

***Moses:***  
***The meekest man in***  
***all the land***



Hosted by the Southaven Church of Christ  
Southaven, Mississippi

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Lectureship Director

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# Dedication

It is with great joy that we dedicate this lectureship book to Keith and Dorothy Mosher. We love them dearly as friends and esteem them highly as fellow-laborers in the kingdom (Acts 27:3; Phil. 4:3).

Keith and Dorothy served the Southaven congregation for six years, 1982-1988. During this short period, the church grew dramatically. The Sunday morning attendance increased by one hundred and key programs like Faith In Action began. Several, including David Jones, Robert Williams, Kevin Beard, and Paul Meacham, were encouraged by them to preach. Although Keith and Dorothy were only at Southaven for a short time, a long time ago, they continue to be mentioned fondly on a regular basis. They made a lasting impression on the congregation here. We are always glad to have a surprise visit from them, and Keith continues to be a favorite fill-in, when his busy schedule allows him to do so.

In preparing for this dedication, I talked with Keith's co-worker, John Curtis, and Keith's secretary, Nina Armstrong. I knew that if anyone knew him, they would. I expected, okay hoped, for a little dirt on him. However, I found none. Keith must have paid them well; or, maybe, just maybe, he has something on them. Whatever the case, they both related only good things about him. Nina talked about what a joy it was to come to work each day. Perhaps, the one exception to this assessment was when she had to type Keith's dissertation multiple times. I remind you that this was before the office had computers. Thankfully, the feeling in her fingers eventually returned. John Curtis talked about how much he learned about personal work and visitation from Keith. He noted how that Keith, unlike some preachers, became one of the members by being in their homes, by going to camp with them, by playing golf with them, and by working with them.

In addition to John Curtis and Nina Armstrong, I interviewed other members who were at Southaven during Keith's tenure. For their

protection, they will stay anonymous. Like John and Nina, they had many positive things to say. However, they also had some dirt. Most of the dirt came from those who played golf or bowled with Keith. As I understand it, he was a little competitive and temperamental. Hard to believe, isn't it?

As a literature major in college, I remember my professors describing some literary characters as “flat.” The professors meant by this description that the characters were one dimensional, simple and boring. The characters were not fully developed. Those who know Keith know that he is not one dimensional. His jokes may be a little flat, but he certainly is not. He is two-dimensional. There is the Keith Mosher that you first meet, and then there is the Keith Mosher that you come to know over time. The Keith Mosher that you first meet, for example, when you show up at the Memphis School of Preaching as a student, is a little scary. He is a little, okay a lot, like a drill sergeant. You stand a little straighter, breathe a little heavier, and speak a little less when he is around. For those who don't know, grammar class is two years long at the Memphis School of Preaching. Even in the break room or hallway, you are subject to correction from him. I learned that boys from the South must be especially careful. Evidently, there is something wrong with the way we talk. Having attended the Memphis School of Preaching while brother Cates was the director, I only heard about “stern Hearn.” However, I can speak firsthand about kosher Mosher. His strict standards rival those of Roy J. Hearn. Keith keeps the tradition of “the toughest school in Memphis” alive. He toughens men's skin so that they can take the criticism and handle the rigors that will surely come in congregational work. The Keith Mosher that you come to know after you graduate from school, and over time, is very different. He is not scary at all. In fact, he is a softie. I remember a number of years ago reading an excellent book on manhood by Aubrey Andelin entitled *Man of Steel and Velvet*. In the book, Mr. Andelin describes the two sides that every man ought to possess—steel and velvet. To his credit, Andelin used Jesus as his model. The steel side of Jesus was evident when He drove the money changers out of the temple (John 2) and the velvet side of Jesus was evident when He wept with Mary and

Martha at Lazarus' tomb (John 11). Like His Lord, Keith is a man of steel and velvet. He is as strong as steel when it comes to standing for the truth, but he is as soft as velvet when it comes to serving others.

If you have ever been in one of Keith's classes, either at MSOP or in a congregational setting, then you know how great a teacher he is. He excels in the classroom. When Keith speaks, he speaks with authority. He is scholarly in his study, but simple in his delivery. Those that are in his classes learn the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:26). Sometimes, they learn that the way that they have always used a passage is wrong (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Pet. 1:20). Personally, I learned to write a T or F in a test blank instead of spelling out True or False. I learned this lesson the hard way, but I have never forgotten it. Since that fateful day, I always read directions twice and follow them meticulously. Thankfully, I still passed the class in spite of that one test. Those who have been in Keith's classes also know that no one is safe. Keith will ask anyone a question about anything. He holds everyone accountable and expects everyone to grow in their knowledge of God's word (2 Pet. 3:18). I remember attending third year classes at MSOP with my wife Jennifer. At the time, Jennifer was fresh out of high school and the only woman in the class. Everyone else in the class was a graduate of the school and was preaching somewhere in the Memphis area. We had all been in Mosher's classes and knew what to expect, but Jennifer had not. I remember how surprised she was when Keith asked her questions just like he did the rest of us. If you were in the class, you were fair game. Preacher's wives, a year out of high school, were no exception. As I recall, Jennifer did well in answering the questions, but it was still a shock.

I have known Dorothy mainly through what Keith has said about her. His love for her is evident to all who know them. He certainly found the favor of the Lord when he found her and married her almost fifty years ago (Prov. 18:22). She has been a helpmeet perfectly suited to him (Gen. 2:18). There is not another like him, and he would tell you that there is not another like her. In the words of Cleon Lyles, God knew *he* needed *her*. I remember Keith praising Dorothy in his classes at the school. He often spoke about how generous and kind she was. He joked that she was always giving away their stuff to

someone that she thought needed it more than they did. Of course, since that time, I have had the privilege of witnessing some of these things with my own eyes. I believe that all who know Dorothy would agree with Keith's assessment.

Those who spend time at sea are sometimes referred to as "salts" because of the time that they spend on or around saltwater. Having served in the United States Navy, Keith can perhaps appreciate this description. Keith and Dorothy are "salts." However, they are "salts" in a far greater and in a far different sense. They are salts in an earthly sense and in a heavenly sense. They have spent most of their time on dry land and in the service of the Lord (Matt. 5:13). Everywhere that Keith and Dorothy have been, they have wielded a powerful influence for good. Although many years have passed since they first began serving the Lord and His people, the years have not taken their savor. Their influence continues to grow. I believe that I speak for many when I say that I am better because of the contact that I have had with them. It is to this influential and godly couple that this book is lovingly dedicated.

Wade Webster

# Acknowledgments

There is an old country saying that observes the following: “If you see a turtle sitting on top of a fencepost, you know that he didn’t get there by himself.” Sometimes we forget, or at least fail to acknowledge, those who help us to get to where we are. I have tried throughout my life not to do so. Although my name appears prominently on the book, I want to acknowledge those who helped me to produce this book and to host this lectureship. I did not do it by myself. It simply is not possible to put everyone’s name on the book that deserves to be there. If things go well, I will gladly pass on the praise to them. If things go wrong, the buck stops with me.

First, I would like to thank the Southaven elders, Larry Everson and Con Lambert, for continuing to see the value of hosting a yearly lectureship and for continuing to commit the funds to do so. I am convinced that the Southaven congregation, as well as the brotherhood worldwide, is richly blessed by their decision to do so.

Second, I would like to thank the office staff, Shelley McGregory and Wanda Waldon. These dear sisters know what needs to be done better than I do and they do it far better than I could. They are team players in every way. They work well with one another and with me. It is truly a delight to work with them on a daily basis. I would hate to think about tackling this project, or any project, without them.

Third, I would like to thank April Meacham for her tireless work on the book. If anyone’s name deserves to be on the book, it is hers. She proofs each of the manuscripts and prepares the book for printing. She makes me, and the other preachers whose manuscripts are in this book, look far better than we otherwise would. I know that it is hard to believe, but some of us as preachers struggle with grammar, spelling, and punctuation. We have good things to say, but we struggle with how to say them correctly. Thankfully, April threshes the wheat and removes the chaff. The finished product is proof of her hard work.

Fourth, I would like to thank each of the men and women who agreed to participate in this year's lectureship. They are among the best, brightest, and busiest in our brotherhood. Yet, they took time to write a manuscript so that this study can be preserved for years to come. Thousands upon thousands will come to know the life of Moses better because of the study and sacrifices that they have made.

Fifth, I would like to thank Bobby Liddell, the director of the Memphis School of Preaching, for his yearly support of the lectureship. Each year, he allows the students to attend the lectureship in place of their regular classes. Their attendance and participation is a tremendous boost. Some of the early morning sessions and Thursday sessions are not nearly as bare because of their presence. We are extremely grateful for the relationship that we enjoy with the school.

Sixth, I would like to thank Paul and Shirley Tuller for travelling from Texas each year to record the lectureship for us. It is a pleasure to see them each year and to work with them. In addition to the Tullers, I would like to thank Rick Jenkins, John Wofford, Jake Schrimsher, and those who work with them in the sound room to record and copy the lectureship lessons. The work of these men and women broadens our influence by making the lessons available beyond our doors. Although the speakers will speak but once in Southaven, MS, their lessons can be heard many times around the world. We are blessed to be living in the electronic age and to have men and women who know how to use it to further the borders of God's kingdom.

Seventh, I would like to thank Paul Sain and the staff at Sain Publications for publishing the book for us. They do an excellent job and they do it quickly. They continue to bless our brotherhood with the books that they publish each year. I do not know of anyone who is a greater friend to preachers than Paul Sain. I am privileged to call him my friend.

Eighth, I would like to thank Bill Pierce for the many things that he does behind the scenes to further the lectureship. I don't think anyone other than Bill knows all that he does, but I am confident that many problems are avoided because we have not let Bill retire yet.



Ninth, I would like to thank Mark Williams, Teah McWhorter, Keith Cozort, and others who set up book displays for the lectureship. Their presence at the lectureship is greatly appreciated. It is such a blessing to be able to purchase sound materials at a reasonable price. Hopefully, they receive some financial compensation for their efforts. I know that we receive benefits from their being with us.

Tenth, I would like to thank those who staff the book table, watch the parking lot, and work in the kitchen. I wish that I could call all of them by name. However, out of fear of leaving someone out, I will not do so. Suffice it to say, their contributions to the lectureship are immeasurable.

Each year the list of those to be acknowledged grows. I am convinced that it grows for two main reasons. First, it grows because I learn each year of individuals that I should have acknowledged the year before. Second, it grows because more and more people step forward each year to lend a helping hand. Let me express my thanks to all, for all that is done.



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CHAPTER 1

**An Overview Of  
The Life Of Moses:  
From The Palace Of Pharaoh  
To The Pinnacle Of Nebo**

*Wade Webster*

The one hundred and twenty years of Moses' life are generally divided into three periods of forty years each. The first forty years were spent in Egypt, the second forty years were spent in Midian, and the final forty years were spent in the wilderness. As we summarize his life, we will use this standard approach. However, we will also add a final period to our study.

