

STANDING ON HOLY GROUND

"And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Exodus 3:5.

Forty years before, Moses fled from Egypt to save his life from the wrath of Pharaoh. He went to the land of Midian and became a shepherd, keeping the flock of a Midian priest. He spent forty years in the desolate wastes of that strange land. As a man of eighty, he was coming to the evening of life with his dreams and visions unfulfilled. One day as he led his sheep into the quiet hills his attention was attracted by a burning bush. That was not so strange except the bush was not consumed. It was a strange sight he had never seen before. It struck him with astonishment. His natural impulse was to inquire into its cause. He turned aside and drew near to observe. Suddenly his steps were arrested. A voice called to him out of the unconsumed bush, calling him by name and telling him that the place was holy ground. Interesting questions spring out of this incident.

1. What did this startling manifestation signify?

- (1) Purity -- "God is a consuming fire."
- (2) Power -- burned with fire.
- (3) Mystery -- bush not consumed.

2. What was Moses timely resolution?

"I will now turn aside and see this great sight."

(1) This turning aside was needed.

Think of what he would have missed if he had passed on. To meet with God and be taught of Him, man has often to turn aside, even from his lawful occupation, but especially from the pleasures of sin and the reasonings of a carnal mind.

(2) He turned aside with a purpose to find out why the bush was not consumed.

(3) He heard God's voice.

A man soon finds God when he leaves all to seek Him.

3. What gracious revelation did he receive?

(1) A revelation of His character.

"I am the God of thy fathers."

(2) A revelation of His sympathetic interest.

"I have surely seen the affliction, and have heard their cry, for I know their sorrows."

(3) A revelation of His saving purpose.

"I am come down to deliver."

4. What was his definite commission?

"Come now and I will send thee."

(1) The Time.

"Come now." Now that ye have failed in your own strength.

(2) The purpose.

"Bring forth My people." They are in bondage and misery, but they are mine.

- (3) The authority.
"I will send thee."

5. What were his excuses?

- (1) Lack of fitness -- "Who am I, that I should go?"
- (2) Lack of words -- "What shall I say?"
- (3) Lack of authority -- "They will not believe me."
- (4) Lack of eloquence -- "I am not eloquent."
- (5) Lack of special adaptation -- "Send by whom Thou wilt send."
- (6) Lack of success at the first attempt. "Neither has Thou delivered Thy people at all."
- (7) Lack of acceptance. "The children of Israel have not hearkened unto me."

6. Why Was That Holy Ground?

He had doubtless been there amny times, but it had never been holy before. What had changed the ordinary and commonplace into a holy thing? The skies were no bluer, the grass no greener, the sun no brighter, the scenery no more beautiful, what unseen thing had changed it into holy ground?

- (1) It was the place where he met God.

Moses was face to face with God. He heard His voice. It was the glory of God that clothed the bush. God's presence will make any place holy ground. And wherever a man comes face to face with God in the struggles of his life, and feels the thrill of His Spirit in a new sense, that time and that spot will ever live in his memory as a holy place. "There is the most sacred spot on earth to me," one said when pointing to the spot where he met God and was saved. I doubt if Paul ever passed along the road to Damascus without stopping at the spot where he had found God. The old dungeon in Rome where he wrote epistles was to him holy ground because God had visited Paul there. His presence changed the prison into the vestibule of heaven. It was dark, damp, cold and cruel but men travel thousands of miles to see the place where God filled the dungeon with glory of heaven. Palestine is unattractive from the standpoint of scenic beauty. But the feet of Christ changed it into holy ground. Paths through it seem to bear the prints of the feet which were pierced through with the nails.

The first Baptist Church in Waco was being crowded out of growing business section; railroads, tall buildings, heavy traffic, making the location an undesirable one. It became necessary to move and build. All knew it; all were willing for the change; but the time came for leaving the old spot and many of the older members sobbed and wept because they were being pulled away from the place made sacred by many experiences. There they had many struggles; many had been saved; many had been married; and their loved ones were brought for the last rites. It was Holy Ground. Presence of God will change any ordinary place into a sanctuary.

- (2) It was the place where God made His will known.

Moses had been an aimless wanderer until that day, with no definite plan, or program, with no convictions about his relations to and labors for God. On that day God commissioned him to go to Egypt in His name and power and deliver the Jews from their bondage, and lead them to the land of promise. Moses

yielded but not without a desperate struggle; he accepted the charge and responsibility, but not without much fear and misgivings. It was the place of vision and inspiration. Henceforth, he made every step toward a definite goal. The Early part of his life illustrates the lives of most people. It was without purpose, aimlessly drifting with current. Nine tenths of the race live and die without a purpose or goal. They live with little vision, no fixed purpose and no definite task. However, Moses life was remade in the light of that bush.

When Jews came from Egypt they did not halt until they reached Shechem, the place where Abraham built his first altar when he came from Ur. They rebuilt the altar and around it rededicated themselves to God. It was holy ground to them. It became center of their activities. Men of all ages have had sacred places in their lives; Jacob in his dreams at Bethel, and his wrestling at Peniel, and Abraham offering up Isaac on Mount Moriah. He could not live long enough to forget such an experience or such a marked spot. Elijah on Mount Carmel -- singlehanded -- overcame by power of God. Such days are pivotal days, where characters are made, and destinies are determined.

(3) It was the place where Moses realized that God was his God.

He had thought of Him as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That day he thought of Him as the God of Moses. The promises of God were not vague theories then but were definite and real to him. When commissioned, he asked, "When they want to know who sent me, what shall I tell them?" The Lord said, "Tell them I AM hath sent you." That was a meaningful name. It was God's unlimited authority committed to him. I AM means the full supply of every need. I am all that you will need for this task, and for this journey.

Alone with God on the mountain slopes, or in the desolate places, was where he developed his faith and courage, and where he fought his battles. It is in such places where all of us must fight our battles, and where faith is developed for all men.

This scene at the bush was where he brought his will into absolute subjection to the will of God. How hard a thing this was to do is seen by the desperate struggle he made. He plead his insignificance, his inability to talk, his lack of influence, his past mistakes in Egypt; and these human weaknesses were all set aside by the power of God, and he finally brought his will into absolute obedience to God's will. And God became the master of his life. And God's program was accepted in full. God was no longer a mere name, He was a living reality, a personal Friend and Leader. Religion was no longer a mere ceremony to him, it was a vital principle filling the soul, guiding the life, and firing the ambitions. Finding God's promise true is a new beginning place in life for us all.