

Moses – Refusing Gold for Glory (Hebrews 11:24-28)

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It is an honor to be asked to review, reflect and make applications from the events of the meekest man of all the Earth, Moses (Numbers 12:3). I have been assigned the task of focusing on the times Moses chose to follow God over all else. We need to remember that Moses was a man not unlike us today. The same temptations would enter his life as ours. Therefore his choices should be an inspiration to us to think thoroughly and choose wisely every day of our lives. It is comforting to us, from the beginning of this treatise, to realize that Moses was a type of Christ to come (Deuteronomy 18:15-22).

The foundation of Moses' life existed before he was born. His parents had a resolve and a pride in their national heritage that would become his in his childhood. They would disobey the Pharaoh and thus Moses very life would be protected. He had ordered all male babies killed at birth. By his parents resolve, national pride and faith Moses would live. Promises had long been made to Abraham about the longevity of Israel (Genesis 12:3; 15:7). Their present condition was not the end of Israel and Moses' parents had hope. They hid Moses for three months because he was a proper child; exceeding fair; a goodly child (Hebrews 11:23; Acts 7:20; Exodus 2:2). What parent would not say so about their own child? But there is more – "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment (Hebrews 11:23)."

...that faith was manifested in their not obeying the king's commandment, but fulfilling without fear of man all that was required by that parental love, which God approved, and which was rendered all the stronger by the beauty of the child, and in their confident assurance, in spite of all apparent impossibility, that their effort would be successful (*vid. Delitzsch ut supra*). This confidence was shown in the means adopted by the mother to save the child, when she could hide it no longer. (Keil & Delitzsch 1: 427)

They were obedient to the God of heaven therefore not afraid of an earthly king that God had put into position. Ellicott helps us realize how hard this must have been,

...As long as she could hope to conceal him effectually. It must be remembered that Egyptians were mixed up with the Israelites in Goshen, and that each Hebrew household would be subjected to espionage from the time of the issue of the edict. (1: 195)

Yet I agree with Robertson L. Whiteside's observation, "Jehovah had a hand in shielding the life of that child, for He had a use for him in the future (146)." God's providence abounds though we do not know when or how, unless we are specifically told in the biblical text.

By the providence of God Moses would be fed at the breast of his own mother, though he had been brought into the house of Pharaoh's daughter. Children would likely be weaned from the mother's breast between three and four years of age. It is interesting that even today the global average for weaning children is a little over four years of age (Glare). He would sit upon the knee and be instructed of his mother at the earliest of years. The love between mother and child would be strong. He would become like her. In my opinion she would keep him at her breast and on her knee as long as possible. One must never underestimate the power of parental training. Remember the beloved Timothy. There was none like him among his peers (Acts 16:1-2). His faith

was great from a youth because of the training he received from Eunice and Lois, his mother and his grandmother (Second Timothy 1:5). Moses would make a transition from his Hebrew mother's knee to the Egyptian classroom. His maternal lessons would not fade away.

The Egyptian classroom was fully made available to Moses. He had caught the eye and moved the heart of the daughter of Pharaoh. Moses now would be trained in the Egyptian court for a godly mission. "Thus the wisdom of Egypt was employed by the wisdom of God for the establishment of the kingdom of God (Keil & Delitzsch 1: 430)." God gave Moses the best training available to later return to the Pharaoh's court and make demands to set the Hebrews free. We have our first contrast of wealth in the face of humility in the classroom settings of Moses. Mother's knee and Egypt's academia are not the same in aesthetics or content. Egypt would train Moses in secular knowledge and methods while Jochebed taught her son of the one, true God and God's people (Acts 7:22).

Moses' training came to fruition as he became of age, about forty years old (Acts 7:23). Moses made a decision at some point while being trained in the courts of Pharaoh. His decision was to love and serve his God by serving his people. He had rejected the multiple Gods of Egypt for the one true God of the Hebrews (Hebrews 11:24). A great lesson had been before his eyes all his life. He had learned the price of his decision. The Hebrews were oppressed, slaves. Moses had a permanent place in the luxury of Pharaoh's court, if he wanted it. He knew that he would give up his present luxury and privilege in his choice to follow God. He also knew that God does not always reward his faithful followers with material gain. Moses knew that God always blessed faithful servants with far greater riches than this Earth can provide. God's reward is spiritual and it will endure in eternity (Second Corinthians 4:18).

