of the oath.

God had made him from a great fighter in his own strength to a meek man who would one day fight in the strength of God by faith. I want to tell you, if you're a man of quick temper, if you're a man of impatience, you'll never be any good to God. Neither will you be a man, nor you would be a man of God if you sink into depressions which bring you to utter laziness because you can't work.

Your spirit's not going. It's down under it. The depressed spirit is always a lazy spirit.

It can't think. It can't do this. It can't do the other.

You know I'm talking truth. There is that which God does in a man which makes him all that God requires of him. And he can cooperate with the Lord.

Lord, what God did with that man in those 40 years in the backside of the desert comes out in all the story that's unfolded afterwards. Was he absolutely flawlessly perfect? No, he wasn't. Did he never lose his temper again? Yes, he did.

Though with sorrow we'll look in these days that lie ahead. Did he never do anything wrong again? Yes, he did do some things wrong again. But his name is splashed throughout the whole of the glorious record of God.

Yes, that's marvelous. I told you last time that he's only second to Abraham in mention in the New Testament, more so in repeated instances. He's in front of Abraham.

His name is mentioned more than Abraham in the New Testament as repeated incidents. That's why he exceeds Abraham. What a glorious thing.

And we're talking about him tonight because God has his history written into this book imperishably. You know the Mount of Transfiguration. He was there with Jesus.

God had a great exodus. That's the name of the book. Yes, that's right.

It's written about the exodus, the outgoing of the children of Israel from under such a lead like that. Are you one like that? Are you? Are you? Hear them. We can't all be leaders.

It's all right. We haven't got to serve each of them. We need hundreds more, hundreds of people who know they've been saved by somebody else's faith through somebody else's faith by the grace of God.

Of course, they had to exercise faith themselves, but long before Moses could ever exercise faith, his mother did it for him and his father. Long before you exercise faith, somebody, you got saved because of somebody else's faith. You keep that very clear in your heart.

You, if it be more possible than ever, let that make you more humble. You're not your own. Not by any standard do you belong to yourself.

Now, praise the name of the Lord then. This is why God was dealing with this man. And of course, he realized it, for he's the man that later wrote of Abraham and all that took place when God established the covenant.

This man Moses, he understood. And I want to tell you that understanding only ever comes to the man that responds to God in humility and patience. Nobody else gets it.

Nobody. God's very jealous about his truth. There's nothing to pay.

Yet there is a price. What must Moses have thought that day when he was at the mountain that later became called the Mount of God? He called it himself, Moses later, the Mount of God. What must he have thought that day when he was going about his normal duties, nothing special about him, he didn't look a bit like an Egyptian anymore.

He looked like a Midianite. Now, 40 years hard wear on his clothes, the soft plush of Egypt's courtroom. There he was in the rough garb of a shepherd with his sheep.

He told him he's got a wife and sons. There they were in a completely heathen-ish background. He'd been plunged into heathendom right there in Egypt.

He'd gone into heathendom. Somehow it had influenced him. It always does.

The people you live with will influence you. They will, unless you see with a clear eye this great thing that God has done. You will not influence your company.

They will influence you, unless you know what you're doing. In one thing, Moses had failed. We shan't get as far as that tonight.

I thought perhaps we might have done. But then we've got, I don't know how many more evenings that we can spend together. We'll continue tomorrow night.

Here then is this. He sees the fire. He wrote it.

He sees the fire. And I may recall to you, your mind, that in Hebrews 12, that's the chapter that continues on from Hebrews 11, the last verse of that 12th chapter is Our God is a consuming fire. But when Moses saw the fire in the bush, it didn't consume the bush.

Then if God's a consuming fire, what or who is he consuming? You, Moses. You, Moses. It's you I want.

I want to make you a God. I want to consume you into my being. I want to infuse this into your mind.

I want to make you greater than a man, though man you'll always be. I want to make you greater than anything you could have learned in Egypt. Could have taught you.

