INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

Key Verse: Exodus 3:9-10

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary
Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson examines the facts of the call of God to Moses. The study’s aim is to show that God’s directions always overcome our objections. The study’s application is to emphasize that if we are willing to follow God’s call, we can be sure He will provide all we need to fulfill it.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Exodus 3:9-10

9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

These verses, which record God’s call to Moses on Mount Horeb, may be divided into five parts: circumstances (3:1-3), confrontation (3:4-10), consternation (3:11-15), instructions (3:16-22), and complaints (4:1-17).

3:1-3. These verses present the circumstances of Moses’ call by God. After 40 years of training in the courts of Pharaoh, Moses now neared the end of another 40 years of his life as a shepherd. Leading his father-in-law’s flock in search of grassland, Moses approached Mount Horeb (another name for Mount Sinai; cf. 19:10-11 with Deut. 4:10). Why his father-in-law is here called Jethro instead of Reuel (cf. Ex. 2:16, 18) is uncertain. Perhaps Reuel thought his daughter’s marriage to Moses, an Egyptian raised in the royal family, brought him (Reuel) prestige so he changed his name to Jethro, which means abundance or superiority. Moses’ reference to Horeb as the mountain of God (cf. 4:27; 18:5; 24:13) probably reflects his estimation of that mountain after the events that took place there later. Interestingly Moses’ communication from God here (3:1-3) is at the same mountain where God later gave him the Law (19:20; 24:13-18; cf. 3:12). There Moses’ curiosity was engaged by a bush that was aflame but was not burned up. The Angel of the LORD (v. 4) is the Lord (cf. Gen. 16:9). Fire was a symbol of God’s presence, seen later when He descended upon Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:18).

3:4-10. In this confrontation with Moses, God commissioned him to deliver His people from Egypt (v. 10). Aware that it was God who was calling him, Moses responded, Here I am. The same response was given God by Abraham (Gen. 22:11), Jacob (Gen. 46:2), and Samuel (1 Sam. 3:4). God told Moses to remove his sandals (cf. Josh. 5:15) in a gesture of worship. The ground was holy not by its nature but because of God’s presence. When the LORD identified Himself to Moses as the God of his ancestors (Abraham... Isaac... and... Jacob; cf. Ex. 3:15-16; 4:5) Moses covered his face, fearful of looking at God (cf. 33:11; 20; and John 1:18). God then told Moses He was aware of the plight of His people (Ex. 3:7, 9; cf. 2:24) and that He planned to rescue them from Egypt. The result of His concern is captured in the words I have come down (3:8), an idiom describing divine intervention. God would (a) deliver them from Egypt and (b) take them to a good and spacious land, unlike the Midianite desert. The phrase a land flowing with milk means that Canaan was ideal for raising goats and cows. Feeding on good pastureland the goats, sheep, and cows were full of milk. Flowing with honey means that the bees were busy making honey. Milk and honey suggested agricultural prosperity. This is the first of numerous references in the Old Testament to the “land flowing with milk and honey” (cf. v. 17; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27; 14:8; 16:13-14; Deut. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20; Josh. 5:6; Jer. 11:5; 32:22; Ezek. 20:6, 15). This land then was occupied by Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (cf. Ex. 3:17; 13:5; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11). In Genesis 10:15-18 all of these are listed except Perizzites, along with several other peoples who descended from Canaan, son of Ham and grandson of Noah. In the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:18-21) God mentioned five of the six groups of Exodus 3:8, along with five others (cf. seven in Deut. 7:1). Canaanites is the more general term. Hittites were probably pockets of people who immigrated from the north. Amorites were perhaps the same as the Amurru of northern Mesopotamia (cf. Gen. 14:13-16). Perizzites were perhaps village-dwellers or nomads. Hivites were possibly in northern Palestine and beyond (Josh. 11:3; Judges 3:3). Jebusites lived in the hill country (Num. 13:29) of and around Jebus, later known as Jerusalem (Josh. 15:8). God then told Moses how He would bring about the deliverance of His people. He would use Moses, not in his own strength (Acts 7:25) but by divine enablement. God said, So now, go. I am sending you. Interestingly while God promised the people two things (deliverance from Egypt and
entrance into a new land), He commissioned Moses to accomplish only the first. God knew Moses would not enter the Promised Land (Deut. 32:48-52).

