

Meditation #1
Exodus 3:13
Prof. Herman Hanko

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

A little of the context of the verse, Exodus 3:13, will help us to understand it.

Moses was forty years old when he fled from Egypt. He went to the desert near Sinai, where he spent another forty years taking care of sheep. He was then eighty years old.

The Lord appeared to him in the bush that burned but was not burnt up or destroyed. It was a picture of the nation of Israel, because Israel was a nation that was “burned” in slavery but could not be destroyed. For God dwelt in that nation.

The main question of this text is: Why did Moses ask God for a name so that he could prove to Israel that God had sent him?

There are, I think, several reasons for Moses’ request.

The first reason is the most important. God had not been known by the children of Israel by any other name but *Elohim*, which means simply, God. This is clear from Exodus 6:3. God had not revealed himself as “Jehovah,” the God of the covenant who is faithful to his promises. Jehovah means, “I AM.” God’s name is I AM. God is not “I Was;” nor is he “I Will Be.” He is I AM. That is, he is the eternally unchangeable one in whom is no past or future, but who is outside of time. And because he is the unchangeable One, he is also unchangeable in his covenant promises (Ex. 3:15). God wanted Moses to tell Israel this.

Another reason why Moses asked this question is because of his own conviction that he was not the one to lead Israel (Ex. 4:1). He had been changed during his forty years in the wilderness from an impetuous man ready to defend one of his brothers, into a meek man – the Bible tells us he was the meekest man on the earth.

It also seemed to Moses that the eighty years since his birth not only seemed a long time to him and to Israel for God to deliver his people. Moses and Israel had begun to think God had forsaken them. They would have appreciated the words of Psalm 77:1-9. But we must always wait for God’s time when he seems also to us to have forgotten us. We must learn to wait on the Lord (Ps. 27:14).

Memory Verse: *Psalm 27: 14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.*

Meditation #2
Exodus 4:11
Prof. Herman Hanko

And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?

When the Lord called Moses from the bush that burned but was not consumed, he sent Moses to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to let Israel go. The time had come for Israel's deliverance.

Forty years before Moses' call, Moses had tried to lead Israel out of Egypt, but he learned it was not God's time and that he was wrong in being so impulsive. He had to wait for God's time. In God's time, neither Israel nor Moses was ready to leave Egypt nor to inherit the promised land. Israel had to learn to wait on the Lord for another forty years; and Moses was not the man God could use at forty, he was: confident, cocky, impulsive, and ready to take matters into his own hands rather than wait for God's directions.

Forty years later the time came, but this time, when God specifically called him, Moses no longer wanted to do what he was called to do. He did not want to be Israel's deliverer. He had changed. It took forty years, but Moses was no longer the impulsive man he was; nor was he sure that he could easily do the work of bringing Israel to Canaan. So Moses refused to do what God commanded him to do. Claiming that he was unable to do this work, he tried to persuade the Lord to find someone else. One of his excuses was that he was not a good speaker (Ex. 4:10).

The words of this text are God's response to Moses' excuse.

The wording of the text seems to indicate that God was angry with Moses for his refusal. The important point God is making is this: *I made you the way I wanted you to be for the work I call you to perform.* If God calls a person to a certain work, God will qualify him for that work. Moses must not doubt that. In anger, God reminded Moses that he is the author of every gift, and that we may not doubt this.

Moses was not spiritually ready to do God's work when he was forty years old, he thought he could easily do anything God asked. God taught Moses humility in those forty years with the sheep. Now, Moses went to the other extreme. Though he was now humbled, he did not yet trust that the Lord would help him do the work. False humility is as wrong as pride.

So we too must be willing to do what God calls us to do, even if it is to be an office bearer in the church. We must be aware that we can do what God calls us to do, but only by God's strength.

Memory Verse: *2 Corinthians 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

Meditation #3
Exodus 5:2
Prof. Herman Hanko

And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.

In obedience to God's instructions, Moses reluctantly went from the desert near Sinai to Egypt, and confronted Pharaoh with God's command to let Israel go. This text contains Pharaoh's response.

