

Sermon 8, The God Who Will Deliver, Exodus 3:7-12

Proposition: God knows His people's plight and sends a man to deal with it.

- I. The God Who Sees, v. 7a, 9b
- II. The God Who Hears, v. 7b, 9a
- III. The God Who Comes to Save, v. 8
- IV. The God Who Sends a Man to Deal with it, v. 10
- V. The God Who Goes With His Servant, v. 12

Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have already noted that God is largely absent from Exodus 2. But He is omnipresent in Exodus 3 & 4. This is the most sustained outbreak of God's revelation of Himself since Abraham. And there is a lot to see of our God's character in these chapters. Particularly here, as He announces the purpose of His self-manifestation in the fire of the burning bush, we see a great deal of what our God is like. He is Savior. That is His character. He comes to deliver His people, and deliver them He will over the course of the rest of the book. But as we saw two weeks ago, God heard, remembered, saw, and knew. Our passage this morning simply highlights those actions all over again. So join with me in looking at the God who saves, and in particular at the God who saves by sending a man to do it.

I. The God Who Sees, v. 7a, 9b

This is so important. The Bible emphasizes it repeatedly: Idols don't have five senses. They haven't got even one sense, or any amount of sense. Idols cannot see. They have no perception of what's going on. But God comes to Moses, and as we saw last week manifests Himself as the fearsome self-subsisting fire. Moses responds in fear. But the important thing to notice is that this God who makes Moses so afraid is the living God. He can see! "Seeing I have seen," He says. That's the opening of the conversation proper, once the preliminary matters are out of the way.

Moses was afraid to look, but God was not afraid to look. Moses went out after 40 years to look on the burdens of his brethren. God had been looking on them from the beginning.

You serve a God who can see. He's looking at you right now. He knows what you need right now. His name is El-Roi, the God who sees. And of course, the word "see" is related to "foresee" or, in its Latin version, "provide." The two words etymologically mean the same thing. God saw His people. It's emphasized again in v. 9. Idiot Bible commentators think that because vv. 7 & 9 both say that God sees and hears, but say it in opposite order, that the author of the text as we have it was trying to put together disparate traditions. Wiser heads see that God was able to repeat Himself and emphasize His seeing ability.

So if God can see, what does that mean for you? That your situation is known. Your problems are taken into account. God reserves the right to intervene in His own time, not yours. But He does see. It also means, of course, that you can't fool Him or hide from Him. If you have

something you want to keep God from noticing in your life, good luck. Indeed, you can't hide your sin or anything from the God who sees and who provides.

II. The God Who Hears, v. 7b, 9a

Furthermore, your God hears. He heard the cry of the sons of Israel. Do you pray? Do you believe that your groans and petitions, articulate and inarticulate, are something He pays attention to? I've said it before, but I'll say it again: As long as you believe that God is listening, you pray. He hears!

III. The God Who Comes to Save, v. 8

And when God sees and when God hears, what does He do? He does not ignore what He sees and hears. He comes to deal with it. Specifically, He tells Moses that He has come to deliver His people from their bondage under Egyptian power.

God came down. Yes, this is anthropomorphic language. In an important sense, God does not have a specific location, for He is omnipresent. He fills and overflows all space; the heaven and the heaven of heaven cannot contain Him. Meditate sometime on the immensity of God. It will leave you speechless. The size of Him! He is beyond all size, larger than the universe, greater than the most infinite distance your mind can imagine.

Yet of course, God is not talking about His omnipresence here. He was indeed present to see the taskmasters whipping His people; He was right next to them as they groaned under their bondage. But His omnipresence is not the issue. Rather, He is referring to His heavenly residence. God came out to look. He came down to Earth from Heaven. Now, we know that that's a description of how we would experience it. How God would experience it is far beyond our ability to conceive. The point is that God left Heaven and descended to this particular bush on the backside of the desert, and He did so because of His unfailing commitment to Abraham and his seed.

We will see in two weeks that God's name, His essential character, is "Being." He tells Moses, as the LXX renders it, "I am He who is." God repeats that description of Himself in the book of Revelation, indicating that it is indeed an accurate name for our Heavenly Father. But in the book of Revelation, He goes farther, saying not just that He is but also that He is the one who will come.

God shows up! He comes, and He comes for the purpose of delivering His people when He sees and hears their plight. He will not only free them from Egypt, but bring them to a new home, a land that He has promised them. It's an amazing land, too.

We can imagine a deity who would rescue His people but then leave them on their own, rather as newly emancipated African-Americans were freed from slavery and then left to make their own way in this country at the end of the Civil War. "You're free. Now figure out where you're going to sleep tonight." But that's not how God does it. The freedom He promises and delivers not only liberates from bondage, but gives an entire place to live. Land symbolizes and sustains life. If you have land, you have a place to be, a place to live, a place to farm and keep animals, a place to build a home and a life. If you are landless, you can be asked to leave any place in which you are. But if the land you're on is your land, then you are secure.

And what sort of land is God going to give to them? He tells them that it's good. He tells them that it's wide. The land to which He's sending them is huge, big enough for half-a-dozen nations to dwell in. One nation can easily fit into a land that's holding six right now. Imagine buying a parcel that has 6 homes on it, and asking the question "Is this parcel large enough for my family to live on?" If it can hold 6 homes, it can hold me! If it can hold six nations, it can hold the Hebrews.

