

Text: Exod. 3:18-22

Title: "God's provision for the deliverer"

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Introduction: Have you ever had a work experience in which a fellow employee was going on vacation and you had to provide his backup while he was away? Perhaps that was not a positive experience for you, in part, because the person you were substituting for failed to provide you with information and tools that were critical to your successful execution of that task. Upon that fellow employee's return, perhaps he wondered why it is that so little of what needed to be done got done. In that scenario, we would be justified in letting him know that he did a very poor job at providing what we needed to successfully execute the tasks assigned to us.

The context of our passage is similar to that scenario only in the detail that God is calling a human instrument to do a specific task. Unlike the unfair expectations of a fellow employee who fails to prepare his replacement, God is omniscient and omnipotent when it comes to providing all that His chosen human instrument needs for the successful execution of the task He is assigning to him. This is a truth that the apostle Paul put this way in 1 Thess. 5:24, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."

We have already seen God's provision of important answers for Moses's questions as He calls him to this task. Moses has asked, "Who am I?" God has said that does not matter, because you are the One I have promised to be with. Moses then asked, "Who are You?" or "What is Your name?", and God explained that the One who has promised to be with him is the great I am, the God of his fathers,

the caring Visitor of His people, and the Savior who brings people up from bondage.

After giving Moses those answers, it is as though the Lord is saying in these next five verses of chapter 3, "And that's not all!" Here the Lord continues to tell Moses about the provision He has made for the success of His human instrument of deliverance. That faithful provision is something Paul counted on, and it is something you and I must count on as we seek to minister the deliverance of gospel ministry to the bondage of sin and darkness in our day.

I want us to see five provisions God promises to make for Moses.

I. God will provide co-laborers who will listen (v. 18a).

Illustration: Next week I will be in meetings at the Middlefield Library in the heart of Amish country in northeastern Ohio. I can remember visiting the cheese factory there with my cheese-maker grandfather when I was a boy, so the town brings back some precious memories for me.

The Amish are known for many things, both positive and negative. One of the positive things is how they are able to do a barn-raising. You can find Amish barn-raising on YouTube. The one I saw was put together by Ohio resident Scott Miller, who took 1600 images of a barn raising that started at 7:00 am and was completely done by 5:00 pm. No one man could do that work alone. It happens quickly and efficiently because it is the work of so very many.

Application: The Lord has designed His work in such a way that it requires the contributions of many hands. Though God meets with Moses and no one else in the

bush, when Moses went to Israel with what God had said, it became true that "God has met with us." The Lord met with them in such a way that the elders of the tribes of Israel would join Moses. The Lord does not say, "You will go to Pharaoh." He says, "Ye shall go to Pharaoh." *Ye* is plural. Moses would not have to do the work alone.

Where would these co-laborers come from? Well, they come from the Lord. God is saying He is going to make sure they are there. We have to trust the Lord, that He knows the work is too great for one, and that He will make provision for others to help in the work.

We certainly have a role to play in this regard. In order for the barn-raising of the Exodus to happen, Moses had to speak, and people had to be willing to listen (v. 18). Moses at this point is actually not willing to speak, and this was so because he did not really believe God's promise (Exod. 4:1). Moses had tried to speak before, and his Israelite brother did not listen (Exod. 2:14).

Why speak again? Because God promises someone is going to listen. He promises to provide for His work, and that provision must include co-laborers who will listen. This is Jesus's promise in our day to build His church (Matt. 16:18). Let's keep speaking and listening, trusting that He will help us hear one another and accomplish our ministry of deliverance with co-laborers.

II. God will provide the message (v. 18b).

Illustration: As a pastor I have often thought about how difficult it would be to preach a message every Sunday as someone who does not believe that the Bible is God's Word. Who provides the message for these pastors? How

do they do it? I know that I could not come up with much to say under those conditions.

Application: I think we all wonder whether we will have the right thing to say at times as God's human instrument of deliverance. When that concern comes over me, as it often does, it has always been a comfort to rest in the truth that God not only sends me to speak, He also provides what the message must be. I do not have to come up with ideas of my own. I only need to teach what the Bible says and apply it to first my own life and then the lives of others.

God's Word is our message. It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. This is God's provision for our gospel ministry. We must do our best to give them what God has said in His Word.

God's Word is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12). "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7).

Note two specifics about God's message to Pharaoh:

1. First, it was a very respectful message. Our KJV has the phrase *we beseech thee*. That is simply the word *please*. It was God's will that even this oppressed people treat their civil rulers with a respectful decorum. We need to treat our political leaders with this same kind of deference, even when we are called to speak truth to power.

