

The Divine Summons

by F.B. Meyer

F.B. Meyer explores the profound implications of God's call to Abraham, emphasizing the themes of separation, sacrifice, and divine promise.

Scripture: Genesis 12:1

Topics: "Divine Calling", "Faith and Separation"

Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the Divine Summons that God issued to Abraham, calling him to leave his homeland and family for a promised land. This call, while involving hardship and sacrifice, was wise and purposeful, designed to strengthen Abraham's faith and ultimately bless the world through him. Meyer illustrates that God's summons often requires separation from worldly ties, but it is accompanied by promises that assure us of God's faithfulness. He encourages believers to heed this call, recognizing that true growth in faith often comes from stepping out of comfort zones. The sermon concludes with a call to embrace the separation that leads to deeper fellowship with God and greater blessings for others.

Transcript

"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." Genesis 12:1-2.

Whilst Abraham was living quietly in Ur, protesting against the idolatry of his times, with all its attendant evils, and according to tradition, suffering bitter persecution for conscience sake, "The God of glory appeared unto him, and said, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee" (Acts 7:2-3).

This was the first of those marvelous appearances which anticipated the Incarnation; and marked the successive stages of God's manifestation of Himself to men.

When this Divine appearance came we do not know; it may have been in the still and solemn night, or in the evening hour of meditation; or amid the duties of his position: but suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about him, and a visible form appeared in the heart of the glory, and a voice spoke the message of heaven in his ear. Not thus does God now appear to us; and yet it is certain that He still speaks in the silence of the waiting spirit, impressing His will, and saying, "Get thee out." Listen for that voice in the inner shrine of thine heart.

This same voice has often spoken since. It called Elijah from Thisbe, and Amos from Tekoa; Peter from his fishing nets, and Matthew from his tollbooth; Cromwell from his farm in Huntington, and Luther from his cloister at Erfurt. It ever sounds the perpetual summons of God, "Come out from her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues"; "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." Has it not come to you? Strange, if it has not. Yet, if it has, let nothing hinder your obedience; strike your tents, and follow where the God of glory beckons; and in that word COME, understand that He is moving on in front, and that if you would have His companionship, you must follow.

(1) THIS CALL INVOLVED HARDSHIP. -- He was a childless man. He had sufficient for the supply of his needs. He was deeply attached to those who were united to him by the close ties of a common nature. It was no small matter for him to break up his camp, to tear himself from his nearest and dearest, and to start for a land which, as yet, he did not know.

And so must it always be. The summons of God will ever involve a wrench from much that nature holds dear. We must be prepared to take up our cross daily if we would follow where He points the way. Each step of real advance in the Divine life will involve an altar on which some dear fragment of the self life has been offered; or a cairn beneath which some cherished idol has been buried.

It is true that the blessedness which awaits us will more than compensate us for the sacrifices which we may have to make. And the prospect of the future may well allure us forward; but still, when it comes to the point, there is certain anguish as the last link is broken, the last farewell said, and the last look taken of the receding home of past happy years. And this is God's winnowing fan, which clearly separates chaff and wheat. Many cannot endure a test so severe and searching in its demands. Like Pliable, they get out of the slough by the side nearest to their home. Like the young man, they go away sorrowful from the One to whom they had come with haste. Shall this be the case with you? Will you hear the call of God and shrink back from its cost? Count the cost clearly indeed; but, having done so, go forward in the name and by the strength of Him in whom all things are possible and easy and safe. And in doing so you will approve yourself worthy to stand with Christ in the regeneration.

Nothing is more clear than that, in these critical days, God is summoning the whole Church to a great advance, not only in knowledge, and in spiritual experience, but also in the evangelization of the world. Blessed are they who are privileged to have a share in this sublime campaign!

(2) BUT THIS CALL WAS EMINENTLY WISE. -- It was wise for ABRAHAM HIMSELF. Nothing strengthens us so much as isolation and transplantation. Let a young man emigrate, or be put into a responsible position; let him be thrown on his own resources -- and he will develop powers of which there would have been no trace, if he had always lived at home, dependent on others, and surrounded by luxury. Under the wholesome demand his soul will put forth all her native vigor.

