

(Men Who Met God): Moses and the Burning Bush - He Met God in a Crisis of Encounter

by A.W. Tozer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing God personally and being helpless in his hands, and highlights the significance of the burning bush as a symbol of God's revelation of himself.

Duration: 49:19

Scripture: Exodus 3:2

Topics: "Moses"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of experiencing God rather than just knowing about Him. He uses the analogy of a soldier who has been through war to illustrate the difference between knowing about something and actually experiencing it. The preacher then discusses the story of Moses and the burning bush, highlighting how Moses had a sudden and powerful encounter with God. He also criticizes the tendency to prioritize doctrine over personal experience with God, stating that the Bible is meant to lead us to a relationship with Him.

Transcript

Now, continuing as I shall continue for some Sunday nights, on the general theme, Men Who Met God, Sermons on the Lives of Great Saints. I want tonight to speak about Moses. I have quite a number of sermons on Moses.

Someday I'll get them all together, maybe write a book on Moses. But as it stands, I want to bring two sermons on Moses, one tonight and I think possibly one next Sunday night. This time let me read from the third chapter of Exodus, a passage that I believe I could quote from memory.

But my mind is tricky, so I'll read it. 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.

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

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. And he said, Draw not nigh hither. Put off thy shoes, come off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. 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. Now we have in this narrative tonight the picture of a great man. Nobody anywhere on earth with any information concerning the facts would even question that Moses is a great man, or that he was, at the time of this incident, a great man.

But his greatness was still hidden. It was undeveloped and had not manifested itself quite yet. At this time, a great career was opening before this man.

He was to be so many things to so many people for such a long time that one feels hesitant even about listing the facets of the great man, lest he might seem to be overstating the case. But it is difficult to overstate Moses. Here was a man who was a prophet.

He was a prophet, and at the set of Christ he was a prophet like unto Moses. He was a lawgiver. He received from God by the ministration of angels the greatest moral code ever given to mankind.

There have been great moral codes given. Everybody who is familiar with Greek thoughts and Greek history knows that like Kyrgios gave to Sparta a system of laws that lasted for, I guess, 500 years, and that Solon gave to Athens, a system of laws that lasted a long, long time, there are the great laws set by a famous Englishman. The Constitution of the United States was the greatest document struck off by the mind of man.

A great system of laws lies there, but the greatest of all was that given by God through Moses. Then this man, Moses, was to be an emancipator, a settler free of slaves, and a leader, and a statesman, and a teacher of the ages. All this he was to be, and for this he was already pretty well prepared.

Did you ever stop to think that at this time in his life the man Moses was prepared so well that he could easily have been the bishop, a bishop in any of the great denominations, could have been, maybe certainly would have been chosen and sought after as a pastor? This man was so great, great in his education. It was said of him that he had been educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He had been also educated at court.

There is something about courts, where there is royalty, that is just a bit different. People who have once been there have been exposed to it for a while, enough for it to take, and never quite the same again. There is what is literally called a courtliness about them that you don't find any place else.

This man Moses had it because he had been brought up at the feet of the great Pharaoh. He had been called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And he had been taken under the knee of many of the progenitates and penitentiaries and kings and great royal figures that moved into that great band of Egypt in that day.

Then after he had broken with Egypt and had pulled away and gone out to keep sheep, he had a postgraduate course which I believe is more to be desired even than his education at the feet of the great teachers of Egypt. He went to school to the silence and to the sheep and to the stars in the heaven above. All through the evening before sleep overtook him he listened to the silence, if you know what I mean, and learned to know himself.

He learned to know himself. We moderns of this 20th century civilization know everything but ourselves. We don't know ourselves because we can't get quiet enough to know ourselves.

You fly someplace and your ears continue to buzz for the next five hours, and it's noise continually. God took this man out of the noise and put him in the silence where he could hear his own heart beat. And that was a postgraduate course, the like of which you don't get in the schools.

He went to a school to the sheep. The Bible doesn't hesitate to tell us to go to the low animals for lessons. Go to the ant.

Thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise, says the Holy Ghost through the prophet. And our Lord said, Consider the lilies of the field and behold the birds of the air. And Isaiah claimed that Israel wasn't as wise as the ox that knew where his crib was and came faithfully back every night to his master's crib.

So that it's not uncommon for the Lord to send people to school to the low animals, and he did send Moses, this learned man, this man with tremendous intellectual capacities that had been trained in the school of the Egyptians and then had had the courtly experience and had been brought up, as I say, in the court of Pharaoh. Now he sent him to school to the sheep. And while the sheep lay everywhere about him their little bells tingling in the evening as they settled down, and the frightened lambs finding their mother and the old mothers solicitors for their young giving that deep, low, quiet organ note that calls her the lamb's suicide, Moses heard all this.

And he learned some lessons he couldn't have learned any place else. There's an old proverb that says, If you would be alone, look at the stars. And Moses had occasion to look at the stars all during the evening and all the night long if he could to and whenever he woke in the night.

And when you want pure loneliness, absolute solitude, look at the stars. For the stars make no noise, they simply burn on in their magnificence. It was Emerson that said that if the stars should come out only one night in a thousand years, how people would gather with awe and look at the city of God as it shone there.

But now, because we see it all the time, we pay little attention to it. The reason we pay so little attention to the city of God that shines yonder that we call the starry universe is there's so much noise and so many distractions. But now, there was something that Moses had to learn yet that he couldn't learn at the court of Pharaoh, he couldn't learn in the schools of the Egyptians, he couldn't learn it from knowing himself, he couldn't learn it by looking at the stars, he couldn't learn it by listening to the sheep.

There was one thing yet that was to prepare Moses for his great work, which he could not have done without that preparation, and that was God wanted to give Moses an encounter with himself. He wanted Moses to meet God face to face and learn a sense of sacredness. Now, the greatest loss that modern man has suffered is not the loss of his legs.

You know, they tell us we ride automobiles so much that we're one of these days, our legs are going to atrophy, and we're just losing our legs. We'll be funny looking when that time comes. But that's not the greatest loss that we've suffered.

The loss of the home, as tragic and terrible as that is, is not the greatest loss we've suffered. The loss of loyalty and the loss of law keeping, all these are losses. But they spring out of another loss which is basic to these.

It is the loss of a sense of sacredness. I don't know how you feel, but I grieve when I come into the average gospel church. There is so little of God in the average gospel church.

Even, even, I mean the fundamental, evangelical gospel church such as this, there's so little of the sense of God in it. You never bow your head with reverence unless you deliberately discipline yourself to do it because there's not a sense of sacredness. Anything goes, and this is a loss too terrible ever to be appraised.

The world has hidden God from our sight, and secularism has taken over. And we've secularized God, and we've secularized the gospel, and we've secularized worship, and we've secularized Christ. And I say that it's a great and tragic loss.

No great man can come out of that kind of thing. No great movement can spring out of that kind of thing. God may have to sweep it away and start somewhere else.

You had to do it here with a man named Moses. You had to give Moses a vivid, intimate, personal experience of himself, an experience the like of which nothing else would give him. You had to meet God in the crisis of encounter.

Now, I don't use words carelessly, and I'm not using these words carelessly. I've used two words there and joined them by the little word of the crisis of encounter. Our trouble is, brothers and sisters, that we are talked into the kingdom of God.

Our trouble is that we are brought into the kingdom of God by smooth personal workers with marked New Testaments that tell us logically how to get converted, but they don't insist because the poor innocent souls don't know themselves that there is such a thing as meeting God in the crisis of encounter, as Moses did here, in a vivid, personal experience. Not that we see with our external eyes, but that we see more vividly with our inner eyes. Never apologize for your inner eyes, my brother, never, because your inner eyes are the real eyes, and these external eyes fool you.

You look down in the moonlight and you see something you think is a ghost, and it turns out to be a white mole or a sheep caught on a bush. Your eyes fool you, your external eyes, but your internal eyes never do. When Paul was caught up into the third heaven, he saw, but he didn't see with his external eyes.