3:11-15. That Moses was shocked by God’s words (vv. 7-10) is evident by his consternation. He found the command hard to believe. Immediately Moses objected to God’s command because of his lack of ability (v. 11) and his lack of authority (v. 13). Moses doubted his ability to confront the new Pharaoh (Amenhotep II) successfully and to lead the nation out. God responded to this objection with two promises: the assurance of His personal presence (I will be, v. 12; cf. v. 14, with you) and the promise of Moses’ return to Mount Horeb (you [pl., referring to Moses and the people] will worship God on this mountain). The purpose of the deliverance was that Israel might “worship God.” This purpose is stated frequently in Exodus (4:23; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 7-8, 11, 24, 26, 12:31). The Hebrew word for “worship” is the same word for “to be a slave” (‘āḥāḏ). Israel had been slaves (‘āḥāḏ) of Egypt (6:6), and was in slavery (‘āḥāḏāh, 2:23) in Egypt (“the land of slavery,” lit., “the house of slaves,” bēṯ ‘āḥāḏāḥ, 13:3, 14; 20:2). Having served as slaves to the Egyptians, Israel was now to serve the Lord, worshiping Him as His subjects. In Moses’ second objection he felt the Israelites would challenge his assertion that God had sent him to deliver them. God told Moses to tell them, I am who I am (‘ehyeh āšer ehyeh, 3:14; cf. “I will be,” ehyeh, v. 12) and I AM (‘ehyeh) has sent me to you (v. 14). This One said He would be with His people in their time of trouble and need. Ehyeh is probably a wordplay on Yahweh (LORD) in verse 15. Thus, the name Yahweh, related to the verb “to be,” probably speaks of God’s self-existence, but it means more than that. It usually speaks of His relationship to His people. For example, as Lord, He redeemed them (6:6), was faithful to them (13:7-8), and made a covenant with them (Gen. 15:18). The word also (Ex. 3:15) points to a second reply to Moses’ second objection (the first reply is in v. 14). The always-present God had demonstrated His character in the past to the fathers ( patriarchs; cf. vv. 6, 16; 4:5) and that willingness to look over His people tenderly is an abiding attribute. He is to be remembered by that name forever. Perhaps Moses knew of God as the distant Sovereign but not as the immanent God who cares for and loves His chosen ones. Both of Moses’ objections (3:11, 13) were answered with lessons on the nature and character of God (vv. 12, 14-15).

