

God's Rescuer?

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Date: 14 July 2019

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[0 : 00] Lord God, as we look at your word tonight, please help us to listen, please help us to hear and to understand, and help us to be encouraged, to be challenged, to be changed by what we read.

Amen. So, we often have situations where we need to work with someone, or to cooperate with them, but really, in the end, they do all of the work.

Like, I'm not talking about uni, but for example, when you travel on a plane, you book your ticket, you plan your trip, you follow the instructions, you check in, you find your seat, but ultimately, at the end, you don't have to fly the plane, do you?

The pilot will do all of that for you. He's the expert. Similarly, if you have an operation, you're told what to do to prepare.

You can't eat or drink for some amount of time. You have to make sure you go to the right hospital, and that you're there at the right time. But when that time comes, you don't have to operate on yourself, do you?

[1 : 14] You just get to sleep and let the surgeon do all the work. I remember when I was in uni, I broke my knee, and I had to have surgery. I was given instructions, but they weren't difficult.

Although not eating felt difficult, I'm still glad that I didn't have to do the surgery myself. That would have been a real mess. Instead, I could leave that to the expert.

Now, in our passage today, we see the same thing. God calls Moses and gives him some instructions, but ultimately, God is the one who will do the work.

It's God's rescue plan. Moses only has to do what he's told. So how does this call begin, and how will Moses respond?

Let's find out. So last time, the previous passage in chapter 2, we had a few weeks ago, if you remember, ended with God hearing the Israelites groaning and remembering his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[2 : 24] Today, we see the beginning of his plan to rescue them as he calls to Moses. We pick up in chapter 3 with Moses. He's still living in Midian with his wife, with his father-in-law, and looking after their sheep.

In verse 1, we see that while he's tending the flocks, he leads them to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. While he's there, an angel comes, the angel of the Lord, who speaks on behalf of God, comes and appears in the burning bush.

Now, Moses sees the bush, but it's not burning up, which isn't normal, is it? It would normally just... Anyway, he goes over to take a look, and that's when God calls to him.

And God first gives two commands. First, to not come closer. Second, to take off his shoes. Both of these are because of God's holiness. Taking off shoes is a sign of respect back then, and in many cultures today.

God then introduces himself to Moses as the God of his own father, and also the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the ones with whom he made his covenant.

[3 : 45] Now, why does he call himself the God of Moses' own father? I remember, Moses was having a bit of an identity crisis in Midian. He'd run away from Pharaoh, and he'd run away from the Israelites.

He even named his son after the fact he was a foreigner. God is reminding him of what he's forgotten, that Moses is one of God's people.

Now, this will be important for us later on in the passage as well. So, Moses immediately understands who he's talking to, and so appropriately he hides his face in fear of God.

Now, God keeps going in verse 7. Have a look. He says, I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I'm concerned about their suffering.

God has seen his covenant people suffering. Now, you can compare 6 and 7 here with 23 and 24 in chapter 2 on the previous page.

[4 : 51] They're very similar. God sees and hears his people cry out, and he remembers the covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, for the sake of his covenant and fulfilling his promises, he's come down to rescue them, which we see in 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, Vegemites, and Jebusites.

And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I've seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. And notice, God has come down to rescue them.

God will bring them up out of Egypt. This is what God will do. So, he announces to Moses in 10, So now go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.

What? Is it Moses or God who's rescuing them? Now, of course it's God who will be doing the rescuing, as he's just said. But Moses will be the means by which God will rescue his people.

[6 : 12] God intends to use Moses for his plan. And now we know Moses has already fancied himself a bit of a saviour. He killed the Egyptian man, and he rescued Jethro's daughters.

So now, of course, he's going to be down for this, right? To join with God in his mighty salvation. Well, let's find out how he responds.

Ryan's going to come up and read the second part of our passage. So I'll be reading from Exodus chapter 3, verse 11, to chapter 4, verse 17. But Moses said to God, Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?

And 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.

Moses said to God, God also said to Moses, 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.

[7 : 39] This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation. Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, appeared to me and said, I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt.

And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt, into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.

The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God.

But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them.

After that, he will let you go. And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed towards this people, so that when you leave, you will not go empty-handed.

[8 : 52] Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians.

Moses answered, What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, The Lord did not appear to you? Then the Lord said to him, What is that in your hand? A staff, he replied.

The Lord said, Throw it on the ground. Moses threw it on the ground, and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the Lord said to him, Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.

So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and turned it back into a staff in his hand. This, said the Lord, 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.