If he had seen with his eyes of the flesh, what he saw would have burned those eyes out. But he saw with the eyes of his heart. It is with the eyes of our heart that we encounter God.

It is with the inner man, and we don't apologize for that inner man, because when this old external man has turned back to dust and the winds of heaven have blown it, the internal man will still be living, gazing upon the face of God. Moses had to have an encounter with God. Now, how God revealed himself, let's notice it here.

God revealed himself as fire. See, God is inscrutable and is ineffable, and he can't tell us what he is, he can only tell us what he's like. And so he tells us that he's like fire.

Now, God isn't fire, though the scripture says our God is a consuming fire, it doesn't mean that physically and metaphysically, ontologically, the theologians would say, that God is fire. The Pharisees believe that, the Persians, the follower of old gold luster. And they'll get down on their knees and worship a flame of fire on an altar.

But we know that God is not fire, for fire can be struck or coaxed, fire can burn down a building or cook a stew. God is not that kind of fire, but God is like fire. Fire is the nearest thing to being like God, that God can think of to tell his poor, half-blind children what he's like.

So God appeared here in the twilight, he appeared as fire, and Moses kneeled before that fire, and God spoke out of the midst of the bush. And Moses saw and felt and experienced in that encounter with God. And God commissioned Moses, and Moses went out to deliver Israel, to receive the law, to organize the greatest nation in the world, out of which the Messiah should come, and to give his name to the ages, all because he met God.

Now, let's look at the effect of this experience, the effect of the presence. For remember one thing, the fire in the bush was God. The fire in the bush was God dwelling within the fire and shining out through the fire.

It was the presence of God, this fire. And Moses experienced God here. And God, you see, was no longer merely an idea to the man.

God is just an idea to the average person. And he had been with Moses up to that time, although Moses was an Orthodox Jew. He had still only conceived God in an intellectual way.

Now he experiences God personally, and God becomes experience. You see, there are two kinds of knowledge, at least two kinds. There is the knowledge that comes from description.

There is the knowledge that comes from experience. You can describe a thing, and thus you have knowledge of it. And you can give knowledge to others by describing it.

But it's another thing to experience it. You can describe the battle, but the boy who has gone through the hell and shot and shell and gas and fire, he has experienced it. And the ones who experience it say very little about it.

Two of our sons, three of them, went through the fire, through the fire, and they say very little about it. It's amazing. The children are usually as talkative as can be, and they are.

But they don't say much about that experience they went through. Just a few things when they came back. Never any more after that.

When you experience a thing, particularly that kind of thing, it's for a lifetime a vivid thing that you can't escape. So this man experienced God. God is not history now to Moses, but God is a living personality.

The tragic breakdown in fundamental circles is that we have substituted doctrine for experience. You know, my friends, the Bible was never given to be an end in itself. The Bible was given to be a path leading us to God.

And when the Bible has led us to God and we have experienced God in the crisis of encounter, then the Bible has done its work. It continues to do its work, but it's done its work. It isn't enough that you should memorize the scriptures.

Some people memorize the Word of God but never meet the God who wrote the Word. They can quote whole chapters, but they have never been inspired by the same Spirit that inspired the Word. The Bible can only be properly understood by the same Spirit that inspired it.

And for me to memorize whole passages of scripture is very little use unless I go on by means of those scriptures to meet God in the crisis of encounter. The greatest ministry this church can have to the city of Toronto and to the world is to experience God and then tell everybody, I can experience God, you can experience God, we can know God as Moses knew the bush, we can know God as a rabbit knows the green briar patch, we can know God as a fish knows the sea, we can know God as a babe knows its mother's breast, we can know God for himself. If I don't do anything else while I'm here in this city, I want to stir the hearts of God's children and those who are borderline people who don't know where they are, to know that by the gospel, by the blood of the Lamb, by the power of atonement, by faith in this and in him, we can know God for himself.

Let's look a little at the fire in the bush and the lessons that the man got from it. I don't know that it came to him one, two, three, four and five the way preachers do, I don't know that. I only know it came to him in a sudden, wonderful, blazing experience.

