

The Call of a Servant (1)
Exodus 3:1-10

1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb. **2** And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush *was* not consumed. **3** And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. **4** And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here *am* I. **5** And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground. **6** Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. **7** And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; **8** And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. **9** Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. **10** Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

OUTLINE

- (1) Encounter with God (v1-6)
- (2) Endeavour for God (v7-10)

INTRODUCTION

The call of God for holy service is a sacred and holy calling. It is a divine decree that is authenticated by a divine encounter. The invisible God makes His will evident to His chosen servant. God predestines and prepares and puts his servant in the picture of His plan and promises His presence and power to go with him to accomplish His plan. God lays before His chosen man his plan and brings him to understand the mission laid before him for His honour and glory. He is then moved by the Spirit of God in an irresistible call to take up the mantle. God uses feeble man to accomplish His fabulous purpose to make a people for His name. A people that will praise Him forever in heaven's paradise.

Moses was God's man to confront Pharaoh and bring forth His people the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. God manifests Himself to Moses by a burning bush encounter and God would show him the work God has for him.

When the Apostle Paul was called to the ministry, it was the pierced hand of the Lord who ordained the apostle Paul to serve Him, so God lays His hand on those who are separated unto the work of the ministry. "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

Theodore Cuyler wrote, "When God calls a man to the ministry, He is apt to let the man know it. I believe in answers to honest prayer, and I believe in them also, and will keep your eyes open and heart humble and docile, you will be likely to get some clear indications as to your duty. During the first eighteen months after I graduated from college – mostly spent in teaching – I was balancing between the law and the ministry. Many of my relatives urged me to become a lawyer, as my father and grandfather had been; but my godly mother had dedicated me to the ministry from infancy and her counsels leaned toward the pulpit. One winter afternoon I rode off five miles to a prayer meeting in a neighbouring village. It was

held in a parlour of a private house. I arose and spoke for ten minutes; and when the meeting was over, a person said to me, “Your talk did me good.” On my way home the thought flashed into my mind, “If ten minutes’ talk today helped one soul, why not preach all the time?” That one thought decided me on the spot. Our lives turn on small pivots; and if you will let God lead you, the path will open before your footsteps.”¹

John 18:37 To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world

God’s Word to the prophet Jeremiah given in **Jeremiah 1:4-10** *Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.*

Two thoughts:

- (1) Encounter with God (v1-6)
- (2) Endeavour for God (v7-10)

(1) Encounter with God (v1-6)

1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

Moses has by this time spent 40 years in the wilderness. In the 40 years, he learned the topography of the wilderness when he led his father-in-law’s sheep, knowing it so well that he will be able to lead God’s people for 40 years in that same wilderness. Mount Horeb, also called Mount Sinai, is the place where Israel will later receive the laws of God. His work has been to take care of his father-in-law’s sheep, menial, unnoticed, he did not have his own flock after all these years. You may say he hasn’t accomplished much in life by any worldly standards. But God’s ways are not our ways. This was how God prepares his servant to the task He has for him.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ called and commissioned the Apostle Paul in his testimony on his Damascus road experience in Acts 26:16-18,

“But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

The Apostle Paul testified after he was called by Christ on the road to Damascus that he retreated into Arabia for three years to prepare himself to fulfil the call of Christ recorded in Galatians 1:15-17

¹ Charles U Wagner, The Pastor – His Life and Work, Regular Baptist Press, 1976, 19-20.

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But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

George Peters aptly observed the need to cultivate faith through the work of the Holy Spirit, "taking time, discipline, patience, much humble waiting in the presence of God, an abiding in Christ and an absorbing interest in the Word of God." He further cited the example of Paul

It is no surprise that Paul spent three years in Arabia soon after his conversion, and somewhat later, five to seven years in Tarsus. He needed time and solitude for theological orientation, biblical solidification, as well as spiritual maturation before he became the greatest missionary of the Christian era.

John Sung testified of his call and commission to preach the gospel recalling the night of Feb 10th, 1927 in an interview, "That night of nights, Feb 10th, 1927, was the birth of new life in me after forty days of wilderness struggle. I shall never forget. The same night I received our Lord's commission to go into all the world to be His end-time witness. The Lord changed my name to John that I should be a forerunner to Him in this age, like John the Baptist in His first coming. The Lord is coming very soon. He needs heralds before His return. Our Lord's Second Coming is different from his First Coming. He requires many forerunners, not one, today. We are to preach, "The Lord is at hand. Christ is coming very soon."² John Sung's God appointed seminary was 193 days in Room 415 of a Mental Hospital.³

This was the wilderness experience of Dr John Sung.

