

Compassionate Action
March 7, 2010
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But God...YOU PROMISED!

Have you ever cried out to God with that line?

- God...YOU PROMISED...
- I read Jeremiah 29:11:
- I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you not to harm you...to give you a hope and a future.

- I read Psalm 1:
- Blessed is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked...he'll be like a tree planted by water...everything he does will prosper.
- God...YOU PROMISED!

• I read Psalm 37 verses 3 & 4
3 Trust in the LORD and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

4 Delight yourself in the LORD
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

- God this AIN'T SAFE PASTURE and THESE ARE NOT THE DESIRES OF MY HEART.

- I thought I was SOMETHING SPECIAL!

- The Israelites of the Old Testament were SOMETHING SPECIAL.

Genesis 12:1a..2-3:

1 The LORD had said to Abram, ...

2 "I will make you into a great nation
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."

- And God brought them through a terrible famine and used Joseph to lead them and to find favor in Egypt.
- But then Joseph died. And a new king took over.

- And the king said these people are a pain and a threat...we've got to control the population
- Start killing every baby boy that is born!
- The Israelites must have cried out: God...YOU PROMISED! How can we be a great nation if they are killing us off at birth?
- Then there was a baby born in the midst of this MURDEROUS blood bath.
- This baby was SOMETHING SPECIAL!

Acts 7:20 in Stephen's speech he said...

20"At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child.[a]

Hebrews 11:23

23By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

- You know the story...his mother hid him in a basket in the river.
- Pharaoh's daughter found him and said: THIS BABY IS SOMETHING SPECIAL.
- And he was raised in the LAP OF LUXURY in the house of the very king who was trying to snuff out his people.
- For 40 years he went to the best schools and wore the best clothes and drove the best chariot!

Stephen said in Acts 7:22:

22Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

- But he was drawn to his REAL PEOPLE, the Israelite slaves
- And one day he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite and his sense of justice cried out and he KILLED the Egyptian!
- And though he hid the body in the sand...he found out there were witnesses to the crime.
- The jig was up...the king was furious...the only thing to do was run.
- So he ran to the desert...a FUGITIVE...and for 40 years he HID OUT working as a shepherd...so much for the life of luxury.
- Working himself to death...stuck on this mountain...tending these STINKIN sheep...in the middle of no where...FORGOTTEN.
- Not SO SPECIAL anymore.

God...YOU PROMISED!

Meanwhile back in Egypt...

Exodus 2:23-25

Exodus 2:23-25 (New International Version)

23 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. 24 God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. 25 So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

- Verse 24: “God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, Issac and Jacob.
- Does this mean God FORGOT his covenant?
- We know God is SOVEREIGN...He’s not FORGETFUL
- They didn’t have the book of Isaiah to read but we do...

Isaiah 59

1 Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear.

- Why do you think God allowed His people to suffer so long before He answered?
- Listen to Ezekiel 20:6-10

Ezekiel 20:6-10 (New International Version)

6 On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands. 7 And I said to them, "Each of you, get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

8 " But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt. 9 But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations they lived among and in whose sight I had revealed myself to the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt. 10 Therefore I led them out of Egypt and brought them into the desert.

- It appears that crying out to God was the LAST RESORT for the Israelites
- It’s been said that “God is not slow...but He IS patient.”

Matthew Henry in his commentary said...

*Now, at last, they began to think of God under their troubles, and to return to him from the idols they had served, Eze. 20:8. ... they had fretted at ... their trouble, but God was not in all their thoughts. ...But before God unbound them he put it into their hearts to cry unto him, ... It is a good sign that God is coming towards us with deliverance when he inclines and enables us to cry to him for it.*¹

¹Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ex 2:23). Peabody: Hendrickson.

- God had been working and watching all along but He ACTED when they cried out to Him for help.
- As hard as it is when we are going through troubles, we HAVE TO CLING TO GOD'S PROMISE that HE WILL ACT FOR OUR GOOD in HIS TIMING.
- Now, back to the desert...and let's see HOW God was planning to FREE HIS PEOPLE.

Exodus 3:1-6 (New International Version)

Exodus 3

Moses and the Burning Bush

1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

- Why a BURNING BUSH?

Warren Wiersbe said:

Some see in the burning bush a picture of the nation of Israel: they are God's light in the world, persecuted but not consumed. But the burning bush was also a picture of what God had planned for Moses: he was the weak bush but God was the empowering fire, and with God's

help, Moses could accomplish anything.

- Another more simplistic idea is this: A burning bush WOULD get your attention!
- After 40 years of tending sheep in the desert maybe it took something spectacular to get Moses' attention

The Life Application Study Bible says...

God spoke to Moses from an unexpected source: a burning bush. When Moses saw it, he went to investigate. God may use unexpected sources when communicating to us too, whether people, thoughts, or experiences. Be willing to investigate, and be open to God's surprises.

