

GOD CALLS MOSES (2)

Exodus 2:1-4:31

Key Verse: 4:12

"Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

Joseph came to Egypt because his brothers sold him there. But Joseph did not think so. He thought that it was the providence of God. Later Joseph, who had become the Prime Minister of the Egyptian empire, invited his father and his seventy family members to Egypt in the time of great famine. So the immediate cause of their coming was the famine. But the distant cause was God's plan for his people. In Exodus chapter one we learned that God sent Jacob and his family to Egypt to grow as a nation. God also sent them to train them in Egypt, where a godless ruler ruled people with cruelty and with no mercy. When they came to Egypt, at first they enjoyed many privileges and great prosperity while Joseph was alive. After Joseph died, suddenly they became slaves in the land of Egypt. While living as slaves they were all broken and lost all hope. What did God do for them? God raised one person, Moses, to be a shepherd for his people Israel.

I. Moses' education (2:1-22)

First, the birth of Moses (1-10). As we know well, Moses was born when King Pharaoh of Egypt issued an edict that all Israelite boy babies were to be slaughtered or drowned in the Nile river. Moses was born in a tragic situation. At that time, his people Israel worked all day long under the scorching heat of the sun to bake bricks. Egyptian slave drivers constantly whipped the backs of the Israelites to make them speed up to mix clay and bake bricks. Moses' parents must have been brick bakers, not bread bakers. In the time of this hard labor, Moses' mother became pregnant and gave birth to a son. Moses' parents were happy to see a newborn son. At the same time, they were sorry that the baby had to be slaughtered. Anyway, as long as the baby was quiet, they hid him. But after three months he began to cry loudly. Now they had to cast him into the Nile river.

In this situation, Moses' parents could do nothing. But they did something. They begged God's mercy. Then God gave them wisdom. Moses' mother got a papyrus basket. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. What did she do next? Verse 4 says, "His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him." Obviously, Moses' mother prayed and asked her daughter to go and watch what would happen to him.

God intervened in baby Moses' life. Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe. She and her attendants were walking along the river

bank. As soon as Pharaoh's daughter saw the basket, she sent her slave girl to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. But he was one of the Hebrew babies. At the moment, Moses' sister approached Pharaoh's daughter and asked, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" Moses' sister seized the opportunity to save Moses from drowning. But it was not her wisdom; it was her mother's prayer and God's intervention. Pharaoh's daughter answered, "Yes, go." And the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So Moses' mother took him. When the child grew older, she took him back to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him, "Moses," saying, "I drew him out of the water." But it was not she who drew him out of the water; it was God.

Second, Moses' education in the palace (11-14). Obviously, Moses received a palace education. As we know well, Egyptian civilization was one of the highest civilizations in world history. Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians: mathematics, science, philosophy, law, military science and so on. Through education in the palace, he became mighty in word and deed. By God's mercy, a slave baby had been lifted to the position of an Egyptian prince.

Before Moses received education in the palace, his own mother nursed him. During the time of nursing the baby, his mother must have prayed to plant faith in God and national identity in the baby. One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Moses killed the Egyptian with one blow and hid him in the sand. The next day, he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting and wanted to stop them. But his people did not listen to him and said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us?" Moses had been quite confident that he could be the leader of his suffering people because he had received a palace education. But this was not the case.

Third, Moses' education in the wilderness (15-22). When Pharaoh heard that Moses had killed an Egyptian, he determined to kill Moses. But Moses had already run for his life and he came to Midian. An Egyptian prince suddenly became a political criminal. Moses was tired and thirsty. So he was sitting by a well. Then seven pretty girls came to the well to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. But some rough guys came and bothered the girls. Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock. This event introduced Moses to the Midianite priest Jethro (4:18). Jethro liked Moses and persuaded him to stay with him. He also gave his first daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. So Moses came to live a fugitive life in the Midianite wilderness, feeding his father-in-law Jethro's flock.

God's wisdom is marvelous. God knew Moses' education in the palace was not enough. God knew Moses needed shepherd training. So God brought him to the Midianite wilderness and began to train him as a shepherd by shepherding Jethro's flock. Moses learned a lot about sheep. Sheep always need a shepherd. Even though a shepherd teaches a sheep how to go to the green pasture ninety-nine times, the sheep forgets the next time how to get there. So the shepherd needs to take him to the green pasture again. Moses learned that a sheep's desires are too low, that is, eating and sleeping. Moses spent his golden age, from 40 to 80, only feeding sheep. As a result, he forgot how to speak. When God gave him a son, Moses named him Gershom, saying, "I have become an alien in a foreign land" (2:22). What, then, is the meaning of this wilderness life?

From God's point of view, a shepherd needs proper education, leadership, courage, martial arts, and all kinds of skills. Still, it is not enough for a man to be a shepherd. In order to be a shepherd, he needs a basic secular education. But most importantly, he needs humbleness to take care of sheep who are like dummies or fourth-degree mental patients. God knew that Moses had to liberate his people from the hand of Pharaoh and lead them. God knew that Moses needed divine patience. God knew that Moses needed not only patience, but also the faith to depend on God. So God put him in wilderness training for 40 years. In short, Moses received 80 years of training all together to be a shepherd for his people. Because of his wilderness training Moses led his 600,000 slave people until they became the soldiers of God. Numbers 12:3 says, "(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.)"