Spurgeon gave this rather humorous incident:

From someone other I heard in conversation of a plan adopted by Matthew Wilks, for examining a young man who wanted to be a missionary; the drift, if not the detail of the test, commends itself to my judgment though not to my taste. The young man desired to go to India as a missionary in connection with the London Missionary Society. Mr. Wilks was appointed to consider his fitness for such a post. He wrote to the young man, and told him to call upon him at six o'clock the next morning.

The brother lived many miles off, but he was at the house at six o'clock punctually. Mr. Wilks did not, however, enter the room till hours after. The brother waited wonderingly, but patiently. At last, Mr. Wilks arrived, and addressed the candidate thus, in his usual nasal tones, "Well, young man, so you want to be a missionary?"

"Yes, Sir." "Do you love Jesus Christ?" "Yes, I hope I do." "And have you had any education?" "Yes, Sir, a little." "Well, now, we'll try you; can you spell 'cat'?" The young man looked confused, and hardly know how to answer so preposterous a question, but in a moment he replied steadily, "C-a-t, cat".

"Very good," said Mr. Wilks, "now, can you spell 'dog'?" Our young martyr hesitated but Mr. Wilks said in his coolest manner, "Oh, never mind; don't be bashful; you spelled the

² Timothy Tow, John Sung My Teacher, (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1985), 73.

³ *Ibid.*, 75.

other word so well that I should think you would be able to spell this: high as the attainment is, it is not so elevated but what you might do without blushing.” The youthful Job replied, “D-o-g, dog.” “Well, that is right; I see you will do in your spelling, and now for your arithmetic; how many are twice two?” It is a wonder that Mr. Wilks did not receive “twice two” after the fashion of muscular Christianity, but the patient youth gave the right reply and was dismissed.

Matthew Wilks at the committee meeting said, “I cordially recommend that young man; his testimonials and character I have duly examined, and besides that, I have given him a rare trial such as few could bear. I tried his self-denial – he was up in the morning early; I tried his temper, and I tried his humility; he can spell ‘c-a-t’ and ‘d-o-g’ and can tell that ‘twice two make four’, and he will do for a missionary exceedingly well.”

Now, what the old gentleman is thus said to have done with exceedingly bad taste, we may with much propriety do with ourselves. We must try whether we can endure brow-beating, weariness, slander, jeering and hardship; and whether we can be made the offscouring of all things, and be treated as nothing for Christ’s sake. If we can endure all these, we have some of those points which indicate the possession of rare qualities which should meet in a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴

2 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

God met with Moses. The angel of the LORD is the pre-incarnate Christ. This is Moses’ first recorded encounter with God. F.B. Meyer said well here, “A MEMORABLE DAY – There are days in all lives which come unannounced, unheralded; no angel faces look out of heaven; no heaven voices put us on our guard: but as we look back on them in after years, we realize that they were the turning points of existence. Perhaps we look longingly back on the uneventful routine of the life that life beyond them; but the angel, with drawn sword, forbids our return, and comels us forward. It was so with Moses.

Quite ordinary was that morning as it broke. The sun rose as usual in a dull haze over the expanse of sand, or above the gaunt forms of the mountains, seamed and scarred. As the young day opened, it began to shine in a cloudless sky, casting long shadows over the plains...”⁵

He saw a burning bush. The fire burned but the bush was not consumed. It was an unusual phenomenon. It captivated his attention.

This writer caught the spirit of fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) during the FEBC night class on Systematic Theology VI – Eschatology in 2001 from Timothy Tow when he gave the message that there is no escape for mankind outside Jesus Christ. The only escape from this judgment is repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21, Hebrews 6:1). We are the privilege people with the message of salvation. The only solution is in Missions, Accelerated Missions...And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matthew 24:14)” As Timothy Tow led the class in singing the song “The Last Hour” written by Tow Siang Hwa after the tune of “O Master Let me Walk with Thee” by H Percy Smith (1825-1898), this writer felt the urgency of the

⁴ Ibid., 23-25.

⁵ F.B. Meyer, *Moses – The Servant of God*, CLC Publications, 2002, 39.

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message, as we were transported to the very gates of heaven to receive this heavenly mandate.

"The sunset burns in western sky, upon the air a warning cry. The siren wails from tower to tower, brethren this the last, last hour."

This was before the infamous 11 Sept 2001 attack on the twin towers in New York City. This writer's response to the same music composed by H Percy Smith of the hymn "O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee"

"Our loved ones do we bring to God, in prayer pleading for their souls. For His great mercy on their lot, that heaven be our common hope."