Fire dwelt in the bush, that's number one. There was the lordship of Jesus. Now, Paul calls this the rich mystery and hope of glory, Christ in you.

This it was, the day that through the Christian mission I landed, such great impulse back there, 75 or 80 years ago, Christ in you, the hope of glory. That had been prayed all the time for 2,000 years nearly. It had been in the New Testament, but a lot of people had forgot it.

And when the Canadian preacher, Dr. A. B. Simpson began to trumpet abroad, Christ in you, the hope of glory, is the objective of our faith, all the churches rose and said, wonderful, isn't this wonderful? Some said he's a fanatic, but a lot of them said, it's wonderful! And a new impulse came, because the doctrine of the angel in Christ was dug out and preached once more. The fire dwelling in the bush. Now, look at that little bush.

It was in the cashew bush, you know. And there was a fire in it, and it was perfectly helpless in the fire. You'll never know God as you should know him until you're helpless in his hands, until you can't escape him.

As long as you can run and go to Tarshish, you're still not in God's hands. As long as you can back out, as long as there's a bridge behind you over which you can retreat. They say it's a poor rat that doesn't have at least two holes.

And the reason for that is, no rat's ever sure of himself. He's never settled. He always wants to have a second possibility.

And I find a lot of the children of God are quite like the prairie dog or the hedgehog, or whatever you might want to use if you don't like the word rat. My zoology wasn't exactly normal when I used that illustration. But these little burrowing rodents that the farmer loves to shoot, they have more than one place to hide.

And the farmer gets down once every hour at one hole, and the groundhog may be a quarter of a mile away sitting and eating peacefully because he has more than one hole, you see. More than one place to hide. And the dear children of the Lord that I've run into, very few of them are committed.

Almost all of them are ready to back out. I was down in New York a couple of weeks ago. Somebody told me a riley, the story of a preacher.

He was a very strong believer in physical healing, divine healing. And he prayed for his family and never called in any doctor. And he said, we lived for years, he said, without any medicine.

But he said, when my baby got, ah, what's this they get in their throat? Diphtheria. He said, when my baby got diphtheria, he said, I didn't think there was anything to fool with, so I sent for the doctor. He trusted God as long as there wasn't much wrong.

But he said, when the baby got diphtheria, he felt he couldn't fool with that. So he passed over God. Oh, my brother.

God is the last resort for most of us. But here was a bush that couldn't back out. It couldn't get out of there.

It was caught there. And the happy Christian that's been caught by the Lord, he can't escape because he doesn't want to escape. He's burned all the bridges, every direction.

And there's nowhere to go. When Moses was on the mountain, I don't want to anticipate myself, but when Moses was on the mountain, you know, he made fun of those servants of Baal. To the point he had them in a sewer.

And if God hadn't sent the fire and confirmed his servants safe, Moses would have been torn to shreds. So Moses, not Moses, Elijah, Elijah looked up and said, in effect, O God, either meet me now or I'm coming up quick because there's tyranny of fire. God sent the fire down on me all the time.

Some of you aren't in any place with God at all. You're hanging around the edges because you've never committed yourself or you can't back out. Never, never committed yourself or you can't back out.

Remember the first airplane trip I ever took? My wife went along to the air shooting and waited with the associate pastor and the little girl until the plane had taken off. And afterwards she told me how terrible it was when they locked me in. She said part of what was terrible was when they locked you in.

Well, after you're locked in, brother, you don't get out. When those motors start to roar and you begin to take off like a scared duck, you don't get out then and go back and say, excuse me, I forgot to turn off the gas. You don't do that.

You don't do it. You can do that often till the time that they say, pass me the seat belt. But after that, you're stuck.

And the reason some of you dear people are such poor examples of Christianity is you've never had the door locked on you. You can get out any time you want to and go back, and some of you are secretly feeling a sneaking idea that you may have to do that one of these days. You can walk with a load as long as things are normal, but when you get in a tight spot, there's nothing to fool with.