**The Palace of Pharaoh—God Preserves Moses**

The first forty years of Moses' life were spent in Egypt. He was born in the worst of times. A paranoid and pitiless Pharaoh was on the throne. Fearing a revolt, Pharaoh made the children of Israel serve with rigor (Exod. 1:8-14). No doubt, the children of Israel had little energy to stand, much less to fight. Yet, Pharaoh still feared them. From rigor, Pharaoh progressed to murder. He commanded death for every boy born to the Hebrews (Exod. 1:15-16). Thankfully, the midwives that he charged with carrying out the atrocious act were pro-life (Exod. 1:17-21). They feared God more than they feared Pharaoh. However, Pharaoh was not to be deterred. He sent out a decree to all in his kingdom to do what the midwives had not done. Every Hebrew boy was to be thrown into the river (Exod. 1:22). Is it any wonder that the first plague brought upon Egypt was for the

river to become blood (Exod. 7:14-25)? God hates the shedding of innocent blood (Prov. 6:16-19).

Amram and Jochebed, Moses' mother and father, were unwilling for their beautiful baby boy to suffer the end that thousands of others must have met. Like the midwives, Moses' parents feared God more than Pharaoh (Heb. 11:23). They hid their baby for three long months. No doubt, they wanted to hide him forever. However, something happened. Perhaps someone heard him crying or caught a glimpse of him one day. In response to the crisis, the faith of Moses' parents kicked into overdrive. With faith in God and love for their child, Amram and Jochebed quickly prepared a waterproof ark of bulrushes and laid it in the flags by the river's brink (Exod. 2:3). They saved their son's life, by being willing to give it (Matt. 16:25). Of course, Moses had never been safer than he was at that moment. He was in the providential hands of God. Things would work together for good (Rom. 8:28). Even Pharaoh could not pluck him out of God's hands (John 10:28-29).

No doubt, Moses' parents carefully selected the spot where the ark was placed. The inspired text reveals that the ark was placed in the flags by the river's brink. The ark was placed in the still waters that the psalmist would later sing about in the most beloved psalm of all (Psa. 23:2). As pictured in that psalm, Moses' parents were walking through the valley of the shadow of death. However, they had no reason to fear evil. The rod and the staff of their Shepherd were there to comfort them (Psa. 23:4). It would keep their baby from harm. Having done all that they could do, Moses' parents waited patiently for the providence of God to work. Of course, the providence of God would not disappoint. Just like Noah's ark, the little ark of bulrushes would bear Moses safely above the waters that destroyed others (Gen. 7:17-23; 1 Pet. 3:20). God had plans for Moses. He was come to the kingdom for just such a time as this (Est. 4:14).

From a safe distance, Miriam, Moses' sister, watched as the providence of God unfolded (Exod. 2:4). She watched as Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe and caught sight of the basket (Exod. 2:5). She watched as the princess' maidens fetched the basket and



handed it to the princess (Exod. 2:5). She watched as the princess opened the basket and beheld Moses' face for the first time. She listened as her brother cried and watched as compassion spread across the princess' face (Exod. 2:6). The moment was right. She approached the princess and suggested that she go and call a Hebrew nurse for the baby (Exod. 2:7). Of course, she knew just who to call. By evening, Moses was back in the arms of his mother (Exod. 2:9-10). Jochebed even got paid for her services. Of course, no pay was necessary. She would have done it for free.

Although we do not know exactly how long Jochebed had with her son, she must have treasured every day. We know that she redeemed the time (Eph. 5:16). After all, when he was come to years, he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb. 11:25-26). Amram and Jochebed trained up their child in the way that he should go, and he did not depart from it (Prov. 22:6).

Interestingly, Pharaoh's daughter called the baby Moses saying, "Because I drew him out of the water" (Exod. 2:10). Although her hand physically drew the baby from the water, another hand was at work. The hand of God was moving in the glove of history. God was working behind the scenes to preserve the life of this child.

If the story ended with the preservation of a baby in a basket, it would be amazing. However, it is even more amazing than that. The story moves from a baby in a basket to a nation in bondage. When the children of Israel sighed and cried by "reason of the bondage" that they suffered in Egypt, God "heard their groaning" and "remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exod. 2:23-24). He "looked" upon them, and had "respect unto them" (Exod. 2:25). Most amazing of all, He would use the one drawn out of the water years before to deliver them. For years, God had been preparing Moses for this task. In fact, God saw to it that Moses received the best education that money could buy, only he did not have to pay for it (Acts 7:22). Room and board were even

free. Learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, Moses was well prepared to plead before Pharaoh for his people. Having seen them suffer affliction firsthand, his heart was moved with their plight (Acts 7:25). When the time was right, God would call him to return and lead them out (Acts 7:30-36). For forty years God preserved Moses; now, He would use him to preserve His people.

### **The Pasture of Jethro—God Prepares Moses**

The second forty years of Moses' life were spent in the pasture of Jethro. When Moses saw an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren, he slew him and buried him in the sand (Exod. 2:11-12). In a decisive moment, Moses made the choice to suffer affliction with the people of God (Heb. 11:24-25). From that moment on, Moses' life would change forever. Although Moses evidently planned to remain in Egypt with his brethren, that would not be possible. Although he buried the Egyptian that he killed in the sand, the deed was not hidden (Exod. 2:13-14). Pharaoh quickly learned of what Moses had been done and sought to kill him. To escape Pharaoh's wrath, Moses fled and dwelt in the land of Midian (Exod. 2:15).

In Midian, Moses met and married Zipporah, one of the seven daughters of a priest named Reuel or Jethro (Exod. 2:15-21). While there, Moses kept the flock of his father-in-law Jethro (Exod. 3:1). On the backside of the desert, Moses learned some things that the universities of Egypt could not or would not teach him. As you may remember, the Egyptians were not fond of shepherds or sheep (Gen. 43:32; Gen. 46:34; Exod. 8:26). In the pastures of Jethro, Moses learned how to care for a flock—God's flock. Repeatedly, in the Old Testament, God's people are described as the sheep of His pasture (Psa. 74:1; Psa. 79:13; Psa. 95:7; Psa. 100:3; Jer. 23:1; Ezek. 34:31). In fact, the exodus is even portrayed as a shepherd leading a flock (Psa. 78:52; Isa. 63:11-12). In caring for Jethro's flock, Moses learned the patience and compassion needed to care for God's flock (Psa. 119:176; Isa. 53:6; John 10:11-13; 1 Sam. 17:34-36; Isa. 40:11). Repeatedly, Moses was called upon to put what he had learned in Jethro's pasture into practice as he led God's flock (Num. 14:19; Exod. 32:10; Exod.

32: 32; Deut. 9:14). Although the Scriptures are relatively quiet about the years that Moses spent keeping Jethro's sheep, it is clear that he learned much there.

### **The Pathway of Jericho—God Proves Moses**

The third period of Moses' life was spent on the pathway of Jericho. It seems clear from the beginning that Jericho was intended to be the point of entrance for the Promised Land (Num. 22:1; Num. 26:3; Num. 26:63; Num. 31:12; Num. 33:48; Num. 33:50; Num. 34:15; Num. 35:1; Num. 36:13; Deut. 32:49; Deut. 34:1; Deut. 34:3; Josh. 2:1; Josh. 4:13; Josh. 4:19; Josh. 5:10; Josh. 5:13; Josh. 24:11). On the way to Jericho and the Promised Land, God proved His people to see if they would walk in His law (Deut. 8:2). He proved them with bitter water (Exod. 15:22-26; Psa. 81:7) and with sweet bread (Exod. 16:4-5; Deut. 8:16; cf. Deut. 13:3-11). Sadly, they failed many of the tests that He gave. Because of unbelief, the path became forty years longer than it had to be. In fact, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, the faithful spies, the Israelites twenty years and older never made it to the Promised Land (Num. 14:26-37; Num. 26:65; Num. 32:6-15).

As one of the people, Moses was also being proven on the way to Jericho. Overall, he did well. However, he failed one great test. Instead of speaking to the rock as commanded that it might give the children of Israel water, Moses smote it twice with his rod (Num. 20:7-11). Although the disobedience of Moses did not cost the people water, it did cost Moses plenty. Moses' offence might seem small to us, but it was big to God. Because Moses did not believe Him and sanctify Him in the sight of the people, he was barred from bringing the people into the Promised Land (Num. 20:12; Num. 27:14). It is amazing to consider that this was the second time that Moses had been on the doorstep of Canaan. The first time, Moses was turned back by the unbelief and rebellion of the people (Num. 13-14; Heb. 3:19; Heb. 4:6). Moses watched each one of that generation, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, perish in the wilderness (Num. 14:2; Num. 14:28-30). Now, as he prepared to take the next generation into

the land, Moses' own unbelief and rebellion got into the way (Num. 20:7-12). After coming so far, and enduring so much, Moses came up a little short of the finish line (Heb. 4:1). Clearly, even leaders must take heed lest they fall (1 Cor. 10:12).

### **The Pinnacle of Nebo—God Pities Moses**

The final period of Moses' life falls outside of the one hundred and twenty years of his earthly sojourn. It began the day that he closed his eyes on Nebo and opened them in glory. Although God buried Moses on Nebo, his existence did not end there (Matt. 17:1-8). In fact, it really just began. It was there that Moses received the reward greater than the riches of Egypt (Heb. 11:26) and enjoyed a rest sweeter than that of Canaan (Heb. 4:9; Heb. 4:11; Rev. 14:13).

James declared, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (Jas. 5:11). The end of Job's story teaches us that God is full of pity and mercy. When Job prayed for his friends, God "turned the captivity of Job" and "gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10-12).

Just as surely as the end of Job's life teaches us that God is "very pitiful, and of tender mercy," Moses' life teaches the same. As already noted, presumptuously striking the rock cost Moses the opportunity to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. Although God would not remove the prescribed punishment, He did allow Moses to see the Promised Land. He had mercy on Moses.

From the pinnacle of Nebo, Moses had a panoramic view of the Promised Land. He got to see the land that is repeatedly described in the Scriptures as flowing with milk and honey (Exod. 3:8; Exod. 3:17; Exod. 13:5; Exod. 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27; Num. 14:8; Num. 16:13-14; Deut. 6:3; Deut. 11:9; Deut. 26:9; Deut. 26:15; Deut. 27:3; Deut. 31:20; Josh. 5:6; Jer. 11:5; Jer. 32:22; Ezek. 20:6; Ezek. 20:15). Perhaps, from the pinnacle of Nebo, Moses recalled the words that God spoke to Him earlier on another mountain. As the Lord passed by Moses on Mt. Sinai, He declared,

The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation (Exod. 34:6-7).

From the pinnacle of Nebo, Moses saw both the “goodness and severity of God” (Rom. 11:22). He saw a just God with a merciful heart. He saw a God who delights in mercy (Mic. 7:18), but Who will not tolerate sin (Nah. 1:3).

Moses knew that God had shown great mercy and forgiveness from the time that the children of Israel left Egypt (Num. 14:19). He knew that God could have rightfully consumed them many times (cf. Neh. 9:31; Psa. 78:38; Lam. 3:22). In fact, Moses witnessed the death of several who challenged God's authority—Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2), and Korah and his cohorts (Num. 16). No doubt, Moses knew that he could have suffered the same sentence.