3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

Most unusual, one pastor calls it "the supernatural in the natural." God is making His presence felt to His servant. We serve a great God, the greatest! The King of kings and Lord of lords who has a plan to save the world. Mankind is moving headlong to eternal judgment and God in the riches of His mercies is making a way to save all mankind through the nation of Israel and in particular the one man that will come out of the loins of this nation, Jesus Christ.

Tow Siang Hwa who compiled and edited the chorus of John Sung in English sums up the charge of the Great Commission in this end time, one of biblical separation, which challenged and inspired this writer during the First Borneo BP Missions Conference held in Miri, Sawarak in 2001 for fervent service. Only Jesus saves is a message that is more and more becoming a forbidden message in the world of ecumenical unity. How long can this message "Only Jesus, Always Jesus" be preached before persecution comes, only God knows.

Only Jesus, Always Jesus
My heart will praise, My song I'll raise
Saved and healed me, Sanctified Me
Glorious Lord, Soon Coming King.⁶

This writer wrote a thesis for his course at the Far Eastern Bible College, "Timothy Tow said in his book *Pattern for Church Growth and Missions* that "the Text Book for those who are giving their lives to the mission field is none other than the Acts of the Apostles. The Acts of the Apostles especially is God's Pattern for Church Growth and Missions. The Apostles' acts are infallible and inerrant, so is their writings inspired (II Peter 3:16) and their preaching (I Thessalonians 2:13).⁷ Therefore, it is in the Spirit of fulfilling the Great Commission in this writer's generation that this thesis is written, by going back to the Word of God in the Acts of the Apostles to glean the infallible truths that gave the Holy Spirit Revival to the Apostle Paul's God ordained, Spirit-led mission to the Gentiles in his time and to John Sung in our grandfather's generation and Timothy Tow and Tow Siang Hwa in our father's generation and for us today in the 21st century before the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

The drive towards a One World Government is the epitome of man's rebellion against his Creator. The LORD made this observation in Genesis 11:6 "*And the LORD said, Behold,*

⁶ SH Tow, *Every Home Sings*, (Singapore: Tabernacle Books, 2001), 76.

⁷ Timothy Tow, *Pattern for Church Growth and Missions*, (Singapore: 1996, Life Book Centre), 10.

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the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.”

Not so long ago in Genesis 6, when the hearts of men was only evil continually, it grieved the heart of God and He had to destroy the world with a global flood. The descendants of Noah are now again totally corrupt, they reject God’s rule and built a great tower as a symbol of his supremacy without God. Man in his depraved and corrupt condition rejects God’s rule and goes about by his own wisdom to establish his own rule, the best way he knows how – a one world government.

Whitcomb in his article entitled “BABEL” observed, “God’s judgment of the Tower of Babel was one of the greatest catastrophes in the history of the world. In one moment, a massive, highly complex building project, involving the entire human race, came to an end. Thousands of workers, linguistically unified and Satanically inspired, suddenly found themselves incapable of communicating to each other. Overwhelmed by fear and frustration, each worker took his family and moved away from the others. Mankind never really recovered.”

Today, the world is heading toward not just a world government but also a world religion led by the Roman Catholic church called the Ecumenical movement that will unite all religions. Mainstream Protestant groups are joined to the Roman Catholic church, I was told, there is that co-sharing. Let us be aware of the danger and be separate.

4 And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

The LORD, Jehovah, the name of the God of Israel spoke to Moses out of the midst of the burning bush. He reported for duty that day, in response to God’s call.

The prophet Isaiah had a similar encounter with God in His throne room. He was cleansed of his unclean lips and called and sent to preach to the people of Judah!

Isaiah 6:1-10 *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. **Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.** And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

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

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Like Isaiah, it was indeed a fearful and frightening experience to meet with God. The Apostle Paul was blinded for three days by the bright light from heaven when Jesus met and called him to salvation and service.

Indeed, it was holy ground that he was treading upon. Isaiah recalled how the king Uzziah died when he intruded into the temple's holy place to offer sacrifice. It was not for the king to do so but a role God designated to the high priest in Israel. In his pride, Uzziah did so. He was immediately struck with leprosy and died a leper. God, indeed, is a consuming fire, a holy Judge, none can stay His hand. All stands guilty before Him. None can escape His wrath. Isaiah understood this and he froze there in God's throne room. If not for the grace of God, who brought the coal to cleanse his lips, he would likewise have perished.

6 Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

This is the continuing story from the Book of Genesis, the promises of God to Abraham is now being fulfilled. God will call Moses to be Israel's deliverer. Moses was so frightened, he tried to hide himself....

To be continued...