Oh, friend, this bush, thank God it was cut. Then the second thing I want to mention is this bush is purified by the fire. You know, all fungi and the bugs and the larvae and the worms, they're all perished.

The fire burnt their whole business. And as a farm boy I know that there's a lot of free borders on the average bush. There it is, you know, all kinds of life, from the life of the fungus to the life of all sorts of bugs and worms under the leaves and larvae and half-hatched worms.

There they are. But you turn a fire loose in that bush for five minutes and there isn't a living thing there but bush. And there wouldn't have been bush if God hadn't preserved it.

The fire that preserved the bush slew all the extraneous matter. You know no evil can stand before the fire of God's presence. Just as no microbe and no living thing can stand in fire, God is the holiness that we need.

Some people think holiness is something that you get and that you take out with you and carefully guard it lest you lose it. No. Holiness is nothing else than the holy God dwelling in a human being's heart.

And the heart will be holy because God is there and God is holy. The bush had no purity of its own, and if the fire went out in that bush, as it probably did after God had given his demonstration to Moses, no doubt before the next Wednesday the bugs were back again, not the same ones but some others. So remember that purity, holiness, is by the presence of God, by the encounter with God, by the fire of God in the human breast.

Cleansing and purity come by the indwelling Christ. Do you ever stop to think that Christ is not our sanctifier? Christ is our sanctification, which is another matter altogether, theologically different. He is our sanctification.

He is himself our holiness. So if he dwells there as the fire dwells in the bush, in living encounter and experience, the man will be a pure man because Christ in him is pure, living out through him. Then the third thing is that the bush was transfigured by the flame.

It was only a scrub-thorn bush, and I suppose there were millions of them, very likely there were millions of them or at least hundreds of thousands of them scattered over the broad face of the wilderness there. And they didn't amount to anything. They were like our mesquite bushes in your Canadian and our American West.

And they weren't looking at Christ. Nobody ever went out and stopped his automobile and said, Mama, let's stop and dig up one of these acacia bushes and take it home to the Lord. They didn't do that because it wasn't worth it.

But this particular bush was transfigured by the flame until it became the most famous bush in all history. In all history. But its glory was not its own.

Its glory was derived from the indwelling fire. It took on a glow, it took on a glory, and it held that glory all down these years. Men talk about the burning bush and artists paint the burning bush and we preach about the burning bush.

Why? Because it was a great bush? No, because it was a great fire. This is one of, or should I say the byproducts of Christianity, that God takes people who have never amounted to anything and never will, and by living in them transforms them and gives them a meaning and a significance. People, the faceless multitudes that tramp up and down everywhere, the faceless multitudes, the nameless crowd, the man on the street, they call it.

Anywhere you go you find people. You walk down the street and there isn't anybody. And two cars bump together and make a hollow sound and in five minutes there are 500 people.

Well let a fire start and you wonder where do they, where do they come from? Out of the woodwork? They disappear from everywhere, you know, and the police have to fight them off to keep them from hindering the firemen. People, people, people. There are so many and they're all so wonderful.

God made them and heaven is for them if they'll go there. And each one is a world in himself. Each one is a microcosm.

The little world, all the big world of God is condensed into the little world and yet because of what sin has done we're all just, just faceless people. Emerson said the average couple is just, the average man and woman is just another couple. Just another couple, faceless and without significance and without meaning.

But let Jesus Christ get a hold of that man. Let Jesus Christ get a hold of that woman. Let the Lord of Glory get into that life and they take significance on immediately.

Who is Dwight L. Moody? Who is Dwight L. Moody? He was a shoe salesman that had tongue tied and stuttered. An ignorant, uneducated shoe salesman selling shoes. I suppose that he had many a memory after he became a great preacher of the woman who had him get every shoe in the store and then she decided to take her own.

I suppose that he remembered that all right. He was a shoe salesman. He'd never have been heard of, the man Dwight Lyman Moody.

But one day the Lord met him. Then the Lord met him in crisis of encounter lying in the home of Mother Cook. And the Holy Ghost came on him in Philadelphia.

