



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Exodus 3:1-12

Exodus

"The Burning Bush and the Call of Moses"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Good morning. We're continuing our study in the book of Exodus with Exodus chapter 3. And this morning we will look at verses 1-12.

So Exodus chapter 3, beginning with verse 1, we read, "Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the 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 blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, 'I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, he called to him from the midst of the bush and said, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said 'Here I am.' Then He said, 'Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' And He said also, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Then 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, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing

with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jeusite. And now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

"Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of is, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God, 'Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?' And He said, 'certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.'"

Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You that we have opportunity to come together and to continue our study in the book of Exodus, to see how You dealt with Your ancient people and learn how You still are dealing with Your people to this very day, because as we look here, Father, and see this amazing event, which captured Moses' attention and led to his call and his return to Egypt, we are reminded of who You are. We are reminded of the pattern and the principles by which You deal with us. And so we ask that You would instruct us and bless us and build us up in the faith, that we might serve You well today and throughout the week. And we pray that as we return together again this evening to take the Lord's supper and to reflect upon the redemption that He has accomplished on our behalf that we would do so in light of the things that we think of this morning, the greatness of Your person and Your work, that You are all sufficient and You are sufficient for every task to which You call us.

So we pray that You would instruct us and teach us this morning, build us up and encourage us, and we pray for those whose names are listed on the calendar of concern. We pray that You'd give healing and encouragement them. We pray that You'd build them up in the faith.

Bless us now, Father, as we look into the scriptures, that we would have an enjoyable time of study, a time of good reflection, a time of preparation. And we pray these things in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] Title of our lesson this morning is The Burning Bush and the Call of Moses. Everyone who is a Christian has not only received a call to salvation, but also a call to service. When God saves us, He doesn't take us out of the world. He puts us into the world and He commands us to give the gospel of eternal life to those people whom we meet and also to live a life that is consistent with our profession of faith.

Now, when you think about it, that's a pretty tall order. And the world is not friendly to the gospel. It considers the gospel and those who hold to the gospel as being rather naïve, unsophisticated. The gospel is unscientific and it can be rather daunting to witness to a knowledgeable skeptic who has a keen mind, because they can ask some rather difficult questions and challenge our faith, and perhaps we don't even have the answers for the things that they ask us and the challenges that they raise against us.

Then on top of that, once we've identified ourselves as Christians and we become public in that regard, then we're held up by the world to a standard that perhaps they don't even hold themselves to. It's a high standard and oftentimes the world expects us to live faultless lives.

And so as we think about the call, think about our responsibilities as Christians in the midst of this world, we might have reason to wonder if any of us are really sufficient for these things. And the answer to that query is very simple and direct, and the answer is no. We're not sufficient for these things. We should never think that we are, and should we begin to think in that way, then we put ourself in dangerous ground. We should continually seek to improve ourselves and the knowledge of the scripture. It's never sufficient to say, "I'm not sufficient for the task, therefore I won't worry about learning more and seeking to develop my skill with knowledge." We should be

continually seeking to develop, continually seeking to know more, to learn God's word, and use it effectively.

But we'll never be sufficient for that task. It's greater than any of us can ever be or become. But really, that's the basis for our confidence, because that should lead us to dependence on God, and God is sufficient for all of these things, because the work to which He calls each of us is His work. It's not ours.

The deliverance that we preach in the gospel that we proclaim is His deliverance. The life that we're called to live of obedience and consistency is obedience that He produces, and so all of it is His work and that's our reason for confidence. And the one who's called us, the one who's commissioned us, is the one who is the God of miracles. And so while we're not sufficient, as the Lord told Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:9, "My grace is sufficient for you."

Well, this is the assurance that Moses received when the Lord called him into His service and gave him a special illustration of His absolute sufficiency and of His care for His people. Israel had been oppressed and suffered under cruel slavery in Egypt for some time. Finally, when they could endure it no longer, they cried out to God and God heard their groaning. He saw their distress and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He remembered the promises that He had made.

