

**GOD IS KEEPING HIS PROMISES FOR  
THE SAKE OF HIS OWN NAME  
Exodus 3:1—22**

*Please review this week's catechism question.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Describe a time when you tried to change something about yourself. What did you try to change? What was it like to try to change? Were you successful or not? Why do you think you were/were not successful?

The Christian life is a life that is defined by change. Salvation is described in the language of change. When God saves a person his entire status is changed from condemnation to justification, from darkness to light, from sinner to saint, from death to life, from enemy of God to friend of God, from hell to heaven. Not only is our status changed but our actual experience is one of transformation. "For those whom he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son ..." "And we... are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory..." "...by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever, those who are being made holy." "Be diligent in these matters. Give yourself wholly to them so that everyone may see your progress." "Grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

As we look at God's saving work in the life of Moses and then through him, the people of Israel, we are going to be witnessing the ways in which God changes people. We will see how God not only changes their status—sheep herder to leader of a nation, slaves to free people—but also how he changes them, personally. Moses, like us, resists God's aim to change him. However, miraculously, he does change. Today we are not going to see the end result of the change that God accomplishes. We are going to examine the beginning stages of how God overcomes human resistance to being

saved, to change. What we are going to see is the glory and greatness of God in his saving/transforming power.  
STUDY

**1.** Review 2:11-22 and then read 3:1, how would you describe the condition of Moses' life for the past 40 years (Acts 7:30)? What has his life been like? How does his life in 3:1 compare with his life prior to 2:11?

*He has worked for his father-in-law, Jethro, as a shepherd for the past 40 years. Presumably, he has been concerned with the daily affairs of life as a nomadic shepherd. He has raised his family and is most likely a grandfather by this time. Moses, who at one time presumed he was going to deliver the people of Israel from their slavery has been living a very ordinary, mundane life in the wilderness of Midian as a nomadic shepherd. Moses, who grew into manhood enjoying all the benefits that being the son of royalty confers, has been living for forty years in obscurity and the hardscrabble existence of a nomadic shepherd. He is in this condition because he believed the promises of God. He believed it better to suffer hardship with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. However, the glory he expected to experience when he left the royal court behind to free the Hebrews did not materialize as he expected. So he has lived for forty years in the bitterness of a failed dream. There is no indication, other than his naming of his son that he has any interest in any other kind of life. He is just getting by. On a very ordinary day, in a very ordinary life, God shows up.*

**2.** What are some things that this appearance of God and his words to Moses communicate about God?

*God is a consuming fire who is able to dwell with ordinary creation and not consume it. He is holy and must be treated with respect. You cannot approach him as you are but must approach him as he says. He is fearsome. He is willing to tell men how to approach him.*

3. Why does God appear in an ordinary bush as a flame of fire that does not burn up the bush? What does this appearance of God point towards? CLUES: 24:12-18, 29:42-46, 40:34-38, Lev. 9:22-10:7 with John 1:1, 14, 2:18-22, Acts 2:1-13 & 37-41 & Ephesians 2: 13-22.

*The fire that does not consume the bush illustrates the fire of the Holy Spirit who has come to dwell in the people of God. This is what is about to happen to Moses and to the entire people of Israel. God is going to come to dwell with men and he is not going to consume them, which is the most astonishing miracle in the universe. That the holy God, who is a consuming fire, actually dwells within his people and they are not consumed is more amazing than anything in the entire universe.*

*We see this pictured in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes upon the 120 disciples gathered in the upper room. Tongues of fire rest upon the head of each one, representing God's presence by his Spirit and then they go into the streets of Jerusalem declaring the works of God. The apostle Peter preaches the first Christian sermon and the people are cut to the heart as they encounter the presence of the living God in and through the people of God. How is it that fire can burn among us and not consume us? God is a consuming fire but he does not consume the church because Christ has cleansed us of our sins. The Holy Spirit burns in our midst and reveals the glory of God through our love for one another and our declaring the great works of God in the person of Jesus. God calls to each person through his church, calling people by name, commanding them to take off their shoes for they are standing on holy ground. He breaks into our ordinary lives with his extraordinary presence through the fire of the Holy Spirit at work among his people.*

4. What are some ways you have encountered the true and living God as he “burns” among his people?

**God displays his glory in overcoming all resistance to his salvation by raiding our ordinary lives with his extraordinary presence.**

