

# The Turning Point

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] skill skill All right, I don't know what Heaven's Playlist is going to be, but I've got to believe that one's going to be on there, right? I mean, what a great... I've been singing that song since I was a kid, How Great Thou Art. It never gets old, of just singing about the glory of God.

If you've got your Bible, go to Exodus chapter 3. Exodus chapter 3, we're now four weeks in to a brand new series called Into the Wilderness, A Journey to Freedom. And we've been going verse by verse through the book of Exodus. Love, love, love the feedback so far. Please don't stop sharing with me how much I'm assuming you're enjoying this series. Those of you that aren't enjoying it, I'm sorry, but I've been getting a lot of feedback and encouraged by that. Some of you, you just love studying a book of the Bible. You love starting at Exodus 1-1 and just working your way through, which is what we do a lot of here at Faith Family. Others of you, it's been specific things we've addressed. Others have shared just how, for the most part, the Old Testament doesn't seem all that relevant to us. And this series is helping you understand that all of God's Word has relevance to you because God's Word is living and active. And so thanks again for the feedback and keep that going. I want to know how this series is speaking to you. Well, we come to the point where we left off last week as we got through Exodus 2. And so we're going to pick up in probably the most or one of the most famous passages of all of the book of Exodus, and that is Exodus chapter 3. So let's stand, if you're able to do so, as we honor the reading of God's Word. And we're going to go Exodus 3-1, and we'll read down through verse 12. It says, Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro and the priest of Midian. And he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and he came to Oreb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the mist of a bush. And he looked, and behold, the bush was burning, but it was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, Moses, Moses. And he said, here I am. And then he said, do not come near. Take your sandals off your feet for the place on which you're standing is holy ground. And he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in

Egypt. I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, to bring them up out of the land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites. And now behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I also have seen their oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, but I will be with you. And this shall be the sign for you that I have sent you.

[ 4 : 2 7 ] When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain. That's about 10 weeks of Bible study right there. Amen. But let's pray and ask God to talk to us tonight as we look to his word. God, what a joy it is to study your word. What a joy it is to hear from you through your word. I need your help tonight to just speak through me. I believe this is such an important passage. I'm very well aware that I don't have any ability to do anything of any significance. But there's nothing impossible with you. And Lord, I really believe we can encounter you tonight in a life-changing way. So come during this time, do whatever you want to do. For your name's sake, I pray. And all God's people said, amen. You can be seated.

Then, thenceforward, and forever free. Those were the words that would echo down the hallway of human history.

Those were the words that changed the trajectory of America's future. They were words that served as the key turning point in America's Civil War. Words that would set human beings free. Many of you know those words. They're the words of President Abraham Lincoln in the famous document known as the Emancipation Proclamation. Now, for those of you that know anything about the Civil War, you know there were several important moments that served as crucial turning points in that war. Moments that really changed and altered the direction, listen, not just of the war itself, but the future of our country, and the fate of many men and women. Historians of the Civil War will often point to key battles as the turning point. Battles like Antietam. They'll say that was a big turning point, or maybe not that, but the Battle of Vicksburg as a major turning point, or one of the most bloody, the bloodiest of all,

Gettysburg. But despite these very important and crucial battles, listen, faith family, the key turning point to the war actually did not happen on the battlefield. It happened by an executive action on behalf of the President of the United States. Listen to me. Up until the Emancipation Proclamation, there had been no presidential action on behalf of slavery. But now, listen, now that the President had spoken, now that someone with that authority had said that slaves are declared free, listen, the entire purpose of the war changed. The war was no longer a matter of suppressing the Southern Rebellion. It was a fight for freedom itself. By declaring on January the 1st, 1863, that those slaves and states rebelling against the federal government were then, thenceforward, and forever free. It changed the war. It changed American history. It changed our nation. And it changed the lives of men and women who were enslaved forever. As one historian writes, quote, in regards to the Emancipation Proclamation, he wrote, quote, it was the beginning of the end of slavery and the beginning of a new life for this nation, close quote. It was, faith family, the major turning point. And of course, there's been a lot turning points in history, a lot of moments that have changed the trajectory of life as we know it. We could talk about several of them just even in our own recent history. The invention of the internet that has revolutionized the world, or the attacks on 9-11 that changed our country forever. The discovery of and mass production of penicillin, although that guy doesn't look like he's enjoying it very much.

