

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Broadcast Date: 8 July 2001

No. T0170

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Double Calls - God called twice: Moses, Moses!

Twin Peaks? It's more like three! St. Catherine to the south west, Sinai in the middle and Horeb to the north east. Towering over two thousand five hundred metres above sea level, two of these three peaks were to play such a central part in the life of the nation of Israel. Today as we continue to look at individuals whom God called by name twice, we shall travel on a journey through the sun bleached whiteness of the barren Sinai wilderness. Temperatures can exceed 40 degrees Celsius, scorching a parched landscape, concentrating life around life-giving oases. This morning we find ourselves on the lower slopes of Mount Horeb, lying between the Gulfs of Suez and Aqaba, at the northern end of the Red Sea. The name Horeb means 'waste', an apt description of the surrounding desert. As God intervenes in the life of Moses, it is to call him from waste to worship. Let us then begin by reading Exodus 3:1-5 and 12, as we join Moses on his journey. 'Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.' So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then He said, 'Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.' So He said, 'I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.'

As we meet Moses here, he is about 80 years old. When we think of the great man Moses, we may think of him as the baby in the bulrushes. This event displays the great faith of his mother, but says nothing about the man himself. For forty years, he then disappears into the heart of Egyptian royalty, before reappearing as a murderer! Hardly any sign yet of the greatness that was to come. For another forty years, after he is forced to flee from Pharaoh, he is to be found in the wilderness, tending the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, and raising his family. For the first third of his life he had been taught that he was everything. For the second third, God would teach him that he was nothing, before finally, in the last third, God would teach him that He, Jehovah, the great I AM, was everything. Allowing for the fact that Moses lived longer than the average man now, we would not be far wrong in picturing a man, now, in his mid-fifties. This has something to say to all of us who would serve God today. So often, we want everything to happen now. We find it so hard to wait, and I am not for one moment suggesting that God does not look for obedience in service from us, even from our childhood. Samuel, and Naaman's maid, are two examples of how God does use the very youngest. But God also sees the big picture. He has so much more to do in us, than through us. All that publicly makes Moses one of the great characters in the Bible happened to him in the final third of his life. Are you getting older? It may only be now that God is ready to use you. All that has gone before may only be the initial training for all that God would have you do for Him in the future. It is interesting that, by the time God calls Moses, his family would probably be grown to adulthood. As a God who instituted the family, as the best building block of society, He does not call Moses to a work that would take him away from young children. We need to constantly ensure that we are not neglecting our families when we become involved in the Lord's work. God had chosen Moses to lead His people, but first he would have Moses learn to lead his own family. Similarly, in the New Testament, Paul instructs that those who would exercise authority within the Church were first to have done so within their own family.

Now that the time is right, God makes His move. First of all, God gets the attention of Moses by appearing to him from the middle of a burning bush. Now Moses may well have seen many a burning bush in his wanderings across the wilderness, looking after the flocks. In the blistering heat, such an occurrence might not have been all that unique. But here was something altogether different! Although the bush was on fire, it did not burn up. What a miracle! Dear listener, does God have your attention this morning? At the cross of Calvary, Jesus has done something far more miraculous. Freely, out of love for all humanity, and in obedience to the desire of God the Father, Jesus has given His life for each one of us. Not only did He give His life up, but He has also taken it up again and He lives for evermore. God now offers total forgiveness, but He also commands repentance, a turning away from a life of self pleasing, to a life of serving God. God has so much that He would say to each one of us if we are ready to listen. First, though, He must have our attention. Have you turned to Him as your own personal Saviour, and are you ready to listen to, and to obey, Him?

So Moses moves aside to see this miraculous sight, and it is now that God calls to Moses, 'Moses, Moses!' There could be no mistaking the urgency of the call, nor for whom it was intended. God similarly would call us today. The

fields are ready for harvesting; this world needs the Saviour as much as it has ever done. Soon will be too late, as God calls us now. God had marked out His man for the moment, and calls him twice. He would not have us concerned with what others are involved in and neglecting to follow Him ourselves. The response from Moses at this stage is exactly right: 'Here I am!' There can be no better place than being in the place where He has put us. When we humbly put our lives at His disposal, then we truly are right where we should be. Peter learned this lesson. Knowing that he was doing what God had given him to do, he was able to sleep, even in a prison cell, the night before his planned execution. He could not have been any safer than there in Herod's jail.

Having got Moses' attention, and then having called him, there is one more thing that God has to do before He can send Moses out to serve Him. So God says to Moses, 'Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.' Before Moses could lead others to God, he first had to have a right relationship to God himself. Before we can ever be truly used by God, and useful to Him, we need to establish a right and living relationship with Him. Day in, day out, we need to spend time in prayer and in studying His word for ourselves. In a busy world, it is all too easy to neglect the fundamentals of our faith. But we do so at our peril. However, more is involved here. Words can scarcely describe how wonderful it is that we have been brought to know God as our Father yet we ought always to remember that He is the supreme Creator and Sustainer of the universe. In grace, Jesus may not be ashamed to call us His brethren but that does not make Him our Brother. We need to cultivate a sense of awe and reverence that guards us from over familiarity with God. We need further to maintain a sense of just how wrong sin is, despite the fact that His blood has cleansed us from all the penalty of it. Moses had to remove his shoes as a sign of respect and reverence for the God who was going to use him so much. Before we come into His presence, whether publicly, or privately, we need to spend time just setting aside all that has filled our minds previously and contemplate the One who has done so much for us.

