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Exodus 2:11-3:6 – The God Who Makes Himself Known to Sinners

- I. Introduction:
 - A. Who is God? Do you know Him?
 - 1. Maybe you know Him, but you certainly don't know everything about Him.
 - 2. Or, maybe you know about Him, but you don't know Him.
 - B. **Fallen Condition Focus:** We constantly try to make God into our image. This is sin, and it blinds us to God so that we cannot see Him. We are morally corrupted so that we do not see God as He is. He must break into our dark world and reveal Himself if we are to know Him.
 - C. God cannot be known through reason.
 - D. God cannot be known through experience and investigation into the natural world.
 - E. These endeavors can only bring us veiled truths about God at best.

 - F. The result is that we invent God's according to our liking so that we can then live up to our own 'righteous' standards.
 - G. But, this god making only results in self-righteousness.
 - H. 'Gods' we create:
 - 1. God is love – meaning tolerance and acceptance and 'freedom'
 - 2. God is righteous – meaning all my political values must be accepted by all
 - 3. God is just and merciful – meaning god is for the poor and against the rich, he is for my racial group and against the majority
 - 4. God is holy – meaning my culture is the only right one so I will separate from the world
 - I. Whatever god we create, we tend to find him or her shifting as we shift. Conveniently, god always fits what we believe and we look down in pride or up in anger at those who don't believe in our god.
- II. **Proposition:** Christians must know God truly as He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ.
 - A. We must always seek to know God truly. Even after many years, we must always be willing to look at God's Word afresh to see if we truly know what He is like.
 - B. We must give up our false gods and quit making Him in our image.
- III. **Organizational Sentence:** In today's historical narrative, we will come to know God better through 4 parts of our story.
- IV. **Part 1:** God uses sinful people. (2.11-15)
 - A. This story begins on a positive note. Moses, the one that God is raising up to be a savior of Israel, sees the oppression and abuse being done to *his* people. It is significant that he sees them as *his people*, or *his brothers*. (2.11)

1. Hebrews 11:24-26 says that Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh when he grew up and chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.
 2. In some sense, the author of Hebrews must be commenting on this first verse where Moses sees Israel enslaved as *his* people.
 3. This is a positive thing. Moses must have at some point began to reject identification with Egypt and embraced his heritage as a Hebrew. No doubt, this led him to see the Israelites as a people inflicted with burdens. Furthermore, it must have led him to become angry when he saw an Egyptian beating one of his brothers.
 4. Before we get into Moses' sin recorded here, we must first point out that Moses is a type of Christ (like we mentioned last week) in that he left privilege and comfort in order to suffer on behalf of and to deliver God's people.
- B. But, before we take that too far and begin seeing everything Moses does as good and right, we must notice that Moses' concern for God's people does not result in a proper response to injustice. Instead of waiting on God, he takes matters into his own hand and commits murder. (2.12)
- C. That Moses looked both ways before killing the man shows that his actions were done with a guilty conscience. He knew what he was doing was wrong, and so he tried to do it in secret, even hiding the evidence. He had no authority to step into the situation as he did. (2.12)
- D. Instead of becoming a leader to Israel as one who brought about justice, Moses is not respected by his brothers. Moses attempts to mediate the situation by addressing the offending party. The offender mocks him and despises him for his assumption that he should be their leader and judge. We learn from these verses that Israel was not just in slavery to Egypt, but they too had a spiritual problem that led them to fight amongst themselves. (2.13-14)
- E. After allowing anger to overcome him, he then begins to fear. (2.14)
- F. Moses' fear leads him to flee Egypt in shame. (2.15)
1. Do you ever get angry? What things make you angry?
 2. Anger is a response to a threat or an act of perceived injustice.
 - a. Sometimes what we want is threatened, and we get angry. We want to be on time and someone stops us from being where we want to be. We want something to go our way, and someone else steps in and changes it. When we want something, and someone or something threatens the absence of the desires satisfaction, we get angry and attack the threat.
 - b. Sometimes a true injustice or wrong is committed and we respond in vengeance. We seek to destroy or eliminate the aggressor. We take the wrong doer on full force.
 3. Anger is one way to respond to threats or injustices.
 4. Fear is another response to threats and injustices. Rather than attacking, fear is a response of flight.
 - a. When we think we will be overpowered by the threat, we run and hide in fear.
 - b. When we think the one who commits the injustice will continue to harm us or others, we run in fear.
 5. Anger and fear are normal emotions that are not inherently bad. They can result in sin if we do not use these emotions properly.