When David sinned by numbering the people, he faced one of three calamities: 3 years of famine, 3 months of destruction before his foes, or 3 days of the sword of the Lord (1 Chron. 21:1-12). David chose the later, explaining, “I am in a great strait: let me now fall into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man” (1 Chron. 21:13). David threw Himself on the mercy of God. Moses would have been in full agreement with David's choice. Furthermore, Moses would have agreed with the sweet psalmist's repetition of God's mercy in the twenty-six verses of Psalm 136. He knew that God's mercy endures forever. It stayed with him to the very end. It followed him all the days of his life, and he dwelled in the house of the Lord forever (Psa. 23:6).

After Moses disappears from the Old Testament text upon Mt. Nebo, he reappears in the New Testament text upon another mountain. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses was privileged

to talk with the prophet that God had promised to raise up like unto him, from among his brethren (Matt. 17:1-8; Deut. 18:15). Of course, that prophet was none other than Jesus Christ (Acts 3:20-22).

With that appearance, Moses disappears again from the Biblical text. If Abraham was glad to see His day, imagine how glad Moses must have been to see His face (John 8:56).

In the course of this study, we have traced Moses' steps from the palace of Pharaoh to the pinnacle of Nebo. We have even examined the intervening years spent in the pasture of Jethro and the pathway of Jericho. Hopefully, we have divided Moses' life into manageable and meaningful pieces. It is my prayer that the chapters that follow this one will finish the house that we have labored to frame.

# **The Palace of Pharaoh**





## CHAPTER 2

# When Society Wages War On Boys

*Brad Harrub*

### **Introduction—Landing the Plane**

**F**or at least three decades, Christians have been hoping the problem will silently fix itself. We have built sizeable buildings, paid youth ministers, sent foreign missionaries, and funded a veritable miasma of programs—all the while knowing in the back of our minds that there is a deadly “cancer” that is rapidly claiming thousands of souls. Insanity has been defined as “doing the same thing over and over expecting a different result,” and yet, we continue doing the same thing silently, praying for a different result. I am convinced that the time has come not only to dissect and expose the problem but to eradicate it permanently.

During the historical period in which God delivered the Israelites through the hand of Moses, the Egyptians feared massive population of the children of Israel. God’s hand had carried this dynasty from seventy (New King James Version, Gen. 46:27) to what has been estimated to be two million out of Egypt. Just prior to the introduction to Moses, we discover an evil plot to wage war on the sons. The king of Egypt ordered the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah, “When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son then you shall kill him but if it a daughter, then she shall live” (Exod. 1:16). They wanted to stop the increase and threat of the Israelites. Simply put, darkness does not like the light—and will go to great lengths to make sure the light is extinguished in each community. While modern Christian children are not being physically killed at birth,

our society is performing a greater travesty—they are killing our children spiritually.

A word of caution before we begin: Much of what we uncover is going to trouble or offend individuals who may currently be “comfortable” in their Christian walk. Others will nod in agreement once the problem is uncovered, but will find the remedy too inconvenient for their lifestyles. The problem is not a pretty one and will take an active, conscientious effort to correct. It is going to require individuals to think “outside the box” and realize what is truly at stake. Bear in mind that we have known about this issue for at least two generations, but the treatment is often considered too costly. Will our generation finally address the problem or will we continue dumbly like lambs to the slaughter?

I often admonish preaching students in their classroom presentations to stop “circling the runway and just land the plane.” While we should always strive to teach the “truth in love” and deliver messages tactfully, I am afraid that in many cases the truth has been so watered down that listeners cannot detect the real message. Or in other cases preachers wait so long to land the plane that they have effectively lost their audience before the point is communicated.

Please allow me to land the plane. **Satan has our children in his hands and we are doing very little about it. Society has waged war on our boys (and girls) and is currently winning the battle. We hear lessons on being sober and vigilant “because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8), and yet deep-down we believe that verse was written for other people—not our children.** I fully recognize the knee-jerk reaction is to say “Not my children” or to accuse me of wrongly judging your family. If truth be told, some may discount this diagnosis completely and put this aside. However, none of these reactions can alter the facts.

### **The Facts—Numbers Don’t Lie!**

The modern prescription that many follow in order to “fulfill” their religious duties is to meet once or twice a week at a church

building. Satan has successfully erected these mental road signs that attending worship and a Bible class is sufficient for the spiritual health of the next generation. **Friends, that is not getting the job done!** Parents continue to march down the same road blindly believing they have done enough. All the while, our young people continue marching out the back door of the church to embrace the world as Satan chalks up another win for his war. Our Christian religion has been sterilized down to three hours per week rather than a life of servanthood for Him.

Why would I say that Satan has our children in his hands? Consider the following four studies we recently conducted at Focus Press. The first was an anonymous study conducted on Facebook with 300 young people (the vast majority of whom identify themselves as New Testament Christians). In this research, 39% of the teens admitted to having viewed pornography online **in recent months**. That is more than 1 out of every 3! Understand this question did not ask how many had ever viewed Internet pornography, as that number would likely be double. We were simply asking how many had viewed this sinful material recently. If 39% of our children admitted that they had viewed pornography recently, one can only wonder what the real number must be—and how many adults are viewing explicit material!

Also, 38% admitted to having cheated in school in the past few weeks. Parents may at first glance not consider this a big deal, but one wonders what type of ethical standard are we establishing for our young people. Are we rearing a generation of individuals who have bought into the lie of situational ethics—that right is not always right and wrong is not always wrong?

The curtain was pulled back on teens' ethical standard in the next question. We asked how many believed that euthanasia—intentionally putting someone to death—was acceptable. For this question, 52% responded that they believed it would be acceptable to end someone's life. This should send chills up the spines of parents who realize these are the same children who will one day make surrogate decisions for their parents' medical care.

Again let me remind you these are our children—young people who have been baptized in the church. And yet, 36% of them believe that homosexuality is just an alternative lifestyle. Have we totally missed instilling in our children what Almighty God views as an abomination? **Even more surprising was that 43% indicated homosexuals should have the right to marry!** The homosexual agenda has done a far better job at teaching our children tolerance than we have done at teaching them the Truth. You think the battle over same-sex marriage is over? If this is the view of Christian young people, consider where our society will be in 10-15 years when this generation begins voting and taking public office. Now, consider the direction the church is moving toward as these same individuals become deacons and elders in just a few short years.

The question that shocked us to the core was on the topic of abortion. We had assumed that within the church (and at home) Christian parents had done a fairly decent job on teaching about the sanctity of life and the fact that we were made in the image and likeness of God. **And yet, 35% of our children believe abortion should be legal.** Friends, society has waged a war on our children!

Have I landed the plane yet? Well, grab a chair, because I am not finished yet.

Two years ago, I conducted a research study at a Christian camp with several hundred Christian young people. The survey was anonymous and only asked four questions. Consider for a moment the results and the fact that once again these are “our” children responding to these questions:

1. How old is the Earth?  
25% selected answer (a) millions of years old  
31% selected answer (b) billions of years old  
42% selected answer (c) thousands of years old  
2% selected answer (d) we don't know
2. When did dinosaurs walk the Earth?  
38% selected answer (a) millions of years ago  
9% selected answer (b) billions of years ago

- 44% selected answer (c) thousands of years ago  
8% selected answer (d) not sure
3. How did the Universe come into existence?  
9% selected answer (a) from the Big Bang  
35% selected answer (b) God and the Big Bang  
56% selected answer (c) according to Genesis 1
4. Does the Bible contain contradictions?  
68% selected (a) which said it did not contain contradictions  
22% selected (b) which said it did contain some contradictions  
10% selected (c) which said they were not sure

While sad, these results were not too surprising—however, there were more incorrect answers this time versus the results I received five years earlier from a similar Christian camp. How is it that more than 56% of our young people believe the Earth is at least millions (or billions) of years old? From my limited research, it appears that the majority of our young people have been indoctrinated by evolutionary propaganda and have bought into the lies within their textbooks.<sup>1</sup> One wonders if these young people have also bought into the concepts of atheism, humanism, feminism, materialism, postmodernism, etc. I believe our research is a pretty good indication that this is the case.

The final study was conducted at Evangelism University in Savannah, Tennessee. Not only were all of these young people New Testament Christians, these were the “mature” ones who are interested in evangelizing their friends. In our research, we had heard that the current generation of teenagers was being taught that there was no such thing as absolute truth, so we set out to discover if this was accurate. In this study Joe Wells asked only two questions and videotaped the teens’ responses. Joe asked:

1. What is Truth?
2. Where does Truth come from?

Most of the teens responded that truth was the opposite of a lie or not lying. One student said truth was the right thing to do. Another added it was what is real about life. What shocked us was that **only one** mentioned the Bible as the source of Truth—and that teen added the words, “I’m guessing” after her answer. The majority of young people said that truth came from “inside” or “your heart” or from “good things” or “your conscience.” The last young lady interviewed said, “I think it comes from God, but I don’t know.”

Friends, if our own children do not know where truth can be found, why are we surprised years later when they abandon the Truth? Consider the danger of man believing that truth can be found within himself. This is sobering, especially given the fact that many of our children are questioning whether we can know the Truth and if the Lord’s church is the only church that teaches the Truth.

Let me make sure you did not miss the significance of the overall findings of our studies. Our young people (some of which are children of elders, deacons, and preachers) are finding it easier to embrace immoral or abominable behavior, they have bought the lies of evolution, and yet they realistically do not know where Truth comes from! Friends, the results of these studies should be a clarion call to New Testament Christians and give us a better understanding of why we are losing 60-90% of our young people.

Creationist Ken Ham recently coauthored a book titled *Already Gone* in which they interviewed 1,000 young people who had walked out of denominational churches into the world. I interviewed Ken recently and we discussed one of the most troubling discoveries of their study:

**Brad Harrub:** Ken, one of the most disturbing findings that came out of the book was that while many of the young people are physically in a church building until ages 17-18, they are already gone by age 11-12. Can you share where this disconnect is coming from?

**Ken Ham:** ...What we found was that about 45% of the kids age 11-13 were already doubting and not believing the Bible in middle school, and another 45% were lost during high school. So what we found was this disconnect happened when they were young. What it came down to was homes and churches not teaching their children how to defend their faith—not teaching them general Bible apologetics or creation apologetics.

**In other words, even though the young people were physically present, they had already mentally checked out.** They did not view religion as relevant to their lives. Take a look around your own congregation. I suspect if you are honest with yourself you will see young people who are *already gone*, because I witness it firsthand almost every week at my weekend seminars.

Several years ago, Guy N. Woods carried out an extensive survey among churches of Christ nationwide. Likewise, his results were not very flattering. According to the survey: 40% of those surveyed admitted that they attended only one worship service a week; 50% indicated that they did not know why churches of Christ do not use instrumental music in worship; 10% believed that one church is as good as another; 90% did not subscribe to a religious publication; 75% could not find the plan of salvation in the Bible.

Woods' findings speak volumes. They indicate a lack of Bible study, an attitude of indifference, and a failure to comprehend both basic Bible doctrines and the nature of the church. Consider that we are now bearing fruit and passing along this same general attitude to the next generation. Little wonder we are losing some 60-90% of our young people after they graduate from high school. They merely are rushing to fit into the mold that so many parents and other church members have set for them. It is, quite simply, a matter of: "What you **do** speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you **say**." Friends, these are the facts.