Then the Lord said, Put your hand inside your cloak. So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, the skin was leprous. It had become as white as snow.

[9 : 58] Now put it back into your cloak, he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh. Then the Lord said, If they do not believe you, or pay attention to the first sign, they may believe the second.

But if they do not believe these two signs, or listen to you, take some water from the Nile, and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground.

Moses said to the Lord, Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past, nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.

The Lord said to him, Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight, or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord?

Now go, I will help you speak, and will teach you what to say. But Moses said, Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else. Then the Lord's anger burned against Moses, and he said, What about your brother, Aaron the Levite?

[11 : 05] I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you. You shall speak to him, and put words in his mouth. I will help both of you speak, and will teach you what to do.

He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth, and as if you were God to him. But take this stuff in your hand, so you can perform the signs with it.

So as we just heard, Moses is not eager, is he? He doubts God's word. He comes up with a whole five different excuses.

We're now at point two, if you're following on the outlines. God has called Moses, but how does he respond? Not well. His first response we see in verse 11, where he says, Who am I?

Who am I that I should go? Perhaps it's these identity issues, or he's feeling inadequate. Maybe he just doesn't want to go. Whatever is Moses' reason to question himself, God doesn't answer him with why he's fit for the task.

[12 : 16] God's answer is much better than anything we could say about Moses. In verse 12, he says, I will be with you.

Who Moses is doesn't matter. God is doing the work. In the rest of verse 12, God also gives Moses a sign, that he will be with him to help him believe.

This will be the sign to you, that it is I who have sent you. When you've brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain. It's a bit of a strange sign though, isn't it?

Moses can't validate this sign until after he's gone and they've been rescued. But the very fact that he will see the sign means they will be rescued.

It helps if you think of it like you're watching a prequel movie and you wonder, will the main character survive? Well, of course he will. He's in the next movie.

[13 : 19] God's given Moses spoilers. He's promised him that they will be rescued. They will leave Egypt and they will come to the mountain to worship God. Well, this isn't enough for Moses.

God said he would be with Moses. So Moses next asks, well, who are you? I have a look at verse 13. Suppose I go to the Israelites and I say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you.

And they ask me, what is his name? Then what shall I tell them? Now, maybe Moses asks because he knows that he's not qualified and he knows the Israelites know that too.

They know him as a murderer and a fugitive. So why would they listen to him? Well, anyway, God answers him, but his answer is a bit hard to translate.

Our Bibles usually use, I am who I am, or I will be who I will be, which you can see in the footnote. Just two things to say.

[14 : 20] Number one, it's the same I will be word, as in I will be with you from before. Number two, it sounds very similar to Yahweh, where our Bible says Lord in capital letters, which he uses in 15.

And you can also see that in the footnote. Simply, God says, you will know who I am from what I do and because I'm with you. But God also includes in his title that he's the God of their fathers.

Altogether, see 14 and 15. This is what you are to say to the Israelites. I am has sent me to you. God also said to Moses, 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.

This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation. And now God also assures Moses that the Israelites will listen to him.

In 18 to 22, God explains in detail how things will go, that they'll listen to Moses, they'll go to Pharaoh together, that Pharaoh will not let them go until God strikes him and performs wonders, and then how finally they'll be able to leave and they'll plunder Egypt.

[15 : 42] Now surely, Moses is ready to trust God and go with this plan. God's revealed all the details and he's promised that the people would listen to Moses.

But surprisingly, or maybe not, Moses is still not ready. Have a look at chapter 4, verse 1. Moses answered, What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, The Lord did not appear to you?

What if they don't believe me? Come on, Moses. God just said that they will. He promised he'll be with you. He is doing the work.

Now at this point, I would have given up on Moses. But God gives him even more signs to prove that it's God at work here. The first is in verse 2-4 of chapter 4.

God turns Moses' staff into a snake and then back to a staff. And in verse 5, he instructs Moses, This is so 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.

[16 : 52] Then he gives Moses another sign in 6-7. His hand goes leprous and then it goes back to normal again. And then in 8-9, he says, If they don't believe either of those, he will change water from the Nile into blood.

All of these serve the same purpose. God is proving that he's with Moses because God's the only one who can do these things. Now once again, God needs Moses to understand God is rescuing the Israelites.

Moses just needs to listen and follow instructions. Well, until now, maybe we could say Moses had kind of a reason to ask all these questions.

But at this point, I think God has very much proven himself and that he would be with Moses. It starts to become very clear Moses just doesn't want to go.

So in verse 10 is Moses' next excuse. Have a look. Moses said to the Lord, Pardon your servant, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant.