And now in chapter 3, He answers their cry in an unexpected time and place and in a most unusual way. We read in verse 1, "Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law." The sense of that statement that he was pasturing the flock is that he'd been doing that for some time. This was not a one-time occasion. For some time now he's been a shepherd. And Stephen tells us in Acts 7:30 that the events of chapter 3 took place some 40 years after Moses fled Egypt. So he's been a shepherd on the back side of the desert for 40 years. For some people that's a lifetime.

So Moses is now 80 years old, and we might think that half of his life has been wasted in obscurity. But that's not so. It's not unusual

for God to prepare His servants for their calling by putting them out in the desert for a time. David spent time in the desert. In fact, we've been studying that with Dr. Johnson the past few weeks and months. Elijah spent time in the desert. And here Moses is in the desert. The desert is one of God's great universities, because there He teaches His people courses in humility, dependence, submission.

Moses experienced long periods of loneliness while tending the sheep. You can imagine how many lonely nights and days he must have had out in the wilderness, no one to talk to. And yet what a wonderful place to learn humility. You can't cultivate your pride when there's no one to boast before, no one to perform before.

So this was the arena, the environment, in which God had placed Moses for some 40 years and he experiences loneliness. And as a man who would lead Israel, he would experience many days and nights of loneliness. It's often the lot of a leader, that they could stand on issues that are not pleasing and not popular, and oftentimes that's what a leader must do. He or she must take positions that are not appealing or pleasing to the crowd. But if he's going to do what's right, he must make those decisions, and that leads to grumbling and of course that's the history of Israel in the wilderness. They grumbled all the way through that 40-year period when Moses shepherded them.

Well, he's prepared for the loneliness that he would go through his time in the desert. So these weren't wasted years. They were years of preparation. But Moses himself really didn't realize that. He must have thought that this was his lot in life and this is where he'd finish out his days on this earth, shepherding his father-in-law's sheep in Midian.

And so for 40 years this former prince of Egypt has been shepherding sheep in the eastern desert of Sinai, when one day he led his father-in-law's flock to the west side of the wilderness. Apparently there was not enough vegetation in the region in which the flock had been grazing, and so Moses moved them to Horeb. And if tradition is correct, this is the southern part of the Sinai peninsula west of Midian,

where considerable water can be found. You wouldn't think you'd find much water in the Sinai desert, but in this area you can find water and vegetation. In fact today there is an old and famous monastery there, Saint Catherine's Monastery. It's located at the base of Jebel Musa, Mount Moses, which is the traditional site of Mount Sinai, also called Horeb, so they seem to be the same mountain – Mount Sinai, Mount Horeb – the same place.

And there is an oasis with vegetation gardens, water, so this is a place that's not improbable that Moses led the flock. This is what tradition has as the location and there's no reason to really doubt it. It was a day probably no different than any other of the uneventful days of the past 40 years of Moses' life, until he came to Horeb, here called the mountain of God. And we read in verse 2, "The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush."

Now according to Jewish tradition, this is an ordinary angel, if angels can be ordinary. But this is just an angel, merely a messenger of God speaking on God's behalf. But the text clearly indicates that this is more than an ordinary angel. It identifies the angel of the Lord with God Himself. It's the angel that speaks out of the bush and it's God who speaks out of the bush. It's the angel in speaking out of the bush that says, "I am the God of your father."

And frequently in the Old Testament the angel of the Lord is recognized as more than an ordinary angel. He appeared to Abraham in Genesis 16. He appeared to him in Genesis 22. He appears in Judges 6 and 13. And in those passages, as here, he spoke as God and identifies himself as God and is recognized by those to whom he appeared as being God.

In fact, when the angel appeared to Samson's parents in the book of Judges, they fell on their faces in worship. And then Manoah, Samson's father, said to his wife, "We will surely die, for we have seen God." So that's consistent.

