

God, Holy and Redeeming

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Date: 25 June 2023

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

- [0 : 00] So we're going to begin our worship now. We're going to sing, first of all, tonight from Psalm 96a. Psalm 96a on page 126. The tune is Strakathro, verses 1 to 10.
- O sing a new song to the Lord, sing praises to His name, and His salvation day by day let all the earth proclaim. His glory and His mighty deeds to every land declare, How great and awesome is the Lord, with Him no gods compare.
- And that's Psalm 96a, verses 1 to 10. If we stand to sing, if you're able, please. O sing a new song to the Lord, sing praises to His name.
- And that's Psalm 96a, verses 1 to 10.
- And that's Psalm 96a, verses 1 to 10.
- [1 : 57] The Lord, in heaven's high. Of our grand majesty, He has it.
- He dwells in glorious light. All nations to the Lord, ascribe the glory that is due.
- And He Him, we go and share, How pure and saith to God, How pure and thee É His choice with joy and faith, and offering with you.
- Worship the Lord, and holy fear, all the land before Him bow.
- Tell them, we land, the Lord is King, established is the earth, and cannot do.
- [3 : 48] The Lord will judge, that we need the sin is true.
- Let's now engage in prayer. Let's all call upon the name of the Lord. Our gracious and almighty God, as we gather once again here in your presence this evening, we thank you for the many promises that meet us as we come around your word.
- We thank you especially for the promise of your presence, for you are pleased, Lord, to present yourself among your people, to reveal yourself to them through your word, through the operation of your Holy Spirit.
- We thank you, Lord, as we anticipate such a blessing once again this evening, for we need to take your word at face value, and believe your promises as they're set out for us.
- We thank you, Lord, for that prospect. We thank you for the way in which that presence of God truly sanctifies our hearts, and sanctifies even our place of worship.
- [5 : 01] We bless you tonight, Lord, that you are worthy of our worship. You have revealed this to us in your word, all the reasons why we come to worship you, and ascribe praise and glory and thanksgiving to you.
- We acknowledge you, Lord, as our creator, the one who has brought us into being, the one who formed us in our mother's womb, the one who took charge of our destiny from our conception and right through to our end in death.
- Lord, we give thanks that we can come and place ourselves anew in your hands this evening. And we know that to do so places ourselves in the custody and the security that you provide for your people.

Lord, we thank you that you have remembered us, poor sinners who are lost without you, that you have not cast us away from you, even though this is what we would deserve. And you have remembered us in your pity, look down upon us in your compassion, and especially that you have provided for us a deliverance, a salvation from our sins to bring us into that wonderful state of redemption.

We thank you tonight, Lord, for your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we bless you, Lord, as our Father in heaven, that you sent your Son into this world, that you sent him in such a way as took our nature to himself, forevermore binding together the deity that he had from all eternity and the humanity that he took to himself to be formed and fashioned as a man.

[6 : 42] Lord, we give thanks for the wonder of his person, the glory of his person, the beauty of his person, the sinlessness of his person.

And we thank you especially for all that has been achieved through his work here in this world, for all that he continues to do in this intercession from heaven as he remembers his people.

Lord, we pray tonight that we may know you as that Lord and Savior of your church, that we may know you for ourselves in such a way as would fall before you in adoration and in awe and praise, and truly be persuaded that you are the only God and that you are the only God we need.

We thank you tonight, Lord, for every way in which your blessing reaches us from day to day, from week to week in the course of life. When we reflect, Lord, on each Lord's Day at the beginning of each new week, we can cast our minds back to many ways in which we have come to experience your blessing.

Lord, we acknowledge with shame that so often we receive gifts and blessings from you that we are sometimes all too unaware of, and that our lives are so filled with things that we do from day to day that we take so little time to pause and to reflect upon the goodness of God.

[8 : 05] Lord, forgive us, we pray, for when our lives fail to give you the thanks, fail to give you the trust that you are worthy of. And remember us then, Lord, we pray this evening so that we will dwell in your presence for a time and that we will know that having dwelt in your presence, we leave this place, Lord, today better than when we came, improved in our relation with you and with each other, and grown in our knowledge of you, in our appreciation and love for you, and in our determination to serve you.

Bless us, Lord, we pray, as a congregation during this coming week. Lord, we give thanks for all the activities that we anticipate during this week to come as we do week by week.

And we thank you for all that this entails, for the many encouragements it brings us to see so many people actively engaged in your service in the congregation. And we do pray for all of these activities, O Lord, as they go on from week to week.

And we pray especially again for the work going on amongst our children and young people and young adults. We commend that to you once again and give thanks for all the parents and all the teachers and all the leaders who provide, Lord, such encouragement for us.

And we're so concerned to bring their young people and children to church and to experience for themselves what it is to belong to a believing and worshiping congregation.