2. Second, the freedom sought here is religious freedom. Moses is asking for three days to hold a feast of worship to God. Throughout all the plagues to come, that will ever be the request. When they finally leave Egypt for good, it is not

because they asked to leave for good, but because Pharaoh finally drives them out for good.

Why is religious freedom the most important freedom we possess in the face of tyranny? The answer is given, I believe, in Exod. 8:27 – “as He shall command us.” Religious freedom is the most important freedom, because it establishes the fact that our freedom and our rights are gifts of our Creator, not gifts of the state. It establishes the fact that there is a Higher Power than the state, and that His commands must be obeyed first. This is what Pharaoh had such a difficult time accepting. He despised religious freedom. Tyrants in our world are the same today.

III. God will provide ultimate control over response (v. 19).

Application: I find myself asking a question as I study these chapters. I wonder to myself, what if verse 19 was not the case. What if Pharaoh was willing after all to let Israel go three days journey and hold a feast of worship to the Lord? What if the whole exodus event could have been worked out peaceably in terms that were agreeable and helpful to both sides? What if Egypt’s plagues had been blessings?

The Bible teaches that the humble response to God’s message is always the response God is looking for. Ezekiel 33:11 is very clear about this: “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

In our passage, God knows that Pharaoh will not listen to His message. He provides Moses with this understanding before He sends Moses to go give Pharaoh the message that he would not listen to. What is the point? Why go through

all this trouble? Why speak to someone who will not listen? The answer from this passage is that God had a plan for even that response, which would ultimately still further His unstoppable work of deliverance. When we give God's Word and the response is more negative than we had hoped, understand that the Lord saw that response coming, and He is still at work to deliver His people from bondage.

IV. God will provide the miracles required for deliverance (v. 20).

Application: There is a reason the Israelites had been in bondage for so long. Very simply, they could not do wonders. Only miracles could bring them out of bondage.

This was true for our deliverance from the bondage of sin. The miracle of conviction from the Holy Spirit was necessary for us to see our sinfulness and need for repentance. The miracle of illumination from the Holy Spirit was necessary for us to understand the gospel in a faithful way. The miracle of regeneration from the Holy Spirit was necessary for us to be changed with new eternal life by the gospel when we trusted Christ. And the miracle of sanctification is necessary this morning as we seek to grow into greater Christlikeness. Only these miracles can free us from sin.

God alone can do these saving wonders. Sometimes things have to become very difficult, as they did for Israel, before we remember to give Him this glory due His matchless name. Salvation is God's work. We are wonder-less human instruments, whom a wonder-working God desires to use in that work of deliverance from sin through the gospel.

The specific wonder God describes in this verse is the stretching forth of His hand and His smiting the Egyptians.

Similar language is used in the Scripture to describe the smiting of a far more severe kind. God promised to smite Israel's Shepherd with the sword (Zech. 13:7), and Jesus explained to His disciples that this would happen when He went to the cross for your sin and mine (Matt. 26:31). God's wonders would smite Pharaoh with a stretched-out hand, pausing after each to give Pharaoh yet another opportunity to repent. God's wonder stretched out a sword against His own Son so that the judgment of His lawful holiness would fall on Christ and not on me. Do you believe that? Has God saved you from your sin through this wonder?

V. God will provide the spoil of victory over the oppressor (vv. 21-22).

Application: The word *borrow* in verse 22 is the word *ask*. What is described in these verses is the fulfillment of a promise that the Lord made to Abraham centuries earlier: "And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance" (Gen. 15:14). He has made a similar promise about our future in Christ. God is faithful to provide ultimate victory over the oppressor. The serpent shall soon be crushed under our feet (Rom. 16:20). The same beautiful feet that face is daily oppression as they endeavor to preach the gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15). The feet that were once swift to shed blood, but were forgiven through the shed blood of the Crucified One (Rom. 3:15).

Conclusion: Here we see again that the account of the exodus is a microcosm of God's plan of redemption for His creation. Although subjected to the bondage of the domain of darkness and the tyranny of the ruler of the darkness of this world, creation will one day be redeemed, and the riches of that domain will become the property of the sons and

daughters of God's kingdom. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. In that day, our sons and daughters shall wear the gold and silver ornaments and the costly raiment of this dark Egypt. May we have sons and daughters adorned with the blessing of that kingdom in that day. May God give us a crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:9).

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*