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NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I SEEN (by: Dr. Stan Reeder)

Exodus 2:11-3:1a NIV

¹¹ One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. ¹² Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³ The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"

¹⁴ The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known."

¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well. ¹⁶ Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock.

¹⁸ When the girls returned to Reuel their father, he asked them, "Why have you returned so early today?"

¹⁹ They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock."

²⁰ "And where is he?" he asked his daughters. "Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat."

²¹ Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. ²² Zipporah gave

birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, "I have become an alien in a foreign land."

²³ During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. ²⁴ God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵ So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

3 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law...

INTRODUCTION:

Nobody knows, the trouble I've seen
Nobody knows, but Jesus
Nobody knows, de trouble I've seen
Glory Hallelujah

Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down,
Sometimes I'm almost on de groun'.
What make ole Satan hate me so?
Because he got me once and he let me go.

Nobody knows, the trouble I've seen
Nobody knows, but Jesus
Nobody knows, de trouble I've seen
Glory Hallelujah

Moses – Mr. Nobody knows the trouble I've seen.

We are going to continue looking at Moses: Mr. Nobody, by examining Exodus 2:11 – 3:1a. Please open your Bibles to that passage and as we study it, we'll come to see that Mr. Nobody knows the trouble of seemingly unanswered prayers!

The underlying theme of this passage is prayer. The word is not mentioned once in these 18 verses, but none the less that's what they are about.

Have you ever really dealt with the question of why sometimes it seems God does not answer prayer.

Why is it that you pray about a perfectly legitimate need and there seems to be no answer?

Why is it that you can pray for something for days, months, years, even decades and it appears no answer comes?

The truth we will see in these verses is that God always answers prayers.

There are three time periods outlined in these verses. They all involve FORTY SOMETHING...

FORTY SOMETHING TIMES:

The first time period of these verses is . . .

1. 40 hours of conflict (Exodus 2:11-17)

*Sometimes God answers our prayers with: **NO !***

The first words of this period . . . One day.

This first time period was like the blink of an eye. Moses had a plan to free his people using his position of royal authority. To this plan, to this prayer, God said NO.

God said NO by making abrupt changes in Moses' situation and removing his royal authority through 40 hours of intense conflict. Isn't it great to know that God is working in our lives even in the terrible times of intense, stomach-churning, painful, conflict.

Seven major conflicts brought about the change Moses needed in his life:

a) He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew (v. 11). I am just estimating, but I assume that this was likely near the end of a long day. The Hebrew slave was tired and his strength was failing so the Egyptian was beating him to motivate him to get moving. Let's say it was 7:00 in the evening.

b) He killed the Egyptian (v. 12)

c) He . . . saw two Hebrews fighting (v. 13). The scripture tells us that we are now in the next day. Likely he is right back in the field first thing in the morning. He tries to break up the fight and one of the Hebrews says to Moses . . .

d) Who made you ruler and judge over us (v. 14) “Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and thought, “What I did must have become known.”

e) Pharaoh . . . tried to kill Moses (v. 15). This would have been later that same day. Moses is no dummy, he knows what this means.

Vacationing in Arizona, a group of British tourists spots a cowboy lying by the side of the road with his ear to the ground. “What’s going on?” they ask.

“Two horses – one gray, one chestnut – are pulling a wagon carrying two men,” the cowboy says. “One man is wearing a red shirt, the other a black shirt. They’re heading east.”

“Wow!” says one of the tourists. **“You can tell all that just by listening to the ground?”**

“No!” replies the cowboy. **“They just ran over me.”**

Mr. Nobody knows what this means, so, he flees to Midian. He likely traveled all day and all night and into the next morning before he finally sits down by a well in the desert. In this remote area of Midian he witnesses a skirmish between some women and a group of shepherds; verse 17 gives us the outcome of the conflict. . .

f) Shepherds drove them away (v. 17). You think you can run somewhere and get away from all the conflict? Moses changed addresses – he changed countries – he ran to the middle of nowhere. He sits down for a moment’s peace and rest and sure enough . . . more conflict!

g) Moses . . . came to their rescue (v.17). He’s fighting again . . . getting rid of these bully shepherds.

The ladies showed up at home around 11:00 am, much earlier than expected. Their father asks, “Why have you returned so early today?” (v.18).

From 7:00 pm one day until 11:00 am two days later – through 40 hours of conflict God says NO and puts Moses in a place where he can GROW.

Let’s look at the next period of time . . .

2. 40 years of crying (Exodus 2:23-25)

The first words of this period . . . *During that long period.*

*Sometimes God answers our prayers with: **GROW!***

It took God 40 hours to say NO. It took God 40 years to GROW Moses.

Five steps that brought change:

Why didn't God respond more quickly to the cries of people that went on for 40 years? It wasn't because God didn't hear their cries. Scripture tells us . . .

a) God heard (v. 24a)

It wasn't because God wasn't being faithful . . . Oh . . .

b) He remembered (v. 24b) his covenant. He hadn't forgotten his promises.

It wasn't because somehow God didn't really understand what was happening in their lives. . .

c) God looked (v25a). He could see the big picture. He knew all about their struggles.

I heard a story about **a small town where there was a volunteer fire department** and the telephone was manned by the police chief because they didn't have a fire chief. Whenever the fire phone would ring the police chief would answer: "Fire Department" and find out where the fire was. Then he'd ring the alarm, all the fire fighters would come and put the fire out.