3:16-22. After being apprised of the nature of his mission (vv. 7-10) and of his God (vv. 11-15), Moses received instructions, details about how to accomplish the task. The instructions relate to the elders (vv. 16-17), the king (vv. 18-20), and the Israelites (vv. 21-22). God told Moses to go to the elders (leaders and counselors) in Israel and tell them of the theophany, the appearance of God in the bush and His message of concern (I have... seen what has been done to you; cf. 2:24; 3:7) and of His plan to deliver them out of... Egypt and into Canaan (cf. v. 8). With the elders Moses was to approach Amenhotep II. The phrase the God of the Hebrews was later used by Moses when he spoke to Pharaoh; it is a term polytheistic people could understand (cf. 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3). Moses and the elders were simply to request permission to leave Egypt for a short trip (three-day journey) for religious purposes. He deliberately said nothing about them returning. God told Moses (3:19-20) that Pharaoh would not respond to his request except by divine imposition. (God’s mighty hand, suggesting His firmness and strength in action, is also referred to in 6:1 [twice]; 13:14, 16; 32:11; Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 7:8, 19; 9:26; 11:2; 26:8.) But God would perform wonders (the 10 plagues) to persuade Pharaoh to let them go. The plagues on Egypt would cause the Egyptians to be favorably disposed toward the Israelites so that when asked the Egyptians would give silver... gold, and clothing (cf. Gen. 15:14b; Ex. 12:35-36) to the Israelite women (and men, who are mentioned in 11:2). God’s people were not to leave empty-handed; perhaps this was partial compensation for the 400 years of slavery. Later the gold and silver were used in constructing the tabernacle (35:5, 22).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Our text is a small but crucial portion of Moses’ encounter with the Lord at the burning bush. Moses had personally witnessed the oppression of his fellow Hebrews while he was in Egypt, and, according to Acts 7:22-25, he had some understanding even then that he was to be God’s deliverer of his people. That, however, was forty years prior to the meeting at the burning bush. Having fled Egypt, Moses had settled down in Midian and was living the life of a shepherd in the employ of his father-in-law. Although it had been forty years since he had left Egypt and his people behind, the plight of the Hebrews undoubtedly remained on Moses mind. Even as he was awed by the Lord’s presence in the bush, Moses must have been greatly relieved to hear that the Lord also had seen the oppression of the Hebrew people and had heard their cries for deliverance. The Lord’s assurance in our text that He was aware of the Israelites’ situation in Egypt actually was a reassurance, for just moments before He had told Moses the same thing (Exod. 3:7) and then added that He, the Lord, was going to deliver the oppressed people and bring them into the Promised Land (vs. 8). While the announcement of the Lord’s coming deliverance must have caused Moses to rejoice, the
news that Moses was the human deliverer the Lord would use to accomplish His work must have been shocking and intimidating. Moses clearly thought his opportunity had passed forty years earlier. It seemed absurd that now the Lord would call him to return to Egypt, confront the mighty pharaoh, and bring the Israelites to freedom. Moses had failed forty years earlier, and now he was eighty years old. He had lived apart from his people as long as he had lived among them. In addition, Egypt was a major power. How could one man hope to counter the power of Pharaoh? Moses had his own excuses ready to offer the Lord, and he proceeded to do just that. He questioned his own abilities and feared how the people would respond to his efforts to free them. Moses overlooked some important things, however. First and foremost was that the Lord said, "I will send thee unto Pharaoh." And earlier, He had said, "I am come down to deliver them" (Exod. 3:8). Moses focused on his abilities and limitations rather than on the ability and limitless power of the One who was sending him. God had not passed Moses by. Rather, He had been preparing him for this very task. For forty years, Moses had been trained in "all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22), and for another forty years he had gained knowledge of the desert through which he would ultimately lead his people. The Lord's calling of the aged Moses reminds us that when God calls people to a task, He also prepares them, accompanies them, and empowers them to complete it to His glory.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Years before ESPN became the primary sports network, there was ABC’s Wide World of Sports. On Saturday afternoon one could tune in as announcer Jim McKay introduced this sports anthology. McKay would remind viewers that attempting to achieve greatness in sporting events led to both “the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.” Such a phrase aptly describes the experience of the Lord’s servants throughout the years. Serving the Lord in a broken, sin-cursed world can be the source of some of life’s greatest joys, but it can also produce some agonizing moments. Perhaps no group of individuals in Scripture exemplifies this battle better than the Old Testament prophets, who are the focus of our next unit of studies. The first of this group to be considered is Moses.

One could use the letters in the word prophet in an acrostic to define the Old Testament prophets as passionate representatives obediently proclaiming heaven’s eternal truth. The prophets were God’s spokespersons who proclaimed his message (usually but not always) fearlessly. Some people view a prophet as one who predicts the future. That is certainly part of what the Old Testament prophets did, but their task was by no means limited to that. It is helpful to see the prophets as both foretellers (those who predicted the future accurately) and forth-tellers (those who declared God’s truth). Prophets were often subject to verbal and/or physical abuse because they spoke unpleasant truth boldly and plainly. They often did so without regard for the consequences. Some look at Moses’ role as that of a lawgiver more than a prophet. But the Scriptures clearly refer to him as a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15). The same book concludes with these words of tribute to Moses: “Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (34:10). Moses began his service to the Lord in need of his own prophet or spokesman, his brother Aaron (Exodus 4:14-16; 7:1, 2). But in time Moses would learn an important lesson: the key to answering God’s call is found not in who the human servant is but in who God is. That principle still holds true. In his defense before the Sanhedrin, Stephen related that Moses had killed an Egyptian whom he saw beating one of “his own people, the Israelites” (Acts 7:23, 24; compare Exodus 2:11, 12). According to Stephen, Moses assumed that his fellow Israelites would acknowledge him as their deliverer and rally around his efforts; “but they did not” (Acts 7:25). When Moses realized that his murderous act was known by others and that he had been rejected as a deliverer, he fled Egypt. He ended up in Midian, where he married Zipporah, one of seven daughters of Jethro. We find Moses in that situation as today’s text opens.
Major Theme Analysis