- Our lesson commentary reminds us:
 - God is Holy and has no need to reveal Himself or His plans to US
 - However, OUT OF LOVE, He reveals Himself to us, keeps His promises, and invites US to work with HIM to accomplish His will.
 - His HOLINESS and His FAITHFULNESS encourages us to TRUST HIM in times of difficulty.

Exodus 3:7-10 (New International Version)

7 The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

- Again, we see that God is confirming to Moses... "It may not feel like it but I have been WATCHING and I HAVE A PLAN for YOU and MY PEOPLE."
- I said a minute ago, A BURNING BUSH THAT TALKS WILL GET YOUR ATTENTION
- Suddenly you forget about the sheep and the heat and how bad your feet hurt!
- You forget about the 40 years you've been out here feeling like a loser!
- By the way, BURNING BUSHES DON'T COME WITH GAS IGNITORS
- You know the thing on your grill...you push the button and the flames ignite.
- Years ago I bought a book with a great title:
 - "The Bush Won't Burn And I'm All Out Of Matches"
- Have you been trying to help God by lighting bushes that He isn't in?
- God speaks in His way and in His timing with His plan
- It's our job to do what we know to do and wait for God to light the bush
- Just when you think God has forgotten you He GETS YOUR ATTENTION and SPEAKS!
- He hasn't FORGOTTEN you and me!
- He hasn't FORGOTTEN His promise.
- When God gets our ATTENTION off our problems and totally focused on HIM He reveals two things:
 - His plan and
 - OUR ROLE
- It's not our job to light BURNING BUSHES...it's our job to be LOOKING for BURNING BUSHES that He has lit!
- By the way, Moses had been SIDELINED for 40 years in the desert.
- He was 80 years old when God called him to his REAL DESTINY
- Why would God make Moses sit in the desert for 40 years until he was 80?

In his book on the life of Moses, Chuck Swindoll makes some points about how God used this time of OBSCURITY in Moses' life:

Notice carefully how the process took place through those years of desert learning, because it is the same with you and me. God must break through several hard, exterior barriers in our lives before He can renovate our souls. His persistent goal is to break through to the inner person.

What are those resistant layers in our hearts, and how does He break through to that hidden part? First, He finds pride. And He uses the sandpaper of obscurity to remove it ever so gradually.

Then He finds us gripped by fear---dread of our past, anxiety over our present, and terror over what may lie ahead---and He uses the passing of time to remove that fear. We learn that things aren't out of hand at all; they're in His hand.

He next encounters the barrier of resentment---the tyranny of bitterness. He breaks down that layer with solitude. In the silence of His presence, we gain a fresh perspective, gradually release our cherished rights, and let go of the expectations that held us hostage.

Finally, He gets down to the basic habits of living, he penetrates our inner person, and there He brings discomfort and hardship to buff away that last layer of resistance. Why? So that He might renovate us at the very core of our being.

- PRIDE removed by OBSCURITY
- FEAR removed by TIME (learning that God has it all under control)
- RESENTMENT & BITTERNESS removed by SOLITUDE in God's PRESENCE
- All of this DISCOMFORT & HARDSHIP is wearing down our RESISTENCE so God can USE US.

One last point and we're through:

- When God REVEALS HIS PLAN & OUR ROLE, our nature will cause us to doubt that He can accomplish what He's planned.
- It's natural to say "God, HOW are you going to do this?"
- And Moses did just that...you probably remember the story:
 - He argued with the Lord
 - God, I'm just a NOBODY
 - TRUST ME MOSES
 - God, I'm 80 years old
 - TRUST ME MOSES
 - These people are never gonna believe me
 - TRUST ME MOSES
 - Who will I tell them sent me?
 - Just say "I AM" has sent you...the God of Abraham, and Issac, and Jacob...TRUST ME MOSES

- Then in verses 19 & 20 of Exodus 3
- God reminds him of his **MIRACULOUS POWER**

Exodus 3:19-20 (New International Version)

19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. 20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

- When God **REVEALS HIS PLAN & OUR ROLE**, we'll tend to doubt.
- But over and over down through history and even in our own lives God has proven Himself faithful.
- No matter how hopeless the situation seems, God can perform “wonders” to accomplish what He wants in our lives.

So, what's the **TAKE AWAY**?

- When we're in difficult situations it may feel like God has not kept His promise...but history and experience prove **GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISES**
- When we're in difficult situations it may feel like God doesn't notice. But history and experience prove **GOD IS ALWAYS AWARE** of our circumstances and cares.
- Sometimes God allows delays and difficulty until we're ready to **CRY OUT TO HIM** in **TOTAL DEPENDENCE** for help.
- But when we totally focus on Him, He speaks and reveals **HIS PLAN** and **OUR ROLE**.
- He may do it in an unexpected way...so our job isn't to force the issue by trying to “set bushes on fire.” Our job is to be **LOOKING** for “burning bushes” that He has lit.
- Finally, we have to **TRUST** in Him to take **POWERFUL, COMPASSIONATE ACTION** on our behalf.