[9 : 36] We remember, too, O Lord, tonight those who have particular difficulties and challenges in life. Remember those who are ill at this time. Remember those who are seriously ill.

Remember those who may be terminally ill. We commend them to you, O Lord, and ask that you'd graciously bless them all. We pray that you'd bless those who mourn the passing of loved ones.

We think of these families, Lord, tonight who are preparing for funerals in these days to come. Remember each and all of these families, Lord, we pray. Grant them your blessing and your comfort.

Grant to them that you would draw near to them and as they know in their hurting hearts, O Lord, the reality of death coming into their family circle.

May they know, too, the reality of your Holy Spirit, blessing your word to them and giving them the comfort and the upholding and the strengthening that you alone are able to bring.

[10 : 34] And we ask, too, that you'd bless Shawnee, who owns the county hotel. And, Lord, we know what took place in the fire there last week. And we, Lord, pray for him and pray for his staff at this time as they seek to adjust and to move on from that event.

We thank you for the way that, while the damage was not insignificant, yet we give thanks that it was not worse and was not what it could have been. We pray, Lord, for all the emergency services, especially the fire service who took place, who gave in a place in their own place, Lord, who gave such valuable assistance at that time.

And we commend to you all our emergency services as they serve us in our community from week to week. We ask that you'll bless them. We ask that you'll keep them safe, especially at such times as these, oh, Lord, when the potential for injury is so much heightened.

And we thank you for your protective care of them. And we pray that you'll give Shawnee and the staff the means by which they will move on as the hotel, whenever it reopens, that they will know your blessing and know your provision for them, Lord, in these days to come.

And we ask that you would bless us now as we continue in your presence. We think of other items, Lord, that were mentioned in our bulletin sheet today. We remember especially Kenny John in Uganda.

[12 : 02] And we pray for him and we pray for the work that he's involved with and the different aspects of that work. And God is good Africa. Remember him and remember all who work with him, Lord, and come alongside him and remember all who are helped by that mission.

We pray too for those families in Uganda who lost their young ones, oh, Lord, so recently in that terrible act of violence.

Oh, Lord, we pray that you would draw near to them and that whatever they may be in life, we pray that they will turn to you and that they will know your blessing at this time coming to speak into their hurting souls.

And we ask that you would, as we are thankful, Lord, for a relative peace that we experience, remember all other places like this throughout the world who today cannot be peacefully at rest and who have violence and terror to contend with each and every day of their lives.

Gracious one, bless our world, bless our world with the gospel, bless our world with the spreading of that good news of Jesus Christ, bless our world with peace, the peace that comes from above.

[13 : 15] Grant these mercies to us, we pray, as we lay them all before you in our prayers, seeking pardon from all our sin, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Let's continue to praise God.

We're singing this time from Psalm 138. Our singing again is from the Sing Psalms version. Psalm 138 on page 179, verses 1 to 6, the tune is rocking him.

I'll praise you, Lord, with all my heart. Before the gods I'll sing your praise. I'll bow towards your holy place and bless your holy name always.

Psalms 138 on page 179, singing the verses marked 1 to 6 to God's praise. I'll praise you, Lord, with all my heart.

Before the gods I'll sing your praise. I'll bow to your holy place unless your holy name always.

[14 : 40] I'll praise you for your faithfulness and for your God.

And for your God, and for your love, O Lord, for over all things you have praised your holy name.

Your holy name, your holy name, unfaithful word. The very day I call to you, You gave an answer to my plea.

You made me bold within myself with beauty song You strengthened me.

O Lord, let all have kings give praise when from your mouth they hear your word.

[16 : 18] let them extol the ways of God for it's the glory of the Lord.

Lord, although the Lord God dwells on high, the lowly person He protects, whereas the proud and for him one He knows how far the heart we share.

Amen. Our reading tonight from God's Word is from the book of Exodus. Exodus chapter 2. Just the last few verses of Exodus chapter 2 from verse 23 and reading on into chapter 3 as far as verse 12.

Exodus chapter 2 So Exodus 2 at verse 23 During those many days the king of Egypt died and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help.

Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.

[18 : 04] God saw the people of Israel and God knew. Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked and behold the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.

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. Then he said, Do not come near.

Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. And he said, I am the God of your 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 at God. Then the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters.

[19 : 18] I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that 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, and the Jebusites.

And now behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the 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? 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."
And so on. Again, we pray for God's blessing to follow our reading of His Word, and as we come to look at this passage in a short time.

We'll sing again before then, in Psalm 99, in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 99, that's on page 361. We're singing verses 1 to 5, the tune of Covenanters.

[20 : 40] The eternal Lord doth reign as King, let all the people quake. He sits between the cherubims, let the earth be moved and shake. The Lord in Zion, great and high above all people is.