### **We No Longer Have One Foot in the World...**

Henry van Til once stated, “Culture is religion externalized.” His implication was that if you wanted to know the religious beliefs of a particular community you could simply look at the people—how they acted, what they embraced, what they held in esteem, and how they prioritized their time. I think if van Til’s aphorism regarding culture were updated, it would probably include a reference to media and t-shirts. In other words, if you want to know what modern young people love (and worship), simply look on their clothing or at their choices in media.

A quick scan around the mall will reveal which pop stars are currently “in” (e.g., Miley Cyrus, Lady Gaga, or Ludacris), which athletes they esteem (e.g., Peyton Manning or Derek Jeter), or which video games teens are plugged into (e.g., World of Warcraft or Grand Theft Auto). In a similar fashion, elementary age children often wear clothing featuring Disney characters or Sponge Bob Squarepants. From an unbiased outsider’s perspective, Christians no longer have one foot in the world—we have jumped in “whole hog.” The Egyptian king wanted the midwives to kill the Hebrew boys at birth. Similarly, Satan is capturing many young people at a very young age, and he refuses to let them go—killing them spiritually.

Honesty reveals that it is getting harder and harder to distinguish Christians from the world. Shame on us! Parents, grandparents, preachers, elders, and youth leaders would do well to take inventory and ask ourselves who our children really idolize. Who are our children’s (or grandchildren’s) heroes? And furthermore why do they view them as heroes? Do we not realize **that our children desire to be like individuals they hold in high regard**? Also, what do our children value and hold in esteem? Ironically many Christians can quote (or at least recall) Paul’s words to the church at Rome: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And **do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2,



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emp. added). **But sadly our comfort in the world results in a lack of action to change.**

When Christian homes mirror the homes of the lost, there will be little difference between what our children value and what children of the world value. If our children are watching the same television shows, listening to the same music, and playing the same video games, how can we expect them to be different? Consider the harsh reality that Nehemiah discovered as he was trying to make reforms only to discover the people had tiptoed too far into the world. “In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people” (Neh. 13:23-24). Their own children could not speak the language of Jehovah God! And yet, how many homes are filled with children who can sing the lyrics of Lady Gaga, but they have no clue about the Biblical period of the judges or kings? We cry for change in our society yet we often turn a blind eye in our own homes. Parents, this should not be so!

The time has come for Christians to be different from the lost world we are trying to save. It is time we place healthy heroes and Biblical values before our children—God-fearing men and women of honor and integrity. The time has come for moms and dads to realize that children take their cues from their parents. If the parents are esteeming worldly things, then their children will remain safely in the hands of Satan. However, if the parents focus on eternal matters and put men and women of true Biblical character in front of their kids, then their children will learn what is truly important. They will learn to value Biblical character rather than worldly character. Parents need to be asking what is influencing my child and where did these influences originate? Who does your child associate more with: Lady Gaga or the elders in your local congregation? Sadly, many children never view elders, preachers, or other faithful Christians as heroes. This might explain why we have such a problem finding good preachers and qualified elders today—young people do not aspire to these positions.

### **Spiritual Chemotherapy—Waging War**

Ask cancer patients what they dislike most about their cancer treatments and you will receive a variety of strong responses. Many hate the physical sickness that results. Others wish for more energy and stamina, while the loss of hair is paramount to some. But each of these individuals knows that he must endure this rough period in order to get well. These patients are in essence waging war on the cancer cells growing within their bodies. The time has come for modern-day Christians to take our medicine. We may not like it—in fact, we may downright hate it at first—but if we truly want to rip our children away from Satan’s hands and build up the spiritual health of our family and our church family, then we must wage war.

Almost 2000 years ago as the apostle Paul was encouraging Titus, he admonished, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-13). His words are still very valid today. There is not a switch you can flip. There is no drink or potion you can buy. There is not even a CliffsNotes version. If you want your children to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, then you must do the hard work of getting rid of the ungodly and worldly lusts. Culture is religion externalized—who is really being worshipped in the culture of your home?

People oftentimes want to do “good” but they just are not sure what to do. Well again, allow me to land the plane. Take the next seven days and rid your house of ungodly material. Throw out the DVDs that Christians should not watch—selling them would just put the ungodly material into the hands of someone else. Toss the books that contain bad language or inappropriate relationships. Block out television stations that promote ungodly programming, or turn off the television permanently. (If you need help deciding which shows or networks should be cut, try placing Paul’s words to the church at Philippi on a card above your television set: “Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever

things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy think on these things” [Phil. 4:8]). Erase internet bookmarks from sites that are not spiritually healthy. The point here is Christians need to shed the lethargy and apathy that have shackled us for decades and actually **do something—for Him**.

Next go through your closet and the closet of your children and get rid of immodest, tight-fitting, or inappropriate clothing. Inspect the video games your children or grandchildren are playing and destroy those that are for mature audiences or have ungodly material on them. Spend a few hours reviewing what music you listen to or your children have downloaded; get rid of any that use bad words or inappropriate material. Satan has waged war on our children through media—now it is our turn to wage war on him! After seven days of thoroughly ridding your house of ungodly material I encourage you to post a sign letting Satan and visitors know, “But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15).

Once you have removed ungodly material I would strongly recommend you purchase a few items to form a barricade, a fortress around your house—a hedge of protection—to keep Satan away. Home computers should have a great Internet filter on them (such as Bsecure—formerly Bsafe), and these are available for about \$50. Televisions should be equipped with a language filter such as TVGuardian. These are available for \$120-150 depending on whether you purchase a high-definition model. I would also recommend a DVD player that has a filter built in (e.g., Clearplay) that will catch language and adult themes that the TVGuardian does not filter. While many may be seeing nothing but dollar signs, I would contend that this is a small price to pay when considering eternity. As I mentioned, this first step may be hard and may cause you pains and frustration—but isn’t eternity worth it?!

### **Cleaning up the Plane Crash—Family is Key**

Many military tactical leaders agree that winning a war often means doing the unexpected. If we are really going to win the war that

society has waged on our children we must abandon society's current model for the family and return our homes to the Biblical model for the home. We need to do the unexpected. We need to return home and train up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). We need to start treating our children like they really are "a heritage from the Lord" and remember "the fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psa. 127:3). If we truly consider the enormity of the responsibility God has given us, maybe then we will recognize the way we have done things in the past is no longer good enough. Please hear me clearly: something is wrong with the way we are training up our children. **In too many homes we are asking the church to accomplish what the family is supposed to do.** It is time the family reclaim the role God intended for us (Deut. 6). This means Christians need to set aside any of our worldly pursuits—golf, tennis, fishing, shopping, soccer—and devote our time and energy toward God and establishing His Word in the hearts of our children. (Notice I did not say "think about devoting time" because we have been "thinking" for several decades without actually "doing" anything or giving up any worldly pleasures.) In Psalm 119:11 we are admonished to hide God's Word in our heart "that I might not sin against you." Maybe our own children could more quickly identify sin if we spent the time instilling it in their hearts rather than keeping up with the Jones' on the ball field. **It is time Christians live the Word at home.**

Some might ask what is a Biblical model for the family? The easiest way to answer that would be to imagine being isolated on an island. All you have is your family, food, shelter, and God's Word. Day-after-day you find yourself pouring through God's Word and pulling out precepts that have to do with family, parental responsibility, and children's duties. If you were to implement those Biblical changes into your family on the island how would that look? How would you treat your wife having read the passages that deal with that topic (e.g., Eph. 5:25) knowing that marriage is an institution formed by God (Gen. 2)? How would you train up your children (Prov. 22:6, Eph. 6)? You want a Biblical model—it is in God's Word.

The inspired Psalmist observed, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Psa. 127:1). How many extravagant Christian homes are built of wood, brick, and mortar—but the Lord is left outside looking in. And then we have the audacity to cry out when the storms of life hit us and we discover our children are lost. In his wisdom Solomon wrote, “When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation” (Prov. 10:25; see also Matt. 7:24-27). Friends, the success rate of withstanding those storms depends on the foundation you are laying. Similarly, the success of Christians being able to withstand the skeptics or atheists charges depends on the spiritual foundation we establish. And that foundation is laid within the home. How can we protect our family and train them up if our family is fragmented and going in three or four different directions? Could it be that the time has come for Christian parents to say no to some of the extracurricular activities that Satan has successfully used to drive a wedge between our family and God? To ask is to answer.

I challenge Christian families to take just fifteen minutes and sit down and find out where your children are spiritually. Find out where their priorities in life currently stand. Find out how well they know God’s Word. Are they well versed in evidence for their beliefs and do they truly know why they believe what they believe? And then I strongly urge you to determine what it will take to get not only that child (or children) to heaven, but also your grandchildren. **And then do what is necessary to make it happen!** I encourage you to start thinking about multi-generational faithfulness. Identify what you need to do in order to instill God’s Word in your children so that they love Him with all of their heart and will teach it to their children.

The reason the Egyptian king was worried in Exodus 1 was because he knew the power of multiplication. He knew what would happen if something drastic was not done. Consider the following example: if I am able to rear four faithful children, each of which grow up, marry, and raise four faithful children, that results in sixteen

faithful Christians. If the Lord wills, I could very easily know and influence many in this generation. If that generation then married and had four faithful children, we would be up to 64. The following generation would produce 256. Their offspring could result in 1024 faithful children, which would multiply out to 4096 in the following generation. If they each had four faithful children the world would have 16,384 faithful Christians to influence it for good and convert the lost. The next generation would be 65,536, followed by 262,144! And remember, these numbers are the result of only teaching my own family line! Just think about the added potential once these children begin preaching and teaching.

The time has come for Christian families to experience a paradigm shift—to reconsider what is truly important in life and to focus time and energy on their family. It would be my prayer that families develop a vision plan that helps draw each family member closer to God and also helps each one grow in knowledge of His Word. Many Christians have a *goal* of getting to heaven, but they have no plan or vision of how to get there! How many of us would set out on a journey—knowing where we want to go—but having absolutely no idea of what roads we should take to get there? Take the time to plot out a path of spiritual growth for your family.

I fully recognize that foreign mission works are vitally important—and my family supports those personally as well as through our local congregation. In fact, we even donate some of our time and resources to several works overseas. However, **I firmly believe the time has come for Christians to start investing in the spiritual welfare of our own families.** In many cases our own congregations are sending monies overseas, all the while our own church family is spiritually sick. In the United States it currently requires four Christian adults to get one faithful child into the next generation. A failure rate of four-to-one indicates an incredible need to address this and begin educating our young (and old alike) on **“why we believe what we believe.”**

We need to return to an era where Christian parents are putting the eternal destiny of their children and grandchildren at the top of

their priority list. While sitting around a dining room table is not a Scriptural command, I believe there is much to be said for families who take the time to gather around and grow together. The world is telling you that you need to be involved and that your children must be active in many different things. This message has been successful in dividing and conquering the Christian family. The war waged by Satan has resulted in far too many casualties. Is it not time we gather around the table and “armor up” those we love—and turn the tables on Satan. Is it not time we win the war?