[ 8 : 53 ] The creation of the home computer, which changed everything. Events like the fall of the Soviet Union, or landing on the moon, the assassination of JFK. These were all turning points. Inventions like the mobile phone that's changed so much, or the invention of social media, or maybe the greatest invention ever, the fanny pack. I mean, that is by far the greatest gift God has ever given us. And all God's people said, amen. These were key things, key moments in history that really changed everything. Changed the trajectory of life as we know it. Now stop for just a moment and think about your life. There's not just turning points in history. There have been a lot of turning points in your life. Amen. Stop and think about those moments that altered the direction of your life. Some of them were good. Some of them were bad. It may have been when your child was born.

The moment you first met. The car accident. The inheritance that you received. The divorce you didn't want. The moment you didn't want. The moment you turned 16. And you could go on and on, and you could think about those moments, those key pivotal moments in your life that altered your history.

It changed the trajectory of the rest of your life. It's the moment everything changed. Amen? Amen. Now you know what Exodus 3 is about. That is precisely how you should think about Exodus chapter 3. Because Exodus chapter 3 is the turning point in the book. Everything's different now. Everything is about to change. And I say that for four very important reasons. Number one, it's the first time in the book that God speaks. Up till this point, God has not said a word. He's not appeared at all. Oh, make no mistake about it. He has been present at every point. And he has been active at every point. But there have been, according from Israel's perspective, no obvious signs of God's involvement. But in Exodus chapter 3, for the very first time, Yahweh has something to say. And everything changes. The second reason why this is the turning point in the book is because the story shifts. Everything slows down. Do you know how many years takes place between Exodus 1 and 2? Answer, 400. Do you know how long it will take us to get to the rest of the book? One year. Not in reference to preaching this book. I mean an actual time and space, okay? It's just a year. Everything in the story shifts. It begins to slow down and narrow in. There's a third reason why this is the turning point in the book is because it's the turning point for the nation of Israel. Oh, listen. Exodus chapter 3, verse 9 and 10, is the emancipation proclamation for the nation of Israel. Oh, there is a war still to be fought. There are plagues still to be had. There are red seas that must be

crossed. But it is in this chapter that God declares by his authority, his people will be set free from slavery. It's the turning point in the book. And there's a fourth reason why this is the turning point in the book is because it's the turning point for Moses. You remember in Exodus chapter 2, he kills a man. He shot a man in

Reno just to watch him die. And that man was Egyptian. And when the word got out to Pharaoh, now Moses is a wanted man. And this once prince of Egypt has now spent, listen to me, the last 40 years since chapter 2, it's been 40 years of Moses' life where he has been a common shepherd. 40 years of a mundane life, 40 years of watching the sheep of his father-in-law doing the same thing every single day.

And then one morning, he wakes up and he decides to take his sheep to the west side. And everything in his life changes. Don't you see? This is the turning point. This is the moment, the trajectory of the story changes. This is where it all begins to shift in a different direction.

[13:30] It's where the whole story changes. And listen to me tonight. It's where, and I've been actually praying for this. It's where our turning point will be. Because listen to me, there are things in Exodus 3 that if we will encounter them, if we will believe them, it will change us forever. Do you believe me? Listen, if you will engage tonight in what we see here in Exodus 3, your life and your faith and your perspective and your hope and your freedom will not be the same. This can be and should be a turning point. So what does Moses experience for his turning point that can be the turning point for ours? Verse 2.

The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush. He looked and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside to see the great sight why the bush is not burned. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside, God called to him out of the bush, Moses, Moses. And he said, here I am. And he said, do not come near. Take the sandals off your feet. You are on holy ground. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God. Here's the first thing we see, and that is the holiness of God. Moses encounters God in a way that is life-changing.

And can I just get this out of the way? It has nothing to do with the bush. Everybody wants to make a big deal about the burning bush. The burning bush is not the point of the story. God's the point of the story.

It's who's in the bush. So there's like a verse dedicated to the bush. And the whole chapter is about God. And we want to be obsessed with this little detail that's not even the main point of the story.

The main point of the story is the greatness and holiness of God, that Moses encounters God in such a way that changes him forever. Why? He sees a manifestation of the holiness of God.

God. And if you for a moment encounter the greatness of God, you are forever changed.

[16:07] I know that to be true. I've experienced this. No, I've not experienced a burning bush. I've experienced it happened to me in early college when I began to experience the godness of God.