Thy great and dreadful name, for it is holy, let them bless. Psalm 99, these verses 1 to 5. May 10 enter as Emily's a god maidens,...

they are the great and part is not in water in the 12th list. Let the earth be moved and shake.

It sits between the cherubims. Let the earth be moved and shake.

The Lord in Zion, great and high above, All people is.

[22 : 03] Thy great undreadful name for it is holy. Let them bless.

His holy, let them bless. His holy, let them bless.

Thy great undreadful name for it is holy. Let them bless.

The King's strength also judgment, And love's so setless equity. Just judgment thou dost execute, And Jacob righteous thee.

And Jacob righteous thee. And Jacob righteous thee.

[23 : 14] Just judgment thou dost execute, And Jacob righteous thee.

The Lord has got exalted upon high, And reverently to ye.

Before his boots to worship him, The holy one is he.

The holy one is he. The holy one is he.

Faith on his boots to worship him, The holy one is he.

[24 : 11] If you turn with me please now to Exodus chapter 3, And this evening I'm going to look at verses 1 to 10.

Exodus chapter 3, verses 1 to 10. When you come to read verse 4 here of this chapter, When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see God call to him out of the bush, Moses, Moses.

That is the first time God had spoken for 400 years to the people of Israel. The last time God spoke to the people of Israel before that was back in Genesis 46, verses 1 to 4, where you find God addressing Jacob as he prepared to go down to Egypt with his family.

And during those 400 years, not a word had been heard of a revelation from God to add to what he had said up to that point. And now we're coming in Exodus 3 to the next stage of God's plan for his people.

It's not a new plan. Nothing's changed in that respect. But after all that time without hearing the voice of God, God again comes to speak to them, to reveal himself to them, to give them instructions, and to provide especially for them the leadership that Moses is going to bring to them to deliver them from Egypt and from their bondage and slavery there.

[25 : 51] In chapter 2, verses 24 to 25, which we also read, we see that God heard that groaning and God remembered his covenant with Abraham and Isaac and with Jacob.

And that takes you back to chapter 15 of Genesis. Just flick through to there. I'll just read the verses for you. Chapter 15 of Genesis, verses 13 to 16, where God there speaks to Abraham and the promise that he gave to Abraham, which is now being picked up again as you come to Exodus chapter 3.

There in Genesis 15, at verse 13, God spoke as following. And following, he said to Abraham, know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, that meant Egypt, and will be servants there.

And they will be afflicted for 400 years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions.

So it goes back to there, to the promise given to Abraham. And then all of this time, since he spoke to Jacob shortly after that, God had been silent.

[27 : 07] And you can see that in chapter 3 here, this is not a new plan that God is formulating. It's not as if he's saying, well, all these years have come to pass.

They're now past these 400 years, and I haven't spoken a word to reveal myself further. So here is my new plan. This has always been God's plan. The 400 years of silence were as much a part of God's plan as anything else.

They fitted into that program that God had for his people. And so the whole thing is just one long chain of events or non-events, but everything is within the plan that God had for them.

And for the past 80 years, at this moment in this chapter 3 of Exodus, for the previous 80 years before then, God had been preparing one man, this man Moses, for the task of leading the people of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt.

The remarkable career of Moses. He was 40 when he had to flee from Egypt, having killed an Egyptian, and ended up in the land of area of Midian, where he took a wife and had a son.

[28 : 22] And now after that time, 40 years has elapsed, and he's been in Midian for 40 years, and God is sending him back to Egypt to lead the people out. And then the next 40 years of his life, he'd be leading them through the desert until they're in sight of the promised land.

Three periods of 40 years in the life of this one man. And all of that, or the first two of these periods, the 80 years, are all to do with God preparing him for this mammoth task of taking the people, leading the people out of Egypt.

And you notice in verse 1 what it says about him, he was keeping, shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and he came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Why does that strike you as somewhat remarkable? Well, if you go back to chapter 46, it tells us what the people of Egypt thought of shepherds.

When Joseph and his family came down to Egypt, chapter 46 and verse 34, this is what Joseph instructed Jacob to say, you shall say, your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers, in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.

[29 : 52] Now, why is that important? It's important because when it came to Moses being here, being sent back to Egypt, having spent these years, God preparing him for this great task, you can see from that that God does not act according to human wisdom.

If the question were asked, what sort of person would I prepare if God were to ask us to go back to Egypt to lead my people out of Egypt, you wouldn't actually think of a shepherd. You wouldn't think that a shepherd would have any place in Egypt where shepherding was an abomination to the people.

If you're going to ask the question as you come into the New Testament, what kind of woman would actually bear the humanity of our Lord, the Son of God incarnate as He came into this world, what kind of woman would give birth to the Lord Jesus Christ?

