

# Old Testament Survey - Part 11

by Dick Woodward

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*The book of Exodus is a story of deliverance, where God uses Moses to free the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, teaching him the lessons of humility and faith along the way.*

**Duration:** 27:28

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:5

**Topics:** "Biblical Deliverance", "Old Testament"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the heart of the message of the book of Exodus, focusing on the unique people of God being developed into a nation, the problem of slavery they face in Egypt, and the miraculous deliverance orchestrated by God through Moses. It emphasizes the allegorical application of slavery to our lives, highlighting the need for deliverance from sin's power. The significant role of Moses as a prophet, deliverer, and contributor of the word of God and worship is explored, showcasing his journey of humility and obedience to God's call.

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## Transcript

As we continue our survey of the Old Testament and we come to the book of Exodus for the second time, having put the book of Exodus in perspective historically, I would like for us to come tonight to perhaps the heart of the message of the book of Exodus in many ways. In the book of Exodus, as we come to it, we focus upon several things. For instance, we focus upon the people of God, the unique people of God who are being developed into a unique nation through whom God's going to come into the world.

Another thing upon which we focus when we come to the book of Exodus is the problem, the great problem that the people of God have, which is the problem of slavery. These people are in Egypt and they've become such a great multitude they are a threat to the Pharaoh and he has enslaved them. And so the bitter bondage, the extreme cruel hard labor that these people are being put through, this is the problem that has to be solved in the book of Exodus.

And the word Exodus means the way out. And so the message of the book of Exodus really is this. What is the way out of this slavery? And this slavery is, first of all, a literal slavery, and the story of their deliverance from that slavery is one of the greatest miracles in the Bible.

And it's a true story, it's history. And it's one of the greatest miracles that has ever taken place on the face of the earth. Somewhere between 2 and 3 million people are delivered from slavery.

And how that takes place and what that involves, that is the exciting message of the book of Exodus. By application, and this is where in addition to being history the book is allegorical and has a beautiful allegorical truth to apply to our lives devotionally, the application is this. We too are slaves.

We don't do what we want to do, we do what we have to do. And if we're doing what we have to do and not what we want to do, we're not free. Now if we're not free, we're slaves.

And we need a solution too. We need to find deliverance from our slavery. The word salvation, with which we're all so familiar, really means the same thing as deliverance, especially in the Old Testament.

When you find the word salvation or the word deliverance, it's really the same word. Because there's a very real sense in which salvation is deliverance from sin. Not only its penalty, present and future, but its power.

When the Apostle John dedicated the last book of the Bible to Jesus, John dedicated the revelation to Jesus with these words, unto him who loved us and loosed us from our sins and made us kings and priests. He dedicated the book to him with those words. In the King James translation it says, unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins.

Most of the revised translations will translate that, loosed us from our sins, because that's literally what the word means. So salvation involves the love of God coming into your life, you realizing that God so loved you that he gave his only begotten Son. And when you understand the love of God as it's applied to you and your salvation, you will not only be saved from your sin in the sense that you're delivered from the penalty of your sin, future or even present, but you're loosed from your sin, from the power of your sin.

This deliverance from the power of sin, or from the enslavement of sin, that's the devotional message by application in the book of Exodus. The third thing upon which we should focus as we survey the book of Exodus is what we call the prophet. Because in the book of Exodus you not only have the story of the people and their problem, but you have the prophet, the prophet Moses.

When you consider the men of God in the scripture, frankly I believe this man stands head and shoulders above all of them. I believe without any reservation at all, Moses is the greatest man of God in the scripture. You can appreciate the greatness of this man Moses if you think about his contribution to the work of God.

Abraham fathered the people of God, and as we have said before, Jacob named them and Joseph saved them. But Moses, think of what Moses did for the people of God, and he does it mostly in the book of Exodus. First of all, Moses gives these enslaved people what slaves want more than anything else, freedom.