Now, and only now, is Moses ready to receive his great commission. Time does not allow us today to look at the task that lay ahead. However, as we come to verse 12, we can read the result. 'So God said, 'I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you (singular) have brought the people out of Egypt, you (plural) shall worship God on this mountain.' Here Moses was on Mount Horeb, which as we have seen already, means waste. Spiritually speaking what a waste his life had been so far. As a high flying Prince of Egypt, or as a simple shepherd in Midian, there had been little for God. But now God was going to use Moses to bring over a million others to worship, where before there had only been waste. What a turnaround! Few examples show more clearly how much God can do from so little.

God is still looking for those to worship Him. When speaking to the Samaritan woman in John 4:23-24, Jesus said, 'For the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.' In the New Testament the Greek word for 'worship' is '*proskuneo*', literally meaning 'towards a kiss'. Now I don't know about you, but to my mind that involves me being active. I could say to my wife, 'Darling, I kiss you' and know that that would leave her feeling decidedly cold. But when I get up and kiss her, well that's a different matter. Worship is so much more than a mere form of words or singing the right choruses. It is not something we do once a week that makes us feel good. It is something we are. Does my life acknowledge the worth-ship of Christ? Does He, in practice, mean more to me than a promotion at work, a bigger bank balance or a night in front of the TV There is a useful acrostic that runs **W**orship's **O**ur **R**esponse **S**eeing **H**im **I**n **P**erson. If Jesus Himself was to come to the lab where I work, then perhaps I would stop moaning about one thing or another and just make sure the job got done. If He were to come home with me, I wouldn't waste the evening watching TV I would more than happily peel the potatoes for Him, and wash the dishes afterwards. You see worship, truly understanding the worthiness of Jesus, should change the way I act at home, at work, at rest and, yes, in the church.

It was no mean task then that Moses was being called to do, and it all started here at Horeb. But as we draw to a close this morning, let us just spend a few minutes looking at this important place where Moses was. You see, again and again, Moses would return to Horeb and find God still there.

In Exodus 17, and Numbers 20, we find Moses again at Horeb. As he strikes the rock, water abundantly pours forth to satisfy the people. What a picture this is of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the gift of the water of life He has to offer us. And yet Moses struck that rock in anger and unbelief and so it was on Horeb that his spiritual dreams were ended, and God tells him that he would not enter into the Promised Land. The crumbling of our spiritual dreams can be one of the hardest things to bear. Are we still able to worship when our spirit feels as cold as stone?

It was on Horeb, in Exodus 33, that the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments. There would be no going back to the golden calf. Symbolically they were turning their backs on idolatry. If only that fine start had been maintained! And yet the fear of future failure should never stop us from doing what is right now. It appears that it was also here that God appeared directly to Moses in response to Moses' plea, 'Please show me Your glory'. Does this not say something to us? The more we worship, the clearer will be our appreciation of His glory. That view of the majesty of God changed Moses physically. Those around about him could see that he was different. Likewise, the sight of the glory of Jesus changed the disciples. So John could say at the beginning of his Gospel, 'And we beheld His glory, the

glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' Similarly, Peter could speak about being 'eye-witnesses of His majesty'.

Perhaps after this broadcast you may want to read for yourselves Deuteronomy 4:10-11 and 18:16-18. Again this special mountain is referred to. The Israelites were to hear God's voice, although they could not see His form. Then we get one of the earliest predictions of the future coming of the Lord Jesus. How much more blessed we are, having received a far fuller revelation of the heart of God, than the Israelites ever had.

But there is just one other reference to Horeb that is of note. In 1 Kings 19:8, it is to Horeb that Elijah flies, spiritually and emotionally drained after his victory at Carmel. There in a still small voice God speaks to Elijah and picks him up again ready for future service. Not in great noise, nor in great power, but in a still small voice. Sometimes we become so preoccupied with the harvest that we lose sight of the Lord of the harvest. We can become spiritually empty. Once again we need to get back to the place where in quietness we are able to hear His voice. God was still there - it's just all the background noise had caused such a distraction. Having had that time alone with God, Elijah returns to a life of service. What a source of encouragement this is to all those who feel that they have nothing left to give spiritually. God is able to use each one of us, even when we think that we have nothing left to give. When we feel that there is no way forward, He would still come to us and in His still, small voice - a remembered text here, the comforting word of a friend there - would lift our eyes away from being occupied with ourselves. He would have us to be totally occupied with His worthiness. As we concentrate on Him, so we also become useful to Him once again. As we reach, then the end of our journey with Moses, this morning let us, each of us, resolve in our hearts to leave behind the waste of living for ourselves and become one of God's true worshippers.

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