### **Notes**

1. For Biblical answers on the age of the Earth and the evolutionary theory please see *Convicted: A Scientist Examines the Evidence for Christianity*, published by Focus Press.

### **Works Cited**

*The Holy Bible*. New King James Version. Print.





## CHAPTER 3

# **The Legacy of Amram And Jochebed: How To Raise Your Sons To Be A Leader of God's People**

*Glenn Colley*

I am grateful to brother Webster and to his elders for inviting me to speak and write for this great lectureship.

Hebrews 11:23 does not use the names of Amram and Jochebed, but it is clearly about them: “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” (King James Version).

Many do not know the names of Moses’ parents, but there was a moment in history when their faith shone brightly enough as to blind the eyes of Egypt’s king. They were two slaves who did something so amazing that it is recorded forever in the book of God.

Remember the Biblical account of Egypt? There arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph (Exod. 1:8). That high esteem in which Egypt and her king once held Joseph and his people has evaporated. There seems to have been about this same time a population explosion among the Hebrew slave nation that provoked the nervous king to exact greater burdens on God’s people. His object was to humble and further suppress them, but it failed. They were a spirited people. The fear and pressure and power of leading his nation drove him mad—as mad as all those leaders who have followed and who came to see mass-murder as a necessary cleanser. He ordered all the male

children taken from their mother's arms and destroyed. Amram's and Miriam's son was a Hebrew baby at that time. Their scheme for saving baby Moses was to create an ark of bulrushes, make it watertight, and float it out on the Nile. Perhaps the baby could be thus unnoticed and spared when the soldiers came that way. Miriam, Moses' older sister, was wisely posted to keep an eye on the child, but when the princess made an unexpected trip with her maids for bathing, they came to that very spot. The baby cried. The princess ordered the ark opened and was immediately endeared to Moses. Miriam cleverly offered to fetch a Hebrew woman to nurse the child, and that seemed reasonable to the Princess, so a deal was struck. Moses would be largely reared by his own godly mother in the house of Egypt's king.

Why were Amram and Jochebed listed in the roll call of faith in Hebrews 11? Let us consider four reasons.

### **Amram and Jochebed's Faith Looked Into The Future**

Amram and Jochebed were included in the roll call of faith because their faith looked into the future. They had vision. "They saw he was a proper child" (Heb. 11:23). Some translations say instead that Moses was a "beautiful" or "fair" child, but I believe the KJV's "proper child" suggests something important to see. All parents consider their babies to be beautiful, but what happened here was motivated by faith when they saw Moses was "a proper child." God had made a promise to Abram that the Hebrews would stay in the land of affliction for four hundred years (Gen. 15:13). After that, they would be coming out. One must assume that there was a growing anticipation in the Hebrews that God was about to act on that promise.

Remember where true faith originates. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Faith is saying, "I know God knows better how life should be lived than I do. I will live according to His will—even when His will does not harmonize with my own." Amram and Jochebed were acting by faith, that is, by the words of God, and the Bible says they saw something special in

Moses. In spite of all the difficulty, they pushed on. They did not have their eyes on the newscast of the day, but on the God of heaven. Faith does not care about circumstances. They were mere slaves, but they believed the word of God. Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Time was getting short. God was going to deliver Israel sometime soon. We are moved to wonder if God the Holy Spirit informed them at this time that Moses was the one.

There are proactive things parents can do to rear their boys to be great leaders for our Lord instead of leaving it largely to chance. Think with me: What kinds of things could you do with your small son if your goal was for him to be a great elder in the church one day? The list of qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 begins, “If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work” (New King James Version). The word *desires*, according to Strong’s Greek Lexicon, is *oregomai* and means “to stretch oneself, i.e., reach out after.” Use great caution when you are with your children about how you speak of your elders and preacher. You may by freely given criticism create a child who grows up with this notion: “I’d never want to be an elder, and the last thing I’d ever want to be is a preacher.” Set the office of elder high in their minds, even in times when the elders in your congregation are weak. Elevate the role of the preacher in the Lord’s church.

### **Amram And Jochebed Acted On Their Faith**

“Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents.” Remember that James writes, “Faith without works is dead” (Jas. 2:20). I suppose they could have practiced some sort of fanaticism as some do in religion today. They could have thrown him into the Nile with the crocodiles and said, “We’ll trust God to take care of him.” That is not faith; it is foolishness. What these parents practiced was active faith.

If we are to rear our children to be leaders, we must resolve to practice Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go.”

Now, it did not say to teach a child, even though that is included in the idea. It says train the child. To train means to “prepare for a contest; to instruct by exercise; to drill; to form to a proper shape; to discipline for use.” We must act on our faith with our children, taking personal responsibility for their spiritual education, not merely relying on the Bible School program in the church. Oh, I love the Bible School program, but that program should be viewed by parents as merely supplemental to what they are training their children to be in the home. Your children will not catch faithful Christianity like one catches a cold. It will come by deliberate decisions and serious, consistent commitment.

Paul writes that a man who would be an elder must be blameless (1 Tim. 3:2). I heard someone say one day, “No one can truly be qualified to be an elder, because no one can be good enough.” Don’t you believe it! The Bible does not require perfection even in the word *blameless*. We know that only Jesus was sinlessly perfect (Heb. 4:15). First John 1:8 says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” I guess you could say we sin just by denying that we sin!

What then does it mean to be blameless? (English Standard Version says it, “Above reproach/disgrace”; American Standard Version says, “Without reproach.”)

Now, this is interesting. The original Greek word means “that cannot be laid hold of.” It simply means that he cannot be a man whose sins are outstanding in any way. In the office of elder there will be times when people might be tempted to lay hold of the elder’s sins. Suppose the elders go into a home kindly to rebuke a church member for his sin. The man looks in the eyes of one of the elders and says, “You’re no better than me—I know you are in sin yourself!” Such a statement, if true, would cripple the elder’s effectiveness. What if the elder is known to be dishonest in business, known to curse, to be apt to lose his temper and hurt people, or to be indiscrete with women?

Let me say it this way: A man who is blameless is one who historically has not persisted in sin, and one who is easily entreated

(humble) when his faults are pointed out to him. He does not continue in any sin, but rather corrects his wrongs when he learns of them. Therefore, being blameless involves these three things:

1. I own my actions.
2. I believe in the principle of right.
3. I exercise my conscience: “So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man” (ESV, Acts 24:16). I do not rest well until I have addressed my wrongs to repair the matters.

How do a dad and mom instill a dedication to blamelessness in their son? How do you put this in a boy? How can a young man work to develop it in himself? With steady, gradual effort. I love this verse in Isaiah:

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little. (Isa. 28:9-10)

When I was in elementary school we had tablets which had perfectly correct penmanship at the top. We wrote underneath and imitated the perfect, line upon line, line upon line.

When you become a parent, what will you do to create a desire in your son to one day become an elder, or your daughter to admire these qualities in a man?

### **Eight Suggestions For Parents<sup>1</sup>**

#### ***Love your sons***

Blamelessness, taught by a father, is like teaching other Christian virtues to his son. It must be in the context of deep love for that boy. I cannot think of one noble thing you can teach a boy better if you do

not show him love. We have all seen the sad results of grown men in trouble who never felt loved by their fathers.

***Have nightly family Bible time when you tell the great old Bible stories of those who did right and wrong***

Read to him with the purpose of making him think noble thoughts. Do not just give him over to video games that do little for his character. “Train up a child in the way he should go” (Prov. 22:6). There is a difference between raising a boy and training a boy.

And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. (Josh. 4:20-22)

Teach them what Solomon was taught by his dad:

And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. (1 Chron. 28:9)

***Make some major family decisions and stick to them***

Do not compromise your major family principles. Drive a deep stake and do not violate them. One couple said with reference to growing up and faithful worship attendance, “We NEVER missed.” Getting ready for vacation, let your kids help you locate a church. Find times. Get lodging close to that place for worship Sunday and Wednesday. It will build more in them than just the Bible lesson they

hear that day. They will learn consistency with doing right. This plan is different from saying, “We’ll try to go on Sunday sometime if we run up on a church of Christ.”

- Decide you will not have alcohol in your house, period.
- Decide you will not allow God’s name to be taken in vain, ever, ever.
- Decide you will not allow pornography to be viewed on your computer or trash on your television. We put those electronics in, we can take them out.
- Decide to keep your word when you give it to your son or daughter, whether in reference to something pleasant (like playing ball together) or something unpleasant (like a spanking if they do that again.)

One more thing, future dads: If you occasionally compromise major principles because at the moment it costs you to do the right thing, your children certainly learn the wrong lesson, and you have failed them in that.

### *Take truthfulness seriously*

Some other wrongs may be smaller but make lying big. Your goal is to build a passion for the truth. Attach great seriousness to this one. Make them know that truth is to be respected and that lying is a black sin.

### *Give young children responsibilities*

Expect them to be done. If your son is lazy and makes excuses, spank him and say, “You let me down today, this is your punishment. Tomorrow you will do better.” If you tell him to sweep the porch and straighten his room before you get home from work, he simply must do that and do it well (for what he is capable of doing). Teach and enforce.

We had dinner at the home of one of our many great families in the church. At the close of the meal, a young son stood up and went to the kitchen and began sweeping. It was his job. We smiled because it was cute. His dad said matter-of-factly, “He’s the sweeper.”

***As a father, guard your example.***

Be very aware of your own honesty and integrity. Your children are absolutely watching you.

I have a good friend who has many good qualities, but one great fault. He often says, “I will be here/there tomorrow” and never comes. I am glad he has no son, for what impression would that make on him? Would he honor his word?

Fix accusations and problems quickly, even more quickly than paying bills.

***Speak often of telling the truth and doing the “Right Thing”***

When your children come to you with ethical matters and decisions, emphasize the right thing. I mean use that term. Talk of this when they are angry and upset and threatening to do the wrong thing.

***Treasure times when it costs you to do the right thing***

At story time, “Here was what happened, and it was going to cost me this or that. What do you think I did?” Then explain carefully how you did what was certainly right.

A question was asked of a preacher, “Should you give before vacation (when you’ll miss a Sunday) or after?” He thought a minute and said, “Before. I might die, and I’d rather die giving ahead than dying owing the Lord something.” His whole life was governed by doing the right thing.

Teach him the value of his name. Teach him family history and that he is part of a much bigger picture. If near ancestors were sinners, emphasize that you and he have a sacred duty to turn the tide in this seed line.

**Amram And Jochebed Were Parents Of Courage**

“And they were not afraid of the king’s commandment” (Heb. 11:23). Pharaoh had commanded that all the sons would be cast into the river (Exod. 1:22). Imagine how powerful he was, and how those soldiers must have looked to the frightened Hebrew people. A tyrant was on the throne, and Moses’ parents were mere slaves. But they did not fear him, because they knew the King of Kings.



If I was not in Christ, I would be afraid today. We live under a government and a primary leader who is so far from righteousness. It is our duty to be respectful of him and pray for him (1 Tim. 2:1-2). With faith, no government can destroy us. Without faith, no god can save us.