Most of us don't know what it is to be a slave or to not be free. There are many people behind the iron curtain or the bamboo curtain or the sugar cane curtain. There are many people in prison who know what it is to not be free.

When a person isn't free, the one thing they want more than anything else, the one thing that consumes them, that obsesses them, is the desire to be free. Moses gave these slaves what they wanted more than anything else, freedom. Then Moses gave them what newly emancipated people need more than anything else in the world, and this is needed so much in our third world countries who are recently emancipated.

God gave these recently emancipated people government or law through Moses. It was Moses who gave them this law and this government, and people who are newly emancipated, they need that. In the spiritual realm, Moses gave the people of God two things that are just invaluable.

He gave them the word of God, and he gave them worship. Now think about this for a minute. The first five books of the Bible are called the law books.

I believe that Moses was given the first five books of the Bible on Mount Sinai. He went up there several times, and in response to his prayer and fasting, God gave him Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. There are about 500 laws in those five books of the Bible.

There's much history, but there's so much law in those first five books of the Bible that these books are referred to as the law of God, or the law of Moses, or the word of God. God's word which was showing us how we should live. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

That's the purpose of this law. These first five books of the Bible are the cornerstone of the Bible, because they give us the pure word of God. This is the word that the prophets preach.

This is the word which in the history books they sometimes obey and sometimes disobey, and so they are sometimes examples and they are sometimes warnings for you and me, upon whom the ends of the world are come, according to the Apostle Paul. The word of God, the pure word of God, is in the first five books of the Bible, and that came through Moses. So as we consider the contribution that Moses made to the people of God, we can say he gave God's people the word of God.

Now what greater contribution could somebody make to the people of God than to give them the pure word of God? And then Moses gave them worship. The third third of the book of Exodus reads like a book of specifications. When people read the Bible through, they do pretty well going through Genesis, especially those character studies are interesting.

And then there's the drama of Exodus, the deliverance from Egypt, and that keeps them going pretty well. But when they get to the third third of Exodus and it starts to read like a book of specifications, you know if an architect showed you a book of specifications, it wouldn't be the most interesting reading in the world to a person who's a lay person in that field. And that's what the third third of Exodus reads like, and then when people get into Leviticus, they really give up.

They just can't keep going when they get to Leviticus. Now why do we bog down when we get to the third third of Exodus and the book of Leviticus? Well it's because we don't understand that God gave Moses a revelation when he gave him this pure word. God wanted to show Moses how he could be approached, a holy God by a sinful people, for salvation and also for direction and also just for communication.

You see in the book of Exodus, God shows us how he saves us from the bondage and tyranny of sin. But in the book of Exodus, especially in the third third, he shows us one of the very first purposes of that salvation. It's to worship him.

God wants to know us and he wants us to know him. He invites us to come and have a relationship with him and worship him. Now we need to be instructed in worship.

We don't know how to worship. The Apostles came to Jesus and said, Lord teach us to pray. They didn't know how to pray.

Many people don't know how to pray. People don't know how to worship. Now the worship forms that we have in our churches today, especially those churches that we call liturgical, where the minister has his back to the people and his face to the altar much of the time.

These churches and the synagogues in the Jewish faith really have their roots in terms of worship forms in this little tent of worship that God instructed Moses to build back there in the book of Exodus. We'll look at this tent of worship when we come to the book of Leviticus in more detail. If you saw it, you would think it looked like a little circus or something.

It probably wouldn't have impressed you very much. It was very colorful. Everything in that little tent of worship had great meaning, and it's one great big picture of Jesus Christ as we'll see when we come and look at that worship tent up close.

But all of this shows us the tremendous contribution Moses made to the people of God, because he gave us the Word of God, he showed us how to live, and he gave us worship. Moses showed us how to worship, so his contribution is really great. Now I would like for us to look at the life of Moses in this sense.

Again, the big problem in the book of Exodus is the problem of slavery, and the solution is deliverance. How are these people going to be delivered from this slavery they're experiencing in Egypt? They need a deliverer. If the people are going to be delivered, they have to have a deliverer.