II. God calls Moses (2:23-4:31)

First, God showed Moses a great sight (2:23-3:3). Our God is the God of covenant. 2:24 says, "God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob." In order to deliver his people from slavery in Egypt, God called Moses. While Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. Moses thought it was a strange sight and he went over to see it. To Moses, it was a strange sight. But to God it was a great sight. While Moses was living in the wilderness for 40 years tending the flock, he became a hermit. Moreover, he became a man of despair. He lost God's covenant. He lost God's vision for him. So God showed him a great sight, that is, a symbol of a vision for him. God wanted him to be a man of vision. God wanted him to be a leader of his people. God wanted him to be a fighter against King Pharaoh. God wanted him to deliver his people from the hand of Pharaoh. This is the reason God showed him a great vision.

Second, holy ground (3:4-5). Moses once lived in a palace. Now he was living in the wilderness. God's covenant was far away from him and he thought that he was living a fugitive life. But to God the Midianite wilderness was not a place for a fugitive; it was holy ground. Where there is no God, even the palace can be cursed ground. But where there is God, even the wilderness can be holy ground. The words "holy ground" awakened Moses from his spiritual slumber. God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." God said to him, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." God straightened Moses' attitude so that he might hear God's word.

Third, the God of covenant (3:6-22). God had already said that he is the God of covenant in 2:24. In 3:6, God says again, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." Our God is the God of covenant who made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering" (7). Read verse 8. "So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites."

Fourth, "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh." Look at verse 10. "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." God wanted to send Moses to deliver his people Israel, but Moses was not ready due to his 40 years of desert life. But to God, he was ready, because he was no more himself. Now he could be useful to God because he had received humbleness training. When God said, "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh," Moses said, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh...?" He lost his human confidence completely. Then God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain" (12). God really wanted to liberate his people so that his people would suffer no more from hard labor, but worship God. The words "worship God" have deep meaning to all human beings. We either have to engage in hard labor as slaves or worship God without fear, in holiness and righteousness.

Moses asked God how to introduce God to his people, "If they ask me, 'What is his name?', what shall I tell them?" To Moses, it was a very difficult task to introduce God, whom they could not see, to his people, who were suffering in the realities of the world. To this uncertain Moses, God said, "I AM WHO I AM...." God told Moses to say to the Israelites, "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." Here God is training Moses to believe that God is Almighty, "I AM WHO I AM," and that he is the God who made a covenant with their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Next God told Moses to assemble the elders of Israel and speak to them about God's covenant. "The LORD, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will bring you up out of your miseries in Egypt into the land flowing with milk and honey" (16,17). God told Moses that he would strike the Egyptians and bring the Israelites out with many possessions (18-22).

Fifth, Moses' staff (4:1-17). Moses wondered if people would listen to him. Then God said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied. The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground." When he did so, it became a snake, and Moses ran from it. Then God said, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." When Moses did so, it turned back into a staff in his hand. Moses needed faith in God who made a covenant with his forefathers. Verse 5 says, "'This,' said the LORD, 'is so 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.'" Moses could not believe in God Almighty through a miracle, though he liked the miracle. Moses needed to believe that God is Almighty. But his faith was weak. God did not give up on him. God gave him another miracle. God said, "Put your hand inside your cloak." So Moses did. When he took it out, it was leprous, like snow. Moses became a leper. God said, "Put it back into your cloak." Moses did so. When he took it out, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. God told him that he would perform many miracles in Egypt (8-9).

Finally Moses made an excuse that he was a man of slow speech and that he was not persuasive (10). Read 4:11,12. "The LORD said to him, 'Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you to speak and will teach you what to say.'" Still, Moses asked God to send someone else, not him. Then God said to Moses that he would send Aaron, his older brother, as his spokesman. In sending Moses to Egypt, God only gave him a staff. Look at verse 17. "But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it." What does the staff mean? A staff is something to depend on or to support something. In this case, the staff was the reminder of God, on whom he could depend.

Sixth, Moses returns to Egypt (4:18-31). After getting permission from Jethro, his father-in-law, he started for Egypt with his wife and his sons. Before departure, God told Moses to say to Pharaoh: "Israel is my firstborn son...Let my son go." God also said that Pharaoh would not listen to Moses. But finally, through the plague of death, he would let the people go.

On the way, the LORD met Moses and was about to kill him. It was because he did not prepare himself for the mission thoroughly. He should go by himself to Egypt. But he was taking his wife and sons to the battleground. Moreover, Moses should circumcise his sons. After that, God met Aaron and told him to go to Moses and be his spokesman.

Moses and Aaron arrived in Egypt and brought together all the elders of the Israelites. Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. When they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped him.

God chose Moses as the deliverer of his people. Moses received education in the palace for 40 years and in the wilderness for another 40 years. Still, he needed more training to overcome his inner fear. May God help us to overcome our inner fear when we receive divine training and depend on God.