

God's Commission to Moses and to Us

“The LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.”
—*Exodus 4:2*

IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS, chapter three, we are provided the record of how God spoke to Moses and commissioned him to perform a very important task, which was the deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. Like all truly great men of God, Moses realized his own weakness and insufficiency for the task at hand. He foresaw the difficulties which would be encountered in his endeavor to convince the Egyptian authorities that through him the God of heaven demanded the release of his brethren. Moses expressed to God his doubts about being chosen for what he felt would be a nearly impossible task for him to accomplish. Thus, although humble, he failed to exhibit sufficient faith to realize that with the power of God on his side, all the obstacles he feared could be overcome.

The Lord gave Moses a very important object lesson to strengthen his faith by performing a miracle in connection with the simple shepherd's

rod which he possessed. By this miracle, we see illustrated an important aspect of God's dealings with those whom he is using in his service today—namely, that he overrules, blesses, and authorizes them to use in his service whatever talents of time, strength, or means which they currently possess. Very seldom is it necessary for servants of God to wait until he puts something new into their hands to use before they can serve him. As recorded in the words of our opening text, the Lord asked Moses, "What is that in thine hand?" Let us note well this lesson—that it is mostly what we already possess which can be used best in our work for him.

God's dealings with Moses on this occasion also remind us of how he speaks to his people. First he spoke to Moses by an angel—his messenger—out of the burning bush. When Moses turned aside to investigate, then God spoke to him. (Exod. 3:2-4) God speaks to his consecrated people today through the Truth found in his Word. He has likewise used a messenger to bring these truths to our attention. When we investigate, and prove these things by the Scriptures, we discover that the messenger has called our attention to God's glorious plan. We then recognize that it is God who has spoken to us through the truths provided through his messenger.

THE TRUE GOD

Writing of conditions in his day, Paul said that there were "gods many, and lords many." (I Cor. 8:5) This is still true today, and it was also the case in Moses' day. In speaking to Moses, however, the true God identified himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (Exod. 3:6)

The God of Abraham is still the only true God, and the message that was preached to Abraham is the only true Gospel. (Acts 3:13; Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) Those who have not heard this message have not heard the voice of the true and living God. They may have heard the voice of the torment god, or the trinity god, or one or another of the many other gods of religious belief, but they have not heard the voice of the true God.

Identification of the voice of the true God is not difficult. To Abraham he expressed his intended purpose to bless all the families of the earth through a “seed.” (Gen. 22:16-18; 26:1-5; 28:10-14; Acts 3:22-26) We have heard this message. It is the great theme song of the Gospel which has reached us. Thus, it means that the true God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has spoken to us, for he does not change. (Mal. 3:6) His promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth is still his purpose.

“MOSES, MOSES”

We should not underestimate the directness with which God deals with us as individuals. We may think that the Truth came to us by accident, and that the Lord had nothing special to do with it. Jesus said, however, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” (John 6:44) God draws his people by the Truth, and while his servants sow the seeds of truth beside all waters, yet it is certain that the Heavenly Father, in his own way, overrules in connection with the individuals who are attracted to it. He is still able to provide the “burning bush” and the

“angel” to engage the attention of those to whom he wishes to speak.

If through the Truth our eyes have been enlightened to behold the glory of the Lord, it means that the God of Abraham has spoken to us. It means also, as in the case of Moses, that God has spoken to us for a purpose. Hence, it is critical that we listen. Moses’ reply was, “Here am I.” (Exod. 3:4) If we are to profit from his example, we too will continue to answer, “Here am I.”

Having thus responded to the voice of God, Moses next learned the sacredness of the position he now occupied. “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet,” the Lord said to him, “for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” (vs. 5) How true this is concerning God’s people today. The position into which the Truth has brought us is holy and sacred. If we have responded to it in the spirit of full consecration, it means that our entire life is now completely devoted to the holy things of God. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,” Paul wrote, adding that these “new” things “are of God.”—II Cor. 5:17,18

A WORK TO DO

God spoke to Moses because he had a work for him to do. This is true of those to whom the Lord is speaking at the present time. Herein is illustrated one of the differences between Christianity in general and those fully consecrated to God. In most of professed Christendom, it is usually only the clergy who are looked upon as having been called to a special work in connection with their Christian life. To most others, being a Christian is merely a matter

of subscribing to certain religious creeds, being a monetary supporter of a church, and attending its services often enough to remain on the membership rolls. Doing so, most feel assured of a happy condition after death.