So when God calls Moses, God calls Moses to be that deliverer. If you study the life of Moses as the deliverer of the people of God in the book of Exodus, it becomes very interesting, because again by application, just as the book of Exodus is one great big illustration of deliverance or salvation, the life of Moses is one great big illustration of how to be a deliverer. Once you've been delivered from the power of sin yourself, that's perhaps the greatest experience you can experience in life.

The second great experience in life is becoming the deliverer for somebody else, becoming the human agent or instrument through which somebody else can be delivered. The book of Exodus illustrates the deliverance or the salvation. Moses illustrates what's involved in being the deliverer.

As we look at his life this way, I think of a quote of Dwight O. Moody. D.O. Moody said, Moses lived 120 years, and he lived that 120 years in three periods of 40 years each. In each of these 40 years of his life, God taught Moses one lesson.

It took him 40 years to learn each one of these three lessons. He must have had learning disability or something, because it took him 40 years to learn each lesson. In the first 40 years of the life of Moses, according to Moody, God taught Moses this lesson.

Moses, you're nobody. It took him 40 years to teach him that. Moses, you're nobody.

Somebody has said this is when Moses got his B.S. degree, because he discovered he was born a slave. Through the circumstances of his life, he was raised in the palace of the Pharaoh, and it may be that being raised in the palace of the Pharaoh, he might have thought he was somebody. But around the time that he was 40 years old, apparently God succeeded in convincing him that he was nobody.

According to Moody, he had to learn that before he could be a deliverer. The second lesson God taught Moses, and this took place in the second 40 years of his life, was this. Moses, you're somebody.

Since God did such a good job in the first 40 years, in that first lesson, it took him 40 years to teach Moses that second lesson. Moses, you're somebody. This is where Moses got his B.D. degree.

That used to mean Bachelor of Divinity, only in the case of Moses, it meant backside of the desert. Because at the end of his first 40 years, Moses went out one day, and he really looked upon the suffering of these Hebrew slaves, knowing now that he was himself a Hebrew slave. It says that he cared, he had compassion, he felt very deeply what they were feeling in all their suffering.

I've heard Charles Colson say that he wouldn't have any compassion particularly for prisoners today, if he had not spent time in the bowels of hell itself. If he hadn't been in prison itself, he wouldn't have a great compassion for prisoners. It was when he was in prison, and he was experiencing the indignities and the suffering that the prisoners experienced, that's when he developed compassion and concern for people behind bars.

The same thing happened to Moses. He probably looked at those Hebrew slaves many times and didn't feel a thing, but when he found that he was one of them, that made a big difference. Moses wanted to do something when he saw their suffering, and so he killed an Egyptian official.

This was at the end of his first 40 years. It's almost as if God came to him at that point and said, No, Moses, no, that's no way to get the job done. Now your picture is going to be on every tree in Egypt, you're going to be public enemy number one, you're never going to deliver anybody this way.

Moses, let's go to seminary for 40 years, and let's think about this. So God takes Moses to the backside of the desert where he gave him his B.D. degree, only it meant backside of the desert, and for 40 years they went to seminary together, and that entire 40 years God consumes Moses with one issue, the slavery of those people and how they're going to be delivered. At the end of that second 40 years, Moses has an experience.

He's out there in the desert, and out there in the desert it's typical for an acai bush to burst into flame, and an acai bush bursts into flame, which isn't unusual. Usually they consume in about five seconds, but this time the bush doesn't consume, it just keeps burning. Moses turns aside to see this.

Let me Moses was pastoring the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and he came to Horeb, or Mount Sinai. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush, and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, I must turn aside and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.

When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses, remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you're standing is holy ground. And then God said also, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

And God said, I surely have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land into a good land. Now behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me.

Furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt? And God said, certainly I will be with you.

You see, Moses had been going to seminary for 40 years, and this was his commencement. He was graduating from seminary, and God was the commencement speaker. And at the burning bush, this is what God said at the commencement of Moses.