(.Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

God’s Divine Contact (Exodus 3:1-4)

1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.
2 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed.
3 Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."
4 So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

God knows how to get our attention (1-3)

Four Ways God uses to get our Attention

1. God positions us to get our attention
   Positions through travel (Acts 9:3-6)
   3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. [4] He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" [5] "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. [6] "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."
   Positions through work (Ruth 2:19-20)
   19 Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!" Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said. [20] "The Lord bless him!" Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers."
   Positions without knowledge of destination (Genesis 12:1)
   The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.
   Positions through loneliness (Gen 32:22-25)
   22That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. 24So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.

2. God causes situations and circumstances to happen to get our attention
   Sometimes by affecting the mind (Dan 4:28-33)
   28All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. 29Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" 31The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. 32You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."
   33Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.
   Sometimes by affecting the human body (Num 12:1-10)
   1 Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. 2"Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this. 3(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.) 4At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, "Come out to the Tent of Meeting, all three of you." So the three of them came out. 5Then the LORD came down in a pillar of
cloud; he stood at the entrance to the Tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them stepped forward, he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. 7But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. 8With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" 9The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them. 10When the cloud lifted from above the Tent, there stood Miriam--leprous, like snow. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had leprosy;

Sometimes through weather (Jonah 1:3-7)
But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. [4] Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. [5] All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. [6] The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us, and we will not perish." [7] Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

Sometimes through Angels (Acts 10:3)
One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

3. God convicts us to get our attention

Conviction through God's Word (Psalm 25:4)
4 Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths;

Conviction through visions (Acts 10:11-15)
11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. [12] It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. [13] Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." [14] "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." [15] The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

Conviction through steadfastness to obedience (Daniel 1:3-8)
3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility-- [4] young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. [5] The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service. [6] Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. [7] The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. [8] But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

4. God contacts us specifically to get our attention

Sometimes to do a special duty (Acts 8:26)
26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."

Sometimes for a warning (1 Samuel 3:10-11)
10 The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." [11] And the Lord said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.

Sometimes in the midst of trials (Judges 6:12-14)
12 When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." [13] "But sir," Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.'" [14] The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"
When God speaks, we should listen (4)

*We should listen because we know God (1 John 4:6)*

6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

*We should listen because of being in the presence of God (Acts 10:33)*

33 So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

*We should listen because the Bible teaches us to be quick to listen (James 1:19)*

19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

*We should listen because it adds to learning (Prov 1:5)*

5 let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance--

*We should listen so we can live in safety (Prov 1:33)*

33 but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm.”

*We should listen because it is a blessing (Prov 8:34)*

34 Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.

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**God’s Divine Plan (Exodus 3:5-10)**

5 Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."
6 Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father -- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.
7 And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.
8 So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.
9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.
10 Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

**Being in God's presence is always a holy experience (5)**

*Holy because God is holy (1 Peter 1:14-16)*

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

*Holy through the sacrifice of Jesus (Hebrews 10:10)*

10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

*Holy through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11)*

11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
When God makes something holy, man should be very careful how it is handled (1 Chron 13:9-10)

9 When they came to the threshing floor of Kidon, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, because the oxen stumbled. 10 The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God.

It is always in God's plan to reveal Himself to man (6)

Revelation through Jesus (John 14:9-10)

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?