I want to make you a God. Well, he was a reluctant God. He fought the idea.

He fought the idea. It was abhorrent to him. It was obnoxious, even blasphemous.

I'll ask him if I remember. But that's what God said. I want to suggest to you that nothing ever shook a man down to his foundation so much.

He had his thoughts. He had his thoughts. We shall see them.

They're not great big thoughts. Unless you're looking hard for them, you won't see them. Not like some people who always look for their thoughts, you know.

Oh, no, no. You have to look mighty hard to find this man's thoughts. You really will.

We may be able to see one or two of them for our own learning. But we may avoid them. That's why they're in the Scripture.

I've been talking to you for an hour, so I think I'm going to stop. Let's pray. By God's grace, tomorrow night we'll carry on.

Father, praise thy name, Father for truth. Thank you for the book that the devil has not succeeded in destroying. Thank you, Lord, for the blessed testimony of the Holy Spirit telling us the truth that we need to know, telling us of precious Moses, Lord, whom thou didst bury.

That is his body, but he lives. He lives with thee, O resurrection and life, and appeared with thee on Mount Transfiguration. We thank thee, Lord, that he truly became a transfigured man.

We thank thee, Lord, that thou didst wonderful things with Moses. And we feel at this moment unworthy to unloose his shoe. We bless thee for him that he was one in that great long line of men who responded unto thee without reserve, with whom thou didst not often get angry.

Now, Lord, bless us in thy good pleasure, who has called us, Lord, unto an everlasting covenant. For, Lord, thou art thine own witness that it was the blood of the everlasting covenant that Jesus shed and which we've been invited to drink. And so, Lord, we come in this, our basic needs, unto thee.

Lord, hath a third of the lives of these people gone before thee? Two-thirds, Lord, and what now? O Lord, if three-thirds should go, and we have not attained unto that to which thou hast called us, to answer the eternal purpose, Lord, from which thou wouldst never deviate. O Lord, Lord God of mercy and grace, we pray thee that thou wouldst rouse us as thou didst rouse Moses when for the first time he heard thy voice. So, Lord, we bless thee for this thy amazing goodness and say thank you.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you. Praise thy name.

Thank you, Jesus, for saving us, to save us, to save us. Thank you. Hallelujah.

Shall we continue where we, more or less where we left off last night anyway? Press on with this great person of Moses. Couldn't help thinking when we were singing that hymn. When at first the work began, small and feeble was it, and then saw ye not the crowd arise and wonder whether Mickey had flipped from Moses to Elijah, but nevertheless the hymn was well-meaning.

But it's like that with Moses. You know, in the beginning as we were seeing last night, he was just taken out of the... What a tremendous beginning that was for him. Of course, it's all in keeping.

This is the way God always works this. You find the prince. He began in the beginning when everything was water.

Then he blotted out the earth by a flood and began again from the flood. And here you have him beginning from Nile, which always floods its banks anyway. He comes to water.

And you will know how John Baptist started. He's always water. And so on and so on.

And it's a glorious and tremendous thing. You will notice, I hope, as we go through, even if I do not have time to give the link and work it all out, there's a great connection between water and blood in the story of the redemption from Israel, from Egypt. And you know that when Moses went down into Egypt finally, he was just one man.

I once heard it called a one-man invasion of Egypt. There he was. He was a man of 18.

You can imagine him, perhaps whiter than I am, certainly with a long white beard, I would think. They never had razors the same quality as we have today, I believe. And so on.

Of course there's an excuse for men growing beards then. And he finally goes down to Egypt, one man with a wife that's not very pleased with him. And that can always be a big handicap.

Really a gap. I hope all you wives, or would-be wives, are listening. How you can destroy the work of God if you're not very careful when God calls a man.

Not that the man himself didn't nearly destroy it in the beginning, seeming to frustrate what God had for him. We shall see it tonight as we turn again into this book of Exodus. And we'll come to that chapter 3, which is about as far as we got with our consequent or substantial reading.