One Saturday morning the phone rang. The police chief picked up the phone and said: "Fire Department." The voice at the other end of the line frantically called out . . . "send a fire truck." Then the caller slammed the phone down.

The police chief was kind of stunned. He didn't know what to do. "Send it where?" So he waited and a few minutes later the phone rang again. He answered: "Fire Department." It was the same lady and she again frantically said: "Send the fire truck." And again, before the police chief could ask where . . . she slammed the phone down.

Now he is concerned. He is responsible for the safety of his little village so he went outside to see if he could see smoke anywhere. Maybe he could see some smoke and direct the fire truck to the right place; but he couldn't see any smoke anywhere. He's thinking . . . "if this phone rings again, I have got to find out where this fire is so that I can get the fire fighters in here and go put it out." So he makes a plan in his head for what he'll do if the phone rings again. Sure enough, as he is standing out on the driveway the phone rings again. This time he is not going to blow it. He runs in and picks up the phone to carry out his plan. He doesn't let anybody say anything. He doesn't even say "Fire Department" . . . he just picks up the phone and says: **"Where's the fire?"**

The other end says: "In the kitchen" and slams the phone down.

The delay in God's action was not because somehow he couldn't see or didn't know about the problem. He knew exactly where they were and what was happening.

It wasn't because God wasn't loving; it wasn't because he didn't care . . .

d) God . . . was concerned (v. 25b)

It wasn't because he didn't care enough to get involved or make the effort because eventually the Scripture says . . .

e) So I have come down to rescue them (Exodus 3:8)

What was God's answer to their cries for help?

Sometimes God answers our prayers with: SLOW!

Why so slow??? It isn't how much time God needs to answer our prayers . . . it is how much time we need before we are ready for him to say yes to our prayers. Remember the first phrase of this time period? . . . ***During that long period.*** The language hints that things were taking place ***during*** that time. When God is saying GROW, he holds back action, his answer seems sooo SLOW, because his is doing a new thing in your life.

Moses needed time in the wilderness. He shows up at the well and he is a 40-year-old city boy. Give him a long period of time and Octogenarian Moses knows the name of every snake and the location of every watering hold. If he's going to lead millions of Hebrews into the wilderness, he better know more than the basics of desert life 101. **He earned his Ph D. his desert survival.**

Moses needed time to understand Family dynamics. If he's going to be traveling with families for forty years, it might help to understand how they work. He couldn't have done it as a bachelor with no experience in family dynamics. He marries a woman of faith, the daughter of a Midianite nomad priest who traveled in tents, and establishes his own traveling family. **This second Ph. D. in NOMADIC FAMILIES.**

Moses needed time to understand more than about deserts and families . . . **he needed to know about himself.** He needed to understand that he wasn't Mr. Somebody, but he was Mr. Nobody who was going to have to be completely dependent upon God if he was going to do his miraculous work. **Moses earned his Ph. D. in NOBODICS** – NOBODY TRAINING. Suddenly he was prepared; and the people of Israel were ready for God to give his new answer to their prayer . . . **Moses, hold onto your staff because you are buckling into the ride of your life.**

Moses was not the only one God needed to GROW. **The people needed to come to a point in their slavery where they realized there was nothing they could do to affect their freedom.** They would understand it was a gift from God.

When God says SLOW, it means he has work to GROW.

The third period of time in this passage starts on Exodus 3:1:

3. 40 days of miracles (Exodus 3:1)

The first word of this period . . . Now.

Sometimes God answers our prayers with: GO!

“Now” gives the idea of action. Suddenly, everyone was ready and God said “GO”!

We are not going to take time to study this third period because we are going to do that in the days ahead. Suffice it to say that it likely took no more than 40 days for God to work the miraculous 10 plagues and free an entire nation. It was an unbelievable, mind-numbing display of God’s incredible power when his answer changed from NO to GROW, to SLOW, and finally became GO!

Those 40 hours of intense conflict, all those 40 years of slow growing were in preparation for these 40 days when God said GO! . . . for when God would ***come down to rescue them (3:8)***. Yes, we’d better be ready when God shows up!!

Throughout those 40 hours of conflict, Moses had no idea what God was doing. Throughout those 40 long years, Moses didn’t even know he was enrolled in the school of desert survival, and family dynamics, and Nobody training. **He didn’t know he was earning his TRIPLE Ph. D.!**

But he was. And guess what . . . so are you. Yes, God is not finished with you yet.

If you think the delay in the answer to your prayers is because God doesn’t hear you, or God is not faithful, or God doesn’t see it, or God doesn’t care . . . remember ***God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant . . . God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them (vv. 24-25)***.

It’s not that God is not ready to answer our prayers. It is that we are not ready for God to answer our prayers. . . . **During some time periods in our lives, God’s answer is slow and grow, because he is not finished with us yet.**

God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure he will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again – Philippians 1:6

Did you see what God is doing? A ***good work in you.***

To put it bluntly . . . **God ain’t finished with you yet!**

He spoke to Moses through a burning bush . . . stranger even still, it could even be that he is speaking to you through this message.

APPLICATION:

When we are ready God’s answer is GO!

God’s answers prayer in one of 4 ways:

1. No . 2. Slow . 3. Grow . 4. Go .

And when the time is right . . . buckle up for the ride of your life.