You might say, well, surely if He's the Son of God as He is, and He's coming to take human nature to Himself, surely it would be somebody of a high status, somebody like a princess.

No, He chose a poor woman betrothed or engaged to a man who was certainly not worthy to Joseph. And all of that reminds us tonight of how God operates.

[31 : 07] God does not actually pay attention in that way, in that sense, to people who might think of themselves as fit and worthy to be used by God in the advance of His kingdom.

Very often, as Paul says to the Corinthians, it's those things that the world sees as ignoble, as too simple, as just not worthy to be considered at all. The kind of people that you would never place in the world's standards in a position of meaningful importance.

No, God does that. God takes people like you and I. God takes people who are just ourselves, really nothing whatsoever in His presence in terms of ability, but He takes us and He puts us and says, right, I'm choosing you to be a servant, to lead my people.

That's what He's saying here about Moses. God's choices and God's methods, they don't fit in with worldly standards, with worldly ideas, with human wisdom and human thinking.

He has His own mind and His own mind is always superior. As He said to Isaiah, my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. So let's just be in awe of God and reflect tonight upon how He operates according to His standard, to His knowledge, to His wisdom and carries through His great plan of redemption, sometimes through people that you wouldn't have thought at all would be suitable for fitting into that plan.

[32 : 49] Well, two things we want to look at here. First of all, how Moses meets with God and some of what took place there as he came to stand in the vicinity of this burning bush.

Moses meeting with God, verses 2 to 5 of the chapter, and then from verse 6 onwards, we'll say something about how God revealed Himself to Moses.

So Moses meets with God and God reveals Himself to Moses. Here you find in verse 2, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.

And he looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. Here was this remarkable phenomenon. It wasn't a dream that he had. It wasn't something that was unreal. It wasn't something that was other than just literal, actual, a bush burning there in the wilderness.

And it was on fire, very much on fire, and yet the wood, the substance of that bush, was not burnt up, totally against what normally happens. When you light a fire, whether it's wood or whatever, the fire devours the material that it burns upon until it goes into ashes.

[34 : 02] Well, here is a bush. It was on fire. Flames were appearing out of it, but it was not being burnt up. It remained in its substance the bush it had always been.

What did that indicate? What is that about? What does that teach us? It's a famous symbol as it was used by the church down through the ages. Well, it indicated, as we'll see, that God's presence was there.

Look at what you read there. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in the midst of a bush. Now, the angel of the Lord, as you know, is a figure that appears at different stages in the Old Testament.

And sometimes he appears and speaks for God, but actually sometimes he appears and speaks as God. So, it's actually a manifestation of God in a certain appearance in such a way that takes the appearance of the angel here, or sometimes it could be in the form of a human, but the angel of the Lord is a manifestation by God of himself.

And it's not improper to actually see it as we treat it carefully. It's a manifestation of the second person of the Trinity who came to be incarnate, to take out human nature in Jesus Christ.

[35 : 25] And if you carefully protect the fact that he only became incarnate at that stage we read of in the New Testament, it's still not illegitimate to say that this was a manifestation of God.

What came to be more clearly the second person of the Trinity in the New Testament taking out human nature to himself. That's a whole area of theology. It's something that has been studied down through the years very profitably and still has a lot of mystery to it.

But here is the angel of the Lord, this figure, appearing to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush. Now, I think it's probably better translating that that the angel of the Lord appeared to him as a flame of fire.

As a flame of fire. Not just in a flame of fire. The angel of the Lord appeared as a flame. He took the form of this flame in the midst of this bush that was burning and was not consumed.

Now, as you know, the Scottish church took the burning bush as its emblem way back in history and that still remains with us. And very often it had the Latin inscription underneath from the Hebrew text here, nektamin consumabater, which means yet it was not consumed from the words that you find there in verse 2.

[36 : 45] He looked, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And sadly, I think when our own church reconfigured the emblem of the burning bush that you find now, it's just like three flames appearing, but there's nothing there.

There are no words there. The Latin phraseology has been just rubbed away. There's nothing there, which I think is a great pity because you cannot really understand the symbol without the words.

And the words actually mean nektamin consumabater means yet it was not consumed. It takes you to the whole essence of what happened here in the days of Moses. That's a bit of a moan, but never mind.

It's something that I think is important in its own right. Anyway, what it represented was that not so much the bush representing the church and persecution represented by the flames, and yet the church was not destroyed.

That's how it was traditionally looked at, but I think it's better really to, if we can be so bold as to say, that it's better to regard the flames in the bush as indicative of the presence of God.

[37 : 58] The presence of God in His people or in the midst of His people, and yet they are not consumed, which itself is a remarkable thing, that God should actually dwell in the midst of a sinful people that He makes holy, and yet they are not consumed.

They are not brought under His wrath in such a way as just lays upon them what they deserve for their sins. So you see here, God called them, in verse 4, out of the bush.