Now, it's not to say that every time you see the term "the angel of the Lord" it speaks of a divine person. That's not the case. Context

determines that. But clearly it seems here that context determines that the angel of the Lord is God. This is what we call a theophany, a manifestation of God. And more specifically, Christian theologians throughout the century haven't identified the angel as the pre-incarnate Christ, because on the one hand he is identified with God, a divine being, but being the angel of the Lord, he's distinct from God. That is, he's distinct from the Father.

So of the same essence of God, but in person, distinct from God the Father. He is the divine angel. He is the messenger, the one sent by the Father. And that's what essential the angel, or the word "angel" means. It's a messenger. Now, that's really the way the Lord identified Himself in that sense, a sent one. An angel is a sent one from the Father and the Lord in John chapter 5 states that the Father who sent me, He has borne witness of me.

So I think it's proper to understand this as a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate state. But here He appears in the form of a fire, because as Moses writes later in 33:20, "No man can see God and live." No man can see God and live because God is holy and men are sinful, and we cannot look upon Him and live.

In 1 Timothy 6:16, Paul speaks in much the same way, says, "No man has seen God at any time." He speaks of God dwelling in unapproachable light, and here the Lord takes the form of light. He takes the form of fire, and fire in a bush.

According to Jewish tradition, again it's a bramble bush that Moses saw – very simple, unattractive bush, and what arrested his attention was that the bush was burning with fire and yet not consumed. But what kind of fire could burn independently without any benefit of wood or fuel? Well, the sight naturally aroused curiosity with Moses, so he says to himself in verse 3, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."

Well, it was not burned up because this was a miracle. And as a miracle it was intended to do just what it did – arrest his attention, capture his attention. That's what a miracle does and that's one of the

main reasons why miracles are performed. They capture the attention of those who have seen the sight. And yet they do more than that, as we see all the way through scripture. We see this particularly in the gospels, and particularly in the gospel of John, where those miracles are called signs. They say something. They reveal something about the one who performs the sign. One of the evidences of an apostle was that he performed signs, miracles, wonders. That's the evidence of his authority. And in our Lord's case, it's the evidence of His authority and the evidence that His claim to be the Son of God is true, because He performs miracles.

So they point to something, but they also reveal something about the person of God, and we have that here. There's more than just an amazing sight that arrested the attention of Moses. There's revelation that is conveyed through this event, but then we might ask what is the intent? What is the revelation? Why is it that God chose this form in which to appear to Moses?

Well, one view is that the bush, which is an unattractive bush, a humble bush, a lowly kind of bush, signifies Israel, a despised people, surrounded by the flames of oppression, and yet not destroyed. And we saw that in the first two chapters – afflicted by the Egyptians, but not destroyed, because God is there, protecting them and assuring that they will not perish. This is the view of Calvin, for example, and many others.

But in view of the context in which God reveals the meaning of His name – and this is what we'll take up next week – but it's within the same context, the same conversation. In verse 14 He reveals the essence of His nature. I think it's better to understand that this is a revelation not so much about Israel, but about God Himself. It illustrates who God is. It illustrates something about His nature.

And fire is often an emblem of deity. We have it at numerous places in the scriptures, in the Old as well as the New Testament. And you think about it, probably one of the first pictures of this that comes

to mind is the book of Acts and the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 1 where the Holy Spirit comes down as cloven tongues of fire.

Fire is often an emblem for deity, and the reason for that is it pictures His holiness, because just as fire destroys and refines, so God and His holiness must deal with sin and He must destroy it. He must judge the sinner or He must purge sin from the sinner and refine the sinner. So fire is an apt picture of God's holiness. And centuries earlier God had appeared as fire. Centuries earlier from this particular occasion, when in Genesis 15, He made His covenant with Abraham and He promised to deliver Abraham's descendants from a foreign land where they would be enslaved. Well, at that time He appeared to Abraham as a smoking oven and flaming torch.

So now, after some 400 years of silence, He has returned to keep the promise made to Abraham and to his people, and the fire identifies Him as the God of that promise. And Moses, who'd been instructed by his mother and told about these things, could make that association between the fire and that bush and the fire that appeared earlier to the patriarch Abraham.

