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Second Quarter.

Lesson VII. May 15. Ex. 3: 1-12.

THE CALL OF MOSES.

GOLDEN TEXT.

I will be thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say.—Ex. 4:12.

I. FORTY YEARS OF RETIREMENT IN THE WILDERNESS. 1. *Now Moses kept the flock.* The Hebrew expresses that this was his regular occupation. *Of Jethro, his father in law.* He is called Reuel (and Raguel) in chap. 2:18. Reuel was probably his personal name, and Jethro his official title, signifying, as it does, *pre-eminence. The priest of Midian.* A priest, one of many priests. *Midian* was the son of Abraham by Keturah.

And he led the flock to the back side of the desert, i. e., to the other side of the wilderness from Jethro's home. The *desert was* rather a wilderness, an uninhabited tract of wild land, but at certain times of the year fitted for pasturage. Now it was probably dried up, as usual in the summer. *To the mountain of God.* So called because on this mountain God delivered the Law. *Even to Horeb* ("dry"). More exactly "to the mountain of God, towards Horeb." The meaning is that Moses came to the mountain of God, *i. e.*, Sinai, on his way towards Horeb.

The value of this period of retirement, in preparing Moses for his life work:

1. His retirement from Egypt would take from him all pride of rank, wealth, culture, and show him the value of man as man, apart from his surroundings.

2. Here he would be safe from Egypt, and from false influences which might mar his character.

3. In the wilderness he would hold communion with God. "No region more favorable to the attainments of a lofty conception of the Almighty could have been found." Here God would be his teacher.

4. In there years his own character would be disciplined and refined, and every noble trait confirmed, his faith strengthened, and his knowledge of God, of religion, and of man, enlarged.

5. His wanderings would make him acquainted with every valley, plain, gorge, hill, and mountain of the whole region: an education of supreme importance towards fitting him to guide his race, when rescued from Egypt.

6. The life, too, which he had led was happily adapted to work within him that hardihood of constitution and character of which he would afterward stand so much in need.

II. GOD APPEARS TO MOSES IN THE BURNING BUSH. 2. *And the angel of the Lord.* Literally, "an angel of Jehovah." Taking the whole narrative altogether, we are justified in concluding that the appearance was that of "the Angel of the Covenant," or "the Second Person of the Trinity himself. The angel *appeared unto him in a flame of fire* "out of the midst of *the* thorn-bush," not out of "*a* thorn-bush," which may be explained by the fact of Moses having so often spoken of it, that, when he came to write to his countrymen, he naturally called it "the bush," meaning, "the bush of which you have all heard." He appeared not in human form, but in the flaming bush. *And, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.* The fire was supernatural, and did not effect the vegetable life of the bush. This it was that arrested the attention of Moses.

THE BURNING BUSH A SYMBOL. 1. Of God's presence among his people, harmless to them, as the flame to the burning bush, but their life, and light, their purifier. 2. The bush that lives unscathed by the lambent flame is an emblem of the true Church of God in the furnace of affliction. Fire, however, does not make pure, but merely leaves the pure untouched.

3. *And Moses said, I will turn aside.* Suspecting nothing but a natural phenomenon, which he was anxious to investigate.

4. *The Lord saw . . . God called.* The interchange of words is remarkable; the same being is designated by both; Jehovah is God, and God is Jehovah. Yet the two names are to be distinguished.

5. *And he said, Draw not nigh hither.* Moses was approaching the bush to examine into the strange phenomena. We must come to God; we must not come too near him. We come too near him when we search into his counsels. *Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, i. e.,* the leathern or wooden sole attacked to the bottom of the foot by "shoe-latchets" passed round the instep and ankle. The Eastern idea is not precisely the same as the Western. With us the removal of the hat is an expression of reverence for the place we enter, or rather of Him who is worshipped there. With them the removal of the shoes is a confession of personal defilement and conscious unworthiness to stand in the presence of unspotted holiness. *The place is holy ground.* The manifested presence of God made it holy.

6. *Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father.* It is probable that the word "father" is used collectively, according to a common Hebrew idiom, for the whole ancestral line. *The God of Abraham*, etc., *i. e.*, the God who revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and entered into covenant with them (Gen. 15:1-21; 26:2-5; 35:1-12). How comforting beyond measure to the Christian, is his more favored moments, to be assured that the God of all the good who have ever lived is *his* God, and equally pledged by his covenant faithfulness to show to *him* the same loving kindness that he showed to them! *And Moses hid his face.* The natural expression of reverence and awe. *For he was afraid to look upon God.* The Chaldee has correctly, "He feared to look towards the glory of God." A consciously sinful creature may well fear and tremble when God comes to visit him, even though on a purpose of mercy.