In other words, the bush there and the flames in the bush were to do with the presence of God, the holy burning presence of God. And while the bush was not consumed, there is a representation for you of the miracle of the wonder of grace that God comes to live in the midst of His people as the holy God because He doesn't change His holiness.

He doesn't actually leave His holiness as it were aside or limit that holiness in any sense in order to dwell amongst us as a people. It is the holy God, the God who is as holy today as He was in the days of Moses, as He was from all eternity.

He was perfectly holy, righteous, pure. And this is the God who dwells today with His people and in the midst of His people. And God called Him out of the midst of the bush.

[39 : 23] So there you find this remarkable phenomenon. So remarkable that Moses went to draw near to the bush. It drew his attention.

It stimulated his curiosity. How could this be? How could there be such a thing as a bush in the desert burning really with fire, with real fire, and yet that bush is not consumed?

The wood is not being burnt up. What is this? Moses turned aside to see. He said, I will turn aside to see this great sight why the bush is not burned.

When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush and said, Moses, Moses, and he said, here am I. He said, don't come near. Take your sandals off your feet for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.

Moses is stopped as he seeks to draw near to get a closer look at this remarkable bush.

[40 : 24] And God stops him. God stops him by calling out his name, Moses. Moses. And it's actually a personal summons where God is speaking to Moses and actually stopping him at that moment by repeating his name which really is a summons to him to come and pay attention to what God is now going to say.

And that's really where our service of God begins, isn't it, for ourselves. We come to serve God not because we wake up one day and say, I think it would be a good idea to be a Christian or I think it would be a good idea to be a minister in the church.

That's not where our service begins. It begins in our meeting with God. It begins with God bringing us to know himself, to be interviewed by himself, to speak to him and for him to speak to us through his word.

And it doesn't matter whether we're in pulpits or whether like yourselves you serve God in different ways. That's where our service begins. It begins with our personal meeting with God, our personal relationship with God, our personal meeting with God in such a way as reveals himself to us savingly.

And as we come to be saved and brought to know him through Jesus Christ, he sets us on our way to serve him. And that's where our service begins.

[41 : 44] And that is very important. And Moses responds, Here I am. You often find that in different parts of the Old Testament especially where God is addressing someone like Moses or maybe it's Isaiah or others where he calls to them and repeats their name as summoning him into his presence and where their immediate response is, Here I am.

Here am I. In other words, Moses is standing there ready to serve, responding to the call of God, responding to the voice that speaks to him out of the bush, the voice he knows is the voice of God.

Here I am. And God says to him, Do not come near.

Take your sandals off your feet for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. It wasn't holy ground before.

It wouldn't necessarily be holy ground afterwards. Why is it holy ground there and then? It is holy ground because God is there. It's holy ground because the holy God is there.

[42 : 59] It's holy ground because God has chosen to make his presence live there for that moment at least. That's what makes a person holy when God comes to bring them to himself, to reveal himself to them, sanctifies them, sets them apart, lives in their lives.

That's what makes a place a holy place. A holy place is not a place because it's associated with something in the past, something to do with religion. It's not a holy place because people have chosen to regard it and label it as holy.

There are many places in the world today where there are no longer church services or any services held at all where there are just empty buildings and people will tell you, no, you go into that place and it just feels so different.

It feels so holy. Well, maybe that's the case. But what makes a place holy it's the presence of God. And when God is in a place, that place is holy while God makes His presence known there, while God is present there here tonight.

God's presence. God being in a place through His people or in His people, it renders this place sacred. It's not sacred because of its history.

[44 : 17] It's not sacred because of whose congregation actually uses it. It is sacred because it's associated with the divine presence of God.

And when God is present, as Moses has instructed, you approach very carefully. you pay regard to what God's presence is about and whose presence it is.

This holy God, this pure God. He had to take off His sandals of His feet because I think His sandals would have had some dirt on them, some dust on them.

That would have been itself a representation, if you like, of defilement. And He wasn't to carry that into the presence of God. Take off your sandals for the place on which you're standing is holy ground.

And whenever we come into the presence of God, we should be conscious that we're always coming into holy ground, onto holy ground. We're coming to deal with God ourselves in our personal, individual sense.

[45 : 23] We don't draw near to God and stand as if we had a right to His audience. We don't come into His presence without being conscious of the defilement of our sin, even when we know that our sin has been forgiven, that we are cleansed by the blood of Christ, that we are His people.

We still come into His presence and we acknowledge His holiness. We acknowledge His perfect holiness because His holiness has not changed. Even if He's changed our lives for the good, you still come into the presence of God and you do what Moses did.

He hid His face. You come with humility and you come with confession of your uncleanness.