This refusal of Pharaoh was to continue all the way through the ten times Moses brought God's command to him. Even when, after ten terrible plagues, Pharaoh gave permission for Israel to leave, he changed his mind and chased the nation, trapping them between his army and the Red Sea.

We can learn several things from this verse.

According to Romans 1:18, Pharaoh did know God in the sense that he could not escape God's creation. God's creation makes known to all men that God is the only God and that He alone ought to be worshipped. Nevertheless, Romans 1:18 also tells us that the wicked suppress the truth in unrighteousness. To suppress the truth means to hate God and push the truth into the subconsciousness.

The Bible says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart for a total of ten times; and ten times we read that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (1 Sam. 6:6; See Arthur Pink's book, *The Sovereignty of God*).

That means that while God remains sovereign over sin, man remains responsible for his own sin. At that point that the will of God touches man's will, God does not coerce or force man against his will to sin. Man sins voluntarily and because he wants to.

This truth is mysterious and beyond our understanding (Read Canons of Dordrecht, especially Head 1 and the Conclusion to learn what our fathers taught on this subject).

Hardening is a process. The more God returns with his command and the more God sends judgments on man for his disobedience, the more the wicked suppress God's truth, hate it and persecute those who teach it, even till this day. This suppression of the truth is what is meant by hardening.

The escape from this awful hardening is, according to Scripture, confession of sin and fleeing to the cross for forgiveness and grace to obey God.

Memory Verse: *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*

Meditation #4
Exodus 5:22
Prof. Herman Hanko

And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, LORD, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me?

Moses brought to Pharaoh God's command that Pharaoh let the people go, but Pharaoh refused the command and openly mocked God (Ex. 5:2). Pharaoh was not content merely to refuse God's demand, he also put an impossible burden on the Israelites. Prior to God's demand, the Israelites *received* straw to use in the making of bricks to build Pharaoh's treasure city. After it, he stopped providing the straw and made the Israelites find their own straw, while they were required to make the same number of bricks as usual.

There is archeological evidence for this. In one of the cities, the lower walls were built with straw, but as one moves upward on the wall, the straw in the bricks continues to decrease until almost no straw can be found. Straw held the mud together.

The Israelites complained bitterly to Moses and Aaron, and Moses and Aaron complained to the LORD.

Apparently, on the basis of what God said earlier to Moses, he and Aaron, as well as the children of Israel, thought that with God's command to Pharaoh, Israel would also be delivered. But God does not always work that way – as Israel learned. Because of God's promise to deliver his people from Egypt, they thought that this wonder of God would be performed with the first visit to Pharaoh.

God has his own reasons for working the way he did to Pharaoh and the children of Israel (Ex. 6:1-8), but he does not always tell his people why he does as he does. Nor need he do this (Rom. 11:33-36). There are times when, rather than deliver us, he brings us further into affliction. He sends affliction to try our faith. We are much like little children; one spanking does not seem to help, so the child receives another spanking.

The Lord keeps his promises, but not always in the way we want and expect. His counsel is perfect and his thoughts far beyond our thoughts (Isa. 55:9) I had an elder in a congregation I served who would remind time and again of this verse and quote it for me in Dutch.

I have experienced that more than once in my life. The Lord sent chastisement; I prayed to be delivered, but my affliction got greater. Finally, I had to say, "Lord, do whatever it is that you will for me. It matters not what happens to me, thy glory is all that is important"

The ten plagues came upon Egypt over several years, and not one immediately after the other. All this teaches us to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.... Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9-10).

God's waiting to answer us is the reason why Scripture teaches us to "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait: I say, on the LORD" (Ps. 27:14).

Memory Verse: *Isaiah 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Meditation #5
Exodus 6:30
Prof. Herman Hanko

And Moses said before the LORD, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?