III. THE MISSION OF MOSES. 7. *And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people.* All the time he had a watchful eye over them, and was only waiting till the right and best time should come to send them deliverance. *And have heard their cry.* It is noticeable that their oppression had lasted for eighty years, but now at length their cry indicated that affliction had done its work.

8. *And I am come down.* I manifest myself on earth. *Unto a good land and a large.* Much larger than the land of Goshen, and affording room for a great population; in fact, too large for Israel to occupy all of it, once (Deut. 7:22). *Flowing with milk and honey.* A proverbial expression in use also among the Greeks. It was literally true, however, in reference to Palestine. As a pasture-land, it flowed with milk. The abundance of its honey, the stores of wild bees, is still remarked by travellers. *Canaanites.* These nations are mentioned to designate the place where the promised land was to be. *Hittites.* Descendants of Heth, the second son of Canaan. The *Amorites*, sons of Amor (Gen. 10:16), were chiefly mountaineers. The name *Perizzites* probably denotes the dwellers in scattered villages,—the half-nomad population; the *Hivites*, a comparatively unwarlike but influential people, held four cities in Palestine proper, but their main body dwelt in the north-western district, from Hermon to Hamath (see Josh. 11:3, and Judg. 3:3); the *Jebusites* at that time appear to have occupied Jerusalem and the adjoining district.

9. *Now therefore.* He repeats the facts, to impress Moses with the truth that all these years, while Moses was seemingly doing nothing, but was waiting in vain, yet God was cognizant of everything, and preparing to deliver his people.

Unto Pharaoh. This was the general name or title of the kings of Egypt, as Cæsar of the Roman emperors.

IV. DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY REMOVED. First Difficulty,—"personal unworthiness." 11. *And Moses said unto God, Who am I*, etc. A shepherd, to go alone and deliver two millions of people from the most powerful empire of the world! Modesty and circumspection, humility and self-abasement, consciousness of one's own weakness and insufficiency, are the indispensable conditions of all employment in the kingdom of God; for they are the vehicles of divine inspiration and wisdom, of divine power and strength.

12. *And he said, Certainly I will be with thee.* It was thus that God removed this difficulty that seemed to Moses insurmountable. *This shall be a token.* Pointing to the burning bush.

Second Difficulty,—"to convince the people of the authority, nature, and power of the God who sent him." The people would ask, What is the name of the God who appeared to you? who is he? The answer was, that he was the Ever-living, Unchangeable God, who had made a covenant with Abraham and their fathers, and who was now ready to fulfil the promises he had made to them (vers. 13-22.

Third Difficulty,—"to convince the people that their covenant God had sent him on this mission." This difficulty was removed by giving Moses the power to work miracles (4:1-9.)

Fourth Difficulty,—"Moses' slowness of speech." This was removed by appointing his brother Aaron, then in Egypt, to join with him in the great work, and be his spokesman.

"Though Ye Have Lien Among the Pots."

A few years ago a book was published by a lady, in which she made many things which are in the Bible plain, by telling what she had seen in the land where the Bible was written. Among the things made plain by her was the verse in Psalm lxviii. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

In the land where the Bible was written the houses have flat roofs. People go there in the cool evenings to sit. Sometimes they sleep there; and sometimes they cook their food there.

When the food is cooked on the roof, the fire is built in a corner; the pots and pans are kept in that corner; and of course there is always a heap of soot and ashes there.

Now the nights are sometimes very cold in that land, and doves like to have a warm bed to sleep in, and they are wise enough to find out and like the warm corners on the housetops, where the fires have been. And although it is not very tidy or clean there, it is warm, and they fold their wings and lie down in the ashes beside the pots and pans, and go to sleep, and very soon their beautiful wings are soiled and blackened with ashes and soot. One morning, when this lady had been sleeping on the roof of the house where she had been staying, she happened to wake very early, and as she was looking about her and at the beautiful sky, she saw some doves that had been sleeping in the fireplace waking up, rising from their bed of ashes and shooting out and up in the morning air, and as they flew past, she noticed that the morning light fell so richly on their wings that they shone like silver and gold. Then she remembered this verse in the 68th Psalm. The very thing she was looking at had been seen hundreds of years before by the singer who first sang that psalm. He had said to himself, just as this lady had did: "That is a picture of the change which takes place when God drops down his blessing on any humble life. Yes, just that way shine the lives of poor mothers and mothers' children when God visits their lowly homes with the glad tidings of his love. He brings them out into the light. He covers them with the light. They become his children, and everything is them and about them is changed. They are like the doves that have been sleeping among the ashes, with wings all soiled by their humble bed among the pots, soaring into the beautiful light of the morning, until the soiled wings shine as if covered with silver, and the feathers as with yellow gold."—*Selected.*

Hints on the Use of English.

