

The Burning Bush

Sabbath Afternoon, July 5

The divine command to deliver Israel, found Moses self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouth-piece for God. But he accepted the work, putting all his trust in the Lord. The greatness of his mission called into exercise the best powers of his mind. God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, and well fitted for the greatest work ever given to man. This is an example of what God does to strengthen the character of those who trust him implicitly, and give themselves unreservedly to his commands. — *Gospel Workers*, p. 359.

Consider the experience of Moses. The education he received in Egypt as the king's grandson and the prospective heir to the throne was very thorough. Nothing was neglected that was calculated to make him a wise man, as the Egyptians understood wisdom. He received the highest civil and military training. He felt that he was fully prepared for the work of delivering Israel from bondage. But God judged otherwise. His providence appointed Moses forty years of training in the wilderness as a keeper of sheep.

The education that Moses had received in Egypt was a help to him in many respects; but the most valuable preparation for his lifework was that which he received while employed as a shepherd. Moses was naturally of an impetuous spirit. In Egypt a successful military leader and a favorite with the king and the nation, he had been accustomed to receiving praise and flattery. He had attracted the people to himself. He hoped to accomplish by his own powers the work of delivering Israel. Far different were the lessons he had to learn as God's representative. As he led his flocks through the wilds of the mountains and into the green pastures of the valleys, he learned faith and meekness, patience, humility, and self-forgetfulness. He learned to care for the weak, to nurse the sick, to seek after the straying, to bear with the unruly, to tend the lambs, and to nurture the old and the feeble.

In this work Moses was drawn nearer to the Chief Shepherd. He became closely united to the Holy One of Israel. No longer did he plan to do a great work. He sought to do faithfully as unto God the work committed to his charge. He recognized the presence of God in his surroundings. All nature spoke to him of the Unseen One. He knew God as a personal God, and, in meditating upon His character he grasped more and more fully the sense of His presence. He found refuge in the everlasting arms. — *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 474, 475.

Sunday, July 6

The Burning Bush

At the burning bush, when Moses, not recognizing God's presence, turned aside to behold the wonderful sight, the command was given:

"Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. . . . And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Exodus 3:5, 6. . . .

Man cannot by searching find out God. Let none seek with presumptuous hand to lift the veil that conceals His glory. "Unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out." Romans 11:33. It is a proof of His mercy that there is the hiding of His power; for to lift the veil that conceals the divine presence is death. No mortal mind can penetrate the secrecy in which the Mighty One dwells and works. Only that which He sees fit to reveal can we comprehend of Him. Reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself. Heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM. —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 436, 438.

It is God's purpose to manifest through His people the principles of His kingdom. That in life and character they may reveal these principles, He desires to separate them from the customs, habits, and practices of the world. He seeks to bring them near to Himself, that He may make known to them His will.

This was His purpose in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. At the burning bush Moses received from God the message for the king of Egypt: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me." Exodus 7:16. With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm God brought out the Hebrew host from the land of bondage. Wonderful was the deliverance He wrought for them, punishing their enemies, who refused to listen to His word, with total destruction.

God desired to take His people apart from the world and prepare them to receive His word. From Egypt He led them to Mount Sinai, where He revealed to them His glory. Here was nothing to attract their senses or divert their minds from God; and as the vast multitude looked at the lofty mountains towering above them, they could realize their own nothingness in the sight of God. Beside these rocks, immovable except by the power of the divine will, God communicated with men. And that His word might ever be clear and distinct in their minds, He proclaimed amid thunder and lightning and with terrible majesty the law which He had given in Eden and which was the transcript of His character. And the words were written on tables of stone by the finger of God. Thus the will of the infinite God was revealed to a people who were called to make known to every nation, kindred, and tongue the principles of His government in heaven and in earth. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 9.

Monday, July 7

The Angel of the Lord

While Moses was living in retirement, the Lord sent his angels to especially instruct him in regard to the future. Here he learned more fully the great lesson of self-control and humility. He kept the flocks of Jethro, and while he was performing his humble duties as a shepherd, God was preparing him to become a spiritual shepherd of his sheep, even of his people Israel. He had been fully qualified as a general, to stand at the head of armies, and now the Lord would have him learn the duties, and perform the offices of a faithful shepherd of his people, to tenderly care for his erring, straying sheep. As Moses led the flock to the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb, "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush. And he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither. Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.—Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 187.

Before Moses went forth, he received his high commission to his great work in a way that filled him with awe and gave him a deep sense of his own weakness and unworthiness. While engaged in his round of duties, he saw a bush, branches, foliage, and trunk, all burning, yet not consumed. He drew near to view the wonderful sight, when a voice addressed him from out of the flame. It was the voice of God. It was He who, as an angel of the covenant, had revealed Himself to the fathers in ages past. The frame of Moses quivered, he was thrilled with terror, as the Lord called him by name. With trembling lips he answered, "Here am I." He was warned not to approach his Creator with undue familiarity: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." —*From the Heart*, July 18, p. 211.