So all this is good news. God is going to get involved! But how is He going to get involved? By what means will He deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians and bring them up to that good land large enough for six?

IV. The God Who Sends a Man to Deal with it, v. 10

It's as though God says, "Moses, I'm so glad you asked. You're it."

Moses was probably really glad that he was still hiding his face at this point, because I'm sure he would not have wanted God to see it.

Brothers and sisters, if you've ever been in pastoral ministry, you know that there are quite a few people with really good ideas about what the church should do. There are a lot of sincere Christians who will come to me and say "Pastor, don't you think the church should do x?"

It's curious, you know, that if I say "Why yes it should, and I think God is calling you to lead that ministry," the person inevitably has a minor stroke. "My good idea for the church was a good idea for the pastor to implement, not a good idea for me to implement!"

Well, in this case, Moses had not come to God saying "Please, Lord, deliver your people from Egypt." Instead, God had come to Moses and said "I'm going to deliver my people from Egypt. Moses, you are the one who will do it for me. You will deliver my people from Egypt."

Well, we saw that the beginning of the chapter replicates the pattern seen repeatedly in the Bible: through the waters, to the mountain, for worship. This part of the chapter picks up on another theme that we see over and over throughout the Bible: The reluctant prophet, "Jonah clinging wildly to the whale's tongue," as Flannery O'Connor described it. No, that's not the theme I want to highlight here. It is a theme, and we're going to talk about it at length in a few weeks. But the bigger theme, the one that runs through the whole Bible, is that God's solution to the problems is a solution He delivers through a human being, and specifically a man. Yes, daughters are part of His plan, as ch. 2 highlights so memorably. But throughout the Bible, from the calling of Adam to subdue the earth to the calling of Jesus to save the world, God *always* sends a man to do the job. It's how He ruled Israel. It's how He fulfilled His promise of a seed for Abraham. And, as I already mentioned, the calling of Jesus as a man in whom all of God's promises would be fulfilled is the ultimate proof of this. Again, this principle is why every book in the Bible is written by a man. And brothers and sisters, I hope you see the obvious application here. God has not changed. If you want to see your prayers answered, if you want to see the world changed for the better, the people of God delivered, the hungry fed and the naked clothed and the oppressors stopped, then you need to act according to God's calling. Don't be a self-appointed Messiah. That's not what I'm suggesting. Rather, what I'm saying is that every

one of you in here is provided for in worldly terms. You all have enough money to purchase a car, license and insure and maintain it, and put gas in it to get here. Why do you have that money? Because God gave it to you! That answer is perfectly true, and is the most complete answer to the question. But how did God give it to you? By you going out and working, that's how. Yes, God gave you your job, your skills, your strength, the mind and hands to work, and all the rest of it. But He expects you to make use of those things to carry out His program and His will. Well, that's what happened here with Moses. God said "I'm going to deliver them, which means you're going to deliver them" — just as God has said "I'm going to provide for your family, and I'm going to do it by you showing up to work five days a week for thirty years."

Do you understand that God carries out His plan through human means? Sometimes He acts directly in this world, of course. But that is the exception. In the Bible, miracles are rare. Did you hear that? I'll say it again: Miracles are rare. They are concentrated in the ministries of Moses, Elijah/Elisha, and Jesus. Outside those times, you'll be hard-pressed to find God changing physical circumstances or operating other than according to His ordinary providence. That's why I'm not a cessationist. God never made miracles the rule in any age of His Kingdom.

This church needs elders and deacons. It needs officers sent by Christ. I want you to think and pray about who would be good at that job, and go talk to that man and see whether he would be willing to serve. God sent Moses to do what some of us would consider God's job. And that's exactly the point. God's work is done by God's human servants.

V. The God Who Goes With His Servant, v. 12

Moses was reluctant to go, as we'll see. But we are talking today about what God showed Himself to be at the burning bush. And He showed Himself to be the God who goes with His servant. The answer to every question is "I will be with you." Are you qualified to be an elder in this church? Are you called to be a deacon here? If so, God will be with you. You and I can't minister in our own strength. Moses had already tried to rescue the people by himself; it couldn't be done. But God promised to go with Him.

Do you know this God? Do you feel His presence? Can you believe His promise to be with you such that you step out in faith and answer His call? You are not called (most likely) to bring any Jews out of Egypt. But you may be called to listen to widow Jones rattle on. You may be called to help this body get its charitable giving sorted. You may be called to all kinds of different ministries. Certainly you are called to personal godliness that spills over into family discipleship and personal evangelism. Are you listening to that call? Do you trust that God will be with you when you talk to your son about Jesus? That He will help you as you attempt to establish a prayer time in your daily routine? That He will assist you in getting your family to read the Bible together?

The sign God gave that it was really Him was one that required faith. It is a sign that won't come to pass for an entire year and more. And in the same way, the sign that you were serving God faithfully will be that you arrive on the mountain height of Heaven and worship God there. Then you'll know that the whole thing was true. Until then, you have plenty of other signs, including the existence of the church and the record of God as the self-feeding fire that

Moses left right here in Exodus 3. But for now, brothers and sisters, know that God is the God who knows His people's plight and sends a man to deliver them. And as you know that, believe it — and go in faith to obey the calling He's set before you. Amen.