- a. Anger can turn to personal vengeance or behavior that seeks to destroy others.
 - b. Fear can turn to cowardice and passivity where we are called to act.
- 6. The solution to both fear and anger is trust in God who is faithful to his promises. Whenever we seek to deal with threats and injustice on our own, we sin. God wants us to trust in Him and in His ways when dealing with threats and injustice.
- 7. We fail to take our anger and fear to God and self-righteously lash out in anger or self-righteously retreat in fear.
 - a. Outbursts of anger stem from self-righteousness. We think we are more righteous than others and feel justified in destroying others with words or violence.
 - b. Retreating in fear stems from self-righteousness because we doubt that God will protect us since we have not been 'good enough.' It stems from a belief that God only protects us if we are good enough. It is void of grace.
- 8. What we need is a vision of a holy God so that we can see ourselves in light of His holiness. When we do this, we will be moved by His grace to trust him and walk in confidence.
- G. God does not destroy Moses or reject him even though Moses sinned. Instead, God providentially sends him out to the wilderness where Moses will come to know God.
- H. I wonder if Israel was meant to read this and see that God later does the same thing with them. Even though they grumble and complain, he does not reject them, but has them wander in the wilderness where they will learn who He is.
- I. **Applications:**
 - 1. Remember that God's people and even leaders of God's people are sinful people who have done really bad things, like murder.
 - 2. We cannot earn a place in God's people, nor can we, as God's people, earn certain roles or responsibilities.
 - 3. There is no sin too bad that cannot be forgiven.
 - 4. There is no one too flawed to be used by God.
- V. **Part 2:** God works providentially. (2.16-22)
 - A. Without his knowledge, God leads Moses right where He wants Him. Moses flees to Midian, which probably designates a region where the Midianite nomads roamed. They roamed about the Sinai Peninsula and the northwestern part of Arabia. (2.16)
 - B. Midian was a child of Abraham (Genesis 25.1-4). As a child of Abraham, it is likely that the Midianite descendants had stories of God's promises to the descendants of Isaac. The priest of Midian then, is most likely a priest of the one true God. It is possible that Moses received much of the history of Abraham and the time before that from these people.
 - C. For some reason, the daughters of the priest of Midian were being abused by the shepherds in this region. They were not allowing the women to get water until late in the day, but Moses, who stopped at just the right well, stands up for them and protects these women. (2.17)
 - D. We see again Moses' concern for justice, but this time we do not get any indication that Moses' concern for justice leads him to murder. In fact, he humbly serves the women by watering their flock, something that men did not do for women. Perhaps Moses has already undergone some change.
 - E. Chapter 2.11-22 serves to show us that Moses is a deliverer, one concerned with justice, but they also serve to show us that Moses has gone about this the wrong way. There is an

essential component missing, and that is knowledge of the one true God. Instead of delivering the people, Moses is a stranger in a foreign land.

- E. Regardless, Moses helped the right people, because the daughters pass on the news of this savior to their father Reuel, who is later called Jethro. Again, we see that God is providentially working out His plan. Even when it seems like God is not involved and His promises are under threat, God is working.
- F. The report of Moses' delivering action comes to Reuel, and Reuel shows hospitality that is typical for Bedouin nomads such as these. Moses receives a meal, a wife, and eventually a son. Despite his sin, Moses is provided for as a person. As a leader, God puts him right where He wants him to be to be prepared to lead Israel. He is brought into contact with those who worship the one true God, he is given a family, and he is sent into the wilderness to meet God. (2.18-22)
- G. The name of Moses' son is significant, for it highlights Moses' dilemma. Gershom means, "I am a sojourner in a foreign land." Moses laments that he is not with his people.
- H. **Application:**
 - 1. God is always working everything according to His plan for the good of those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose.
 - 2. We must not despair in hard times. We must trust that God is in control for our good.