But what is true of the natural qualities of the soul is preeminently true of faith. So long as we are quietly at rest amid favorable and undisturbed surroundings, faith sleeps as an undeveloped sinew within us; a thread, a germ, an idea. But when we are pushed out from all these surroundings, with nothing but God to look to, then faith grows suddenly into a cable, a monarch oak, a master principle of the life.

As long as the bird lingers by the nest, it will not know the luxury of flight. As long as the trembling boy holds to the bank, or toes the bottom, he will not learn the ecstasy of battling with the ocean wave. As long as men cling to the material, they cannot appreciate the reality of the promises of God. Abram could never

have become Abraham, the father of the faithful, the mighty exemplar of faith, if he had always lived in Ur. No; he must quit his happy home, and journey forth into the untried and unknown, that faith may rise up to all its glorious proportions in his soul.

It may not be necessary for us to withdraw from home and friends; but we shall have to withdraw our heart's deepest dependence from all earthly props and supports, if ever we are to learn what it is to trust simply and absolutely on the eternal God. It may be that He is breaking away just now the shores on which we have been leaning, that the ship may glide down upon the ocean wave.

It was wise FOR THE WORLD'S SAKE. On this one man rested the hope for the future of the world. Had he remained in Ur, it is impossible to say whether he would have continued true; or whether he might not have been seriously infected by the idolatry around. Or, even if he had been enabled to resist the adverse influences, his family, and, above all, his children, might have failed beneath the terrible ordeal. Was it not, therefore, wise for the world's sake, and for the sake of the Divine purposes, that he should be taken right away from his home and early associations, to find a fresh religious starting point for the human race, on new soil, and under new conditions?

Was it not thus that, in days of abounding vice and superstition, God led the Pilgrim Fathers to cross the seas, and found a new world, on the inhospitable shores of New England? And has it not been the plan of the Divine government in all ages? It is impossible to move our times, so long as we live beneath their spell; but when once we have risen up, and gone, at the call of God, outside their pale, we are able to react on them with an irresistible power. Archimedes vaunted that he could lift the world, if only he could obtain, outside of it, a pivot on which to rest his lever. Do not be surprised then, if God calls you out to be a people to Himself, that by you He may react with blessed power on the great world of men.

Sometimes, indeed, He bids us stay where we are, to glorify Him there. But oftenest He bids us leave unhallowed companionships, irreligious associations, evil fellowships and partnerships, and at great cost to get ourselves away into the isolation of a land which He promises to reveal.

(3) THIS CALL WAS ACCOMPANIED BY PROMISE. -- God's commands are not always accompanied by reasons, but always by promises, expressed or understood. To give reasons would excite discussion; but to give a promise shows that the reason, though hidden, is all sufficient. We can understand the promise, though the reason might baffle and confuse us. The reason is intellectual, metaphysical, spiritual; but a promise is practical, positive, literal. As a shell encloses a kernel, so do the Divine commands hide promises in their heart. If this is the command: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"; this is the promise: "And thou shalt be saved." If this is the command: "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor"; this is the promise: "Thou shalt have treasure in heaven." If this is the command: "Leave father and mother, houses and lands"; this is the promise: "Thou shalt have a hundred fold here, and everlasting life beyond." If this is the command: "Be ye separate"; this is the promise: "I will receive you and be a Father to you." So in this case: Though thou art childless, I will make of thee a great nation: though thou art the youngest son, I will bless thee, and make thy name great: though thou art to be torn from thine own family, in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And each of those promises has been literally fulfilled.