We, you will remember, moved about a bit last night. How much ground we'll cover tonight just depends, I suppose, on what the Lord would have us consider. But you will remember that we were reading in chapter 3 and how this man came to the backside of the desert.

Verse 1, Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And if you are wondering between verse 18 of chapter 2 and verse 1 of chapter 3, that the man is called by two different names, it's because one is the Midianitish name and the other one is really Jethro, the Hebrew name. We have it translated Jethro.

Jethro was his father-in-law. And he was 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.

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the desert. And he looked. And he saw that flame of fire turn to a whole burning in the bush.

The bush burned with fire. And the bush was not contained. You will notice, I trust, that in Hebrews 1, this is in your New Testament reading, we are told that God made his angels flames of fire.

So here we have it then. One of the angels called the angel of the Lord. Now this, I suppose, could have been a great lesson to Moses.

We don't know a lot about angels. But one thing is absolutely certain. They can take on the nature of God or they can take on, apparently, the nature of the devil.

They are beings through whom God, that is, the unfallen angels, can express himself absolutely clearly. That he can identify with angels and express himself quite fully. This could have been a lesson to Moses, of course.

Although at the time he didn't know it. And you must remember that Moses is writing this many years afterwards when he is wise after the event. What actually must have gone through his mind at that time, I do not know.

This I am certain of. But Moses was one of these men that knew the spirit of identity. In that, you will remember, how firmly he identified himself with his people.

Because of that, of course, he slew the Egyptians. This was very strong in Moses. How he went out that morning and he automatically, though he had been, perhaps automatically isn't the word, immediately, spontaneously, anyway, although he had been brought up in the courts of Egypt, he did not identify himself with the splendor and the glory of those courts.

He identified himself with the outcast, downtrodden people. He identified with his people. That's a tremendous thing.

And let me say this. If anyone in this room is ever going to accomplish anything for God, along the lines, if not in the same manner, that we shall see whilst going through this story of Moses, you have to have a strong sense of identity with the children of God. You are not to identify, as we were listening to the prayer, with the world, with the things in the world.

You are not to identify with money, with its positions, with its favours, with its courts, with its jewellery, with its royalty, or with its rulers. You are not to identify with those at all. Now that thing you have to see so clearly.

To the degree to which a man or a woman identifies with the things of the world, he or she will be of no use to God. Now let's all get this thoroughly understood. As I say, Moses, although he may not have learned it at the time, he wrote it wise after the event, many years afterwards.

He saw something there at that bush. He could have learned a tremendous lot. Remember that God had not appeared to Moses before then.

He had done many wonderful things for him. But Moses himself had not had a real meeting with God. It may be that you, although God has done much for you, have never really had a straight meeting with the Lord.

You may, because of that, have some wonder in your heart why some people seem to be getting on further than you, or going on faster than you, but it's simply because that these have had a real meeting with God, and you haven't at all. It isn't that God hasn't done things for you. That's not in question.

It's whether or not you have had that personal, direct meeting with the Lord yourself. That's the big thing. When you do that, then you have a whole new life opening up to you.

Let's look at it here, Charlie. He knows it was the angel of the Lord. All he thought first was the flame.

That's the thing that attracted him, leading his thought. Then he saw the flame spread to a holocaust, a great fire in the bush. And the bush was not consumed.

And Moses said, verse 3, I will now turn aside and see this great sight. Why? The bush is not burned. I suppose you read it flat.

I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned, and take it out of intelligent thinking. Moses was talking to himself. 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. And he said, draw not nigh hither. Put off thy shoes from off thy feet. For the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Moreover, he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Moses hid his face. For he was afraid to look upon God.

Well, what a glorious truth this is, that God wants to see. Now, what we need to understand is this. The reason that Moses drew nigh was not just because he was attracted by the fire, but he wanted to know, here it is, why did God draw nigh?

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