VI. **Part 3:** God remembers His promises. (2.23-25)

- A. While Moses is in Midian, the Pharaoh dies and a new Pharaoh comes to power.
- B. This new Pharaoh doesn't reduce the labor of the Israelite slaves, and so they groan under their hard labor.
- C. They also prayed to God for deliverance. They remembered the promises God had given their fathers, and they cried out to the God of their fathers.
- D. While the narrator has been focusing on Moses for several verses. Now, the author returns the focus on God by using four verbs: God remembered what he promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- E. God heard, God remembered, God saw, and God knew. What does it mean that God saw the people of Israel and God knew? It seems like the author is saying that God was concerned with their situation. God knew what they were going through, and wants to see their situation changed according to his promises to bless Israel and give them the promise land.
- F. It is true that God answers prayers because he loves his children, but it is also clear that he answers prayer in order to show himself faithful to his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- G. **Application:**
 - 1. We can be sure that our prayers of deliverance will be answered, but it might not be in the timing that we want. God has promised us life in Jesus Christ, and so though we might suffer for a time, we will be raised up on the last day. We must pray in faith that God will hear us and be faithful to his promises.
 - 2. We must know that God is a God who remembers his people and promises to be with us in our suffering.
 - 3. We must go to God in pray in difficult times.

VII. **Part 4:** God is holy. (3.1-6)

- A. The narrator then returns focus on Moses in Midian who is now shepherding as a member of the Midianites. It is significant that Moses is a shepherd. If you look at the leaders of God's people, it is very common that they were shepherds. This becomes the dominant metaphor for leaders of God's people. God himself is called our shepherd.
- B. The location of Mount Horeb (also Mount Sinai) is not known to us. The narrator calls it the mountain of God, but that is not because it had already been known as the mountain of God. The author calls it that because he is calling it by what we later find it to be.
- C. Who is the angel of the Lord?
 - 1. An angel, Gabriel or Michael.
 - 2. The pre-incarnate Christ, the second person of the Trinity. This seems more likely to me since Moses later is afraid to look 'at God' and the ground is holy. If this is angel, it seems less likely that Moses would respond this way. All the indications are that it is God who is present there.
- D. God then performs a miracle. The burning bush does not get consumed. The significance of this miracle is large. Later, in Exodus 19, God will reveal himself to Israel by fire on this same mountain. In the same way that Moses has been living in the wilderness where Israel will later wander, so too God has revealed his holy presence by fire on the same mountain where all Israel will later see God's holy presence. Later, in Deuteronomy 4:24, Moses says that God is a consuming fire. This miracle shows God's power of nature.
- E. Moses sees this fire from afar, and goes up the mountain to see it. God then speaks to Moses for the first time. Moses says, "Here I am." Throughout Scripture, men often respond with this phrase when God calls them.
- F. God warns Moses not to come near and to also remove his sandals. Moses probably knew something of the holiness of God since his father-in-law Jethro/Reuel was a priest of God. Moses could not come closer because God is holy. He is separate and cannot be in the presence of that which is common. Moses removed his sandals because that was a sign of respect. Moses knew whose presence he had entered into, and he saw that it was dangerous. God is holy and a consuming fire. Anything that is not holy that came into the presence of the holy God would be consumed and destroyed, so he did not approach, but showed respect and distance.
- G. God then reveals who he is as the father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- H. Confronted by God's holiness, Moses saw his own sin and hid his face.
- I. Several passages indicate that no one has ever seen God. Yet, several places in the bible, we find that God reveals himself. We call this theophany, literally, God appearance. But, these theophanies do not contradict passages like John 1:18 or I Timothy 6:16 because these theophanies are always revelations in part, never in whole. God is revealed in form, but never in full measure. Certainly, that would kill us because we are unholy.
- J. **Application:**
 - 1. This might be the most important lesson from this text. God is holy. Every time people are confronted with God's holiness in the bible, they are made aware of their lack of holiness.
 - 2. What is holiness? To be holy is to be set apart.
 - a. God is different from us. He is not created. He is eternal. He is transcendent.

- b. God is also morally perfect. Holiness does not always entail moral purity. The ritual laws of Israel often do not deal with moral issues. But, they are meant to remind Israel that God is not like them and that he is morally perfect.
 - c. God is holy, and we are not. He is pure, and we are sinful.
3. This is the most common attribute of God that is ignored today. Our culture views God as loving and powerful, but not holy. When we make God in our image, that by definition destroys the concept of the holiness of God.
 4. People then think that we can approach God in a cheap easy way. But the bible is clear that to approach God, we must be holy, and this only comes by faith in Jesus Christ. The New Testament tells us that by faith we are justified, forgiven, and set apart as holy. We are saints, holy ones, not because we have been really good, but because our status has been changed through the blood of Jesus.
 5. The paradox of the gospel is that a holy God became a common man so that we might see God and be reconciled to him.
 6. We must realize that to grow as a Christian is to gain a better understanding of who God is. To grow in our knowledge of God is to see him as holy. When we see that God is holy, we will see that we are unclean, sinful, and impure. Christian maturity is marked by humility.