5. Summarize what God tells Moses in vv. 7-9. Why is God going to act to save Israel?

*He calls the people of Israel “my people.” He says that he has seen the misery they are experiencing in Egypt. He has heard them crying out because of their slave drivers. He is concerned about their suffering. Therefore, out of his love for his people he has come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians. He has come down to end their slavery, to remove them from their suffering. Not only is he going to end their misery but he is going to give to them an amazing future. He is going to give them their own country to dwell in. It is a land that is good, just like creation was good at the beginning. It is a spacious land and a land that gushes forth milk and honey. It is a land that holds seven nations right now but God is going to give it to just them. They alone, his chosen people will get to dwell in the land. Then God repeats his motivation for acting to rescue the Israelites: The cry of the Israelites has reached him and he has seen how the Egyptians are oppressing them. He is going to save them because he loves them. They are his people. The tenderness and compassion of God for his people is so clearly expressed in these verses. The great, holy Creator God has come near to tell of his compassion and to act in power to save his people. He will rescue them from their misery and he will take them into a place of safety and abundance.*

6. What is surprising about v. 10 in light of vv. 7-9? (HINT: Compare the subjects of the verbs.)

*Verse 10 comes out of nowhere. God makes all of these amazing promises about what he is going to do and then he commands Moses to go and do what he just said he was going to do. The combination of vv. 7-9 with v. 10 reveals one of the most amazing and difficult to grasp facts about the work of God in the world. Most of us want a God who works in impossible to miss ways. We want a God who shows up in spectacular miracle. However, the God who exists, who*

*is working to sustain his creation and save his people ordinarily works through the most ordinary of methods. He is going to deliver his people but he is going to do it through Moses.*

*God's work of saving his people requires the involvement of Moses. I don't know about you, but if I were God, I'd come up with a better plan. Even if you forget about who Moses is and what happened to him the last time he was in Egypt, it just doesn't seem to make much sense to send a man to do what clearly requires divine power. Why doesn't God just appear to Pharaoh in a pillar of fire and command him to let the Israelites go himself? Why doesn't he send an army of angels to fight the Egyptian army and then other angels to lead the people? Why pick a man and then not just any man but this man to do this amazing feat?*

**7.** Why does God want a human being to do this? See Genesis 3:15, 12:1-3, Romans 5:15-19.

*The world has been brought into the misery of sin by the disobedience of a man. The suffering that is in the world is here due to the sin of our parents, Adam and Eve. The curse of God rests upon the creation and upon the human race because of the sin of Adam and Eve and the sin of all their descendants. Therefore, God promises that a descendant of the woman will destroy Satan and his followers. Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin so also the gift of righteousness comes through the suffering of the one man, Jesus Christ. Moses', the forgotten shepherd, points us towards Jesus the forgotten Son of Man. Jesus, like Moses, is called out of obscurity to deliver his people from the slavery of sin. Only a man can reverse the curse. Humans can only be delivered from the power of sin and the devil through the suffering of another human. This is always the pattern of God's saving work in the world. God delivers humans from sin through the suffering Christ and then through his suffering messengers. God's saving power is powerfully revealed through the weakness of suffering human messengers. It is the suffering of Christ that has brought salvation to his people. It is suffering messengers who represent the suffering Christ. Moses is being called upon to join in the saving work of God. He must suffer the loss of all things that he knows and he must embrace a life of suffering if he is going to*

*participate in the salvation of God. In short, Moses must change and change always hurts.*

**God displays his glory in overcoming all resistance to his salvation by requiring human involvement.**

**8.** How does Moses respond to God's command for him to go to Pharaoh and lead the people out? Compare his response to what happened back in chapter 2 and what the Hebrew slave said to Moses. What has not changed in Moses' view of salvation?

*Moses repeats the very question that was asked of him when he attempted to reconcile the two Israelites forty years ago in Egypt (2:14). I have no power and no authority. I cannot go and lead Israel out of Egypt. Who do you think I am, God? We find out that Moses' view of God's salvation has not changed in forty years. Back in Egypt, he presumed he was the Savior of Israel and he went out and began to "save" Israel by murdering one Egyptian at a time. He thought for sure that the Israelites would be delighted to have as their Savior one of their own who was also a prince of Egypt. His confidence was in his own ability. Now, his lack of confidence is in his own ability. He still views his power as the determinative factor in the work of salvation. It is what he does that will determine the success of the enterprise. The only difference between Moses at forty and Moses at eighty is that at forty he thought he was strong enough while now at eighty he doesn't think that he is strong enough.*