Moses, you've seen the problem, and that's commendable. Many people have never even seen the problem. Unless we go into the prisons, like Chuck Colson, or into the veterans hospitals, or into the mental hospitals, we may never see the problem, because our problem is institutionalized today, out of sight, out of mind.

So many people have never seen the problem, and God says to Moses, Moses, you've seen the problem, and that's commendable. And Moses, you feel something. You feel compassion, and that's great.

And you want to do something, and that's good. But Moses, the important thing is not that you see it. It's not that you care.

It isn't that you want to do something. The important thing is this, Moses, I have seen that problem, and I care about those people. I have compassion, and I want to do something.

I have come to do something. Now, at this point, you might think Moses would have said, oh, that's great. I'm going back and tend my sheep.

But then God says, therefore, come to me, and I'm going to send you to Pharaoh, so that you can be the deliverer of these people. Now, at this point, Moses says, who am I? Why are you picking me? You see, this is the end of the second 40 years of the life of Moses, and God is now trying to convince him of this lesson. Moses, you're somebody.

The first 40 years, he taught him he was nobody. The second 40 years, he taught him that he was somebody. As they begin the third 40 years of the life of Moses, we all know, and this is the dramatic story in the book of Exodus, God is going to teach Moses this lesson, according to D.O. Moody.

God is going to teach Moses what God can do with somebody who's learned that he's nobody. We call this humility. What is humility, after all? It's a very difficult thing to define.

I heard about a preacher who was given a medal for humility by his congregation, but they had to take it back because he wore it all the time. And I heard the story about an Episcopal minister who was having his devotions early one morning, and he stood before the altar and he said, Oh God, I'm nobody. And the curate, the assistant minister, was impressed with that.

He thought that was outstanding. So he stepped up next to the minister, and they were both kneeling. He knelt down next to him, and he said, Oh God, I'm nobody.

And the custodian who was back in the sanctuary thought this was real neat, so he put aside his broom and he knelt down back there in the sanctuary, and he said, Oh God, I'm nobody. And the curate nudged the senior minister and said, Look who thinks he's nobody. I suppose we might say that what God wanted

to produce in Moses before Moses could be the deliverer of his people was humility.

Another way of saying the same thing would be to say this, that in order for God to bring the third forty years of the life of Moses into fruition, this is when he got his PhD degree, which meant deliverance from Pharaoh, in order for Moses to be the great deliverer through which the people could be delivered from Egypt and from Pharaoh, he had to teach him, Moses, you're nobody. Now Moses, if you really believe that you're nobody, then you're somebody. Because Moses, if you really know that you're nobody and that you're somebody, then I can show you what I can do with somebody who's learned that he's nobody.

Have you ever wondered why Moses asked that question, who am I? Think about this for a minute. Who was Moses? If you were going to send someone to deliver these people, would you have sent Moses? First of all, it says he is a murderer. Now would you have sent a murderer, public enemy number one, back there to Egypt? It's interesting how three of the great men of the scripture are murderers.

Paul's a murderer, David's a murderer, Moses is a murderer, and yet God uses these people who are murderers. Would you have chosen a murderer? It's obvious now, we're sure, that Moses is a Hebrew, and you read in the book of Genesis that the Egyptians had nothing to do with Hebrews. Discrimination and prejudice is just as old as man.

Joseph couldn't even eat with his brothers because Egyptians didn't eat with Hebrews, and he appeared at least to be an Egyptian. Would you have sent a Hebrew? Then it says in the book of Genesis, the one thing that was an abomination to the Egyptians more than Hebrews was shepherds. They hated shepherds.

They had a thing about shepherds, because they were into cattle, they worshiped the cow, and they just hated shepherds. So God says to Moses, what is that in your hand? Moses says, a shepherd's rod. God says, well here, wave that around in front of Pharaoh, that'll really get a rise out of him.