[18 : 05] I'm slow of speech and tongue. His excuse is that he don't speak good. Don't you get it yet, Moses?

God is doing the work. After all, as he says, who gave humans their mouth? Who makes Moses able to speak? Of course, it's God.

God says, I'll be with you. I will help you speak. I will teach you what to say. And it's not about Moses. It's not about how qualified he is or how capable he is.

He just needs to go. He needs to do what God tells him to do and say what God teaches him to say. And God will do the real work. Now, have you had a situation where you were asked to do something and you didn't have a good reason to say no?

But, you just didn't want to do it? When I was up in Brisbane, I was at the church and after a while they asked me to join the welcoming team. And I didn't really want to.

[19 : 12] I'd never done it before and I thought, oh, I'm bad at remembering names or I'm bad at making small talk. And in the end, weren't these all just excuses?

So finally, after some pushing, I said, okay, and do you know how it went? It was fine. There was no problem.

My excuses had been just that, excuses. Now, Moses is in exactly the same situation and he has completely run out of excuses but he just doesn't want to do it.

So in 13, I have a look. Moses says, pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else. It's only now that God finally gets angry with him as we read in 14.

But even so, his answer to Moses is surprisingly compliant and it perfectly summarizes what he's been teaching Moses. Moses has said he doesn't speak well and God wants him to send someone else.

[20 : 20] No problem, Moses. Your brother Aaron speaks well. He can speak on your behalf but guess what? You're still going. So God uses Aaron to demonstrate to Moses the way that God is at work.

Aaron's like a model for the way God is with Moses. Aaron will be like Moses' prophet, like his mouth. He will say everything Moses tells him to say. However, Moses will be the one who performs the miraculous signs.

This is just as it is for Moses and God. God tells Moses everything that he wants him to say but when it comes to the miraculous signs, God is really the one who does them.

Now once again, using this arrangement, God is teaching Moses that he is the one who is doing the work. God has come down to save and though he calls Moses to act, God is with Moses in what he does and he says and the signs he'll perform.

Now at this point, I think Moses must have finally, if reluctantly, accepted because next we see him getting ready to return to Egypt. But just before he does, there's a little bit more of our chapter and there are some final preparations for Moses.

[21 : 40] So now we're at point three if you're following on the outline and it starts from verse 18. We have here three little events to prepare Moses and close out this section of Exodus.

The first event is from verse 18 to 23 and it's God telling Moses what to expect. So in verse 18, Moses speaks to Jethro.

He says, let me return to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive. What a strange reason that he gives to Jethro.

We don't know why he didn't tell Jethro the real reason. Perhaps it's just too hard to explain how he met this talking burning bush. Or perhaps he's still not fully trusting in God yet.

Either way, Jethro agrees and lets Moses return. Then in verse 19, we see God has reassured Moses that he'd be safe to return. So in verse 20, he packs up his donkeys and his family and they're all ready to go.

[22 : 48] But in the next, in 21 to 23, God keeps talking and the main point here is God prepares Moses by telling him what to expect from the Israelites, from Pharaoh and from what God will do.

Now, we'll see all of this play out over the next few weeks, so I encourage you to come back. But you'll have to come back to find out. With all of this, Moses' travel preparations are done.

And he has his itinerary for once he arrives. And this is the first way that God prepares Moses. Now, the second event that God uses to prepare Moses is in 24 and 26.

And it's a really strange story. See how strange it is as we read it. In 24, at a lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him.

But Zipporah, his wife, took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me, she said, so the Lord let him alone.

[23 : 55] At that time, she said, bridegroom of blood referring to circumcision. I don't think I've ever heard that story in Sunday school. Did any of you?

It is difficult to understand exactly what's going on, but the main issue seems quite clear. Moses had not gotten his son circumcised.

Now, circumcision is God's sign of his covenant with Abraham and God has been big on his covenant in these chapters. He's mentioned being the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob four times in these two chapters.

So, by not getting his son circumcised, Moses has made himself to be outside the covenant. Now, whether Moses did this because he's rejecting his Israelite heritage or because he's just lazy, it doesn't matter.

Moses needs to come back under God's covenant himself if he's to lead God's covenant people out of Egypt. After all, how can Moses rescue the Israelites if he isn't like them?

[25 : 07] How can he lead them as an outsider? Now, Moses doesn't look too good here. It's even worse for him that he didn't actually understand the issue. It was his wife, a Midianite, who figured it out.