It was customary for Moses and God to speak together. In fact, we are told in Scripture that the LORD knew Moses face-to-face, and there was no other prophet like Moses in this way (Deut. 34:10). How this took place, Scripture does not tell us. Perhaps always when Moses and God conversed, God took on an appearance as angels did when they spoke to men. We know that sometimes this was true. We read that God appeared to Moses in a cloud of glory in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and God also appeared unto Moses on Mount Sinai. The latter appearance was at Moses' request (Ex. 33:18-23), which would seem to indicate that Moses did not actually see God until he asked. We cannot be sure, but what is true is that God talked with Moses as a friend talks with a friend, with close fellowship and communion. That was covenant fellowship. Enoch too walked with God, as did Noah.

The hour had come for Moses to bring God's command to Pharaoh to let Israel go. Moses was afraid, as he could not easily forget that Pharaoh had threatened to kill him for killing an Egyptian. However, he also had learned humility as he sat, hour after hour, under the shadow of Mount Sinai caring for Jethro's sheep.

But there is more. It was a high calling to which Moses was called. As any man who is conscious of his own weaknesses, Moses too did not think he could do what God commanded. I would think, knowing myself, that Moses was conscious of his own powerlessness as a persuasive speaker. He pondered, I think, the fact that a common shepherd bringing a command to a mighty king, had to be eloquent in the extreme to get this mighty king to change his mind.

There are at least two things the Scripture teaches us in Moses' reluctance. The first one is that when God calls us to perform a given task, we may not say *no*. Although some people are led to say *no* out of a false modesty (which is really pride), others are genuinely convinced that they cannot do what God wants them to do. I do not mind confessing to you that there were many times in my life that I was terrified to go to the pulpit and pleaded with God not to send me.

The second teaching we learn from this is that we never do God's work in our own strength, but God gives his grace to us poor sinners to do what he calls us to do.

Memory Verse: *Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

Meditation #6
Exodus 10:3
Prof. Herman Hanko

And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.

God's way in delivering his people from the land of Egypt was through ten terrible plagues that destroyed Egypt. God's people are always delivered from the bondage of sin and death (of which bondage Egypt was a type) by his judgment upon the wicked. It is a principle of our salvation expressed in Isaiah 1:27: "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness."

Ten different times God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh to command him to release Israel from slavery and permit them to leave Egypt for the Promised Land. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he refused. This same response to God's command on ten different occasions fully demonstrated the awful depravity of Pharaoh's heart, and the hearts of all men apart from the saving grace of God. Wickedness must be shown for what it is: rebellion against God, that God may reveal his justice in sending the wicked to Hell.

So it is always with the preaching. Preaching is not only the public proclamation of the gospel of good news in Jesus Christ, but it is also a calling to all who hear to repent from sin and believe in Christ (Canons of Dordrecht Head 2 Article-5).

Some have claimed that God may not demand of sinful man something they are unable to do. Arminians try to avoid this by saying that man can repent and believe because he has a free will. Antinomians answer this objection by saying that the demand to repent and believe comes only to the elect to whom God gives the grace to obey the demand of the gospel.

The answer of Scripture is that God created man capable of doing his will; but man lost the ability to do what God demands. It is man's fault, not God's fault that man is so wicked. (See Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 4)

To obey God is to humble one's self before God and confess one's sin. Pharaoh would not do that. He hardened his heart – and was destroyed. And Israel, the object of God's favour, was delivered by God's righteous judgments upon Egypt.

Memory Verse: *Romans 11:26-27 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

Meditation #7
Exodus 13:14
Prof. Herman Hanko

And it shall be that when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage.

This text is found in a passage in which we have recorded for us God's instruction of Israel concerning the celebration of the Passover Feast. The command of the text was an important part of the celebration of the Passover.

It is interesting to note that the text implies that children were not permitted to celebrate the Passover with the adults. The reason was that they did not understand the meaning and significance of this important feast.

The Lord's Supper has taken the place of the Old Testament Passover. Our Lord changed the Passover to the Lord's Supper at the last Passover Jesus celebrated with his disciples before his death (Matt. 26:26-28).