Tuesday, July 8

The Name of the Lord

The time had fully come when God would have Moses exchange the shepherd's staff, for the rod of God, which he would make powerful in accomplishing signs and wonders, in delivering his people from oppression, and in preserving them when pursued by their enemies. "And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee, and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee. When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. 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 to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses I Am That I Am. And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you. This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 188.

In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were set in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the faculties of the mind, all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Christ the Word, a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power.

Our substance was not hid from Him when we were made in secret; His eyes saw our substance, yet being imperfect, and in His book all our members were written when as yet there were none of them. —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 415.

Had God desired to be represented as dwelling personally in the things of nature,—in the flower, the tree, the spire of grass,—would not Christ have spoken of this to His disciples when He was on the earth? But never in the teaching of Christ is God thus spoken of. Christ and the apostles taught clearly the truth of the existence of a personal God.

Christ revealed all of God that sinful human beings could bear without being destroyed. He is the divine Teacher, the Enlightener. Had God thought us in need of revelations other than those made through Christ and in His written word, He would have given them. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 265, 266.

Wednesday, July 9

Four Excuses

Moses plead with the Lord, and said, "But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." The Lord then assured him by the miracle of the rod becoming a serpent, and the hand turning leprous, that by such signs and wonderful works would he cause the Egyptians and Pharaoh to fear, so that they would not dare to harm him. By these signs he assured Moses that he would convince the king and his people that a greater than himself was manifesting his power before them. And yet, after they should perform many miracles before Pharaoh in the sight of the people, they would not let Israel go. Moses wished to be excused from the laborious task. He plead a lack of ready speech as an excuse. That is, he had been so long from the Egyptians, he had not as clear knowledge and ready use of their language as when he was among them.

The Lord reproved Moses for his fearfulness, as though the God who chose him to perform his great work was unable to qualify him for it, or as though God had made a mistake in his selection of the man. "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?" What an appeal! What a rebuke to the distrustful!

"Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O, my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." He entreated the Lord to select a more proper person. The backwardness of Moses at first proceeded from humility, a modest diffidence. But after God promised to remove his difficulties, and be with his mouth, and teach him what to say, and to give him success finally, in his mission, then for him to still manifest reluctance was displeasing to God. His unwillingness to execute the mission God had preserved his life to fill, and had qualified him to perform, after the assurance that God would be with him, showed unbelief and criminal despondency, and distrust of God himself. The Lord rebuked him for this distrust. The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, in the manner God proposed to do the work, looked hopeless to him of the mission ever being successful. —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 192, 193.

The Circumcision

As Moses journeyed to Egypt, the angel of the Lord met him and assumed a threatening posture, as though he would slay him. He was fearful of his life. He had yielded to the refusal of his wife to have their son circumcised, and, in compliance with her wishes, had neglected to obey God. His wife, fearful that her husband might be slain, overcame her feelings of undue affection for her son, and performed the act herself. After this, the angel let Moses go. In his mission to Pharaoh, he was to be placed in a perilous position, where his life would be exposed to the will of the king, if God did not by his power, through the presence of his angels, preserve him. While Moses was living in neglect of one of God's positive commands, his life would not be secure, for God's angels could not protect him while in disobedience. Therefore, the angel met him in the way and threatened his life. He did not explain to Moses why he assumed that threatening aspect. Moses knew that there was a cause. He was going to Egypt according to God's express command, therefore the journey was right. He at once remembered that he had not obeyed God in performing the ordinance of circumcision upon his youngest son, and had yielded to his wife's entreaties to postpone the ceremony. After he had obeyed the command of God he was free to go before Pharaoh, and there was nothing in the way to hinder the ministration of angels in connection with his work.

In the time of trouble, just previous to the coming of Christ, the lives of the righteous will be preserved through the ministration of holy angels. Those who come up to that trying time, neglecting to obey God's commands, will have no security of their lives. Angels cannot protect them from the wrath of their enemies while they are living in neglect of any known duty, or express command of Jehovah. —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 195, 196.

The Lord desires us to rest in Him without a question as to our measure of reward. When Christ abides in the soul, the thought of reward is not uppermost. This is not the motive that actuates our service. It is true that in a subordinate sense we should have respect to the recompense of reward. God desires us to appreciate His promised blessings. But He would not have us eager for rewards nor feel that for every duty we must receive compensation. We should not be so anxious to gain the reward as to do what is right, irrespective of all gain. Love to God and to our fellow men should be our motive. —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 398.

Friday, July 11

For Further Reading

"Moses," in *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 180–202.

"The Call of Moses," *Signs of the Times*, February 26, 1880.