God is bringing Moses back to his covenant and to his people as the really essential second way that God prepares Moses. Now, the third very brief event is in 27 and 28.

Moses finally meets Aaron, who God has provided, and tells Aaron the plan. And now they're all ready to go and talk with the leaders of Israel. How will the Israelites respond?

Will Moses' fears come true that they won't listen? Well, we find out in 29 to 31. They bring together all the leaders, Aaron speaks, Moses does his signs, and the people believe, just like God said.

All this worrying, all these excuses, turns out for nothing. See, he just had to go and do what he was told, and God took care of the rest.

[26 : 23] Now, seeing this, seeing how God has fulfilled this promise, should encourage them to continue trusting in him. After all of this, it just seems so simple, right? Now, I'm sure we're all excited for what will happen next.

Moses will confront Pharaoh, there'll be action, there'll be tragedy, but we won't be looking at that today. Today, we have heard how God has prepared for those things.

God has seen and heard the cry of the Israelites and remembered his covenant with them. So, God came down to rescue them, even calling Moses to play a part.

God will be the one to rescue through Moses. God will be with Moses and he instructs Moses on what to do and say. God will save his people in spite of Moses' excuses and his doubts.

And since God will do it all through Moses, he also prepares Moses. God brought him back into the covenant and made him to be like his own people, the Israelites, so that he'd be fit to save and lead them.

[27 : 38] And now all of these things serve to point us to the greatest rescue story in the Bible, that which all of Exodus points to, to Jesus, who rescues his people from the slavery of sin and death.

Just as God saves Israel through Moses, God saves us through a better Moses, through Jesus. How? Well, first, Jesus is literally God come down to rescue.

God the Son comes down from heaven, born as a man, to fulfill God's greatest rescue. Secondly, Jesus is made like us. Just as Moses was brought back under the covenant, we see Jesus being made like us.

In Hebrews 2, we should be up here. Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shed in their humanity, so that by his death, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death.

That is the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. Jesus shares in our humanity, our flesh and blood, he is made human just like all of us, so that his death could break the power of the devil over humans like us.

[28 : 56] How? The devil has the power to demand our eternal death as payment for sin. But Jesus could pay for our sin at the cross. So the devil loses that power, and we don't have to fear death anymore.

Instead, we're guaranteed life eternal if we believe in him. And what's great is Jesus didn't make excuses like Moses. Because thirdly, he did pay for our sin.

He was obedient to death, even death on the cross, as it says in Philippians 2.8. being found in appearances of man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

To recap, Jesus is God come down to rescue. He was made like us, human, so he could rescue us. And he was obedient, so he did rescue us.

Jesus is the better Moses, the one through whom God rescues us from sin and death. Now, if you here don't consider yourself a follower of Jesus, I want to challenge you to consider putting your trust in him.

[30 : 09] Jesus' rescue is the most important rescue event of all time, from the greatest slavery of all people, slavery to sin. But only for those who believe in him.

So do you, or will you make excuses? But now, for those of us who do trust in Jesus, and we're among his rescued people, God calls us to partner with him as well.

We see this in Matthew 28, which is on the slide, a very famous passage. Jesus came to them and he said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, and surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.

So now, how can we be making disciples and being part of God's rescue? For example, first, we can be praying for the gospel work here at church, in Bible study, in Christianity Explored, in our outreach.

[31 : 21] We can also be praying for our mission partners. like the Vinicums, the Davies, Stephen's parents who are here tonight, and all of our AFES people.

We have quite a lot, don't we? We can also be praying for our friends and family to hear and accept the gospel, or to be sharing it if they have.

Second, we can serve at church and encourage each other here. Third, we can also support our gospel work by giving money to here at church, to our missionaries, to our AFES partners.

Yeah, then we can serve at church. And fourth, we can make the most of every opportunity to share the gospel with people whenever we have a chance, whether at work, at uni, at the shops, or just with friends.

And the good news is this, that God is with us, and he will do the real work, just as it was with Moses, and just as Jesus says in verse 20, surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

[32 : 33] So how will you respond to his call? Will we make excuses? I'm too busy to pray. I can't spare any money for mission.

Maybe it's too cold to come to church, which is very relatable today. Or, I don't speak good. Or, will we trust that God is with us and that he will do the work?

Let's pray that we would. Father God, I thank you that you have sent your Son, Jesus Christ, down to earth to rescue us from sin and death.

help us to be part of your mission as we consider how we can be praying, giving, serving, or speaking. Help us not to make excuses, but to depend completely on you.

And thank you that you are with us always. In your Son, Jesus' name we pray. Amen.