It is interesting that children might not partake of the Passover. The reason was that children could not yet understand the spiritual significance of the Passover. They could not understand the death of a lamb which pointed ahead to Christ's sacrifice on the cross for the sins of God's people.

The same is true of the Lord's Supper. Children are forbidden to partake of the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper for they cannot discern the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29).

The point of the text is that parents are solemnly instructed to explain to their children what is happening and why adults celebrate the Passover.

The saints in the Old Testament were instructed to teach their children about the slavery the nation endured in Egypt and how God delivered the nation from Egypt with many signs and wonders and with a mighty hand. They were instructed to tell their children the wonderful salvation that would be given them when the promised seed would be born.

And so it is today. When the Lord's Supper is administered in our congregation, we must explain to our children what the bread and wine signify, what eating a piece of bread and drinking a bit of wine signifies, why they may not yet join in eating the bread and drinking the wine, and what the death of our Saviour means for us.

It is good in the morning when the Lord's Supper is administered, to read a part of the narrative of Christ's suffering or a passage that speaks of the forgiveness of sins because God hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor. 5:21).

Memory Verse: *2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Meditation #8
Exodus 15:11
Prof. Herman Hanko

Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

These words were a part of the song that Moses and the children of Israel sang after Pharaoh and his army were drowned in the Red Sea while Israel passed through the Red Sea on dry ground. It was a song of praise to God who had marvelously saved his people; it is the kind of song we ought also to sing to the Lord.

Too often our prayers consist of a long list of requests which we make to God; but if one reads the Psalms, it is clear that our prayers should also be filled with praises to the God of our salvation.

Israel praised God for being the only true God among all the idols the nations worshipped. Scripture often does this (refer to Isa. 40:12-21).

Israel praised God for his glorious holiness. God's holiness is a perfection which includes grace, mercy, peace, love and all the communicable attributes. Holiness is said in Scripture to be a blinding light, that when the seraphim see, they hide their faces with their wings and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3b).

The phrase "fearful in praises" probably means that those who praise the living God do so in fear. Fear is not terror but awe and reverence. Fear is mentioned many times in both the Old and New Testaments. It is even said to be the beginning of wisdom.

Israel praised God because he does wonders. The immediate reference is, of course, to the miracle of the Red Sea's saving and destroying power. No god can do what our God does.

That miracle of destroying the enemies of God, and saving his people, his Christ and the church, as well as you and me by Jesus Christ is the greatest miracle of all history. To make of hideous, guilt-ridden sinners and enemies of God, saints more beautiful than the angels and utterly without sin or the possibility of sinning, is a miracle only God can do: we can't; no one in all the creation can. He does this to us! Praise ye the Lord!

Memory Verse: *Psalm 107:8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!*

Meditation #9
Exodus 17:4
Prof. Herman Hanko

And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

Israel had travelled from the Red Sea to Rephidim, into the wilderness near Sinai. The LORD had led them to that place by the pillar of cloud during the day and the pillar of fire during the night. But there was no water for the people and cattle to drink. Once again, they rebelled against Moses and against God. They were a rebellious people.

Scripture records at least ten rebellions by Israel while between Egypt and Canaan. Ten in Scripture is symbolic of the full measure of something: Ten Commandments is the full expression of God's will for his people. Ten plagues were the full measure of God's judgments on wicked Egypt. By rebelling at least ten times, Israel had filled the full measure of their sinful rebellion against God.

Their sin was lack of trust that God would provide their needs. This time they were so angry they wanted to stone Moses and get him out of the way so they could go back to Egypt – Egypt! The symbol of the slavery of sin.

The following truths are meant for our instruction as well as for all God's people:

We are as rebellious as Israel in our sojourn on the way to Heaven. We too so often doubt God's care of us that we nearly kill ourselves studying so that we will be able to earn a lot of money, and worry when God puts some obstacle to our goals in our way (Matt. 6:24-34). Thus it is that we, as with Israel, prefer Egypt (the world of the slavery of sin) to following Christ who leads us to heaven.