Revelation of God's will (Eph 1:9)

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

Revelation through the prophets (Rom 16:25-26)

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him

Revelation through the Church (Eph 3:10)

10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

Revelation of righteousness through faith (Rom 3:21-22)

21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Revelation of God's wrath (Rom 1:18-20)

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

God's plan always contains deliverance for His people (7-9)

Deliverance through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (2 Thess 2:13-14)

13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Deliverance through grace (2 Tim 1:8-9)

8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time

As God delivered those in the Old Testament, He will deliver us (2 Peter 2:9)

9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.
God delivers even into our old age (Isaiah 46:4)

4 Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

God has always delivered and will continue to do so (2 Cor. 1:10)

10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

When God reveals His plan to man, He has a part for man to do (10)

God has plans for each one of us (Jer 29:11)

11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

God delivers us for a purpose (Jer 15:11)

11 The LORD said, "Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose; surely I will make your enemies plead with you in times of disaster and times of distress.

God created us to do good works (Eph 2:10)

10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

God predestined us and called us for His purpose (Rom 8:29)

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God has plans for some that may include dishonor (Rom 9:19-21)

20 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" 21 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?

God’s Divine Assurance (Exodus 3:11-12)

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" 12 So He said," I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Man tends to always have an excuse for not doing God's will (11)

Excuses started in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8-12)

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." 11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Moses gave the excuse that he couldn't talk (Ex 4:10-12)

10 Moses said to the LORD, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." 11 The LORD said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."
Aaron gave the excuse of peer pressure (Ex 32:21-24)
21 He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?" 22 "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. 23 They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' 24 So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

Excuses make one unfit for service (Luke 9:59-62)
59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

God's assurance is that He will always be with His people (12)

God promises to be with us to the very end (Matt 28:20)
20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The Holy Spirit will be with believers forever (John 14:16)
16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-

God will never forsake His people (Deut 31:6)
6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

The Psalmist points out that he has never seen any righteous forsaken (Ps 37:25)
25 I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

God loves and will never forsake His faithful ones (Ps 37:28)
28 For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off;

Man's response to God's assurance is to be obedient and serve God (12)

Our response should be out of love for God because if we love God, we will obey Him (John 14:15)
15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

Our response is an obligation to live by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:12-14)
12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Our response should be to be obedient and serve God regardless of the circumstances (Dan 3:16-18)
16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Our response should be to offer our whole selves as living sacrifices to God (Rom 12:1)
12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.
Our response should be to throw off everything that hinders and serve God (Heb 12:1-2)

12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Our response should be to be thankful and worship God (Heb 12:28)

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Five Points of Moses (3:11–4:17)

As a friend and I discussed possible titles for this section, he suggested this one, which I like a lot: “While Israel gathered straw, Moses grasped at straws.” For those who are into theological inquiry and discussion, I am convinced that Moses was a “five pointer.” Here are the five points of Moses, as he seeks to prove that he is not the man for the task which God has given him. The essence of Moses’ argument is: “Here am I, send someone else!”

Moses responds to the commission of God five times. The first two responses we have dealt with previously, but we shall briefly review them so that we can view Moses’ response as a whole.

(1) Who am I? (Exod. 3:11). After prematurely and presumptuously asserting himself as a deliverer (Exod. 2:11-15), and being rebuffed by a fellow-Israelite (“Who made you ruler and judge over us?” Exod. 2:14), Moses was not so full of self-confidence. Moses, we are told in Scripture, was the “meekest man on the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). To the degree that Moses’ question reveals true humility, it is legitimate. But in this instance, I fear that his humility is out of bounds. The issue here is not who Moses is, but whose he is. God has sent him, and it is God who will be with him. Moses’ authority is based upon his divine call and the divine presence with him as he goes (Exod. 3:12).