And so this is how He comes to him. He comes to him as fire, but this time in a bush. The bush, which does seem to signify Israel because of its lowly condition, because of its despised nature. Israel was that, a nation of slaves, nothing attractive about it to the world. And He comes to them, or He appears in this bush representing Israel, and He's the one who made promises, unconditional promises to Israel, to redeem them and not to destroy them. And so the bush is not consumed, because Israel is not consumed. He's the Holy God, but He does not destroy His people, because unconditional promises were made to redeem them and to purify them.

So that seems to be signified in this. There's an emblem here of what God was going to do with His people. He was in their midst. He'd come to dwell within them, a theme we see throughout the book of Exodus, not to destroy them, but to purify them.

But there's more to it than that. The flame burning independent of the bush illustrates the nature of God in itself and it pictures God's transcendence. As the flame was self-sustaining, not dependent upon the bush or energy, for fuel, so God is self-sustaining. He's self-sufficient, self-perpetuating, wholly unaffected by the environment. God does not need the world to exist. We need this world to exist. We cannot exist apart from it. We're totally dependent upon the creation as part of the creation. God's not the creation. He's not part of the creation. He's the creator, but He's independent of it.

And that was something totally different than the theology of the ancient world in the pagan lands. Their idols, their gods, were basically nature gods, part of nature. And then what we see here is this flame in a bush is not dependent upon the bush, not dependent upon nature, because it is self-sustaining, and that essentially is what God is. He is the self-existent God. He's eternal. He's changeless. He's unaffected by His environment and what is around it, so He doesn't depend upon it.

I think this is what's portrayed here in burning bush, but of course Moses, this was not immediately apparent to him. He was simply amazed by the sight and he moved forward to investigate it. But as he did, he received revelation of its significance when God spoke to him out of the bush and addressed him by name. "Moses, Moses!" He says. This is God's call to Moses. And there are a few things I think we should notice here, because it says something about God. It says something about the call.

First off, we see that He's the one that take the initiative in it. We see the grace of God in that, because He appears to Moses. He draws him to Himself and then He reveals Himself to Moses. Moses was not out there in the desert looking for God, thinking thoughts of theology, at least as far as we know. Some people have tried to explain this as a psychological experience that Moses had. He was out there agonizing over Israel, thinking about God. His mind had built up so much over these facts that He imagines that He sees this bush.

There's nothing from the context that suggests any kind of psychological situation that would have led to this. He's simply carrying out the day-to-day routine that he's done for some 40 years. Then there's this amazing, marvelous sight, as he calls it, before him. God takes the initiative in the call. He always does that. We don't seek Him. He seeks us. And the reason we find Him is because He first finds us.

And you'll notice that this call is very personal. One might get the idea from looking at the flame and just contemplating that that God has some impersonal power, some force within the universe. And that's how some thought about Him. Aristotle described Him as the unmoved mover, an impersonal being, a power, a force, and oftentimes we hear God referred to in that sense, but He's not that.

He is power, or power is part of His nature, but He's personal. He's the personal God, though He's changeless. He's self-sufficient. He's totally unlike us. He doesn't need us to exist. We need one another. We're dependent creatures. We can't exist on our own. God doesn't need us. He's self-sufficient. He's self-existent.

And yet He condescends to call us to Himself. He condescends to have a relationship with us of a personal nature. He says, "Moses, Moses!" He knows him by name. He knows all of His creation by name. He knows His people by name and He invites them into a personal relationship with Him. Now that's an amazing thought when you contemplate it, that the God of the universe, the creator of heaven and earth, the infinite and eternal being, would invite you and I into a relationship with Him, and a relationship in which we can serve Him and carry out His task and be involved in all that He's doing. And that's what we see here. This God who takes the initiative, this God who is personal, reveals Himself to Moses.

And I think we can also see from this that it's through His revelation that the bush and the phenomenon is made known to Moses. Apart from God's word, he would not know what it is. It would just be a phenomenon that would remain an enigma within his mind. What is

going on here? He could walk around it, he could look at it, he could puzzle over it. He couldn't figure it out.