It may seem that the hardships involved in the summons to exile are too great to be borne; yet study well the promise which is attached. And as the "City which hath foundations" looms on the view, it will dwarf the proportions of the Ur in which you have been content to spend your days; and you will rise to be gone. Sometimes, therefore, it seems easier not to dwell on the sacrifice involved, but on the contents of the

Divine and gracious promise. Bid people take; and they will give up of themselves. Let men find in Jesus the living water, and, like the woman of Samaria, they will leave their water pots. Fire the hearts of the young with all the beauty and blessedness of the service of Jesus; and they will not find it so hard to leave nets, and fishing boats, and friends, to forsake all and follow Him. "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me... immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

St. Francis de Sales used to say, "When the house is on fire, men are ready to throw everything out of the window; and when the heart is full of God's true love, men are sure to count all else but worthless."

(4) THIS CALL TEACHES US THE MEANING OF ELECTION. --Everywhere we find beings and things more loftily endowed than others of the same kind. This is markedly evident in the religious sphere. And there is at first a jarring wonder at the apparent inequality of the Divine arrangements; until we understand that the superior endowment of the few is intended to enable them the better to help and bless the rest. "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing."

A great thinker feels that his end is approaching; he has made grand discoveries, but he has not as yet given them to the world. He selects one of his most promising pupils, and carefully indoctrinates him with his system; he is very severe on any inaccuracies and mistakes; he is very careful to give line on line. Why does he take all this care? For the sake of the young man? Not exclusively for the pupil's benefit; but that he may be able to give to the world those thoughts which his dying master has confided to his care. The young disciple is blessed that he may pass the blessings on to others.

Is not this a glimpse into the intention of God, in selecting Abraham, and in him the whole family of Israel? It was not so much with a view to their personal salvation, though that was included; but that they might pass on the holy teachings and oracles with which they were entrusted. It would have been worse than useless to have given such jewels directly to mankind. As well put a gorgeous banquet before a hungry babe. To say the least, there was no language ready in which to enshrine the sacred thoughts of God. The genius of truth required that the minds of men should be prepared to apprehend its sacred lessons. It was needful that definitions and methods of expression should be first well learnt by the people, who, when they had learnt them, might become the teachers of mankind.

The deep question is, whether election has not much more to do with our ministry than with our personal salvation. It brings less of rest, and peace, and joy, than it does of anguish, bitterness, and sorrow of heart. There is no need to envy God's elect ones. They are the exiles, the cross bearers, the martyrs amongst men; but careless of themselves, they are all the while learning God's deepest lessons, away from the ordinary haunts of men; and they return to them presently with discoveries that pass all human thought, and are invaluable for human life.

(5) THIS CALL GIVES THE KEY TO ABRAHAM'S LIFE. -- It rang a clarion note at the very outset, which continued to vibrate through all his after history. The key to Abraham's life is the word "Separation." He was from the first to last a SEPARATED MAN. Separated from his fatherland and kinsfolk; separated from Lot; separated, as a pilgrim and stranger, from the people of the land; separated from his own methods of securing a fulfillment of the promises of God; separated from the rest of mankind by special sorrows, which brought him into closer fellowship with God than has ever been reached by man; separated to high and lofty fellowship in thoughts and plans, which God could not hide from him.

BUT IT WAS THE SEPARATION OF FAITH.

There is a form of separation known amongst men, in which the lonely soul goes apart, to secure uninterrupted leisure for devotion; spending the slow passing hours in vigil, fasting, and prayer; hoping to win salvation as the guerdon of its austerities. This is not the separation to which God called Abraham, or to which we are summoned.

Abraham's separation is not like that of those who wish to be saved; but rather that of those who are saved. Not towards the Cross, but from it. Not to merit anything, but, because the heart has seen the Vision of God, and cannot now content itself with the things that once fascinated and entranced it; so that leaving them behind, it reaches out its hands in eager longing for eternal realities, and thus is led gradually and insensibly out and away from the seen to the unseen, and from temporal to the eternal.

May such separation be ours! May we catch the Divine Call, irradiated by the Divine Promise! And as we hear of that fair land, of that glorious city, of those Divine delights which await us, may we leave and relinquish those lesser and injurious things which have held us too long, spoiling our peace, and sapping our power; and, striking our tents, obey our God's behest, though it may lead us whither we know not!

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