

p 19 WEEK 3: MOSES' CALL AND PREPARATION

Exodus 3:1–7:7

The Place of the Passage

Now that the stage is set with Israel in slavery and God poised to act on his covenant promises, this section records God's call and preparation of Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt. Although God repeatedly promises to make good on his word and accompany Moses in leading Israel out of Egypt, both Moses and Israel struggle to believe in the midst of their difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, God assures his people that they will know that he is the Lord when he redeems them and judges Egypt. In the following chapters God will prove himself faithful to this promise by delivering Israel from slavery "with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment" (Ex. 6:6).

The Big Picture

God promises to deliver Israel from slavery in Egypt, but the Israelites struggle to believe in the midst of their oppression.

p 20 Reflection and Discussion

Read through the whole passage for this study, Exodus 3:1–7:7. Then review the shorter passages below and write your answers to the following questions. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 147–154; also available online at www.esvbible.org.)

1. The Burning Bush (3:1–22)

Exodus 3:1–12 records the theophany of the burning bush, in which God calls Moses to lead Israel. In the broader context of Exodus as a whole, what does the "flame of fire" (3:2) foreshadow? What is therefore special about this location that makes it "holy ground" (3:5)?

In Exodus 3:8 God says that he will "bring [Israel] up out of that land," but then two verses later he tells Moses, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (v. 10). What does this reveal about how God carries out his salvation in the world?

God tells Moses that, upon Israel's release, they will "plunder the Egyptians" by receiving silver, gold, and clothing from them (3:22). Plundering was what ancient armies did to cities they

conquered in battle. According to vv. 19–21, [p 21](#) who is going to do the fighting in this battle? What does this teach us about what it means to be “warriors” in God’s army?

2. Moses’ Signs and Return to Egypt (4:1–31)

In Exodus 4:1–9, God gives Moses several signs to validate his leadership. How does Moses respond in verse 10? How does God respond to Moses in verses 11–12? From this, what do we learn about the relationship between gifts and faith in serving God?

Before Moses has his first encounter with Pharaoh, God says that he will “harden [Pharaoh’s] heart, so that he will not let the people go” (4:21). Why do you think God would do this? How might this push back against common preconceptions concerning how God interacts with people?

[p 22](#) In Exodus 4:24–26, why is God about to kill Moses (hint: see Gen. 17:12–14)? What does this teach us about those whom God calls to lead?

3. Oppression and Disbelief (5:1–23)

In chapter 5, Moses and Aaron faithfully obey God’s word and ask Pharaoh to release the people (vv. 1–3). This results in Pharaoh further oppressing the people (vv. 4–19) and the people condemning Moses and Aaron (vv. 20–21). What does this show us about the potential results of “faithful obedience” to God in a sinful world?

In the ancient world there were “kings” or “suzerains” who ruled, and there were “servants” or “vassals” who were their subjects. A servant could be loyal to only one king. Read Exodus 5:15–16. How do the Israelite foremen view themselves at this point in the story? According to Exodus 4:23, what is the goal of the Israelites’ deliverance from Egypt? What might this imply about the goal of our deliverance in Christ?

4. Divine Reassurance (6:1–7:7)

After Moses complains to God about Israel’s worsening circumstances (5:22–23), God initially responds not by alleviating their difficulty but by recalling his covenant and reiterating his promises (6:1–8). What do you think God was [p 23](#) teaching Israel by doing this? How might this apply to us when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances?

Despite God’s reassurances after Moses complains, Israel still does not believe (6:9). Nevertheless, the text repeatedly emphasizes that God continues to command Moses and Aaron to proceed in carrying out his redemption of the people (6:10–13, 26–29; 7:1–2). What does this show us about God’s prerequisites for those whom he chooses to save?

Read through the following three sections on *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings*. Then take time to reflect on the *Personal Implications* these sections may have for your walk with the Lord.

Gospel Glimpses

CHOOSING UNLIKELY LEADERS. In these chapters, Moses is presented as an unlikely leader. He isn't seeking a leadership role (3:1–3), doesn't think he is significant enough for the task (3:11), isn't a good speaker (4:10), tries to get out of the job (4:13), doesn't follow the rules well (4:24–26), and is a complainer (5:22–23). However, God often chooses to work through such people. Jacob was wily, Joseph was a slave, David was the youngest, and the apostle Paul was a persecutor of the church, yet God chose each in their time to lead his people in accomplishing his divine purposes. By choosing such unlikely leaders to carry out his work, God highlights his own grace and power in salvation (see 1 Cor. 15:9–10).