Moses acted upon his decision. He went forth to visit his brethren, the oppressed Hebrews (Acts 7:23). The word visit must be correctly understood to realize the depth of Moses' conviction. The original Greek rendering means "...to go see a person with helpful intent,... (Danker 378)". It is illustrated for us in other texts. It is the way that we, as servants of Christ, are to visit the sick (Matthew 25:36). Paul visited newly established churches in this manner (Acts 15:36). Widows and orphans that are suffering are to receive this care from the church (James 1:27). He went forth to inspect his brethren to see their exact condition. His intent was to provide relief for them in whatever way he could. Notice that this came into his heart. The heart is the seat of our emotions, the very center of our personal life. He had determined this course of action. Moses felt this desire very strongly. "Moses had made his choice before slaying the Egyptian. He stuck to it resolutely (Robertson 5: 426)." This is the avenue to loyalty in every age.

There is an indication that God had revealed to Moses that he would be used to deliver his brethren. The command to go deliver them at the burning bush was yet forty years away (Acts 7:30). But Moses was placing himself at God's disposal to be the deliverer of his brethren. We learn that he would leave Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king and that he would do so by faith (Hebrews 11:27). Like mother like son – both acted by faith and did not fear the king's commandment. Remember that faith comes by hearing God's word (Romans 10:17). Faith is perfected when it brings forth works of obedience (James 2:26). He was a young man, full of zeal and ambition. All he needed was the opportunity and the call of God. An opportunity did present itself. It is probable that the mistreatment that Moses observed was a common event; "...so

common that our eyes can see it on the monuments of Egypt at this very day – an Egyptian overseer beating one of the slaves who worked under him (Smith, Fields 152).” The text bears out that this was a severe beating that would leave a man wounded or possibly dead (Wilson 401). On this day he saw it clearly through eyes of compassion, conviction and determined interest. One of his brethren was being mistreated. The Hebrew was suffering wrong at the hand of an Egyptian. Notice the thinking of Moses in his actions (Acts 7:24). He defended him. He avenged him. Moses was following a conscience of justice. He was setting things right, as they ought to be in his own perspective. He was delivering this one brother from his wrong suffering. He did it deliberately. He looked one way and then the other to take this action (Exodus 2:12). He then killed the Egyptian and set his brother free from the present distress. Moses buried the Egyptian in the sand. He assumed his brethren would see this event as he did. This should be an indication to them that he was ready to deliver them from oppression by the hand of God (Acts 7:25). The Hebrews did not see this as Moses assumed. Ellicott makes a pertinent point about Moses in this event,

Jewish commentators gloss over the act, or even eulogize it as patriotic and heroic. But it was clearly the deed of a hasty and undisciplined spirit. The offense did not deserve death, and if it had, Moses had neither legal office nor Divine call, justifying him in making himself an executioner. The result was, that, by this one wrong act, Moses put it out of his power to do anything towards alleviating the sufferings of his brethren for forty years. (1: 196-197)

Moses next addresses two Hebrews who are quarreling. What a paradox to see Hebrew brethren, both in Egyptian bondage, smiting one another in the same manner as the Egyptian that Moses killed earlier! His message to them is one of unity. “Ye are brethren” was his evidence that called for peace (Acts 7:26). There is strength in unity. They would need to be at their strongest to break free from oppression. They would need to pull together in the national pride his mother had taught him. But the time was not yet. God had not called. Moses was not ready by God’s standards. Israel had not yet seen the depth of oppression necessary to appreciate deliverance. Israel in the person of these brethren refused Moses as their champion saying, “Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us (Acts 7:26)?” This tells us about Moses’ brethren that day and throughout history when God would send them a redeemer. Ellicott says,

The stress laid on this afterwards, in verse 35, shows that it took its place in the induction which was to show that the whole history of Israel had been marked by the rejection of those who were, at each successive stage, God’s ministers and messengers for its good, and that the rejection of Jesus was therefore a presumptive proof that He, too, was sent from God. (7: 41)