The God-centeredness of God. That God, I don't even know that they meant to do it, but most of my upbringing in church really made me the center of everything that God did. Why did Jesus come? He came for you. Why did Jesus die? He died for you. Why did he raise again for you? Why is he coming back for you?

And it's like, I'm not the point of the story. Oh, all those things are true. But what's higher and bigger is that God did this to display his glory. That God is centered on God because God is a holy God.

And my whole theological world, pun intended, went up in smoke. And I hated it at first. I didn't want to believe in a God that could be like that. And God, by his grace, taught me that I don't get to determine what God is like. He is who he is. He is a holy God. Now, before I get too far ahead of myself and preach a second sermon, I want to show you from the text, because actually, here's the main point that we're going to get to, and that's that the turning point in your life will be the moment you catch a glimpse of the holiness of God. And man, I am praying that tonight will just be a getting into the depths of who God is and that your life would be changed. Again, let me show you from the text where I get this idea of the holiness of God so you don't think I'm making it up. Number one, the holy angel, the holy angel. Verse two says that Moses experienced the angel of the Lord. You notice that it doesn't say an angel. He experiences the angel of the Lord.

Now, keep in mind, the word angels just means messenger. So when you come across the word angel in the Bible, you have to do some context. It doesn't always mean it's referring to an angelic being.

[ 18 : 27 ] It may very well just be referring to a messenger sent from God. That's very important. We'll talk a little bit about that more in the spiritual realm series. Shameless plug there, right? But what's unique about this messenger is that this messenger is associated, listen to me, with God himself.

Look at the text. Verse two says that the angel of the Lord is in the fire, and that is the very place from which God speaks in verse four. Point, this is no ordinary angel.

This is no ordinary angel at all. In fact, as most scholars agree, this is a manifestation of who? Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. This is what we call a theophany. It is a physical or visible manifestation of the invisible God. The unapproachable God has drawn near. Number two, not just the holy angel, but the holy angel, but the holy fire. When you think about the fire taking place here in Exodus chapter three, do not think of a little flicker or a little match. You need to think of like a brush fire, an all-consuming, awesome, massive fire. It's the kind of fire that if you get close to, it will burn you. Faith family, this manifestation of fire is not random. It's revelation. God is revealing by the presence of this fire something about his character. He is not an out-of-control fire. And you will see this all throughout the book of Exodus when fire again appears in the pillar by night in the wilderness, at Mount Sinai, at the giving of the law, at the tabernacle, at the very end of the book of Exodus. And all of this is to show you the holiness of God. Are you with me? Say yes.

The holy angel, the holy fire, and thirdly, the holy ground. God will not allow Moses to come near. And the reason that's the case is you are not to bring unclean things onto holy ground. And the ground is holy not because the ground is holy. The ground is holy because that's where God chose to meet Moses, meaning the ground is holy because God is there. Wherever God is, that place is holy. For God is holy. It's also a picture here of how in the ancient Near East, people would take their shoes off when they were in the presence of someone majestic like a king. This is a moment where God reveals himself to Moses. He reveals through this manifestation his holiness. Isn't this good? Oh my gosh, I could spend the whole night just on the holiness of God. Now here's the important point, I think, in the flow of the text. Notice it here on the screen, is that before God reveals to Moses what he will do, he reveals to

Moses who he is. Before he tells Moses what he's going to do, he reveals to Moses who he is. That is, his holiness, kadosh in the Hebrew. It means to cut, to separate, to set apart. Listen to me, faith family, I'm going to go fast, so you need to listen faster. The holiness of God refers to the absolute moral purity of God that sets him apart from all creation. God is in a class all by himself. He is distinct from anything that has ever existed or ever will exist. He occupies a moral space that no one has ever occupied before. And as such, we have never experienced, nor do we even have the frame of reference as to what God is like, because there's nothing like him. It's what it means to be holy.

[ 22 : 22 ] It's why the Bible says in Exodus 15 verse 11, who is like you? Oh Lord, among the gods, who is like you?

Majestic in, say it, holiness. Awesome and glorious deeds doing wonders. 1 Samuel 2 2, there is none holy like the Lord, for there is none beside you. There is no rock like our God. This is what you have to get into your brain, and it's this. Notice it on the screen. God's holiness is not an aspect of who he is.