And Moody went out not only to be a great preacher, for he never was a great preacher, but he went out to be a transfigured man. Don't you know people that are transfigured? I do. Faceless people who never had significance, who never had gifts, who had no money, who had no social position, who had nothing.

And yet, God transfigured them. I often speak of my friend Tom Harris. Some of you know Tom.

Tom was just an uneducated Irishman from County, what, County, from, well I've forgotten the county. I've never been to Ireland so you'll have to excuse that. But he was a marriage man anyhow and he had all the red faces of an Irishman.

And, he has it, he still has it. He talks about the face of the Lord. That's all he says.

Well to me that's very humorous because I'd say face and have an accent. But he says face and that's Irish. Well, that was Tom.

Who'd ever heard of him? He was a, he was a plumber from Lisbon, Ireland. A plumber, mind you. He just put pipes together and screwed them up and said that'll be four dollars.

Now that was Tom you know. That's all, Tom has no education. So, but why, why when you see him come in do you know God is in the neighborhood? Why when he gets on his knees there do you know that, that God is answering his prayers? Why does it talk about him all over the North American continent? Why does it write him letters by the hundreds asking his prayers? Why is he known in, in, in Europe and in America? Because God got him Tom Hare and transfigured him.

He was only a, an acacia bush and he would have died and been forgotten with all the Irish acacia bushes that flood the Emerald Isles. But the Holy Ghost came and filled him and took him over and now to pray in the summer of Lisbon. Now I remember County Antrim.

Some of you Irish people never forgive me if I didn't remember that County. County Antrim. All right, now another thing is that this bush was protected by the fire.

I want you to get that. No evil could come to that bush. No evil could come to the bush.

No, no Christian, nobody can hurt a Christian. Nothing can hurt a Christian. Nobody can get through to a Christian unless the Lord wants him to.

When the devil wanted to tempt Job he said, God, you've got a, you've got a hedger on the man. He had to ask permission to get through. God opened the hedge a little and the devil slipped through and went in to tempt him.

And so it is. There's no, no child of God can get injured if he has the fire dwelling in him. Well, now what was it that protected the bush? Well, it was the fire in the bush.

You know, if it had been today, we'd have had a conference and it would have cost us \$40,000 to hold a conference and we'd have taken four days and we'd have eaten up all the ham and sweet potatoes in the neighborhood and talked and gossiped and fooled and we'd have called that a conference. Then we'd have passed some resolutions to build a wire fence around the bush so nobody would bother it. But do you know that bush didn't need any wire fence or any glass encasing because nobody bothers a bush while the fire is in it.

There wasn't a goat anywhere in all Asia Minor that could dare come up and smell of that bush. He didn't get near enough because his nose would have been singed with the heat. So he stayed away perfectly safe.

The bush just, there he was. So a Christian, he doesn't have to defend himself. Some of you people ought to practice unclosing your fist.

Unclose them. Unclose your fist. You have, you have been a fighter all your life.

Anybody says anything against you, you're ready to rise up and write him a hot letter and say, what do you mean you're attacking my character? Imagine that bush having a writing letter saying, attacking my character. Nobody attacked the bush. They couldn't because the bush was perfectly safe while the fire dwelled in it.

And the buzzard that circled overhead looking for a place to light in the twilight didn't light on that bush. His feathers would have been singed off very quickly because there was fire in that bush. So safety lies not in constitutions and bylaws and regulations and church order.

Safety lies in the presence of God in the midst. My friends, if God dwells in the church, that church is a safe church. That's why I never joined the group that wanted to go to Washington and fight in Washington for the church.

We don't need Washington. The church doesn't need Washington. And I never would join in the group of the ecumenical minded brethren who want to go and be represented before Congress.

We don't need Congress. That bunch of big windy boys, let them pass laws and break them. We have God in the midst and when we have a fire in the bush we're safe and the church is safe.

Safe by the Holy Ghost. Some people want to run away and hide, you know, they don't want to be seen because they think they've got it and they want to keep it. And if they happen to go out too far they'll lose it.