There is a great deal of discussion these days about self-esteem. While one’s self-concept has a great deal to do with how one feels about himself and how he (or she) may function in life, it is not the key to Christian growth or obedience. Why? Because the orientation is wrong. Self-esteem focuses one’s attention selfward. One can only be confident if one is confident about one’s self. God redirects Moses’ attention to Himself. The burning bush is a revelation of God to Moses, not an introspective analysis of Moses himself. No man, no matter how capable, is fit or able to adequately serve God. It is God who is infinite, eternal, and all-powerful. Thus, when Moses has a proper God-concept, he is able to serve. Let us learn from this text to focus our attention on the One whom we serve, rather than on ourselves.

(2) Who are you? (Exod. 3:13). If Moses’ authority is wrapped up in the God who has called and commissioned him, then it is surely worthwhile for him to inquire as to the nature and character of God. If it were not for the other three responses of Moses (the last two are protests, not inquiries), we might find this question altogether acceptable. My own inclination is that Moses already knew enough.

Knowing God is the highest calling of the Christian and a lifetime occupation (cf. Phil. 3:10). As such, one should always seek to know more of Him. But Moses does not seek this knowledge for himself; he seeks it because he fears that the Israelites will reject his authority. In other words, this is really a reflection of the same fears of Moses which were more openly admitted in the first question. God’s answer to the first question was not sufficient for Moses, so he asked it again, in different terms. Moses still expects to be rejected by the Israelites, as he was 40 years before.

I find many of us seek to avoid immediately acting on the commands of God, excusing this by our “lack of information, knowledge, or training.” How many people “want to think it over,” or “pray about it,” when in reality they are reluctant to obey God’s leading? How many have excused themselves because they have not gone to seminary or Bible college? Very often, these are merely a smoke-screen for unbelief. We are never ready when we act on our own, but we are always ready when God says, “Go!”

(3) What if they do not believe me or listen to me? (Exod. 4:1). Is this question not a bit shop worn? Moses is asking the same question of God for the third time. This time, it is even more inappropriate. No, I have not said it strongly enough. This time, the question is sinful. In the past, Moses doubted his calling; now he is doubting.
the Word of God, for the Lord has just told him, “The elders of Israel will listen to you” (Exod. 4:18). From the words which follow this assurance, we know that Moses was not only told that the leaders of Israel will accept his leadership, but that it will all work out, just as God has said. Moses therefore is guilty of unbelief, pure and simple.

I have been rather hard on Moses, and I believe that the text (which Moses wrote) is making his weakness and unbelief clear. As an inveterate coward, let me say a word or two in behalf of Moses. Have you ever had to face a group of skeptics and convince them that God sent you, based upon a conversation you had with a bush? I find it easy to understand why Moses feared that no one would believe his story. People don’t stand around talking to burning bushes. That this was unusual was an evidence of its significance. It is also something which is difficult to convince others is true.

God still graciously deals with the weakness of Moses here. In response to his question, God grants Moses the ability to perform three signs. The first two Moses performs on the spot, at God’s instruction, so as to assure him. The final sign (turning water from the Nile to blood) has to wait until the raw materials (Nile water) are available.

The specific meaning of each miracle is without common consensus among scholars. Overall, I believe that we can see several important contributions of these signs. First, for the Israelites these signs were visible evidence that God had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Would they refuse to believe the account of the burning bush? Let them see a shepherd’s staff turned into a serpent, and then transformed once again to the staff. Let them see a hand turned leprous, and then restored. A burning bush is no harder to believe than these phenomena.

Second, for the Pharaoh and the Egyptians, these signs were evidence of the “finger of God” (cf. Exod. 8:19). Not only did they emphatically prove the existence of the God of the Hebrews, but they gave evidence of His superior power. More than this, these three signs were of a similar kind. At the word of Moses, a staff could become a serpent, leprosy could be inflicted, and water contaminated. In other words, Moses had the power to inflict injury and to destroy. Pharaoh had tried, in vain, to destroy Israel. Moses could easily destroy Egypt. The signs were all “plague-like,” and Pharaoh would do well to take heed. He had been warned, not only of the power of God, but also of the nature of the divine judgment which he could and would inflict on Egypt. Finally, since Moses had the power to reverse the adverse plague, Pharaoh was also instructed as to Moses’ power to restore, once a plague was brought to pass. The three signs were therefore very significant, both to the Israelites, and to the Pharaoh.