God's holiness is the essence of who he is. Let that set in. It's not the aspect. It's not part of him. It's not a characteristic or an attribute that he has. It's who he is. It's his essence. And so if you were to ask me, pastor, how is the holiness of God revealed? I would answer to you this in everything he does. He's holy in his justice, holy in his love, holy in his mercy, holy in his power, holy in his sovereignty, holy in his wisdom, holy in his patience, holy in his anger, holy in his grace, holy in his faithfulness, holy in his compassion. Holiness isn't something he does. Holiness is something he is. He is by his very nature set apart from anything you have ever known or possibly could ever know. It's why when he shows up, there is fire. And that is just the smallest manifestation we can probably get as to understanding the holiness of God. Because what is in fire that is like the holiness of God? Two things quickly. Fire attracts us. God's holiness attracts us. Listen, it's beautiful. It's the most beautiful thing you've ever seen. It's amazing. It's incredible. Do you know how I know? Because when you see it, you cannot help but worship. You can't help but be in awe. You can't help but stand amazed. You can't help but behold and glorify him. Anytime you encounter God, the natural response is worship. Just like fire will draw you in. But secondly, fire will also repel you. This character or this nature of God, this essence of God is so unlike us, it can be terrifying. It can be so

consuming, we can't handle it. It is so hot, it will burn you in seconds. And that is why Moses is afraid.

This is just a taste. It's just a taste. I need a thousand more years to preach to you the holiness of God.

But the point I'm trying to make is that encountering the holiness of God was the turning point of Moses. It's the turning point in the story. And the reason why I'm saying that a turning point in your life will be encountering the holiness of God, here's why quickly and I got to move on.

[ 25 : 40 ] Because if you believe, if you begin to understand who God is, first of all, your view of yourself is never going to be the same. It's really hard to have pride and behold God. It is why in Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah sees the vision, the seraphim crying, holy, holy, holy. And his response is not. That's the neatest thing I've ever seen. His response is, I'm unclean. And everybody around me is unclean.

Woe is me, I am undone. This is the most beautiful and terrifying thing I've ever seen. Secondly, if you really catch a glimpse of the holiness of God, and if you're offended by this, good, your worship is going to change. And for the first time, worship is going to stop being about you and your preferences and what you like and what you don't like. And it's going to start being about what God deserves. In my own life, it makes me go crazy the way people talk about worship.

Well, I just don't like that kind of worship. It ain't about you, sweetheart. And when you encounter the holiness of God, you won't care what you're singing.

You're going to be obsessed and consumed by this fire, this one who is unlike anything you have ever known. You will be consumed and obsessed with worship. Thirdly, if I didn't offend you yet, I'll offend you with this. Your theology is going to change. Gone will be any man-centered theology. You will not have one single thought about you being the center of God's plan for just a moment, and you will be perfectly fine with God's name and his glory being the center of everything.

[ 27 : 44 ] And topics like predestination will not offend you because you will begin to understand that all of your life and all of this creation and all of this world and all of this universe is about God and God alone. There will be no place left for man-centeredness theology when you see the holiness of God.

Another way your life will change is your witness will change. When you begin to realize who God is, you will begin to understand the importance it is for every human being to know him and to see the most beautiful thing that an eye could behold, to know the most glorious thing anyone could ever know, to cherish the one who is worthy to be cherished above all, namely God. I'm telling you, I'm telling you, I'm just telling you, you catch a glimpse of who God is, it's over. It will be a turning point in your life.

Number two, I want to keep preaching this. I got to go on. There's a second thing that Moses encounters that we've got to encounter to have a turning point in our faith as well, and that's pick it up in verse seven. The Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings. I've come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, to bring them up out of the land to a good and broad land flowing with milk and honey. We'll just stop there. Here's the second thing we see in this passage, and that is the love of God. We don't just encounter here the holiness of God. We encounter here the love of God. Now, let me tell you why I say this is the love of God, because if you were an Israelite in Exodus chapter one and two, caught in the confusing chains of suffering and slavery, these verses would change your perspective forever. Notice it on the screen. There will be a turning point in your life the moment you come to accept the love of God. And I know that we know the love of God, or at least we think we know the love of God, but we only scratch the surface. Listen, imagine how different your life would be if every day you lived like you were loved. Imagine how different every day would be if you lived like you were loved. Look at the language of the text. Again, my job is to prove to you where I'm getting. I'm not making this up. In the text, it says things like, I have surely seen the affliction of my people. I have heard their cry. I know their suffering. In verse eight, I have come down to deliver them. Jump down to verse nine. The cry of the people of Israel has come to me. I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians have oppressed them. Don't you see? God here is communicating the covenant love he has for his people. I've seen them in their suffering. I have known their suffering. I've been here all along. And why would Israel, and why would we, have any reason to doubt the love of God? Answer number one, Israel's suffering. I don't know about you, but 400 years of slavery and oppression to a pagan nation might make you