Why do we still, in prayer, ask God to cleanse us, to forgive us our sins, to make us holy because we're coming into the presence of God and we're conscious of our defilement, of our sinfulness, of the dirt of our sin.

And we appear before God and say, Lord, as such a person as I am, as a sinner in myself, I am not worthy that I should come into Your presence. I need to, Lord, ask You to cleanse me, to prepare me to meet with You, to prepare my heart that I'm coming to meet with this holy God.

[46 : 46] And if there's one thing that's wrong with the world, and if I may say if there's one thing that's wrong with the wider church throughout the world, it's that we've lost sight of the holiness of God and lost sight of what the holiness of God means and what the holiness of God imposes upon us in terms of our approach to Him.

I don't mean that we should be legalist or legalistic, that we should actually be just formally coming before God in a fashion that would formally acknowledge that this is the holy God.

What I mean is when we come to the presence of God consciously, and really dealing seriously and earnestly in our hearts with who God is and what God is like. How dare we come into His presence if we were to do so at any time without due preparation and due thought and due prayer.

Because our God is holy. And as our God is holy, we have to treat Him with that respect and awe and worship that He is worthy of.

And so here is Moses meeting with God. The burning bush draws his attention. God speaks to him and the angel of the Lord out of the midst of that bush.

[48 : 06] He hears the words of God. And what we'll see now from verse 6 is what God added to what He said. He instructed him regarding taking off the sandals of His feet and that the place He was standing in was holy ground.

But that was just the introduction. And then he went on to add to that the substance of the message or the revelation God had for him and it was this. He said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and so on. So you see, God is revealing Himself here to Moses as the covenant God of His people.

That's why I said early on in our study tonight that this is not a new plan. This is not a different God to the God that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshipped. He is actually emphasizing to Moses, I am that God.

And despite the fact that 400 years have gone by when I haven't said a word to the people you belong to, I am still the same God, I am still the same covenant God, I am still committed to these people in the covenant, promises that I made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[49 : 22] That's why He calls them in verse 7, my people. I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt. Now one of the things that you and I should be deeply thankful for tonight is that we are not dealing with a different God to the God that Moses came to know and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew.

He's the same covenant God. He's the God who has not changed in terms of His covenant promises and His covenant dealings with His people down through all of these thousands of years.

He's the same God to you tonight as He was to Moses. He hasn't changed. His promises haven't changed. His objectives have not changed. His purpose has not changed.

And tonight you're thankful that you don't deal with a God who is fluctuating from one moment to the next, from one year to the next, who actually says, well, I'm not going to be to you today what I was yesterday or last year.

I am the God of your Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. If there's one thing that characterizes this God we worship tonight, it's His consistency.

[50 : 35] His consistency as the Holy God committed to His covenant, committed to His promises, committed to bringing His people out of slavery, committed to bringing them home to be with Himself.

Now you see, Moses has gone from curious to being in awe. He hid his face for he was afraid to look upon God.

And as we said a minute ago, that's really taking us to the heart of worship, isn't it? Worship is not something you just follow through mechanically. We don't sing the Psalms just in a formal fashion mechanically without really thinking of what we're saying.

And even if we're thinking of what we're saying, we don't just sing them as if it was just a matter of routine. We sing them as part of our relationship with God. We sing them and we read His Word and we proclaim His Word and we listen to His Word because we live in awe and obedience and humility in the presence of God.

We hide our face, as it were. We're afraid to look upon God. And yet God has revealed Himself so wonderfully in the person of Jesus Christ which is saying to you tonight, you can approach Me.

[51 : 52] You can come to Me. You can come to Me through Him. You can come into My presence. I've made provision for you. You are safe in the grace that is in My Son. Is there any greater privilege than that?

You know, if you know your heart and I know my heart as surely we do tonight as sinful human beings, one of the things that should impose the greatest wonder on us is that we can come into the presence of God.

That we can live in fellowship with God. That we can be represented by this burning bush in which God dwells, in which the flame of God's presence, God's living presence is there and yet we are not consumed.

We are not swallowed up and devoured in God's wrath against sin. Why? Because of Jesus Christ. Because He is our shield. He is our exceeding great reward.

In Him, we come into the presence of God and through Him, we hold that relationship with Him that His grace has opened for us. So there's your covenant, God.

[53 : 07] And God will not change. Whatever happens in your life, however different your life may be tomorrow from what it is today, whatever events in your life may yet lie in wait for you in God's providence that you have never experienced before, whatever depths of pain or challenge or difficulty await you on life's journey, and we cannot predict these.

But I guarantee you, and you can guarantee for yourself on the basis of God's Word and what God's Word says about Himself, that this is what is true always of you when you are in Christ, when you know Him as your Savior.

I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I will remain the same to you. I will be faithful to you. I will never change my relationship with you. You are my people.