We, the parents of today, have pharaohs we are fighting, too. The evil dictator called Pornography is rapidly ripping at our homes and drowning trust in marriage. Wise parents are not afraid. We put our on-line computers in public places in our homes, such as the kitchen or den, because constant traffic in those areas produces accountability for the boy or girl using the computer. We set definite rules for the TV we watch and DVDs we buy or rent. We know that with God's help we can rear moral children who will grow into responsible adults who are different from the hedonistic society in which they will live. We face the pharaoh of evolution, the kind of evolution which pretends transmutation of the species and an origin other than by a divine Creator, but we are not afraid. We will speak of God daily in our homes and school our children well in the evidences which prove God's existence. How old must a child be before he can understand and explain the design-Designer principle: "Every intelligent design proves an intelligent designer"? We fight the pharaoh called materialism, but we will not be afraid. We will not be led to reason, "If I can afford to give more things to my children, I will," but will rather govern what I give to them based on what is good for them. We will, by our example, teach them self-restraint in reference to material things, and that what is really important in life is not things, but people, and their relationship to Jesus Christ.

### **Amram and Jochebed Were Successful In Their Child-Rearing**

How wonderful to have a son like Moses! How valuable he was to the cause of God!

How did little Moses get all that faith? It started in the heart of Jochebed and with the crafting of a little ark and some slime. Every mother should be impressed that God saw to it that Jochebed got that baby. He wants mothers to rear their own children. Mothers

are hard-wired into their children's psyche in a way not true of any other—not even the children's grandmothers. She will influence her children by direct imprint. Moses was learned in all the ways and wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22), but he came out with a faith in the Almighty because his mama trained him up in the way he should go. Mothers, stay very close to your children in the formative years. Put something in him that the pagan world around us cannot take out. Moses grew up and chose to suffer with God's people rather than enjoy the treasures of Egypt. How do you explain that amazing reality? He had a godly mother and daddy who trained him. He grew up and led a nation.

Drill your children in Bible verses, giving them a subject and letting them tell you where it is found. Have a family time each night—sometimes with contests: “Whoever answers this Bible question first gets to take one giant step forward, and the one who gets to me first will get a prize!”

Two qualifications for elders are “vigilant, sober.” These point to his wisdom. How can parents create and build wisdom in their children? Get your son with wise men and your daughters with wise women. Invite such men to visit in your home and let your children listen while they give the Bible lesson that night. When your children have ethical dilemmas, make an appointment with faithful, wise men in the church (preferably elders) and let your children listen while such men flesh out the matter. While the girls cannot be elders (1 Tim. 3:2), they will need that wisdom to serve them when they are one day rearing their own children. Set your goal for your daughter that one day she could be a fitting and good wife for an elder. Find ways to get her around wise women. When you are faced with tough issues of right and wrong during your days, remember them and explain the matters to your children. Let them wrestle with the issues, and teach them how to work through them. Challenge them.

Find ways to motivate them to memorize the Scriptures as Lads-to-Leaders does for example, to memorize 100 verses in a year. This can be done even before your children can read by using Scriptures set to music, such as with *Hannah's Hundred* CDs.<sup>2</sup>

Faith is a transferable commodity. Amram and Jochebed successfully put theirs into the heart of the one who would eventually lead God's people as no other.

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel (Deut. 34:10-12).

### NOTES

1. Some of these concepts about rearing our boys to be elders can be found with others in the book *Headed To The Office: How Teens Become Real Men And Elders In The Church* by Glenn Colley. It can be ordered online at [www.colleybooks.westhuntsville.org](http://www.colleybooks.westhuntsville.org)

2. *Hannah's Hundred* can be ordered online at [www.colleybooks.westhuntsville.org](http://www.colleybooks.westhuntsville.org)

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## CHAPTER 4

# When A Nation Throws Away Its Future: Unwanted Babies And A Nation's Demise

*Eric Lyons*

**T**o say that the descendants of Abraham were growing in number is an understatement. According to Exodus 1:7, while in Egypt “the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them” (New King James Version, Exod. 1:7). The more the Egyptians afflicted them, “the more they multiplied and grew” (Exod. 1:12; cf. Exod. 1:20). As Jehovah had promised, the “few” had become a “mighty” nation of “many” (Gen. 46:3; Deut. 26:5)—so many, in fact, that the Egyptians “were in dread of the children of Israel” (Exod. 1:12). Even Pharaoh became alarmed to the point that on two different occasions he called for the slaughter of all male Israelite newborns (Exod. 1:16; Exod. 1:22). In an attempt to thwart Divine Providence’s promised growth of Israel (Gen. 12:2; Gen. 22:17; Gen. 46:3), Pharaoh took it upon himself to call on “all his people” to throw Israel’s neonatal sons into the river (Exod. 1:22). Infanticide ensued. “Drown the Hebrew infants.” “Destroy those abominable babies” (cf. Gen. 43:32). “Feed them to the crocodiles.”

Some 80 years later, God severely punished Egypt for their wrongdoings. He brought ten dreadful plagues upon Pharaoh and all his land (Exod. 7-12). Moses described God’s “great” and “mighty” judgment upon Egypt as “the chastening of the Lord your God” (Deut. 7:19; Deut. 11:2). The psalmist wrote how God “cast on them

[the Egyptians] the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending angels of destruction among them. He made a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, but gave their life over to the plague, and destroyed all the firstborn in Egypt” (Psa. 78:49-51). Granted, Egypt’s sins were many—from their idolatry, to their mistreatment of the Hebrews, to their refusal to let God’s people leave Egypt—but do not think for a minute that Jehovah had forgotten Egypt’s massacre of Abraham’s innocent descendants. Those precious children were “a heritage from the Lord” (Psa. 127:3). Jehovah had “graciously given” them to Israel (cf. Gen. 33:5). He created them in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 9:6) and gave them life (Acts 17:25; Eccl. 12:7)—life that Pharaoh had **no right to choose** to take from them (only God has that right; see Butt).

Three thousand six hundred years ago, Egypt was plagued with baby murderers. From the tyrannical king, to all those who assisted him in drowning Israelite infants in the Nile River (Exod. 1:22), Egypt revealed itself as a **bloodthirsty** country. (Interestingly, the first punishing plague God sent upon Egypt was turning water to **blood**, while the last was striking down all of Egypt’s **firstborn**.) Scripture repeatedly affirms that God detests the sin of murder. In patriarchal times, murder was wrong, and punishable by death: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed” (Gen. 9:6). Under the Law of Moses, the prohibition of murder was listed as one of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:13) and likewise carried a punishment of death (Num. 35:30). King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kings 3:12), noted in the Old Testament book of Proverbs: “[T]he Lord hates...hands that shed innocent blood” (Prov. 6:16-17). According to the New Testament, governments have the God-given authority to take away the physical life of murderers (Rom. 13:4). Furthermore, impenitent murderers will also “have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). From Genesis through Revelation, God emphasized the sanctity of human life, while simultaneously making clear His hot displeasure with those who disregard it.

## Created In The Image Of God

In ancient Egypt, only Pharaoh was considered to be like a god, the supposed incarnation of the Sun god, Ra. Pharaoh also was thought to be the sole person who bore “the image of God.” The Egyptian canal digger and the merchant, the taskmaster and the Hebrew slave, all were thought innately inferior because they were not divine image bearers (or so they had been told). Such a designation was not applied to the common man in Egypt, nor anywhere else for that matter. Outside the Bible, archaeologists and historians never have found where mankind in general was said to have been created in the “image” of a particular god. Three Akkadian texts from the Sargonic period of Assyria’s history use the Akkadian cognate of *tselem* (“image”), but it is employed only in a context where kings are being discussed (Miller 294-95). The rulers of empires were the sole beings referred to as “images” of gods.

According to the first chapter of the Bible, however, the Creator of the Universe has honored **all** humans by endowing them with certain qualities that are intrinsic to His nature. Genesis 1:26-27 describes **all** mankind with language that previously had been applied only to the supreme rulers of nations:

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Make no mistake about it, “In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God” (Gen. 5:1).<sup>1</sup> Thousands of years after Creation, James warned Christians not to curse men because they “**are made** after the likeness of God” (Jas. 3:9, ASV, emphasis added).<sup>2</sup> Although Adam and Eve are the only two humans to have

been specially created by God (Gen. 2:7; Gen. 7:21-22), **all humanity** shares the honor of being made in God's likeness—**which is the reason God gives for murder being morally wrong**. Following the Flood, God said, "Whoever shed's man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; **for in the image of God He made man**" (Gen. 9:6, emphasis added). Murder is forbidden because man **is** made in the image of God.

The newborns that Pharaoh drowned in ancient Egypt were Divine image bearers. Likewise, the infants that Herod slew some 1,500 years later also bore the likeness of God (Matt. 2:13-17). They were all 100% human beings. They were not rocks or plants. They were not animals. They were not merely blobs of living tissue. They were humans who had been given living spirits by "the Father of spirits" (Heb. 12:9). What's more, these babies were pure and sinless. They were by creation children of God, who had never separated themselves from Him (Ezek. 18:20; cf. Matt. 18:3-5; Luke 18:16-17) and who now live in the afterlife in paradise (cf. 2 Sam. 12:23; Luke 16:19-31).

### **Abortion**

Pharaoh slaughtered infants for population control purposes. Herod butchered babies in hopes of killing the King of kings. These men were wicked rulers who implemented hideous policies and practices. However, what is taking place in America today is no less revolting. The United States, its morally inept leadership, and those who willfully chose to put them into office, are just as guilty as the bloodthirsty, tyrannical baby killers of the past. Why? Because every year in America far more babies are brutally murdered than were killed in Egypt and Palestine in the days of Moses and Jesus.

More than one million innocent, unborn children are slaughtered each year in the United States of America. In 2008, Guttmacher Institute reported that "from 1973 through 2005, more than 45 million legal abortions occurred" ("Facts"). Forty-five million! That is more people than currently reside in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and



Tennessee **combined**. The murder of unborn children has occurred with such frequency since the Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973 that few people ever stop to consider the brutality involved. I recently became aware of one high school student who went to school pregnant, left to have an abortion, then returned to finish the school day. (No, her parents were not informed of her “choice” beforehand.) “Just a casual procedure in a doctor’s office, that’s all it was.”

In truth, there is nothing casual about the slaughter of an innocent child. Have you ever considered what mothers and doctors do in order to abort a baby? (Most abortionists do not want you to know how abortions are performed!) Some doctors actually use pliers to tear unborn babies into pieces. Others use a strong salt solution to burn the baby inside and outside. Some use a knife-like device, and suction from a powerful hose and pump, to chop and suck a baby out of the mother’s womb. When performing partial-birth abortions doctors actually deliver part (and perhaps all) of the baby except the head, and then puncture the base of the skull with a pair of scissors, before removing the baby’s brain with a hollow tube. This is sick! This is sadistic! Today’s abortions make Pharaoh’s command to cast the neonatal Israelites into the river sound like compassionate killing.