**9.** What is God's answer to Moses' objection?

*There are two parts to his answer. The first thing he says is this, "Moses, it's not about you, it's about me. Just because I'm telling you to go and lead my people out doesn't mean it depends upon your strength. It does not depend upon you. This saving work depends upon me. Don't make the mistake of thinking that because I'm involving you in the process that somehow it depends upon you. It doesn't. The success of the work is in my hands. I am with you." The second thing he does is give Moses a "sign" that he is with him and will fulfill his promise. The sign is that after Moses finishes the job, the Israelites will worship God at Mt. Sinai.*

**10.** Why does God give Moses a "sign" that he won't see until after he has done what God tells him to do?

He is requiring Moses to do what he is commanding him to do by faith. He is requiring him to trust him. When it is all over, then he will worship God for what God did. Moses must take God at his word and believe not only that God is going to do what he says but that the end result will be worth the suffering he will have to endure to get there. The motivation God gives to Moses in response to his assertion that he doesn't have the power to go to Pharaoh is this: *I have the power and you will get the joy of worshipping me for my power at the end. God tells Moses that it's not about you, it's all about me. Stop thinking about yourself and begin thinking about me. Your power, whether you think of yourself as strong or weak, is not what matters. My power will accomplish what I have promised through you. Moses must believe God will do what he says and that worshipping God with Israel at Mt. Sinai is worth the cost.*

**11.** What benefit has God promised to you through Christ that makes it worthwhile to suffer the pain of change? Is there any promise God has given to you that motivates you to change?

**God displays his glory in overcoming all resistance to his salvation by replacing self-consciousness with God-consciousness.**

**12.** According to Genesis 12:8, 26:25 & 49:18 do Abraham, Isaac and Jacob know the name of God (YHWH=LORD in English translations)?

*Yes they all know that God's name is YHWH. Therefore, we would presume that all their descendants, the people of Israel know the name of God.*

**13.** What is it that Moses is suggesting the people of Israel will want to know if he were to tell them the God of the their fathers sent him?

*If his first question is "Who am I?"; then his second question is, "Who are you?" In essence, his question is "how do I know that you are a God who can be trusted?" Moses has enough sense to not phrase his question in such a belligerent manner. He puts the question in the mouth of the people of Israel. The question, "what is his name?" has to do with God's ability to act, not with what to call him. The question here is, does the God of*

*Israel have adequate power to do what he promises? What kind of God is he? Moses is challenging God's ability to perform what he promises. He is saying something like this, "You are asking me to change my entire life and to risk everything. How do I know that you will come through on what you say? Who are you that I should do as you say?"*

**14.** What is God's first response to Moses' question (vv.14-15)?

*First, in v. 14, he reveals his name, which is also a revelation of his nature. He declares his eternal existence. He is the God who has always been and who will always be. He is the God who is always present, never distant or far away. He acts, as he pleases, not according to the demands and controls of anyone or anything else. He is who he is and is under no obligation to Moses or anyone else to prove himself. He will be known on his terms, not mans. Moses and Israel must deal with a God whom they did not create and whom they cannot control. He needs no one and nothing else. Rather all existence depends upon him. He tells Moses to tell the sons of Israel that the God upon which all existence depends and who is sovereign and free and able to do anything he is pleased to do, is the God who sent him. The second thing he says in v. 15 is the good news we need to hear. This all-sufficient and self-sufficient God is the God of the Hebrews. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His name is not only the transcendent I AM but also the personal, promise-making God who delights to save his people.*

**15.** In vv. 16-22, what is his answer to Moses' question, "who are you?"

*As the promise making and promise keeping God of Israel he tells Moses exactly what Moses is going to do and what the Israelites and Pharaoh will do and then how he is going to act in the midst of and through all this human action. Moses will go talk with the elders and they will listen to him. Then he and the elders are to go talk with Pharaoh and he will not listen to them. He will only let them go when compelled by a mighty hand. Therefore, God is going to strike the Egyptians with all the wonders he will perform among them and then Pharaoh will let them go. In 21, God promises that he is going to cause the Egyptians to be favorably disposed to the Israelites when they leave so that they will not leave their slavery empty handed.*

*God has the entire program all arranged, all that awaits the fulfillment of his promise is Moses' believing what he has just been told. He can do whatever he pleases and he is pleased to save Israel through Moses. He has come near to save his people and he is more than able to accomplish that salvation. He not only knows what is going to happen but is going to exercise his power to make sure that everything goes according to plan.*

**16.** How does God's knowing and controlling the future help you want to change? How does God being the eternal I AM encourage you to change?

**God displays his glory in overcoming all resistance to his salvation by revealing his nature and plan.**

**17.** What area of your life (attitude, thinking, behavior, relationship, etc.) is God asking you to change right now in order for you to participate in his salvation?