God speaks, and because He speaks, he understands what the bush is and what it represents. Apart from God's revelation, we cannot understand the universe, ourselves, our destiny, anything. And it's significant that the bush becomes less important when God speaks. Now it's the word of God that's all important.

The bush, as it were, fades into the background. Not that he wouldn't think about it. He certainly would. But the point seems to be, or the principle we can draw here, is that God's word is what's sufficient and important for us. It defines things for us. It gives direction for us. And he will not listen to the word of God.

So God is the initiator. God is personal. But His personal nature does not diminish His holiness. And as Moses approaches the bush, God says to him in verse 5, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." It's holy because God was there. God made it holy. And where God is, things are holy. God is within us, we are holy, because He's within us. But He was there at the mount, the mount became holy.

And for Moses to approach, he must do in reverence. He must do so in recognition of God's holiness, and he did that by removing his sandals. Sandals collect dust and the holy place was not to be defiled by that which is common, by that which is unclean. Holiness essentially means separation. And God is to be separated from that which is unclean, that which is common. And so Moses takes his sandals off as a gesture, an indication that he recognizes the holiness of God. He acts in reverence.

In fact, in the east today you see this same practice. People remove their shoes before they go into the house of a guest. You see this in India, for example. You can see pictures of houses and their shoes lined up outside. The mausoleums today, when they enter into their mosques, they take their shoes off before they go in. What this

tells us is that to approach God we must approach Him with reverence, and that's what Moses does.

And then as he approaches in reverence, God identifies Himself. We read in verse 6, "I am the God of your father." Probably meaning "I am the God of Amram, your father, who, along with your mother, taught you about me. I am the God that they instructed you on." But He becomes more specific and He says, "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." In other words, I am the God who made the promises to those men. And when Moses realized that it is God who is addressing him, not some mere angel, but God, he hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. He immediately sensed his unworthiness, his uncleanness, much like Isaiah did in the temple when he saw the Lord high and lifted up in Isaiah chapter 6 and he said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips."

And yet God came to Moses, as He would come to Isaiah, as He comes to so many of us, in their uncleanness, in their unworthiness, in their sinfulness. And even after Moses' failure in Egypt 40 years earlier, after so many years of what might seem to some, might even have seemed to Moses, to be insignificant labor on the back side of the desert, God had not forgotten him. God had not rejected him, nor He forgotten His people and the promises that He had made to them.

He has, as He says, seen their affliction, given heed to their cry, and so He has come down to deliver them. Come down; now that is a phrase we find in the writings of Moses. We see that in the book of Genesis with the Tower of Babel. We see it here, and it seems to be a suggestion of the humiliation, so to speak, of God as He comes down to His people, and shows how insignificant things are down here that God must come down to them. So He condescends to come to His people, to this small situation, this great God has come to visit.

But He comes down, as He says, to deliver them, from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them up to a good and spacious land, to

a land flowing with milk and honey. In other words, it's a fertile land, a good and a rich land. That's the inheritance of Israel.

And that's the pattern of redemption. And the Old Testament illustrated here and illustrated throughout the exodus but a picture of the spiritual reality, the pattern that we all have enjoyed if we're in Jesus Christ, because the Lord delivers from slavery to freedom. He delivers from affliction and judgment to blessing and life, and that was to be and would be a motivation to Israel, an encouragement to them in their time of affliction. God's promises are about to be fulfilled. Live for that, look forward to that. And that of course is what the promises of God and the promise that we have of eternal life should do for each of us – be a motivation, be an encouragement to us – a land flowing with milk and honey, but a land occupied by other nations. Six are listed here in verse 8. "The Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite." Seven are listed in Deuteronomy 7:1. Ten are listed in Genesis 15.