Let him know that you're a shepherd. So he's a murderer, he's a Hebrew, he's a shepherd, he's an ungrateful adopted son, he spent 40 years in the palace of a Pharaoh and shows his gratitude by killing an Egyptian official. Is he really qualified to do this? There's a sense in which you'd say no, he's not.

Picking the right men to do important jobs, that's one of the things that makes a president a success or failure. Many presidencies have succeeded and presidencies have failed because the president didn't have the ability to do that, to pick the right man. Now when a president of the United States tries to select men to do a job for him, of course he tries to get the most qualified men.

In the Bible you'll see God calling people like Moses to do very important things, like deliver his people from the bondage of Egypt. Only it almost seems as if God is trying to pick the man who's least qualified. Because if this man really does believe that he's not qualified and he does believe that God can do it and that only God can do it, then this just could be the man that God is going to use to bring about the great miracle.

When you consider the call and the commission of Moses, you can see this truth coming out very clearly. If we're going to be used of God to be the deliverer for people back there in Egypt or today, if you would like to see some friend or some loved one delivered from the bondage of sin, perhaps you know people that are slaves to sin and you'd like to be the human agent of their deliverance, never forget this, you're not the one that delivers them. I remember a professor saying to me when I was in seminary, when you

attempt to lead a person to Christ, when you attempt to lead someone into the experience of salvation, which as we've said is deliverance, never forget this, apart from the Holy Spirit you are attempting the impossible.

That's absolutely impossible. You can't do that. Only God can do that.

So if God is calling you to be a deliverer, just as he called Moses to be a deliverer, it's obvious that he's got to produce humility in us, and I think a good definition of humility is really just understanding who it is that's going to perform this miracle. I've never understood this, but the Bible will teach us from cover to cover that it's the plan of God to use the power of God in the people of God to accomplish the purposes of God according to the plan of God. I'll run that by a second time.

It's five P's, it's easy to remember because five P's, five words that start with the letter P. It is the plan of God to use the power of God in the people of God to accomplish the purposes of God according to the plan of God. In the New Testament, Jesus gives us one of his great illustrations. When he goes out into the garden of Gethsemane and he pulls down a vine with branches coming out of it and fruit growing on the end of the branches, and he gives this great teaching.

He's just been in the upper room with the Apostles, and in the upper room essentially he's been saying to these men it is the plan of God to use the power of God in the people of God to accomplish the purposes of God according to the plan of God. He has said to them in the upper room, you've been fascinated with the work you've seen me do and the words you've heard me speak. Now let me tell you something about my work and my words.

My work and my words are the overflow of my relationship to the Father. I and the Father are one, and all the works that I do and all the words that I speak are a result of the fact that I and the Father are one. Having said this to them, he says, I'm going to leave you and when I leave you the Holy Spirit's going to come.

When the Holy Spirit comes, if you will be at one with the Holy Spirit, just as I am at one with the Father, then he will make it possible for you to do his work and speak his words. In other words, he says to these men, the work of God has been done on earth through me and the word of God's been spoken on earth through me because I and the Father are one. If you will be one with the Holy Spirit, the work of God will be done through you and the words of God will be spoken through you.

Having taught that, he pulls down this vine and these branches and he says it's just like this. You see how these branches are abiding in this vine? You see how they're related to this vine? This is what makes it possible for them to have this fruit produced. Now in that illustration, I believe he's saying two things.

He's saying without me you can do nothing, but he's also saying this, without you I will do nothing. You see the fruit doesn't grow on the vine, it grows out on the branches. In that illustration, Jesus is a vine looking for branches and back there in the book of Exodus that's what God is.

He's a vine looking for a branch. God will not do it without human instrument, without human instrumentality. He does have to find his Moses, but when he finds his Moses and he commissions and calls his Moses, he has to convince him, Moses you're nobody, you're not the one that's going to do this.

Now if you understand that Moses, then you're somebody and you can discover the great miracle of what I can do with somebody who's learned that he's nobody. Remember this, it is the plan of God to use the

power of God in the people of God to accomplish the purposes of God according to the plan of God.

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