Recognizing that careless habits of speech are among the prominent faults of young people, the professor of English literature at Wellesley College, Miss Louisa M. Hodgkins, prepared for the *Christian Union* the following list of "words, phrases and expressions to be avoided," from which old as well as young may receive many valuable hints:

Guess, for suppose or think.

Fix, for arrange or prepare.

Ride, and *drive* interchangeably (Americanism.)

Real, as an adverb, in expressions *real good* for *really* or *very good*, etc.

Some, or *any*, in an adverbial sense, e. g., "I have studied *some*," for *somewhat*. "I have not studied *any*," for *at all*.

Some ten days, for *about* ten days.

Not as I know, for *not that I know*.

Storms, for it *rains* or *snows moderately*.

Try, an experiment, for *make* an experiment.

Singular subject with contracted plural verb; e. g., "*She don't skate well.*"

Plural pronoun with singular antecedents "Every man or woman should do *their* duty;" or, "If you look anyone straight in the face, *they* will flinch."

Expect, for *suppose*.

Freshest, as a superlative.

Nice, indiscriminately. A *real nice* may be doubly faulty.

Had rather, for *would rather*.

Had better, for *would better*.

Right away, for *immediately*.

Party, for *person*.

Promise, for *assure*.

Posted, for *informed*.

Post-graduate, for *graduate*.

Depot, for *station*.

Stopping, for *staying*.

Try *and* do, for try *to* do.

Try *and* go, for try *to* go.

Cunning, for *small, dainty*.

Cute, for *acute*.

Funny, for *odd* or *unusual*.

Above, for *foregoing, more than* or *beyond*.

Does it look *good* enough, for *well* enough.

Somebody else's, for *somebody's else*.

Like I do, for *as* I do.

Not *as good as*, for not *so good as*.

Feel *badly*, for feel *bad*.

Feel *good*, for feel *well*.

Between seven, for *among* seven.

Seldom *or* ever, for seldom *if* ever, or *seldom or never*.

Taste and smell *of*, when used transitively.

More than you think *for*, for more than you think.

These kind, for *this* kind.

Nicely, in response to an inquiry for health.

Healthy for *wholesome*.

Just *as soon* for just *as lief*.

Kind of to indicate a moderate degree.

The matter *of*, for the matter *with*.

No With a Will.

When Balaam said "No" to Balak, he did so in such a half-hearted way as to reveal that he would much rather have said "Yes;" and, therefore, when the application was renewed, he went on in that way which finally ended in destruction. Now there must be no such self-heartedness with us. Let us say "No" to sin as it we meant it; not rudely, indeed, for there is no need for rudeness, but distinctly and decidedly, like those whose minds have been made up to the course to which they mean to adhere; and if the application be repeated, let us repeat our refusal, if possible, more emphatically than ever. When Nehemiah was assailed by his adversaries, who sought to beguile him into the plain of Ono, that they might there assassinate him, he replied: "I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?" And when they sent to him four times after this sort, he answered them as many times after the same manner. So let it be with us. Let our "nay" here be unmistakable, without any qualification, reservation or apology; and then, if after all it is not understood, let us run away, as Joseph did, even though we should have to leave our raiment behind us, believing, as Matthew Henry quaintly says, that "it is better to lose a good coat than a good conscience."

Ah! how many are there who go out to court temptation, heedless of the command of Christ, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation;" they deliberately put themselves in its way, and of course they fall before it. That result is just about as certain as it is that there will be an explosion if, with an open barrel of gunpowder in your arms, you enter the smithy where the sparks are flying all around. "Can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" No more can you put yourself in the way of temptation without injuring your souls. It would be perilous to do so, even if you were innocent and holy; how much more so, considering the inherent depravity by which we are all characterized!

It is dangerous to drive restive horses near the edge of a precipice; it is dangerous to bring gunpowder near the fire; it is dangerous to come near an adder's fangs; and it is equally so with these fallen natures of ours to approach temptation. Therefore, "avoid it, pass not by or near it, turn from it and pass away."—*W. M. Taylor, D. D.*

LIONS ABOUT.—It is a dangerous thing to trifle with a cold. A darkey preacher once told his hearers that "he thanked God that the devil went about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he might devour. He might catch a poor fellow who didn't know that he was near him, but when he heard the roar he could get out of the way, if he didn't he deserved to die." So when one hears the wheeze or cough which tells of the old lion of consumption lurking around, he should fly and get Minard's Liniment and use it freely on the chest, and take Minard's Honey Balsam internally, and get out of the way of danger. These preparations are well known, having been tried for 30 years and are acknowledged by all who use them to be unsurpassed in their soothing and healing properties.

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