However, there is no clergy and laity division in the ranks of the true followers of the Master. All are called to do a work for God—the amount of work they do being limited merely by circumstances and individual capacities. It is also a distinctive characteristic of our God that he “calls,” but never forces. He wants those who worship and serve him to do so willingly, gladly, intelligently—“in spirit and in truth.”—John 4:23,24

GIDEON AND OTHERS

Gideon was called to serve God, as was Jeremiah. God put his hand upon Ezekiel because he had a work for him to do. (Judg. 6:14; Jer. 1:4,5; Ezek. 1:3) Isaiah was given a vision, and was shown that God wanted him to be a special messenger to Israel. (Isa. 6:8,9) Invariably, these called ones felt inadequate for the work which they were asked to do. Yet, when fully convinced of the source of the call, and assured that God would be with them, they each responded in the spirit of full dedication to the God of Abraham.

When Isaiah saw that wondrous vision of God, he said, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.” When Moses realized the import of God’s words to him, he felt his weakness. He was not a man of eloquent speech, yet this seemed to be a necessary qualification for one who was to appear before Pharaoh and plead for the deliverance

of the Israelites. God's hand was not short. He cleansed Isaiah's lips, and provided a mouthpiece for Moses. (Isa. 6:5-7; Exod. 4:10-16) Likewise, we can be sure that he continues today to provide all the needs of those whom he calls into his service.

In the case of Moses, God used what Moses possessed in the way of talents, and then gave him a coworker to do what he could not do himself. It is the same with the Lord's people today. As individuals, we are called to perform only those parts of the Heavenly Father's work for which, in his providence, we are qualified. God has "set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." (I Cor. 12:18) By this arrangement of divine wisdom, the great cause of God goes successfully forward.

DELIVERANCE

Moses was called of God to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage. This illustrated the deliverance of the whole world of mankind from the bondage of sin and death, and the blessing of all the families of the earth, as promised to Abraham. We today are called to participate in another phase of this great plan of God. We have been invited to share in the work of representing Christ in the earth as, under God's direction, the preparation of the future kings and priests of earth is taking place.

We are also called to share in the future aspect of God's plan—the kingdom work of blessing all the families of the earth. If we prove worthy of having a part in that work, our privileges of service will be much more glorious and extensive than they are now. However, let us not suppose that the opportunity

of service in the kingdom will be granted to us if we are not faithfully responding to the divine call for service at the present time by the sacrifice of all that we have, and are, and hope to be.

HAVE WE HEARD?

Like Moses, we have difficulty in grasping the immense fact that God has spoken to us through his Word, and that he actually wants us to go to work for him. Moses asked, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?” (Exod. 3:11) We also are inclined to wonder why we should be called to such a High Calling—why we should be invited to work with God in the reconciliation of a lost race. It is important, however, that our faith grasp this important truth.

The Scriptures clearly inform us, and our faith must take hold of, the fact that God is calling a group of people in this Gospel Age, and that he will use them in the Messianic kingdom to deliver all who will then become his people. If we have responded to this call and agreed to meet its terms, we must feel the deep sense of responsibility that its acceptance impresses upon us. In so doing, it is also essential that we grasp the blessedness of the divine promises of “grace to help in time of need,” as we seek to do the work that God has given us to do.—Heb. 4:16

Moses’ recognition of his own unworthiness for the work at hand was a good thing, in that it caused him to lean more fully on God. It is only in the strength of the Lord that any of his people are able to serve him acceptably. (Ps. 28:7,8; 121:2) God said to Moses, “Certainly I will be with thee,” and

this promise applies equally to us. (Exod. 3:12) Another promise is, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Heb. 13:5) These are but samples of the many precious promises by which the Heavenly Father assures us of success in the great undertaking to which he has called us.

A HEART-SEARCHING QUESTION

Moses wanted to be sure of his chosen position before starting out on such an important mission as delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage. His uncertainty was evident to the Lord, who asked him what it was that he held in his hand. When Moses replied that it was a rod, God then demonstrated to him how he would use this rod in a miraculous manner to prove that its owner had indeed been sent by the great “God of Abraham.”—Exod. 4:2-5

The question to Moses, “What is that in thine hand?” seems beautifully to suggest the thought that God expects us to use whatever we possess of time, or talents, or means in carrying out the commission he has given us. It behooves each of us to ask ourselves this same question—What do we have in our hands that could be put to work in the Lord’s service? It may be surprising to realize how many talents or opportunities we are permitting to lie dormant. Sometimes little privileges of service are overlooked while we are waiting for the Lord to put something more important into our hands to use for him.