Moses received the call of God when he was eighty years old. He then needed assurance. There is a difference in a man at these two ages. It is at the later stage of life when God declares that Moses was the meekest man on the Earth (Numbers 12:3). Moses’ physical strength and youthful sense of justice needed to be tempered by patience. His brethren’s rebuke informed him that the death of the Egyptian was known and it did not signify deliverance to them. Moses fled to Midian where he would become a shepherd. He would marry and raise a family watching sheep in the wilderness. God would here train him in the ways of endurance, patience. Moses endured this period of his life by faith (Hebrews 11:27). He took God at his word and now waited on Him. He

would wait forty years! This is the essence of meekness. He had a disposition to accept God's ways as his own. He would wait for God's instruction. When it came he would obey. He would not resist and would not impetuously strike out on his own. It would take Moses a lifetime to become the meekest of all the Earth! The die had been cast and there was no return from Moses' decision. But there also was no regret. He had calculated the cost and acted in the best interest of his brethren. He would now start to pay the price. He did not fear the King of Egypt. He revered God. There would be no bitterness spring up in his heart.

When Moses was fully trained God called him. From a burning bush that would not be consumed he would be sent forth. He would journey from a wilderness setting back to the courts in which he had lived as a son of the king in the long ago (Acts 7:30-35). It was here that Moses would truly face the wrath of the king of Egypt. He would make demands to let the Hebrews go free. He would manifest the power of Almighty God in signs and plagues. He would be sent forth and retrieved. But this time Moses would leave Egypt delivering Israel as he had purposed early in life. He had been correct in that it would be by God's hand. God would provide for Israel a way to leave Egypt with great treasures in hand! The plague that melted Pharaoh's heart took away his firstborn son. It also took away every firstborn child and animal in Egypt! Through faith Moses kept the Passover (Hebrews 11:28). He obeyed God's instructions to deliver Israel from death in that night. Egypt's death in contrast to Israel's life set them free from oppression in Egypt. Forward they went toward the Red Sea following Moses who was following God. By faith they crossed the Red Sea (Hebrews 11:29). Moses would lead Israel to Sinai where they received their national law from their king, God.

Moses would then take the Nation of Israel, the people of God, to the land he had promised them. It was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Great was its produce. A land fit for God's people. If only the people had been fit for the land! They refused to go in. They cried all night and begged not to be made to go in (Numbers 14:1-2)! Through the intercessory prayer of Moses these people would not be immediately disowned and destroyed but would be sent to the wilderness of suffering and death for most. Moses would lead them through this wilderness by faith. He would preserve them through prayer. He would bring them once again to this great land God had promised them through Abraham (Genesis 15:7). But Moses was at the end of his earthly journey. He would not enter this great land. He had disobeyed God in the latter part of the wilderness wanderings (Numbers 20:1-13). God instructed him to speak to the rock and it would give water to stop the murmuring of the thirsty ones. Moses rather smote the rock, yet it still gave forth its water. More serious was the matter of who was glorified. It was God's water, rock and power that would bring forth water from the rock. But Moses said, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock (Numbers 20:10)?" They had failed to sanctify God before the people. This failure was born of intense frustration with a stiff-necked people but it did not justify this response. Moses died and God buried him where no man knows (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). He had delivered the people of God to the threshold of their beautiful and bountiful land, but he could not set one foot inside. Yet, he, that day, attained his eternal reward in a land of eternal rest and happiness. A great price had been paid at his early decision to forsake Egypt and the pleasures of sin but the final reward was greater. He had followed God to the home of God.

There are many times in the life of Moses that he left behind what would be comfortable to most people to go where God would lead him. He would leave the 'gold' behind and go for the glory by

following God. Each occurrence has certain applications for our walk with God. We will look at a few briefly and then study deeply the time when he first committed to his brethren and God.

