

When All Seems Lost

¹¹ Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. ¹² So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³ He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your companion?" ¹⁴ But he said, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and said, "Surely the matter has become known." ¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well. (Exod. 2:11-15)

²² **"Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.** ²³ **"But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel.** ²⁴ **"And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian.** ²⁵ **"And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.** ²⁶ **"On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?'** ²⁷ **"But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE OVER US?'** ²⁸ **'YOU DO NOT MEAN TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY, DO YOU?'** ²⁹ **"At this remark, MOSES FLED AND BECAME AN ALIEN IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN, where he became the father of two sons. (Acts 7:22-29)**

²⁴ **By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,** ²⁵ **choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,** ²⁶ **considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.** ²⁷ **By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. (Heb. 11:24-27)**

The book of Exodus tells us that Moses was grown up ... In Acts 7, Stephen tells us that Moses was approaching the age of 40.

Stephen tells us that Moses was a man of power and deeds. According to the ancient historian Josephus Moses commanded the Egyptian forces in a campaign against the Ethiopians.

Moses considered it to be sinful to identify and live as an Egyptian and he considered indentifying with the Jews, equal to identifying with Christ ... since they were God's chosen people.

The Jewish slave was being treated unjustly which evoked in Moses righteous indignation and he defended the slave who could not defend himself and in that act of defense, killed the Egyptian.

Moses thought word would get around, but that the Jews would understand that the action was just and, as he did, understand that God had chosen him to be their deliverer.

They did not and their response was pretty much, "Who do you think you are, do you think you are better than us."

So, Moses fled from Egypt, not because (according to the writer of Hebrews) because he was afraid of Pharaoh but for other reasons ...

... 2 reasons ...

... First, because Pharaoh was trying to kill him,

... but also (I believe) because he was devastated by the rejection of his Jewish brethren.

So at the age of 40 years, life found Moses displaced, discouraged, on an entirely different path than he thought he would be on at this point in his life.

Moses must have believed that grand plans for his life and the hope of the Jews being delivered were pretty much lost.

Moses didn't belong in the land of Midian, but he settled down there anyway...

... and was there for 40 years.

... no matter how hopeful Moses may have been at the beginning

Forty years without any encouragement can do a lot to a man—and none of it is good.

Gone was his zeal, confidence, passion, and hope for a better day.

If he wasn't broken I would be shocked ... but then something happened that changed everything.

1. An Ordinary Day Can Become An Extraordinary Moment

Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. (Exod. 3:1)

The day probably started like any other day during those 40 years.

- The sun rose in the normal manner.
- The sheep were grazing as they always did.
- The giant mountains surrounding the plain loomed as large as ever. .

There was nothing to indicate that this day was going to be any different than all the rest.

... however before this day is over Moses, right in the middle of doing the ordinary stuff of life, is going to have an encounter with God.

This is how God works.

... The two disciples on the road to Emmaeus said, *'Did not our hearts burn with in us as he talked to us while we were in the way.'*

The NASB translation says while we were *"on the road."*

This is why faithfulness is so important

... not every day is spectacular

... sometimes life is about doing your duty

... But there are those time, on a normal day in you walk with the Lord, that God breaks into our routine and does the unexpected.

... Just be faithful over a few things, and when you least expect it, He will make you ruler over many.

- I can see **Gideon**, in fear, hidden away in a cave threshing grain—Suddenly God showed up and address Gideon “O Thou Mighty Man of Valor.”
- **Isaiah** was being faithful and a prophet of the Lord and unexpectedly Uzziah died—the old prophet just stayed the course when suddenly (the Bible says) he saw Lord lifted up and sitting on his throne ... and at the end of that moment Isaiah cried out, “Here I am Lord, Send me!”
- **John the Revelator** writes, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet, saying, "Write in a book what you see ..." (Rev. 1:10-11)

That’s how God works!

- **Moses** was in the desert tending sheep, and when he came near the mountain of God... God showed up in an extraordinary way!

When All Seems Lost, Suddenly an ordinary day becomes and extraordinary moment!

2. God Uses Common Things As Uncommon Signs

² *The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.*

³ *So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."* ⁴ *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." ⁵ Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." (Exod. 3:2-5)

Here was just a common bush ... that part of the world is dotted with these scraggly bushes.

... they are everywhere.

But something uncommon was happening **in and to** this bush ... it was on fire BUT it was not being consumed, burned up, destroyed by fire!

What does this mean??

Some people say this burning bush represents the nation of Israel that has gone through fiery experiences and survived.

... The Jewish people have truly been an indistinguishable people.

Other people say that this burning bush represents God Himself.

- Deuteronomy 33:16 tells us that it was God who was in that bush.
- Hebrews 12:29 says, "Our God is a consuming fire."
- In Revelation when the Apostle John receives a revelation of Jesus Christ, John says that His eyes were like a flame of fire.

So certainly that bush could be a symbol of God himself.