Time, strength, means, and ability are some of the things we may have in our hand to use in service to the Lord and his people. Time is a very important talent with which to serve, especially if

coupled with a measure of strength. Yet, some may say that they have both time and strength, but have no ability—hence are not able to serve the Lord. However, this is not a valid excuse in the day in which we live. Indeed, the Gospel is available for distribution in both printed and electronic form, and is supplied freely to all who will use their time and strength to share it.

Others may say that they have time, but not sufficient strength to work for the Lord. However, there are many who are confined to their homes by illness or age, yet use their time in addressing messages of truth, or writing words of encouragement, to others. The Lord richly blesses such efforts. Moses wanted God to send someone else to deliver the Israelites. Frequently, we may likewise feel like shifting the responsibility of service to the Truth to the shoulders of others, but the fact that God has given us his Word of truth means that he expects us to use it.

BY THE SPIRIT

Our commission to serve is clearly stated in Acts 1:8: “Ye shall receive power [ability], after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” There is no scriptural authority to show that this divine commission is to be withdrawn while a single member of the church remains this side of the veil. While the results may seem meager, we are still blessed with the opportunity to preach the “gospel of the kingdom . . . in all the world for a witness.”—Matt. 24:14

There are many evidences of the Spirit by which we may know of its indwelling in our lives. A very important one is mentioned by Paul: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; . . . if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:16,17) The Holy Spirit, through the prophets, had foretold the sufferings of the Christ. Hence, those who have the privilege of partaking of this suffering have the testimony of the Spirit that they are a part of the anointed company who are authorized to lay down their lives in the Lord's service. They have the assurance that the sacrifice of their lives in this way will be "holy, acceptable unto God," their "reasonable service."—Rom.12:1

We must, then, see our privilege of sacrifice. The Christian life is not merely a matter of high moral standards, and a certain satisfying of an emotional commitment. If we are to be loyal to the Truth, we must be willing to sacrifice all that we have in its interests. It is not enough to say that we believe the Truth. We must also serve its eternal cause to the best of our ability. God spoke to Moses, and thenceforth his life was lived for God. Thus it has been with all the truly faithful servants of God to whom he has spoken. Saul of Tarsus inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) This is the true desire of all to whom God speaks.

The sacrifice of the church, made in response to the vision of truth, is for the purpose of preparing her to share in the deliverance of the world from sin and death as part of the great Melchisedec priesthood of the next age. (Rev. 20:4,6) When the acceptable time for these present sacrifices has

ended, no longer will there be an opportunity to suffer and die for the Truth. However, while the way of sacrifice is still open, it is our privilege not only to receive and believe the truth of God's plan as it is centered in Jesus, the Redeemer, but to die for it. Paul said, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."—Phil. 1:29

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

If we have heard the voice of God and have entered into his service, we have an individual responsibility to him to be faithful. We cannot all do the same things in so far as the details of our service are concerned. There are "many members" in the "one body" of Christ, and we do not all occupy the same place in that body. (I Cor. 12:12) Let us endeavor to find out what there is that we can do—what the Lord has placed in our hands.

Let us be watchful for the privileges of meeting with and serving others of like precious faith. This includes being on the alert for opportunities to serve the brotherhood as a whole, as well as individual brethren. Not all can be elders, but even so there are plenty of ways of serving the general interests of the body of Christ. Let us not take the position that someone else will look after the spiritual affairs of the ecclesia, and that all we need to do is attend the meetings.

As individuals and as ecclesias let us also be watchful to do all we can to spread the Truth—the "gospel of the kingdom"—through our own local efforts as well as by cooperation with the general work of the present Harvest period of the Gospel

Age. There is much work which can be done, and for each of us individually, most of it can begin by simply looking to see what is in our hands.

What a great privilege it is to serve the Most High God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Let us not be downcast because the way before us is one of sacrifice. As the sacrificial death of the saints is “precious in the sight of the LORD,” so we should esteem the privilege of dying with Christ a blessed one. (Ps. 116:15) Indeed, we presently “glory in tribulations,” knowing that by the grace of God we will be part of the victorious Christ, head and body, tomorrow. (Rom. 5:3) It will be the church victorious that will do that great work for God of leading forth the world from the bondage of sin and death, thus being the instruments in God’s hands of fulfilling that wondrous Abrahamic Covenant to bless all the families of the earth. ■