So there are many nations there, and all of them are hostile. None of them are friendly to God. They're pagan nations. They're opposed to God, and perhaps that's a suggestion here. "I'm going to deliver you from Egypt, a hostile people, and take you into a land occupied by an equally hostile people." But those hostile people, the opposition of the Canaanite, would be no more of an impediment to God's power than the opposition of the Egyptian. In fact, those are simply occasions for God's glory to be all the more manifested. He would deliver Israel from Egypt. He would bring them into the land. It was God's work, because as He says, "I have come down to deliver." And if He has come down to deliver, then it is a certainty.

And yet in verse 10, He charges Moses to deliver His people. "Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, um, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." You might think that there's something of a conflict there between verse 10 and verse 8, but there's no contradiction between these two, between God announcing that He Himself will deliver Israel and then sending

Moses to deliver them. That's God's pattern. He involves men and women. He involves His people in His service. He was not saying to Moses, "You are going to be the source of deliverance." He's simply saying you're going to be the channel of deliverance. I'm going to use you. I'm going to do it, but I'm going to use you to carry it out." And that too is an act of God's grace. His grace is seen in the initiative of Him coming to this servant, this simple shepherd, and His grace is seen here in that He includes him, as He includes all of us in the high privilege of serving Him.

And Moses had been prepared for this. He'd been raised in Pharaoh's house, where he learned many skills that would be important in his future ministry. He had spent 40 years in the wilderness shepherding sheep. He'd had family in the meantime – two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. He had experiences that prepared him for all that would take place. God gives him a family. He knows what it is to have sons, to train them up. And now he's going to be given an even larger family in the sons of Israel. And as a shepherd, he would shepherd them through that same terrain, through the wilderness that he had spent so much time in.

God calls His people to service who have been prepared. And He's preparing each of us. Service may start out small, but if He calls us to service, He's equipped us. And the more obedient we become, the more He equips us for greater service. And so He prepares His servants, and Moses had been prepared –didn't realize it, and because of that, he didn't feel worthy or adequate for the task that God had now called him to. And so he protests in verse 11. Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"

Now that's a great change from the Moses of 40 years earlier, who had boldly, confidently gone out to visit his people in order to deliver them. He'd done that in his own strength, done it in the flesh. And as a result, it failed – killed an Egyptian and then had to flee. After 40 years of reflection on that event, he'd become filled with

distrust of himself, and that shows an advance in Moses' development and maturity. Self-distrust is a virtue. It's a necessity if we're to serve God. We can't depend upon ourselves and we can't that we're sufficient for these things.

And we witness that in many of the Lord's servants. When Gideon was called, he replied, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh and I am the youngest of my father's house." When the Lord called Jeremiah, the prophet said, "Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth." "I'm too young. I don't know, I'm not trained. I'm not the one to send." And then it was after Peter declared to the Lord, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," that God called him to be a fisher of men – catch men instead of fish.

Well, Moses had that sense of insufficiency, of inadequacy for the task. He'd been a simple shepherd living in obscurity so long, how could he possibly deliver a nation of slaves from the power of the mightiest nation on the earth at that time? What could an 80-year-old man with a shepherd staff do before Pharaoh of Egypt and his court? And so he must have he was totally insufficient for the task.

What could a man in that condition do? What could any of us do, for that matter? The answer is quite simple: nothing –of ourselves. Moses could do nothing of himself, but God had just announced to him, "I have come down to deliver Israel." This was God's work. It wasn't Moses' work. And so in verse 12, seeing the doubt in Moses' heart, seeing the sense of inadequacy, God gives him assurance and He said, "Certainly I will be with you." Now what greater incentive, what greater assurance of success can there be? The God of the universe is going to be with him. What is Pharaoh and his court, what is Pharaoh and his army, what are the Canaanites and all of the nations of that land to go, the creator of the universe? God would be with him.

But to give further assurance, the Lord adds a sign as proof that He was with Moses and that Moses has his authority in the task to which He's called him. And He says, the second part of verse 12, "And

this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: when you have brought the people of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

Now of course the sign is after the fact, which strikes us as a little strange, but that's really the signs of a genuine prophet were given. How did you know a man was a true prophet? Because his prophecy came to pass. So you wouldn't really know for sure that he's prophet until his prophecy had come to pass.