Moses received instructions from God at the burning bush to go to Egypt and deliver Israel from oppression. They had been oppressed for the better part of eighty years. He was eighty years old. Moses obeyed. Just think for a moment about having an established home with a wife and children. There was an extended family and prestige in the community. There was a house and land. Moses had been settled for almost forty years and had grown fond of all things pertaining to his life. He was in his later years and settled. Moses left all and went to the task for which God had prepared him. He revived that determination of spirit to suffer with his people, God's people. With the proper encouragement and resource he went and faced the king of the land in which he grew to adulthood. He went back to the land in which he had murdered a native son. He went back demanding the release of a multitude of slaves from a foreign, sovereign government unconditionally. He left the 'gold' of home to go do a hard work (impossible without God) in a foreign land to the glory of God. He would never live in Midian again. Lessons: 1) We must realize that we must be faithful unto death, and until we die (Revelation 2:10; 14:13). Every day of our life is to be given glorifying God. We must glorify God even if we must face a premature death. 2) We must be prepared to work at unpleasant tasks when God requires. Today many people think that they have immunity from unpleasant tasks, even if required of God. There are some people we must disassociate ourselves from in order to please God (1 Corinthians 5). This is rarely pleasant.

Moses was not preparing to stay in Egypt while manifesting the power of God to the Egyptians through signs and plagues. But Egypt had plenty of resource to sustain the people of God in the necessities of life. The desert around them did not, except by the providence of God. Moses would lead Israel out of the golden land of resource into the desert at the command of God and Pharaoh. They left with gold to a place without stores or storehouses. Yet the people of Israel were provided for, even their animals, by the providence of God. If they shared the faith of Moses they would have journeyed without complaint in a land of nothing. Lessons: 1) We are not to judge by appearance (John 7:24). It appeared to be better in Egypt but God had a better land in store for them. The desert which appeared to have nothing had plenty to sustain them. God is able and will not forsake those who follow Him explicitly. 2) Gold perishes and can be used to our hurt. Treasures can be laid up in heaven where thieves cannot steal, moths cannot eat and rust does not destroy (Matthew 6:19-20).

Moses, Joshua and Caleb knew to receive God's gift of the land that flows with milk and honey. The majority whined and cried the nation into the wilderness of death. Can you imagine looking over into the golden land only to have to turn to the bleak wilderness of discipline at God's command? Moses obeyed and led the nation to the glory of God as he cleansed His people. They would emerge at the banks of Jordan ready to finally receive the golden land in strength and favor with God. Lessons: 1) The majority is not always right in spiritual matters, God is. God will never hurt you or lead you astray. Find truth and follow it. God is truth (John 14:6). 2) It takes time to right some wrongs and cleanse some congregations and works. In our push button society many foolishly want an immediate cleansing of something that took a lot of time to get defiled. We must constantly be at work in repentance and purification but we must not destroy works that are not now as good as they once were. It takes time and resource to start works. If everyone threw up their hands and quit at every infraction there would be no works and no spirit to start one. At the

same time a work must be abandoned when it is proven defective beyond repair. Follow the truth, follow God to glory.

Let us turn our attention to the decision that Moses made to flee the temporary pleasures of sin to follow God with his brethren. The greatest lesson, in my opinion, is to properly count the cost of discipleship. Moses knew that he would be poor and oppressed if he chose to follow God with Israel. He knew that there was a reproach in following God (Hebrews 11:25-26). There is today and always has been. Whenever anyone lays hold on the absolute they become the center of controversy. Absoluteness, of necessity, calls for exclusiveness. When there is one God, there is one way. Therefore all other ways fail except God's one way. My ways and your ways fail if they are not God's way. When you claim God's way and point out that my way is wrong you have become the point of controversy, a troublemaker by appearance. Of a truth the errant way is the troublemaker. But trouble is surely present.

Moses made a choice. What a wonderful lesson in glorifying God. He was not ambivalent, apathetic, nor ignorant. He made a solid choice based upon true evidence. He did not deceive himself by renaming things to make them seem something other than what they are. He did not deconstruct statements of truth so they would become ambiguous. He did not look to his wants but to his true needs and what was right. Moses was not pre-modern, modern or post modern in his thinking. He simply determined to seek out God's way and obey.

