

Exodus 3:7–8, God Hears You  
6/28/20, Fourth Sunday after Pentecost  
Pastor Alex Amiot

Exodus 3:7–8 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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.”

How is Genesis like January? What’s the first book in the Bible? Genesis. What’s the first month of the year? January. So there’s that. But there’s another way they’re similar. Compared to what came next, both Genesis and January ended well.

It was in February this year that the community spread of COVID-19 in the United States was first reported. A lot has changed since then. In terms of the pandemic, February didn’t end so well, and March was worse. So you could say that January ended well.

Genesis is similar. The book of Genesis ends with the Israelites living well in Egypt. God had saved them from the famine back in the promised land by providing food and a place for them to live through Joseph in Egypt. Genesis ended well.

But eventually Joseph died. Eventually everyone in that generation died. New generations of Israelites grew up in Egypt, and new generations of Egyptian rulers came into power. Very quickly in the book of Exodus the prosperity of the Israelites turns sour. A Pharaoh rose to power who didn’t know his history well enough for the name Joseph to mean anything to him. He saw the growing multitude of Israelites as a threat to His rule.

Look what Pharaoh and the Egyptians did to the Israelites in Exodus 1:13, “So [the Egyptians] ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves <sup>14</sup> and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.”

What words describe the lives of the Israelites? Ruthless; slaves; bitter; hard service are a few from just these verses.

What words describe your life? Be honest. You might just feel fine. Or maybe I’ve caught you when you’re sad. Maybe it’s a moment of peaceful trust. Maybe you’re mad. I don’t know. But I know one word that describes your life for sure: loved.

God loves you. How do you know God loves you? What’s the major piece of evidence that He gives that happened 2000 years ago on a hill outside of Jerusalem? The cross.

Jesus loves you so much that He went through the bitter suffering of the cross at the hands of ruthless people in order to be your substitute on that cross, to take your sin on Himself and die for you so that you can have life through believing in Him.

Do the words ruthless and bitter ever describe your life? When the devil tempts you to sin, he's a ruthless tempter. When you believe his lies and you do what the devil and the world say is good but God says is sin, then there's bitter regret.

We're sinners. We're not just fine. But Jesus died to save sinners.

What did the Israelites do when Genesis was over and they weren't fine? When the words ruthless and bitter described the Israelites' life, what did they do? The people cried out and God heard them and answered.

In Exodus 3:7 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. <sup>8</sup> 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."

God was going to rescue them from Egypt and bring them to the Promised Land of milk and honey. During the rescue there were times when they didn't understand why bad things were happening and they wondered if God had forgotten about them. He hadn't forgotten. He was listening and answering according to His timing.

What do we need to do when we're not fine? Cry out like the Israelites. God help! God have mercy on me! He's bringing us to a Promised Land, but the road there is rough in spots.

What's the Promised Land He's ultimately bringing us to? Heaven! What's God doing when we don't understand bad things and can't see how He could possibly make it better? He's doing what He did with the Israelites. He's listening and answering according to His timing.

Who's the guy God sent to tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, "Let my people go?" Moses. Sometimes we're like the Israelites—the ones crying out to God for help and mercy. Sometimes we're like Moses—the one God uses to help people whose lives are more "bitter and ruthless" than "fine."

Don't forget that Moses also cried out and God heard him, too. God chose Moses but he didn't feel qualified. Look at Exodus 3:10–11. God said, "<sup>10</sup> Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

How does God respond to Moses' cry? He's told him to go to Pharaoh and Moses doubts that he's got what it takes. What I love about God's response is that He doesn't tell Moses that Moses has what it takes.

Who has what it takes to pull off that kind of rescue? God! God doesn't say, "You got this," instead He promises, "I'll be with you." In Exodus 3:12 He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Whatever God calls you to do, you're not alone. The Lord is with you. You might doubt that you have what it takes. You might be right about that. But the Lord's got this, and He delights to work through you.

But Moses digs in his heels. He's afraid of what the people will think. How will the people of Israel respond to him being the agent of God's rescue operation? In Exodus 3:13 "Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?"'

God isn't going to let Moses use fear of what others think as an excuse. He's God, so He tells Moses who He is. In Exodus 3:14–15 God reveals that He's the LORD, the I Am Who I AM, Whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshipped.