But in this way God was putting the burden on Himself. He was putting Himself to the test, so to speak, a self-imposed test. A sign was a prophecy. It was a pledge of God's faithfulness to His word. It was an assurance that Moses' mission would succeed. It seems to be a way of saying, "I swear to you that I will give you success. I'm going to bring you back here." At the same time it, of course, calls for Moses to exercise faith, to trust God's word.

And so Moses has been called to God's service. He's been invited to trust Him and he's been given strong assurances of success. He will stand before Pharaoh, but God will be with him. And the God who is with him is like that fire in the burning bush: self-sustaining, not dependent upon the creation, not dependent upon on Moses or anyone else; self-sufficient, all-sufficient. He is the sovereign God who has total and complete control over the elements.

Now to Moses, this may have seemed like mission impossible, but to God all things are possible. And so He calls him with these great signs, the sign of the burning bush that in itself testifies to who He is. It's a miracle, and He gives him these words of assurance that He's going to be with him.

Well, that's the comfort that the Christian has today, because the same God who called Moses calls us, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is as sufficient for us as He was for Moses. He is as much the God of the burning bush today as He was in Moses' day. The world from which He has delivered us and into which He has placed us and called us to minister is every bit as hostile to the Lord and His representatives as it was to Moses.

And things were no different, really. This is not a task for which we are sufficient, that we in ourselves have the ability to do. No, we're not sufficient, but we're not alone either. What the Lord promised Moses and his commission, He promised His disciples in the great commission when, at the end of Matthew, He says, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen."

Our inability, our insufficiency, makes us fit instruments of the Lord. We're not fit instruments if we think we're sufficient. We're fit instruments in our insufficiency and that's the way God likes His people, His servants.

On one occasion the great violinist Paganini gave a concert before an audience that had paid a large sum of money for their seats. And so they were horrified when the virtuoso steps out onto the stage and proceeded to break all the strings on his violin except one. And having done that, he then held up the instrument and he cried, "One string and Paganini." Proceeded to play on the violin, which shows that he was the virtuoso, shows his great ability.

Well, that's what God does with His instruments, His people. He take the weak, He takes the insignificant, and He uses us and He performs His work and His task through us. All He calls us to do is be obedient, to yield ourselves to Him. The heart that is yielded to the all-sufficient God has nothing to do. We do fear and we'll fear to the day we die, I suppose, but we have nothing to fear, because God is all-sufficient.

As Paul could say in his various epistles, "I am weak. When I am weak then I am strong. I can do all things in Christ that strengthened me. His strength is made perfect in weakness." And that's how He works through us.

And finally, the Lord not only illustrated for Moses His intention to deliver Israel and to dwell among them with the burning bush, He also foreshadowed His future incarnation when, as John writes, "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory." Now that is when He came down and delivered His

people at the cross. And as He brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt and He brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey, so too He has brought us out of the slavery of sin; He's delivered us from judgment; He has brought us into eternal life; and we have the sheer hope of a heavenly country. And that's for all who know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

If you're here this morning and you don't know Him, not put your faith in Christ as the eternal Son of God, in whom alone is salvation, then I invite you to believe in Him, to enter into that deliverance and to look forward to that heavenly country pictured in the image of Canaan. Well, with that, let's bow in a word of prayer, thank the Lord for the deliverance He's given us in Christ. We pray that He'd give us strength to serve Him well. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for the truth that we see present and we're reminded of the pattern in which you deal with Your people. We are an unworthy people. We are a people that are insufficient in and of ourselves, and yet You call us to do Your great work and we recognize, as we study this, that it's not we ourselves that do it, it's You that perform the work. We're simply the channel through which You work, and so we pray that You'd give us strength and give us courage. Help us to seize the opportunities that You give us, that we be bold witnesses for You and trust You to perform the work.

You are the God of miracles. You're the God of the burning bush. You're all-sufficient. Help us to lean up that great encouragement. We thank You for the gift of Your Son, the life that He has brought to an unworthy and undeserving people. We pray these things in Christ name. Amen.