You think it was something that pinned on them. No, no. It's something that's in them or should be back in the old days of the monks.

Well, of course there are monks now, but I don't know whether they're quite as silly as they were then. They used to go and never come out of a hole in the ground. There was an old fellow named Simeon Stylite.

He went up on a pillar 60 feet high and stayed up there 30 years. He was trying to preserve his holiness up there. If he had only read the third chapter of Exodus, the first six verses, he'd have learned that if fire dwells in a man he doesn't have to go 60 feet up with no elevators in order to be safe.

He's perfectly safe where he is. Thank God protection is by the indwelling fire. Then, lastly, it became beautiful in the fire.

Moses, many, many long years later, prayed this wonderful prayer. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. And the beauty of the Lord was in the bush.

It was the beauty of the fire. And when Moses saw that beautiful blaze there in the twilight, he said, I will turn aside now and see this great sight. The Sunday school teacher, you know, wanting to teach her class, that Moses had a scientific turn of mind.

She said he did have a scientific turn of mind because when he saw the bush immediately he turned aside to examine it. He said he wanted to put it under scientific scrutiny. He was a scientist.

Oh, how silly can you get, Mama? You shouldn't be teaching Sunday school class, you should be knitting and teach a thing like that. A man all alone, hundreds of miles from human habitation with nobody around him but sheep, the sun going down as it goes down, they tell me there. It doesn't go down slowly as it does here, it just drops and it darks.

I used the word twilight a while ago, but actually there isn't much twilight there. It suddenly gets dark. And now there's a fire over yonder.

Of course it shines out everywhere, and Moses turned aside to see. Did that make him a scientist? No, but he merely showed he had an IQ of at least 35 and a quarter. And anybody that didn't have an IQ that high, he maybe wouldn't have looked like everybody else would have.

You'd be caught out in the desert somewhere with nobody within miles. It got dark and suddenly you saw a fire. Wouldn't you look? Sure you would.

It was the attraction of fire that turned Moses around there. And you know that attractiveness is the great and mighty need of religion. I grew up, of course, in fundamental circles after I was converted at the age of 17.

And I found an awful lot of theology and a very little bit of saintliness. And I've yearned for saintliness all my Christian life. And I've yearned to meet people who were saintly.

I was at the Bible College over here, Toronto Bible College, a good Friday morning and gave them a little talk at their communion service. And a layman, who was, I understand, a member of their board, was asked to lead in prayer. Some of you might know him.

His name is Stephen. I hope he doesn't know that I said this because it would embarrass him. But he led in prayer.

Oh, what a prayer that was. And I went to him afterwards and I said, Brother Stephens, I don't like to refer to a prayer, but I felt God in your prayer and I was worshipping with you. Worshipping with you.

I felt I had met a man who had some saintliness on him. And I don't care where they come from, brethren, and what denomination they come out of. If they've got saintliness on them, my heart's attracted by it.

My wife and I can remember and sometimes talk about it to this day. For 40 years ago in the church in Akron, Ohio, we knew men of God there. Simple men of God who, when they prayed, put their faces up to God and closed their eyes and you felt you saw a light shining from heaven down on their faces.

I can remember a few great saints that I have known in my time, but not very many. It's what we need more than any other one thing, I say. A sense of sacredness that brings beauty to the life.

Attractiveness, I say, is a great need. And one of the tragedies of the hour is unlovely orthodoxy. You know, we who are fundamentalistic and orthodox, we're great fighters.

Our knuckles are heavy with calluses where we've been out beating the liberals. You know what you can do to help the liberals, friend? You can do a whole lot more for the liberals by being Christ-like than you can by beating them overhead with your knuckles. They're honest.

They don't believe the Bible. They're honest. They don't think Christ was the Son of God.

They're honest. And you can't make them believe by cursing them. But if they see Jesus in you sufficiently, maybe they'll change their minds and decide to investigate this thing.

After all, lonesome saints, where are they? Do you feel a desire to be one? You know, the strange and wonderful thing is when you are one, you don't know it. That bush didn't know anything about its attractiveness. There it was, burning away.