Here's the wonder of grace, this covenant God. He's not just the covenant God, though. He is the concerned God. Concerned, I mean in the sense of being involved with His people.

Because look what He goes on to speak of here from verses 7 through to verse 10. I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I've heard their cry because of their taskmasters.

[54 : 26] I know their sufferings. I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

There are four elements there that are themselves wonderful in the truth of them. He says, I have surely seen the affliction of my people.

Where has God been for 400 years? He hasn't spoken for 400 years. Where has He been? What's He been doing? He's been looking at His people. He's been intensely interested in His people. The 400 years gap of speaking is no indication that God has forgotten them, that somehow or other they have fallen out of God's favor or God's view.

I have seen, surely seen the affliction. I have certainly seen the affliction of my people. God's eye is never off His people. Whatever His providence has ordered for them.

There's another wonderful jewel that you can put up and hold in the casket of your heart. I have surely seen your affliction.

[55 : 37] There isn't a drop of suffering in your life as a Christian that has not already been entered into God's record book, that God has not taken careful note of, that God is unaware of.

I have surely seen the affliction of my people. And then He says, and I have heard their cry. I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters.

In other words, not only has God been taking note of where they are and what's being done to them and the suffering they're going through, He has heard their cry. He has actually been moved by their pained cries.

I don't let anybody think or tell you that God is a God who is so stiffly in regard of His people that He's on the borders of their lives, looking from a distance into their lives, but really totally unmoved by anything they're going through.

I have heard their cry and I know their sufferings.

[56 : 43] He's been moved by their predicament, by their conditions. And I know their sufferings.

What a God! What a privilege they have that despite all the fact that they haven't heard from Him for 400 years, He has all the time had His eye upon them.

And He's now saying to them, I know what you're going through. I've heard your cry. I haven't just listened to it, but I've heard it in a way that's moved me to pity you. And here I am.

I'm ready to come to your rescue. Well, there is God for us tonight, friends. And when you look at Jesus and the fact that that is God having taken our nature to Himself, the person of the Son of God who has come to take our nature.

Why did He take our nature? So that He would take our sins and die for our sins. But one of the other aspects of that is that He would be a faithful and merciful High Priest.

[57 : 59] That He would be able to support us in all our sufferings, having been tempted in all points like as we are and yet without sin. That is the God who is moved.

The God who takes note carefully of our predicament and our sufferings. And who tonight is assuring you if you're experiencing suffering on His behalf for His sake.

God's not just got a casual acquaintance with you or acquaintance with your predicament. He's taking stock very carefully, very lovingly, in a very covenantal way that this is what His child is going through.

And He's saying to you, I'm here for you. I know your suffering. I know what you're going through. And then He says, I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, to bring them out of that land to a good and broad land.

I have surely seen their affliction. I have heard their cry. I know their suffering. And now, fourthly, He's saying, I have come down. There is God, you see, reminding Moses that He's actually on high.

[59 : 14] Here He is, represented in the bush, in the flame of the bush. The voice is coming from the midst of the bush. But Moses is under no illusion, left under no illusion as to who God is and where His position is.

I have come down because I am up there. I am the King. I am the Creator. I am the One who controls all things.

I am the Sovereign God. But I have come down. You see, His view of the people, His hearing their cry, His seeing of their sufferings, His knowledge of their sufferings, is now something that lies behind His action.

His concern for them has led to this great action. I have come down. And where do you better see that than in the person of Jesus Christ, His Son?

Because when you look at the life of Jesus in the Gospels and in the Epistles, when you look at the record of His life in the Gospels, and when you look at the amount of time that's given or space that's given to His trial and then His death on the cross, which is the greater part of all the four Gospels, you can really say as Jesus is crucified and as He expires on the cross, you can take these words of Exodus 3 and very meaningfully apply them to what you're seeing.

[60 : 39] I have come down. I have come down to deliver them. And I have come down to deliver them and to take them up into this great land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

In other words, what God is saying to us there is really in the two sides of it to deliver them on the one hand out of the suffering of Egypt, out of the bondage, the slavery of Egypt, and bringing them into the wonderful liberty of Canaan and the bounty of that land.

That's in essence an image of salvation for you. What is salvation? Salvation is God taking us out of our sin and misery, that state into which we fell and brought ourselves, and He's taking us out of that and into that great land, the inheritance that awaits in heaven for His people.

That's salvation. That's redemption. That's this God acting on behalf of His people and for His people to deliver them, but also to bring them in too.

And you notice how He describes the land of Canaan, not just a land flowing with milk and honey, and then the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites. Why does He mention all of these here at this point?

[61 : 55] I think it's more than just to actually remind Moses of what He's going to be confronting when they reach the land of Canaan. He's more or less saying to Moses, I think, at this point, this land is so good that He's able to sustain all of these people here and now.

