

Beginning of the Year Letter
Pastor Raymond, January 6th, 2008

"When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites...After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai ...He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert." (Acts 7:23, 30, 36)

Whenever we are at year end or the beginning, we are more conscious of numbers, like how old we are, how many years we have stayed in SF, or how long we have been a Christian. Often, it is healthier to take a bigger picture of our past, and future, in a way that the above Biblical passage does with Moses' life.

For a long time, I have often seen from these verses that the life of arguably the greatest hero of the Bible, Moses, was divided into three equal parts. In the first third of Moses' life, he was raised in Egypt, unaware of his destiny as an Israelite and merely enjoying the privileges of the court of Pharaoh.

It all changed when he became a murderer at age 40.

Then for the second one-third of his life, Moses was a fugitive, perhaps cursing but still not understanding his destiny as an Israelite. This one-third of his life was particularly bitter because he was without the good things in life in Egypt. Worse, he had to depend on his father in law, and had only sheep as companions. A prince has become a *pastor*.

But things changed again for Moses on that mountain of a burning bush, at age 80.

The Moses we have come to know from the Bible made his mark only in the final 1/3 of his life, leading possibly close to 2 millions disorganized, ungrateful, stiff-necked and complaining people across the Red Sea, through the wilderness, and on to the border of the Promised Land. Moses' final 1/3 was spent in conditions even worse than the previous 2/3. But that was the Moses we know and respect most.

Near the end of his life, Moses wrote down these words: *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Brothers and sisters, 2007 is now behind us. Let's focus on 2008. You know how many 1/3 of your life still remains, normally speaking. It is time to resolve to live our lives to make our last 1/3 count for something, like Moses did. Don't even have 1/3 left? Just resolve to **honor God above all else, build fellowship, love one another, and serve the community**, in 2008 and beyond.

23 他將到四十歲，心中起意去看望他的弟兄以色列人；..... 30 過了四十年，在西乃山的曠野，有一位天使從荊棘火燄中向摩西顯現。..... 36 這人領百姓出來，在埃及，在紅海、在曠野，四十年間行了奇事神蹟。（使徒行傳 七：23，30，36）

歲首或年終，我們通常特別留意數目字，如：我們的年齡是多少歲；在三藩市住了多少年；我們成為基督徒有多久。上列的經文，和摩西所渡的年日有關，也許我們亦應從這些角度去看過去與未來，這比較健康吧！

長久以來，這些經文讓我看到聖經中可能是最偉大的英雄摩西的生命可分為三部份。最初的三分之一，是在埃及皇宮中成長，完全未覺察到自己是以色列人，只是盡情享受法老宮中的一切特權。

四十之年成為殺人犯，一切都得改變。

其次的三分之一，摩西是逃犯，可能邊逃邊咒罵，但仍未醒覺自己之所以是以色列人的使命。這三分一時光特別苦，因為完全沒有在埃及生活的好處；更差的是要倚賴外父過活，只有羊陪伴，一個王子淪為牧羊人。

然而到八十歲，在那燃燒的荊棘的山上，摩西的生命又有改變。

我們從聖經中所認識的摩西就是從他的最後三分之一的生命所作的事：他帶領近二百萬沒有組織、沒有良心、硬著頸項、經常埋怨的人群過紅海、越過曠野、走到應許之地的邊界。這最後的三分之一，是在甚為困苦的情景中生活，比前三分二人生更苦，卻是摩西生命中最值得我們尊敬的一段。

離世之前，摩西寫下這些話：

4 以色列阿，你要聽！耶和華——我們 神是獨一的主。5 你要盡心、盡性、盡力愛耶和華——你的 神。（申命記 六：4-5）

弟兄姊妹：二零零七年已經過去了，讓我們集中注目在二零零八年。正常來說，你該知道自己還有多少個三分之一的人生。是時候去讓我們人生的最後三分一，像摩西一般，活得出色。你說自己可能已沒有三分一那麼多，不要緊，只管由二零零八年開始，下定決心好好地：尊主為大，建立團契，彼此相愛，服務社群。持之以恆，繼續努力。