In verses 16–18 He assures Moses that He will bring them to Canaan which flows with milk and honey and that the Israelites will listen to him. In verses 18–19 He foretells how Pharaoh will not listen to him. But then in verse 20 He foretells how He will strike Egypt with wonders and plagues and Pharaoh will let them go. Finally in verses 21–22 He foretells how they will plunder the Egyptians as they depart with silver and gold jewelry and clothing for their children.

He answered questions for Moses that he hadn't even asked yet. He does this with us too. It's called the Bible. When you dig into God's Word He shows you more about who He is and He answers questions you didn't even know you had about His love for you and about your life.

But amazingly Moses treated God's promises as if they were just God's opinions. In Exodus 4:1 he denied the Lord's promise from Exodus 3:18 that the people will listen to him.

So God was like, Oh that's how this is gonna be? In 4:2–9, God pretty much said, "Throw your staff on the ground, Mo." And God turned it into a snake. "Hey Mo, why you running away? Come back here Mo. Grab it. Grab it by the tail." Moses obeyed and took the snake by the tail and boom, it was back to being a regular old dead stick staff.

God graciously gave Moses signs to convince him and the people. God turned the staff to a serpent and back to a staff, and He made Moses' hand sick with leprosy and then back to healthy again.

And sure enough, when Moses finally did go to the people in Egypt to tell them what God said and show them the signs, Exodus 4:31 says the people believed and worshiped God.

God has given us a sign that He's with us and that He saves us. It's the cross. Romans 5:8 says, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." The cross isn't just a thing of the past. It's God's sign for you today that He loves you.

Back at the bush, Moses was still crying out with excuses for God to not use him. In 4:10 he tried disqualifying himself because he wasn't good at public speaking. God kept listening.

God said in verses 11–12, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? <sup>12</sup> Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak."

Moses is out of excuses, so he cries out to God in one last wimpy pout in verse 13, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." At this point God was angry and could've done a lightning bolt attack, boom, you're dead Mo. He was angry with Moses's stubbornness and refusal to believe all of God's answers. God had been listening and answering and Moses is like "lalalala"

But God didn't crush Moses. He answered with abundant mercy in Exodus 4:14–17 and said okay, your brother Aaron can be the spokesman while Moses hears from God and tells Aaron what to say.

Sometimes we're the ones crying out to God for help and mercy like the Israelites. Other times we're the ones God uses to help people who are in ruthless and bitter trouble like he used Moses. And sometimes God uses you and another friend to get through to someone who's in trouble, like how he used Moses and Aaron together.

Either way, we cry out and God listens and answers. His answers are written for us in Scripture. Scripture tells us that, as sinners, we can't expect God to hear us based on if we're good enough to be heard.

We don't cry out to God based on how much we deserve an answer, we cry out trusting that He hears us based on how much God loves us. He loves us so much that He gave His only Son for us. And Jesus loves you so much that He went through with the cross for you.

That's why we pray in Jesus' name. If I closed my prayers, "In Alex's name, Amen," then I'd be making requests to God based on how much I deserve an answer. But because of my sins I don't deserve an answer. So we don't ask in our name, we ask in Christ's name.

God hears you. His answer to our prayer for forgiveness is always yes because of Jesus. His answer to our prayers for help with health and friends and family and school and the future are that He is with us through it all.

Sometimes He fixes what's wrong for us, and other times that fix won't happen until Jesus returns and we are with Him forever without problems or sin or death in the final Promised Land of heaven and the new earth.

While I was still a student in college I had been a Christian for a long time. I had believed in Jesus as my savior from sin. But then I started to really struggle with some issues. Was it a ruthless and bitter time? Maybe. I didn't know how to pray anymore. Would God listen to me? Was He even there?

I found myself praying from a place of doubt, saying, "God, if you're there, I need you." Was God there? Yes. Did I know it? No. Was He listening? Yes. The way God answered my prayer was by graciously changing my prayer. My prayer changed from "God, if you're there, I need you." To praying, "God, because you ARE there, just hold me."

What happened in that moment was God heard the hurt and doubt and struggle in my heart. He listened. And what did He give me? Faith. Trust that He was there. Belief that He did indeed hear me because of Jesus.

So we daily come to God with our prayers, and He hears us. Why? Because we aren't praying in our name based on what we deserve. We pray in Jesus' name, trusting in His death and resurrection for our forgiveness, and trusting that God is with us when life is ruthless and bitter.

May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.