(4) But I am not eloquent! (Exod. 4:10; cf. 6:12,30). From here on, it is all down hill—fast. Moses is still hung up about his inability. Rather than acting on the basis of who the God is who commissioned him, Moses is now retreating on the pretext that he is not a gifted communicator. This is indeed a piece of false humility. Look at what Stephen has to say about Moses’ abilities: “When he was placed outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action” (Acts 7:21-22, emphasis mine). Moses did not have a speech problem, as some might suppose. Neither was he ungifted in speech. According to Stephen, Moses was eloquent. Moses is not only doing a disservice to God (by refusing to believe Him and obey in faith), but to himself. Moses should not trust in his own abilities, but neither should he deny the abilities which God has given him.

The historian Josephus goes even farther than Stephen. Now, of course, Josephus did not write under inspiration. Worse yet, Josephus has been accused of exaggerating. But it is interesting to note that Josephus writes that Moses was a commander of the Egyptian army, attacking and defeating the Ethiopians who had humiliated Egypt. It is a glorious story—too much so to take too seriously. Nevertheless, it indicates that at least Josephus didn’t take Moses’ excuse seriously either.

The Lord’s response reveals His displeasure and has the tone of rebuke. Little wonder! Moses is talking to His creator. He is saying, in effect, “God, I can’t do what you ask because you did not make me well enough.” God reminds Moses that, as his Creator, He fashioned him precisely as He intended, and he was therefore fully able to carry out his commission. The problem of what to say is one that the Lord will handle in due time. He will teach him what to say (Exod. 4:12). While Moses is worrying about what he will say when he gets to Egypt, God is spurring him to get going. Moses is looking too far down the path. His immediate task is to get going.

(5) Please send somebody else (Exod. 4:13). Here is the bottom line. Moses does not want to go. It is not that he lacks the assurance or the authority; he simply lacks the courage to act. No reason is stated here as to why God should send someone else, because Moses is all out of excuses. And so Moses pleads with God for someone else to go.
God is longsuffering and patient, but now He is angry. I do not know precisely what physical manifestations evidenced the anger which Moses mentions in verse 14, but my own impression is that this must have scared Moses half to death. Can you imagine making God mad and then having to stand there faced with His anger? If Moses was afraid of the presence of God in the burning bush before (Exod. 4:6), one can hardly imagine the fear which Moses had at this point.

God’s anger was not only reflected in some visible way (did the burning bush suddenly flare up?), but it was evident in the answer which God gave to Moses (vv. 14-17). Aaron could speak fluently, so let him speak for Moses. As later events will indicate, the presence of Aaron was a burden for Moses and a stumbling block for others. Among other things, Aaron fashioned the “golden calf” and led Israel in false worship (Exod. 32:1-6). Aaron was, at best, a mixed blessing.

(Adapted from URL:https://bible.org/seriespage/beating-around-burning-bush-exodus-3-and-4)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

When God chose Moses for leadership, did Moses anticipate the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat? Confronting the leader of a great empire was quite a task! Like Moses, we too can be intimidated by the seeming impossibility of our tasks. We can be intimidated into silence by peer pressure, social media, our workplace atmosphere, and other sources of opposition. But before we ask Who am I? let us remember who God is. Jesus concluded his commission to his disciples with these words: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Moses was called to lead Israel from physical bondage to freedom. The church is called to lead people from spiritual bondage to eternal life. The God who assured Moses of his presence with him assures us of the same thing now. Jesus has done the hardest work; we point others to him.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. No matter where we are or what we are doing, God knows how to find us and get our attention (Exod. 3:1-3)
2. To answer the call of God, we must remove anything that interferes with the holiness of God (vss. 4-5)
3. We must always recognize and reverence the awesome power of God (vs. 6)
4. God has a plan to deliver His people (vss. 7-10)
5. Kings and rulers are no match for God (vs. 11)
6. God is always with His servants (vs. 12)