Both of these things could certainly be true ... but let me suggest something else.

... I think that this bush represents Moses.

This was an ordinary bush and Moses was an ordinary man.

... but when the common is touched by the hand of God the common becomes uncommon.

... and in this God is glorified.

This is exactly what Apostle Paul meant when he told the Corinthian church that God chooses to use the foolish things in order to confound the wise.

... this is what the Lord was saying when He told Paul, "*Paul, my strength is made perfect in your weakness.*"

This is why Paul said that he was going to *boast about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power would rest on him.*

- The miracle that we are seeing here in Exodus 3 is not the bush, the miracle is God in the bush.
- There was no greatness in Moses, the greatness was God in Moses.

Until you put your ego aside you will not be able to see this.

God loves you ... not because you are special, but because He is God.

God wants you to use you ... simply because He delights in using the ordinary and unpretentious.

- God welcomes our plain and thorny ways
- Any old bush will do, just so long as God is in the bush
- **If you will be the ordinary vessel God will supply the inextinguishable flame**

Moses sees this miraculous sight and he says, "**I am going to turn aside and see this thing.**"

In other words, Moses took the time to see what God was doing.

I realize that all of us have busy lives but somewhere, in some place, at some time, we have got to turn the world off ... dwell in God's presence.

One of the things about spiritual disciplines is they create spaces in our lives ...

Prayer, Meditation, Bible Reading, Serving others, Gathering in church with God's people ...

... it is in these places where we begin to learn what God is up to...

When the Lord saw that Moses had turned aside He said, "Moses, Moses."

... This is personal.

... And Moses says, "**Here Am I.**" ... I like that.

... this is what is called SURRENDER ... AVAILABILITY!

... and look at how the Lord responds...

... Lord says, "**Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.**"

- NOW AGAIN I want to remind you, It was not Moses that made the holy ground.
- ... the ground was holy Because God was there.

We have this wonderful promise that when God's people gather together God is in the midst.

You and I are on holy ground this morning.

When you and I come together in this building, claiming the promises of God, meeting with God's people, God has committed himself to meet with us.

... and we should meet God together with a holy reverence and humble expectation.

I don't mean that we shouldn't laugh, or fellowship, or express ourselves in normal actions and activity

... I mean there should be an awe, an overwhelming awareness ... a desire that God will work in us, and through us in real and definite ways.

Some years ago it was advertised that a great violinist would play a concert on a violin that was worth a million dollars.

Previously this violin had only been on show as a museum piece—it wasn't really played.

However, for this event people came from all over to hear this extraordinary violin played.

The time came for the concert and the concert hall was packed.

The violinist came on stage and played a song that brought rapture and thrill to the listening audience.

... But, just as the last note of the first song was dying out the musician suddenly threw the violin on the floor of the stage and began to stomp on it, crushing it into a thousand pieces

... and then he stormed off stage.

The audience sat there in silent shock.

In a few moments the manager walked back onto stage and explained that the violinist had not used the expensive violin but instead a cheap \$50 violin.

... and now the great violinist was coming back out on stage and this time he would be playing the million dollar violin.

The crowd settled down and before long the violinist came back out with the million dollar violin and played the same song again ...

... Surprisingly no one could really tell any difference at all.

... it was not the violin, but the violinist that made the difference.

The devil is going to try to convince you that God can't use you because you are common and ordinary ...

... I'm here to tell you that YOU ARE common and ordinary and that is exactly WHY GOD can use you ...

... why God WANTS to use you.

When All Seems Lost ... God glorifies Himself and blesses His people by using the Common to Accomplish the uncommon.

3. Our Constant Call Brings God's Merciful Response

⁶ He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ The LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. ⁸ "So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. ⁹ "Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ "Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." (Exod. 3:6-10)

God doesn't say, "I was the God..." He says, "I am the God..."

God is reminding Moses that he is God of the past, present, and future.

Then, as if in rapid machine gun fire God uses five very strong verbs.

- I have seen

- I have given heed to their cry
- I am aware of their suffering
- I am come down to deliver
- I will bring out and to a land flowing with milk and honey

Suddenly in that moment, in the mind and heart of Moses I believe HOPE was reawakened.

... vision for God's work and God's people began to burn bright again.

When all seemed lost ... After 40 years in the wilderness ... God said, **“Moses, I still have the same plan, and it still includes you!”**

Satan is going to try and convince you that all is lost ...

... it's just too late for you

... you are just too broken and too ordinary

... the world is just too far gone

That is a lie of the devil.

As long as there is a God in heaven your life is not over!

God is still saving sinners and repairing lives

As long as there is a resurrected risen Savior at the right hand of the father ... hope remains steadfast and certain!

When all seems lost ... There is still God!!!! And He Cares For You!

When Robert Morrison, the first missionary to go to China, disembarked from his ship in a Chinese port, the captain sneeringly said, "So you think you are going to make an impression upon China." Morrison quietly replied, "No, sir, but I believe God will."