doubt a little. Hello? 400 years here, and it's a pagan people. It's the Egyptians of all people. And we're going to be, we, your people, are going to be slaves to them? That doesn't make any sense at all. It's the very question I raised two weeks ago. Notice it here. That is, God, why would you bring your people to Egypt to preserve them? Remember the famine and Joseph? Only to let Egypt persecute them. It doesn't make any sense,

God, why you would do this. Israel's suffering, just like yours, would have been a grounds to doubt the love of God. And let's be honest, don't you doubt? Come on, don't come in here all, I never doubt. Sure you do. There are times when you just don't feel God's love. You feel lost. You feel abandoned. You feel forgotten. And often it's because of suffering in your life. And not only Israel's suffering, but secondly, God's silence. When you don't hear from somebody for a long time, you begin to wonder, do they care? God has been silent for a long time. It's as though God is ghosting them, it seems. But then in Exodus 3, He speaks. And it's what I've tried to show you these last few weeks that God has actually been there at work the entire time. But because of our suffering and God's silence, at times it feels He has abandoned us. But what does the text say? Are you still with me? Say yes. The text says, I heard them. And I know their sufferings. And I haven't left them for a moment. They are still my people. In other words, at some point, child of God, are you listening? You're going to have to get it through your thick, stubborn, sinful heart that you are really loved by God. No matter how loud your suffering or how silent your God, He is at work for your good. And the sooner you come to truly accept that, the sooner you will have a turning point in your Christian walk. You see, the holiness of God is a turning point when we begin to realize who we're dealing with. And the love of God is a turning point because when we actually start to believe that no matter our suffering and no matter His silence, we are loved, here's what happens.

[ 34 : 19 ] We doubt less and trust more. We despair less and hope more. We get rid of the negative and trust in the truth. We have less of a low view of ourself and more of a loved view of ourself.

And trust me, God's love for us isn't saying much about us. It's saying much about God. It's why God's love is still a very God-centered thing.

The love of God changes everything. The turning point of God revealing His holiness, revealing His love, and then one more and we're done. Verse 11, But Moses said to God, Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? He said, But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you that I have sent you when you have brought the people out of Egypt. You shall serve God on this mountain. Here's the last one.

I didn't know whether to call this the power of God or the faithfulness of God. Both would fit. Now here's what's crazy to me, Faith Family. Listen, what's crazy to me is after all that Moses has seen, he's still hung up on himself. Did you notice that? Let me explain. His response to everything God has just revealed, and everything God has just said is this, But who am I? And I'm reading it and I'm thinking, Moses, Moses, Moses, listen. On one hand, you're completely right. I get why you would ask the question, Who am I? Because who are you? This is who you are. You are, after all, a murderer. You are, after all, a riches to rags story. You are, after all, nothing but a common shepherd who's working for your father-in-law because you can't even show your face in town because you have a background report that Pharaoh knows about and he wants you dead for it.

Trust me, Moses, I understand why you would ask,

Who am I? But God has not just spent the last ten verses revealing the resume of Moses. He spent the last ten verses revealing the glory of God. In other words, Moses, if you have learned anything from these first ten verses, it's this, it doesn't matter who Moses is. It only matters who God is.

[ 36 : 59 ] Get over yourself, Moses. I'm going to have to teach you this over and over and over again, buddy. He's got to teach me this over and over again, and he's got to teach you this over and over again. It isn't about your strength. It's not about your ability or how wonderful of a speaker you are. It's about my power. Moses, listen, until you begin to understand this is about me and not about you, you're never going to get it right. You're never going to have the turning point. Look at it on the screen. There is a turning point that will happen in your life the moment you actually start believing in the power of God and get over yourself and learn that this life is not about your skill. It's about his strength. Amen?

You may remember the story. I'm almost done. General Anthony McAuliffe, he was a general in World War II, the 101st Airborne, the Screaming Eagles, my hometown, go 101st Airborne, fighting in the Battle of the Bulge.



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