### **The Humanity of the Unborn**

Some people believe that unborn humans at various embryonic stages are more animal-like than human. Ernst Haeckel first proposed this idea in the latter part of the 1800s. He insisted that what lived inside a woman during her pregnancy was not human until the latter part of the gestation period. Even though science disproved Haeckel’s ridiculous idea long ago, “popular culture has never fully abandoned” it (Gould 44). Some pro-abortionists no doubt still take some comfort in believing that the human embryo may be going through the stages of our **alleged** evolutionary ancestors, and thus not really human. Other pro-abortionists seem happy just to take a “leap of faith” and hope that what is inside a pregnant woman is not a living, human being. Still others, like pro-abortion President Barak

Obama, claim not to know when an unborn child is fully human. In a Presidential Candidates Forum on August 16, 2008, President Obama declared that knowing when an unborn child deserves human rights “is above my pay grade” (Saddleback). Though the President claims ignorance on the matter, his actions speak volumes: he still strongly supports pro-abortion policies.

The fact is, common sense, science, and Scripture all show that an unborn embryo/baby is a living human being. Do nonliving beings hiccup, suck their thumbs, or respond to touch, pain, cold, sound, and light? Of course not. Yet unborn babies do all of these things. They have a beating heart and a working brain. They are, beyond any doubt, **living human beings!** Only the cold, callous heart would think otherwise.

Although she recanted her views about abortion several years ago, relatively few people know that “Jane Roe,” the pseudonym that Norma McCorvey assumed as the lead plaintiff in the infamous *Roe v. Wade* case, no longer supports abortion. After over twenty years of supporting the pro-abortion platform, McCorvey suddenly began opposing abortion, and has been for several years now. Why did this pro-abortion poster child become pro-life? What led to her change in thinking? Why does she now adamantly oppose the slaughtering of innocent unborn babies? According to McCorvey, the “straw that broke the camel’s back” came while she was working in an abortion clinic and was instructed to enter a room where aborted fetuses were kept. Her assignment was to count the body parts of an infant that had just been aborted—to make sure the doctor had retrieved the entire baby from the mother’s womb. McCorvey, who had previously worked in at least three other abortion clinics, stated, “I went back to the parts room, and **I looked at this tiny little infant**, and I freaked” (as quoted in McGrew). “Jane Roe,” the woman who symbolized a woman’s right to have an abortion (i.e., **Roe v. Wade**), was forced to look upon the body parts of an aborted fetus and became convinced that it was a human being. Why? Because it **looked** like a human being. Unborn babies **look** like humans beings because they **are** human beings!

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When Samuel Armas was a 21-week **unborn** baby, *USA Today* photojournalist Michael Clancy snapped what arguably would become the most famous pre-natal photograph ever. On August 19, 1999, Dr. Joseph Bruner, of Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee, performed spina bifida surgery on Samuel while he was *in utero*. During the surgery, Samuel, who was only about half way through the normal gestation period, was pictured with his tiny hand resting on one of the doctor's fingers. Samuel was born 15 weeks later. When Samuel's surgery was first reported more than ten years ago, many eyes were opened to the preciousness and humanity of early unborn children. More recently, however, another baby who further testifies to the humanity of unborn children captured the headlines. Her name: Amillia Sonja Taylor. She was born on October 24, 2006 in south Florida. What makes Amillia so special? Doctors believe she "spent less time in the womb than any other surviving infant" ("Fla. Baby"). Amillia's mother, Sonja, carried Amillia for **less than 22 weeks**. At delivery, she was only 9½ inches long and weighed less than a can of soda. But, she was a living human being. Four months later, Amillia weighed 4½ pounds, was 15½ inches long, and was almost ready to go home for the very first time ("Doctors Extend"). Two years later, she was a healthy toddler ("Amillia").

Amillia did not **turn** into a human 15 to 18 weeks later—when most babies are delivered—she **was** a human at 22 weeks, and had been human since she was conceived. She was not lifeless matter—a mere blob of tissue. She was not a plant. She was not an animal. She was a living, growing human being. How can anyone look at pictures of an unborn child such as Samuel Armas or a 10-ounce baby such as Amillia Taylor and come to the conclusion that at 22 weeks old they are not living human beings?

Consider some things that science has discovered about unborn babies in the first trimester of a mother's pregnancy.

- **Day 22** – heart begins to beat with the child's own blood, often a different type than the mother's

- **Week 5** – eyes, legs, hands begin to develop
- **Week 6** – brain waves detectable; mouth, lips present; fingernails forming
- **Week 7** – eyelids, toes form; nose distinct, baby kicking and swimming
- **Week 8** – every organ in place; bones begin to replace cartilage, fingerprints begin to form;
- **Weeks 9 and 10** - teeth begin to form, fingernails develop; baby can turn head, frown
- **Week 11** – baby can grasp objects placed in hand; all organ systems functioning; the baby has fingerprints, a skeletal structure, nerves, and circulation
- **Week 12** – the baby has all of the parts necessary to experience pain, including the nerves, spinal cord and thalamus (“Diary”).

In addition to the support that common sense and science give for the living humanity of unborn children, Scripture is equally clear on the subject. Seven hundred years before Christ, the prophet Isaiah said of himself: “**Before I was born the Lord called me**; from my birth he has made mention of my name” (Isa. 49:1, emphasis added). Similarly, several years later, the prophet Jeremiah spoke of how the Lord knew of him *in utero*: “Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; **before you were born** I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations’” (Jer. 1:4-5, emphasis added). The Creator of life has testified through inspiration that He views pre-born infants as living, human beings—real people that he calls, sanctifies, and ordains. Had the mothers of Isaiah and Jeremiah aborted them, they would have been unlawfully taking the lives of precious, little people.

God made this equally clear in the Law of Moses. In fact, He specifically addressed the life and value of an unborn child in Exodus 21:22-23. He informed Moses: “If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman’s husband

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imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life.” Notice how God equates the life of all humans—both the unborn and the already born: “life for life,” He said. If God did not view a “premature” baby as a living human being, then one could not take “life for life.” Rather, it would be more like “a living human for a blob of matter.” But unborn children are not merely blobs of tissue; they are precious, living, human beings.

When the angel Gabriel informed Mary about the pregnancy of her cousin, Elizabeth, the angel of God said that she had “conceived” (Luke 1:36). Conceived what? What was inside of Elizabeth? A mass of meaningless matter? A non-living non-human? An animal evolving into a person? What had Elizabeth conceived? Gabriel informed Mary that Elizabeth had “conceived **a son.**” What’s more, when Mary went to visit Elizabeth prior to the births of John the Baptizer and Jesus, Luke, the physician, called the unborn baby in Elizabeth’s womb a “babe,” and even noted that He “leaped in my [Elizabeth’s] womb” (Luke 1:41; Luke 1:44). Luke used this term (Greek *brephos*) at least four other times. Twice he used it in reference to Jesus lying in a manger after His birth (Luke 2:12; Luke 2:16), once when referring to young “infants” whose parents had sought the Lord’s blessings (Luke 18:15), and once in reference to the “babies” that Pharaoh had “exposed” in ancient Egypt (Acts 7:19; cf. Exod. 1:22). In each of these cases, *brephos* refers to children, to boys and girls, to sons and daughters—to living human beings whom the psalmist said are fearfully and wonderfully made, formed, and woven by Almighty God (Psa. 139:13-16). Man should be careful messing with **Jehovah’s** creation whom **He** fashions in **His** image!

### **America, Abortion, And The Absurd**

#### ***Mommas Can Murder, But Daddies Can’t?***

Few things enrage a community more than finding out that a pregnant woman has been murdered. Towns struck with such an atrocity often rise up and declare that justice must be served: “Violators should be charged with two counts of murder, not just

one.” In recent times, men committing such heinous crimes have been charged with double murder. From Missouri to California, from Ohio to Utah, prosecutors have been pushing for maximum penalties by charging men, who allegedly have killed their pregnant wives (or girlfriends), with **two** counts of murder. In one particular case in California, a man, who police and prosecutors believe kicked and punched his pregnant girlfriend, was charged with assaulting the mother and murdering the baby (whom the mother was carrying in the womb).

It is encouraging to know that our judicial system has seen fit to prosecute those who murder unborn babies, and to make the guilty pay the highest penalties allowed. In these situations, our judicial system has treated the unborn baby as he/she really is—a human being. “A person guilty of murdering an unborn child is guilty of murdering a person.” This is what we are being told over and over again by those who seek to charge men, who take the lives of a woman and her unborn baby, with double murder.

But wait a minute! How can an unborn child be considered a human being in one situation (when a man takes the life of a woman and her baby), but then, when a pregnant woman wants to take the life of her unborn child, the baby becomes an “appendage” of the mother’s body? “The baby is not a human being, just an extra lump of tissue that the mother can discard at will.” If the father intentionally kicks a baby while in the mother’s womb, killing the child, he likely will be sentenced to prison, or possibly to death (and rightly so—Gen. 9:6). On the other hand, if a mother goes to an abortion clinic and pays a doctor to insert a pliers-like instrument into her uterus literally to pull and shred the baby into pieces, snapping the spinal cord, and crushing the skull, she has done nothing illegal?

How, in the name of common sense, can our courts rule that when a woman takes the life of her own child “it is a choice,” but when someone else takes that life “it is murder”? Such reasoning makes no sense. Abortion-rights activists, at least, are consistent in this regard. As Heather Boonstra, senior public policy associate at the Alan Guttmacher Institute, stated: “The law cannot hold both

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that a pregnant woman is two persons and at the same time allow her to have an abortion” (“Debate Grows”).

*Inhumane to Kill Dogs, but not Humans?*

In August 2007, many people, including myself, were disappointed to learn that a well-known professional football player (Michael Vick) plead guilty to sponsoring, financing, and participating in the brutal sport of dog fighting. Vick even admitted that he was partly responsible for hanging and drowning a number of dogs that did not perform well in certain “test” fights (see *United States v. Vick*). For his crimes, Vick was sentenced to 23 months behind bars, most of which were served in a federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas.

I certainly believe that Vick’s actions (i.e., the drowning of dogs, etc.) can be described as appalling and somewhat sadistic. What’s more, he knowingly participated in a sport which has been outlawed in every state in America. He deserved some kind of punishment for his actions. But, we must recognize that Vick’s acts were done against **animals**. Though dogs may be “man’s best friend” (and I happen to love dogs), they still are just animals, not humans. They are every bit as much an animal as cows, crows, chickens, deer, monkeys, horses, and pigs are animals.

How absurd, inconsistent, and immoral is the United States judicial system when a person must serve nearly two years in prison for fighting, hanging, and drowning **animals**, yet, if that same person slaughters a 22-week-old unborn **human**, he supposedly is blameless. The fact that doctors in the United States can legally rip unborn babies to pieces with plier-like forceps, chop them up with knife-like devices, or puncture their skulls with a pair of scissors before sucking out the babies’ brains, is atrocious (cf. Prov. 6:16-17). Are we to believe that Vick’s actions against dogs were “**inhumane**,” but what happens to approximately one million innocent, unborn babies every year in America is not? What could be more **inhumane** than willfully, selfishly, arrogantly, and brutally taking the life of a **human**—one of God’s image-bearers (Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 9:6)? Baby murderers freely walk the streets of America every day, but dog

fighters are jailed for inhumane acts...against **animals**? How absurd!  
How atrocious!