Moses prayed to God for he was the typical intercessor of God's people. He was a type of Christ, who as our High Priest, makes intercession for us. He prays that God will not be angry with us when we sin so dreadfully, but will pardon our sins for his sake.

As with Israel, so it is with the church today. There are wicked people in the church who are tares among the wheat, according to our Lord in Matthew 13. The tares can easily lead the church astray, but there are elect believers, who though they sin also, seek forgiveness in Christ.

Memory Verse: *Matthew 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

Meditation #10
Exodus 32:12
Prof. Herman Hanko

Wherefore should the Egyptian's speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Israel was still at the foot of Sinai when this prayer of Moses was made. Moses had just returned from the mount after receiving from God the law that would govern Israel's life as a nation.

While Moses was gone, in wickedness and repeated rebellion the people built, with Aaron's help, an idol in the form of a golden calf. They worshipped it and cried, "These be thy gods, O, Israel" (Ex. 32.4). It was a dreadful sin, as it were before the face of God who was with Moses in Sinai, they dared to make an idol and worship it!

The words of the text quoted above are the words of Moses' mediating prayer that he made when God who saw the sin told Moses he would destroy the nation and make a new nation from Moses (Ex. 32:7-10).

The calf may very well have been one of the idols that the Egyptians worshipped. But the sin of idolatry, which started at the foot of Sinai, was a sin that continued to plague the nation throughout its history until the destruction of the nation when God brought them into captivity.

Moses was an Old Testament type of Christ as the mediator of Israel. He stood between God and the nation to plead the cause of the nation before God.

Notice that Moses makes his plea on the basis of God's own promise to bring the nation to the land of Canaan. If God does not keep his promise the nations will ridicule God and show that God is no better than their idols: he cannot keep his promise to save his people.

Because Moses was the Old Testament picture of Christ, we must see the implications of this. Christ is our Mediator who pleads our cause before God. We, again and again, rebel against God and serve our idols of wealth, beautiful homes, expensive cars, sports and earthly pleasure. God has every reason to destroy us.

But Christ prays for us and brings to God his own precious blood that he spilled on Calvary to turn God's wrath against our sins away that we may inherit heaven. Please read Hebrews 7.

Memory verse: *Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

Meditation #11
Exodus 32:26
Prof. Herman Hanko

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

The nation of Israel had committed a great sin. Before the face of God as it were, they had broken the second commandment in making and worshipping a golden calf. The punishment for idolatry and image worship was death. Moses had now to carry out that sentence upon the nation.

Before the wicked were punished, Moses called to his side those in the nation of Israel who had not participated in this sin. The tribe of Levi composed of priests and Levites had not joined the nation in this sin. They came to Moses to stand with him. Moses stood, we are told, at the "gate of the camp". This was probably not a gate like we think of a gate. Every city in Israel had a large open meeting place where people could assemble for purposes that involved them all. Rulers met here to make public announcements and elders met here to try cases.

The Levites were innocent. They became the executioners instead (Ex. 32:28). Their service of God in the tabernacle might possibly have made them more sensitive to the seriousness of God's commandments.

Nor did the Levites kill everyone who had committed the sin. They killed only three thousand men. We may assume that those who were the ringleaders in the nation were killed, while we read that the nation itself committed the sin of image worship.

This is a clear instance of corporate responsibility. As was usually the case in Israel (and it still is today), it was not the whole nation that participated in the sin. We are told the Levites did not; and many in the nation refrained. But they also did nothing to stop the sin, and so the sin was the sin of the whole nation. The nation persuaded Aaron to make a golden calf for them.

This matter of corporate responsibility came up often in Israel's history – as it does in our lives. At the end of Israel's history under its own kings, though the whole nation of Judah did not commit all the sins of the people, the righteous were also taken into captivity with the nation. Examples are Daniel and his three friends.

Corporate responsibility is also seen in families, a drunken father brings grief and suffering to the whole family. It is also seen when a nation goes to war, even though many in the nation do not want war. Most important of all, the whole human race is responsible with Adam for eating of the forbidden tree. God always judges corporately.

Memory verse: *Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*