That's the land I'm taking you into. And who is He saying this about? That He's going to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and bring them out of that land to a good and broad land.

Who's He talking about? He's talking about slaves who don't have a land, who don't have an inheritance, who don't have a place to call their own.

And here is God because this is redemption, taking us as slaves of sin, taking us out of the slavery of sin, and giving us, instead of that bondage, giving us the broad land of heaven, the inheritance that is undefiled, incorruptible, and awaits in heaven for His people.

You see, He's calling it not just a good land, but a broad land. Here are these people as slaves in Egypt, and where are they? What's their condition?

[63 : 04] They're being squeezed. The life is being squeezed out of them. They're in the land of Goshen, a very good part of Egypt, but they've multiplied hugely. They're now being squeezed into this small area compared to the whole of Egypt.

And God is saying, that's not your home. The land I have for you is a good and a broad land. There's plenty of space for you there.

You're going to thrive there. It's the best I could give you, a land flowing with milk and honey. From owning no land, they come to an inheritance in Canaan, the best plot on earth.

This is salvation. This is salvation portrayed in the history of these people of Israel. This is salvation as it's represented there, God delivering us from sin, from the confinement, from the bondage of sin, from the restrictions of a sinful life.

What is He doing? He's taking us out of that. He's delivering us. He's taking us into a broad and good land. Redemption, salvation, heaven, and inheritance in glory.

[64 : 22] That's why the New Testament so often speaks about this. I can just, in finishing, remind you of one version, the letter to the Colossians, chapter 1, verses 12 to 14.

This is the prayer of Paul for the Colossian Christians. May you be strengthened with all power, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, a good and a broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

But you notice finally verse 12 of Exodus 3. This will 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. The word serve there really means worship. You shall worship God on this mountain. There you have it. There's the climax. The whole point of salvation is that we will come to be worshippers of God.

[65 : 41] Why has He saved you? What is His purpose in saving you? To place you along with others who will forever worship God, giving praise and honor and glory to Him.

You look at the passages in the book of Revelation that give you some indication as far as we can of what heaven is like. And how is it described?

Well, it's very often described as that place where there is praise and honor and glory given to God and His majesty. Where our people are gathered together as a saved people of God worshipping Him forevermore without interruption.

There is, friends, our privilege to know God as our deliverer, our Savior, the one who is promising tonight to bring us into this broad and good land, the land of heaven.

Isn't that your hope? Isn't that your prospect? Isn't that your experience already of this God?

[66 : 57] Aren't you here as a worshipper of God tonight because He has saved you? because He has delivered you, because His promise is to you, I will bring you into that inheritance as surely as I have delivered you out of the bondage of sin.

To God be the praise, to God be the glory, to Jesus Christ be all majesty and dominion and power now and forevermore. because only He deserves.

This great covenant God deserves our worship and our allegiance. Let's pray. Our gracious God, we find it so difficult to find words adequate to describe the thoughts of our hearts even as we come to realize the enormity of your redemption.

And Lord, we pray that as we consider this evening the wonder of your deliverance of your people from sin and the wonderful prospect of being brought to be finally with you in that heaven that flows with milk and honey spiritually, we thank you tonight for that redemption.

We thank you for the one who has brought it to us, who has come into this world and given himself to the death of the cross, who has given himself to be made a curse for us, the one who knew no sin, to be made sin for his people, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

[68 : 32] Sanctify us, we pray. Give us day by day to be concerned, to draw near to you, the holy God, living by faith in Christ and being persuaded that not only is it our privilege to do so, but as we exercise our privilege, Lord, help us, we pray, to be convinced and to have assurance that you will not lay your hand upon us to destroy us, but that you will ask us again into your presence to experience more of your blessing.

Hear us now, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Let's sing in conclusion now from, in the Scottish Psalter, from Psalm 99 again.

Psalm 99, page 361, verses 6 to 9. To the tune Bethesda, Moses and Aaron among his priests, Samuel with them that call upon his name, these called on God, and he them answered all.

Within the pillar of the cloud he unto them did speak, the testimonies he them taught and laws they did not break. And so the psalm concludes, do ye exalt the Lord our God, and at his holy hill do ye him worship, for the Lord our God is holy still.

Verses 6 to 9 of Psalm 99. Moses and Aaron among his priests, Samuel with them that call upon his name, these calls on God, I need them answered all.

[70 : 36] Within the pillar of the cloud, he unto them did speak, the testimonies he them taught, and laws they did not break.

Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God, Thou wast a God that came, are done to them, O Lord their deeds, Thou rooted, fengeness have.

Do ye exalt the Lord our God, and at his holy hill, do ye him worship, for the Lord our God, our God is holy still.

I'll go to the door here, to my right this evening. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

Amen. Die of whom he is holy by the Lord is holy with you, O Lord your glory and themision to God.

[73 : 02] YN