DELIVERANCE FOR DOUBTERS. Despite God's repeated assurances of his personal presence in redeeming his people (3:12; 4:12, 15; 6:1–8), they repeatedly doubt and disbelieve (5:21–23; 6:9). Nevertheless, as the story moves forward, [p 24](#) God's covenant love for Israel moves him to deliver this doubting people anyway (see Deut. 7:7–8). Similarly, though we were once chronic spiritual doubters—indeed, we were “dead in [our] trespasses and sins,” totally faithless, as Paul says (Eph. 2:1)—“because of the great love with which he loved us ... [God] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (Eph. 2:4–5).

Whole-Bible Connections

GOD'S PRESENCE. A repeated theme throughout this section is God's presence. Moses must remove his sandals because God's presence makes the ground holy (3:5). As mentioned above, God repeatedly promises his presence in delivering Israel (3:12; 4:12, 15; 6:1–8), and as discussed below, even God's name reflects his presence with his people. By the end of Exodus, God will dwell with his people through the tabernacle, as he later will through the temple (1 Kings 8:10–11). Although God removed his presence from the temple during the Babylonian exile (Ezek. 11:23), the divine presence returned with Jesus, who “dwelt [lit. “tabernacled”] among us” (John 1:14). After Jesus ascended, he poured out the Holy Spirit, who now makes the church God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16). When Jesus returns and all things are made new, God's presence with humanity will be permanent: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (Rev. 21:3).

GOD'S NAME. In Exodus 3:13–22, God tells Moses his name, “The LORD,” which translates the Hebrew name “YHWH” and is related to the verbal phrase “I AM WHO I AM” (v. 14). As the ESV text note says, this phrase may also be translated, “I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE.” Insight into the significance of this name comes from observing that this same verbal phrase (“I will be”) occurs just two verses prior, when God assures a doubtful Moses by saying, “I will be *with you*” (3:12). Therefore, contextually, God's name reflects the fact that he will be “with” his people. Centuries

later, Isaiah prophesied the virgin birth of a child named “Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14), which means “God with us.” Centuries after that, Matthew tells us that this prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:23), whose name means, significantly, “YHWH saves” (see Matt. 1:21).

GOD’S SON. The theme of Israel as God’s “son” first appears in this section (Ex. 4:22–23). God rescues Israel from slavery the way that a father protects his son. Yet as time goes on, Israel will repeatedly turn away from God and live as a disobedient son. Through the prophet Hosea, God later recalls, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son” (Hos. 11:1). However, God goes on to say, “The more they were called, the more they went away” (Hos. 11:2). Eventually this disobedient son would be disciplined through exile, and God would send another Son as a redeemer. When Joseph took Mary and Jesus down to Egypt to avoid Herod’s genocide (Matt. 2:14–15), Matthew tells us [p 25](#) that this fulfilled Hosea 11:1. That is, Jesus was replaying Israel’s role as God’s “son” in the exodus. However, as the perfect Son of God, Jesus obeyed where Israel had disobeyed, and because of Jesus’ perfect obedience, we who believe in him now receive “adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4–5).

Theological Soundings

TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE. Two fundamental attributes of God are his transcendence and his immanence. God’s transcendence refers to his complete distinction from and sovereignty over creation. This distinguishes biblical faith from pantheism, which views all of creation as divine. God’s immanence refers to his personal presence and involvement in creation. This distinguishes biblical faith from deism, which views God as distant and uninvolved in creation. Both attributes are reflected in this section as the transcendent God sovereignly hardens Pharaoh’s heart, while the immanent God draws near to his people as he prepares to deliver them from their bondage.

SOVEREIGNTY OVER UNBELIEF. Twice in this section God says that he will harden Pharaoh’s heart so that he will not listen to Moses and release the people (Ex. 4:21; 7:3). Although mysterious to us, in his wisdom God sees fit to use and even facilitate human rebellion and unbelief for his good purposes. In this section, God states that Pharaoh’s resistance will provide him the opportunity to showcase his salvation of Israel by bringing judgment upon Egypt (7:4–5). Similarly, the book of Acts reveals that God used the rebellion and unbelief of Herod, Pontius Pilate, and others to showcase the greatest act of salvation ever—the crucifixion of Jesus—all of which God sovereignly “predestined” (Acts 4:27–28).

Personal Implications

Take time to reflect on the implications of Exodus 3:1–7:7 for your own life today. Make notes below on the personal implications for your walk with the Lord of the (1) *Gospel Glimpses*, (2) *Whole-Bible Connections*, (3) *Theological Soundings*, and (4) this passage as a whole.

1. Gospel Glimpses

[p 26](#) 2. Whole-Bible Connections

3. Theological Soundings

4. Exodus 3:1-7:7

As You Finish This Unit ...

Take a moment now to ask for the Lord's blessing and help as you continue in this study of Exodus. And take a moment also to look back through this unit of study, to reflect on some key things that the Lord may be teaching you—and perhaps to highlight and underline these things to review again in the future.