It didn't know it. The great saints didn't know they were saints. And they'd smile and scold you and chase you away if you told them they were saints.

They didn't believe it. But they were. The beauty of Jesus dwelt in them.

Ah, these were the lessons Moses learned and the lessons you and I need to learn now and to the young men who are going out into religious work, I have a few little remarks that I'd like to make to you to close this talk. I'd like to tell you that you are called to be a burning bush. You're not called to be or to imitate a movie actor.

You're not called to be great. You're called to be beautiful. Maybe it's beautiful in the fire, beautiful in your bones, maybe in your courage, but beautiful.

You're called to be a burning bush. And I would seriously recommend and now some of you may not be back, but they'll be able to take your place. I'd seriously recommend to all young men who feel themselves called to do God's work, shun the coarse ways of the cheap gospel amateurs that bring the spirit of sin to the market and the bank and the ballgame into the church.

Shun them. Stay away from them. I heard the president of Wheaton College one time in a serious talk say that we're suffering in evangelical circles from an epidemic of amateurism.

Anybody that can talk can get up and talk. And oh, the amateurism, the coarseness, the ignorance, the cheap humor, not a flash of wit sometimes to wake an audience, but cheap clowning. I say shun it and stay away from it.

We already have enough promoters. We need prophets. We already have enough organizers.

We need men who've met God in the crisis of encounters. We've got enough converted pugilists who draw crowds to see them fletch their bikes. But we need men in whom the fire is burning.

It is the sundown of the world, I believe it truly. It's the sunset of the world. Somewhere there are men, maybe only one man, in the shadows susceptible to a fire if he could see one.

Do you want to be that fire? At any cost. At any cost. The rank and file of half-saved evangelicals, they'll think you're a fanatic.

Of course. They'll say he's lost his mind. Did you hear about Brother Sonto? There's many crazy people in heaven, I take it, because about everybody that ever really comes through and meets God gets branded as being a little bit wacky.

And if he takes that, I say, Lord, you can have what's up here. It's all right. But the sanest man in Toronto is the man who knows God the most.

The sanest mind in the world is the mind in which the fire is burning. The mind in which the fire dwells the most perfectly. But don't let them fool you.

You're just crazy from their viewpoint, you know, that's all. You hear two Chinese talking backstage when you go for your laundry, you smile to yourself. That sounds awfully funny to you.

It sounds awfully funny to you, but it isn't funny to them, it's just funny from your viewpoint, that's all. So when you talk about the fire that dwells in the bush and the glory of God and the sweetness of the Lord high and lifted up, the world says he's crazy, but he just doesn't know your language, that's all. You're talking perfectly good talk, but he doesn't know your language.

That's why I think you're a little off. But the beautiful part about it is afterwards they come around to you. When you start to seek God in the crisis of encounter, they say he's lost his mind.

But after you get established and get your feet down, something goes wrong in their house, the phone rings at eleven o'clock at night and says, we're in trouble over here, could you come? Why don't they send for the dead pastor? I don't mean the pastor here, please, but the pastor that refuses to go along with you

and says you're crazy. Why don't they send for him because there's no fire in that bush and when you're going to get dark enough you want a fire in the bush? Oh, yes. The Lord is calling his people, calling them to the spiritual life, calling them to a concentrated life, calling them to a life that's committed to a point where they can't back out and don't want to.

Would you be one of them? Do you want to be one of them? Now, I looked over this book to try to find something to sing after my sermon. You know, brothers and sisters, there just isn't much. It's a nice book, but there just isn't much because I guess people aren't wanting what I'm talking about.

They don't want to sing about it. But listen, could we sing this one anyhow? Could we sing this There is a place of quiet rest near to the heart of God, a place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God. That's the best I can find in a book that says what I've been trying to say, that there is a place in the presence of God where the fire burns and where you're safe and where it's a quiet place and a safe place and a comfortable place and a resting place in the heart of God.

Could we sing it? Al, would you come and lead us, please? Thank you.

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