

ESF, Lord's day service message
1/1/2016

God's Call for a New Life

Exodus 3:1-6

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father -in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight-why the bush does not burn up. 4. When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within bush, "Moses! Moses!" and Moses said, "Here I am." 5. "Do not come any closer, "God said, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6. Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Every New Year around this time, we are thinking about New Year's resolution. In our New Year's resolution, we want to improve our lives. We want to change our lives positively.

God wants to change and improve our lives more than we do. To change and improve our lives, God is calling you and me today.

Through the life of Moses, God shows us how we can hear His calling for changing and improving our lives in this New Year.

God molds our character through difficulties in our lives

When God called Moses to overcome his failures and start a new life, Moses was a poor shepherd in the desert. He had been living in the desert for 40 years. Before that time, Moses had lived in Egypt as a prince. He had lived a very privileged life as a prince. In those days,

Moses had seen the suffering of the people of Israel and he knew that he was to be the deliverer but he was also an impulsive man. He got ahead of God's plan and developed his own plan and timetable. This ultimately led him to taking the life of an Egyptian taskmaster which forced him to flee for his life. As a result, he spent 40 years of his life shepherding sheep.

It would seem that these 40 years was a complete waste of time for Moses. But it was not a waste of time in God's eyes. God had a great plan for Moses. God prepared Moses to be a great leader during those years. While he was spending his life as a shepherd in the desert for such a great number of years, he learned to be **patient, humble and gentle**. Those are the three most important characteristics in being a great leader.

God never ceases to work out His will in the lives of His people no matter where they find themselves.

Sometimes we think that God takes too long time to move on our behalf. That is why we end up in trouble at times. We may not have much patience when things do not go our way. We want answers and we usually want the answers as we expect. "God, if you have something for me to do, then show me now or soon." How often do we fail to wait upon the Lord, and make our decisions on our own understanding, only to find that our plans end in big trouble?

But God is a gracious God. With the insurmountable troubles we create, God molds our character into becoming a humble and teachable person. No matter how great the obstacles you have been through or are currently facing now, God has not finished His best plan for you yet. God's best plan for you is molding your character. So even when you can't see any improvement day by day in this New Year, never forget

that God always works for you, and He uses every situation to positively mold you.

God gets our attention through a supernatural way

God appeared to Moses through the fire in a burning bush. For Moses, the bush was just an ordinary bush in the desert. But God made an ordinary bush something extraordinary. The bush was on fire but it did not burn up. It was a supernatural phenomenon. With the supernatural phenomenon, God called Moses' attention.

What is the burning bush for you today? How has God been working to get your attention?

God may use many different objects and circumstances as burning bushes. In our lives, this could be something unexpected and out of our routine –such as a minor injury in a major car accident, unusual strength in illness, mysterious provisions when we do not have a job.

We may call these incidents “coincidences,” but these are not events of chance or luck. It is God's way of tapping us on our shoulders so that we will take notice of what He has to say. He can also do so in less dramatic ways, such as when we are reading Scripture or listening to a sermon.

You do not need to do extraordinary things to see God. God comes to you in ordinary places and experiences. You are just an ordinary person, and it might be on another ordinary day, but God may do something extraordinary to get your attention.

There are many examples of people who heard God's call through something unusual in their ordinary lives: Gideon was threshing grain (Judges 6), Samuel was serving in the tabernacle (1 Sam 3), David was caring for sheep (1 Sam 17:20), Elisha was plowing (1 Kings 19:19-21),

four of the apostles were managing their fishing business (Mark 1:16-20), and Matthew was collecting taxes (Matt 9:9).

Mark this down, when there is an extraordinary moment in your daily routine, or when an unusual event or moment strikes your heart, God may be trying to get your attention. God may be seeking to communicate with you.

Be willing to search God's presence in your ordinary life. Has it not been the case that when God spoke to you or when God did something extraordinary in your life it was just an ordinary day? You were just getting up and getting ready for work. It was just another trip to the supermarket. It was in the normal everyday routines of life that God chose to come to you in an extraordinary way. Your day for God's gracious call will come. God has work for each of us to do. We just need to be ready when He calls.

God calls us to a holy and powerful life

When Moses was drawing near to the burning bush, God spoke three things to him.

First, God called Moses' name personally, "*Moses, Moses!*" His name was forgotten years ago by his very own people in Egypt, where he had grown up and lived as a prince. He was a nobody now. He was just an old shepherd. But God remembered him. God recognized him personally.

When nobody calls your name or remembers your name, God still remembers you, and calls your name. He personally knows you by your name. God recognizes your value. You are precious to Him. God says to you, "*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. ... Since you are precious and honored in my sight,*

and because I love you,..” (Isaiah 43:1, 4). Hear God’s personal calling for your name and be confident of yourself.

Second: God told Moses to remove his sandals, *“Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”*

The place was not a sanctuary, but a lonesome mountainside. It was the middle of the desert, barren and lifeless. Nothing had happened in that place until that time. In that place, Moses had never seen anyone worshipping God, or any sign of God’s existence. It was the last place Moses expected to meet God.

But God told Moses that the place was holy ground. What did God mean by saying that the place was “holy ground?” The Hebrew word “holy” literally means, “separated.” God was calling Moses to separate him. Separate from what? From everything that prevented him from improving his life.

The reason God calls you is to separate you from all the negative in your life. When He calls you, He is saying to you, “I want to separate you from your past failures. I want to separate you from your present fears. I want to separate you from a meaningless life. I want to separate you from hopeless circumstances. I want to separate you from listening to what the world tells you, what you think about yourself, and I want you to listen to what I think and declare to you.”

When the creator of heaven and earth is present, the one who holds all things in the palm of His hands, the one who does not know the limitation of a specific place, the place you are in now becomes a holy place.

Look at your own life now. Your job may be a dead-end job. Maybe you have no job at all. Things may not be working out very well for you at home, at school or in your relationships. You may be feeling like there is no point in your life. There is no purpose for it. But with God's presence, any place can be a holy place. No matter what kind of places or situations you are living in, God can appear there and turn the places and situations into holy places and holy situations. So, do not focus only your hopeless situation, but see God's presence and accept God's invitation: *"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."*

Third, God told Moses: *"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."* Jesus used this word to prove that there is resurrection and there is life after death (Matthew 22: 29-32). During Moses' time, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were dead. They were dead hundreds of years before that time. So logically speaking, God might have said, "I *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." But God said, "I *am* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." By these words, God meant that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were alive. Although they had died physically, in God's resurrection they were still alive. The point God wanted to convey to Moses was that He was the Lord of the resurrection. The point was that with the power of the resurrection, God could make an old, poor shepherd such as Moses, a great man.

God can use an ordinary person and make him a great person with the power of the resurrection. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:7, *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."* You and I are clay pots. But God uses clay pots to reveal the power of the resurrection. What matters is not the clay pot but what is in the clay pot. As Paul says, "We- jars of clay, have the *treasure-* the power of the resurrection, in us."

It is this resurrection power of Christ in you that enables you to rise from nothing. Therefore, depend not on yourself, a clay pot, a fragile pot, but on the power of God's resurrection. When you depend on the power of this resurrection, God will enable you to overcome all failures and build up a great life again.