Moses was resolute in his decision the day he made it and every day thereafter. With God there is no variableness or shadow of turning (James 1:17). Moses was godly. He did not waver. How did he do this? He knew the secret. He found the truth that the wages of sin is death though they may seem pleasurable for a short time. The treasures of Egypt could provide these temporal pleasures but offered no benefit that was eternal. He knew that his spirit was immortal and would exist in eternity. Moses saw the true need of providing for himself for the eternal existence that surely was coming to him and everyone else. He knew that there was a payday coming for every person (John 5:28-29). The pay would be based upon the work, the life he lived. There is life attached to godly living and death firmly attached to a life lived in opposition to or in ignorance of God and His way (Romans 6:23). He literally weighed out on spiritual scales the life that the treasures of Egypt could provide and the obedient life toward God with its potential perils on Earth – *in view of eternity!* He knew rationally, by the true evidence, logically, by right methods of reasoning, and ethically, according to moral principles that the reproach of Christ was far greater in benefit eternally to the treasures of Egypt. Thus, having this knowledge, he made a firm decision. He committed heart, mind and soul to following God wherever He would lead (Matthew 22:36-37). He also knew what the daily maintenance of this decision would entail. Moses had respect toward the payday, positively and negatively. The term for respect (gr. *apoblepo*) literally means, "for he was looking away (kept on looking away) (Robertson 5: 426)." He was up to that time a part of Pharaoh's house so he started and daily, continually, habitually looked away from the luxurious life of Egypt. But it was not enough to take away the desire for temporal things. Moses now started looking toward the eternally beneficial godly life. He fixed his eyes upon the heavenly goal! The text bears out that he did this with intensity and confidence (Danker 107, 653).

Moses followed God as though he could physically see him day by day. We need this lesson today as in every generation.

Based on his faith in the Lord, Moses endured patiently – that is the heart of the matter. That is the lesson we need; and it is the very lesson those Jewish brethren needed (Hebrews 11 – RLM).

Moses endured with the strength of being in the very presence of God. It was if he could see the unseen God.

Being conscious of God's presence is a strength to all people of great faith. It gives strength to "endure patiently," regardless of the circumstances. (Littrell 366)

Moses was described as a prophet God knew, unlike any other, face to face (Deuteronomy 34:10). God spoke to Moses as friends speak (Exodus 33:11). He could do this because Moses' face was directed toward heaven constantly and willfully.

There is a lesson to be learned in the action of Moses as he killed the Egyptian defending his brethren. With his choice properly made to follow God with his people Moses started living full of zeal. This zeal was coupled with youthful ambition that could do anything. He was impetuous through national passion and murdered a man. Moses would become meek but that would be learned. Self control is a Christian virtue that must be added to the Christian's character (Second Peter 1:6). Without self control through a properly trained conscience we are apt to hurt ourselves and our cause by impetuous vice in flames of passion. Through self control we arrest the desires and passions properly.

The judgment of Augustus is really the true one. Thus, in his *c. Faustum Manich.* 1. 22, c.70, he says, "I affirm, that the man, though criminal and really the offender, ought not to have been put to death by one who had no legal authority to do so. But minds that are capable of virtues often produce vices also, and show thereby for what virtue they would have been best adapted, if they had but been properly trained. For just as farmers, when they see large herbs, however useless, at once conclude that the land is good for growing corn, so that very impulse of the mind which lead Moses to avenge his brother when suffering wrong from a native, without regard to legal forms, was not unfitted to produce the fruits of virtue, but, though hitherto uncultivated, was at least a sign of great fertility." Augustine then compares this deed to that of Peter, when attempting to defend his Lord with a sword (Matt. xxvi. 51), and adds, "Both of them broke through the rules of justice, not through any base inhumanity, but through animosity that needed correction: both sinned through their hatred of another's wickedness, and their love, though carnal, in the one case towards a brother, in the other to the Lord. This fault needed pruning or rooting up; but yet so great a heart could be as readily cultivated for bearing virtues, as land for bearing fruit. (Keil & Delitzsch 1: 431)

Every person has this same matter to wrestle with and the same choice to make. Which will it be, Gold, temporal things often attached to sin, or Glory, which belongs to God? It is my hope that you are encouraged to make this decision with heaven, eternity, in mind. And that you decide rationally, based upon true evidence; logically, with right methods of reasoning; and ethically, in agreement with the right moral principles of God. I pray that you are resolute in your decision to follow God because your eyes are continually fixed upon heaven and therefore constantly looking

away from all that distracts from your heavenly goal. Build the Christian character around your faith as you look to heaven with intensity and confidence. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (Second Corinthians 15:58).”

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