***Overpopulation Problem? Don't Pollute the Planet with Babies!?***

More than 3,500 years ago, Pharaoh observed that the children of Israel were growing and multiplying so rapidly that he became fearful of problems such a large number of slaves might cause. Exodus chapter one makes clear that Pharaoh gave two separate execution orders upon Israel's newborn sons because of what he perceived as an overpopulation problem. Sadly, such "reasoning" is still used today.

In 2006, evolutionary environmentalist Dr. Eric Pianka was named the Distinguished Texas Scientist of the Year. At his award ceremony, attendee Forrest Mims reported how Pianka

began laying out his concerns about how human overpopulation is ruining the Earth. He presented a doomsday scenario in which he claimed that the sharp increase in human population since the beginning of the industrial age is devastating the planet. He warned that quick steps must be taken to restore the planet before it's too late. Professor Pianka said the Earth as we know it will not survive without drastic measures. Then, and without presenting any data to justify this number, he asserted that the only feasible solution to saving the Earth is to reduce the population to 10 percent of the present number.... His favorite candidate for eliminating 90 percent of the world's population is airborne Ebola (*Ebola Reston*), because it is both highly lethal and it kills in days, instead of years.

Most people find Dr. Pianka's suggestions revolting. Who in his right mind would propose spreading airborne Ebola around the planet for the purpose of reducing the world's population?



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Ridiculous? Before dismissing Texas' 2006 "Distinguished Scientist" as a raving lunatic, consider a more palatable form of population reduction.

In 1977, Paul and Anne Ehrlich and John Holdren (who currently serves as President Obama's "science czar") penned a book titled: *Ecoscience: Population, Resources, and Environment*. In the book, Holdren and the Ehrlichs asserted that "there exists ample authority under which population growth could be regulated.... [U]nder the United States Constitution, effective population-control programs could be enacted" (1280). What kind of "population-control programs" exactly? They specifically noted: "compulsory population-control laws, even including laws requiring **compulsory abortion**," which "could be sustained under the existing constitution if the population crisis became sufficiently severe to endanger society" (1280, emphasis added). Is there really much difference between the Pharaoh of Exodus one and President Obama's science czar (cf. Matt. 5:21-22; Matt. 15:18)?

The United Kingdom's *Daily Mail* ran a story a few years back about a woman (Toni Vernelli) who "**terminated her pregnancy** in the firm belief she was **helping save the planet**" (as quoted in Courtenay-Smith and Turner, emphasis added). According to Vernelli, "Having children is selfish.... Every person who is born uses more food, more water, more land, more fossil fuels, more trees and produces more rubbish, more pollution, more greenhouse gases, and adds to the problem of over-population." Vernelli indicated her desire to "save the planet—not produce a new life which would only add to the problem." She went on to describe procreation as "something negative" and claimed that there were many others with similar planet-saving ideas. The *Daily Mail* concurred, saying, "Toni is far from alone" (Courtenay-Smith and Turner).

Thirty-one-year-old Sarah Irving was in complete agreement with Vernelli. "[A] baby," she said, "would **pollute the planet**.... [N]ever having a child was the most environmentally friendly thing I could do" (Courtenay-Smith and Turner, emphasis added). Sarah and her fiancé Mark Hudson told the *Daily Mail*, "In short, we do

everything we can to reduce our carbon footprint. But all this would be undone if we had a child.... It would be **morally wrong** for me to add to climate change and the destruction of Earth” (emphasis added). In the minds of environmentalists and atheists, including Freedom from Religion’s President Dan Barker, murdering unborn children can be considered “progress” and a “blessing” (see Barker 135; see also Barker and Rankin) while bringing children into the world is “negative” and “morally wrong.”

### Conclusion

Some 2,700 years ago, the prophet Isaiah warned those “who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter...who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight” (Isa. 5:20-21)! Sadly, Isaiah’s description of the ungodly fits America to a tee. In this country, we call unbridled lust “love,” we describe immodest apparel as “stylish,” we refer to homosexuals as being “gay,” and baby murderers we call “pro-choice”—protectors of “women’s rights.” (Whatever happened to children’s rights?!)

What will become of those who “call evil good, and good evil”? What is God’s reaction to those who “rejoice in iniquity” rather than truth (1 Cor. 13:6)? Isaiah spoke of God’s judgments and punishment later in chapter five:

Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore the anger of the Lord is aroused against His people; He has stretched out His hand against them and stricken them, and the hills trembled. Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. (Isa. 5:24-25)

According to Isaiah, “[T]he nation and kingdom which will not serve you [Jehovah] shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined” (Isa. 60:12).

Both the Bible and history teach us that God does not tolerate wicked, bloodthirsty nations forever. He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven. He rose up a mighty army to punish the wicked inhabitants of Canaan (Deut. 9:4; Deut. 18:9-12). He sent “angels of destruction” upon Egypt, and gave them “over to the plague, and destroyed all the firstborn” (Psa. 78:49-51). What will be America’s fate? If our “Christian” country’s murderous methods do not cease, what can one expect? He can expect that God will severely judge our nation as a whole in this life (Isa. 60:12), while individually rending “each one according to his deeds” in the afterlife (Rom. 2:5-10). In the meantime, may our longsuffering Savior grant Christians the courage to “take up the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:13) and “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10).

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people (Prov. 14:34).

“Blessed is the nation who God is the Lord” (Psa. 33:12).

### Notes

1. For a discussion of what being made in the image of God means, see Lyons and Thompson.

2. The English verb “are made” (ASV) derives from the Greek *gegonotas*, which is the perfect participle of the verb *ginomai*. The perfect tense in Greek is used to describe an action brought to completion in the past, but whose effects are felt in the present.

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## CHAPTER 5

# Learned In All The Wisdom Of The Egyptians: Keeping Your Faith While Receiving A Secular Education

*Daniel F. Cates*

**I**t is a great privilege to be speaking again at Southaven. This congregation has meant much to this writer through the years, and it is always a blessing to be associated with her.

### **Introduction**

The birth and first third of the life of the great lawgiver Moses was summed up thus by Stephen:

In which time [that Hebrew children were being killed (Acts 7:19)] Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. (King James Version, Acts 7:20-22)

Stephen drew this portion of his great sermon from Exodus 2:2-10:

And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child,

she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

When one views Stephen's inspired supplement and compares it with Moses' inspired, original account of his own birth, one sees—at the very least—Stephen's expounding upon the expression “he became her son” (Exod. 2:10); however, one is more likely seeing the Holy Spirit's revealing an aspect of Moses' life which had not been introduced before: Moses was one who “was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22).



What, exactly, did Stephen have in mind when he spoke of the wisdom of the Egyptians—what did Moses learn as a child and young man in Egypt?

First, Moses surely learned about at least some of the religion of the Egyptians. Depending on location and time, the Egyptians worshipped any number of gods—even the Pharaoh as a god-man who would be born and die daily like the sun. It is interesting to consider that within a century of the Exodus there would arise an Egyptian Pharaoh, Amenhotep IV (1350-1334 B.C.), who would consolidate Egyptian religion into the worship of one god, Aten—he would even change his own name to Akhenaten. His son, Tutankhaten (1334-1325 B.C.), would restore polytheism and likewise change his name, becoming the Tutankhamun—the King Tut of popular fame. It is interesting to consider this brief shift in religion as perhaps having been influenced by the failure of the Egyptian gods to halt the plagues, to keep the Israelites subjugated, or to save the Pharaoh's first-born; remember, one God was responsible for this ignominy!

Second, Moses definitely learned the science and mathematics of the Egyptians. He probably learned about geology from a culture which grew rich mining gold, silver, and other such precious metals. He probably learned about astronomy—and for that matter astrology—from a culture which viewed the Milky Way as a heavenly manifestation of their precious Nile. He probably learned about medicine from a culture which perfected the process of mummification—albeit not appreciating the role of the brain in human consciousness. He probably learned about agriculture and irrigation from a culture which could live off “the gift of the Nile” on a green ribbon of earth in a parched tan environment. He probably learned about engineering from a culture which had built perfect pyramids over eleven hundred years earlier.

Third, Moses undoubtedly learned a biased version of the history of the Egyptians. As each new dynasty would arise—Egypt had between thirty and thirty-three, depending on which historians/interpretations are accepted—it would try to elevate its own grandeur over those who had preceded it. Especially was this true when a

dynasty made of foreigners like the Hyksos or Nubians would be replaced by natives. This political self-aggrandizement manifested itself in the destruction of the monuments of former days and of the erasing from history—and therefore eternity—the names of former pharaohs.

These are the things Moses would likely have learned—wisdom, yes (to a degree); great, yes; remarkable even from a modern perspective, yes; but nonetheless human and skewed and defective.

Moses, though he knew that which was human and skewed and defective and had learned these things from men which bore the same characteristics, was able to act applying wisdom which was neither skewed nor defective. It was not human wisdom which led him to try to defend the Israelite (Exod. 2:11-15). It was not human wisdom which made him a leader (Exod. 3, 4) though he was reared by Pharaoh's daughter. It was not human wisdom which contended with Pharaoh (Exod. 5-12). It was not human wisdom which delivered the Israelites or divided the Red Sea or received the law or handled the murmuring multitudes (Exod. 13-40). What was more important for Moses than his learning the wisdom of the Egyptians from his secular teachers was his apparently having been learning the wisdom of God from his godly parents, especially his mother Jochebed (Exod. 6:20). Philo, an Alexandrian Jew and contemporary of the Lord and of Stephen, wrote of Moses concerning that which he had learned of a secular nature but more than that wrote that "he behaved with temperance and fortitude" (Philo, "On the Life of Moses," I.vi [25]). Moses must have learned that from somewhere, and why not from Amran and Jochebed, especially given that "God easily brings to pass whatever he is inclined to effect, however difficult it may be to bring to a successful issue" (Philo, I.v [19])—at times Philo was prone to supply details from supposition; however, that conclusion was spot on!

### **The Case For Being Learned**

There is nothing wrong with knowledge. God has given man the capability of imagining, learning, and growing in knowledge.

Solomon wrote often concerning attaining knowledge. “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:3-5). “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding” (Prov. 3:13). “Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth” (Prov. 4:5). “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Prov. 23:23).

There is a case for being learned; the problem is that knowledge can be abused. It can be empty (Isa. 44:25; 1 Cor. 8:2), it can be a temptation (Gen. 3:5-6), it can lead to pride (1 Cor. 8:1), and it can lead to other problems (Eccl. 1:18; Eccl. 12:12). These things arise when the knowledge sought has originated with man, or as in the case of Solomon when the knowledge of God is not applied to life!

One who seeks any extra-biblical knowledge today will certainly come face to face with human wisdom—that is true whether he is reared in a Christian environment or not or attends Christian schools or is homeschooled or not. What that one is taught will often include these elements—even in a seeming Christian environment: first, human philosophy excels; second, human history is better without God; third, man made God; fourth, gods became God; fifth, the Bible is man-made myth; sixth, man is just an animal—evolved, yes, but just an animal. One might argue that these things are not taught in Christian schools. They are! The difference between what is always taught at secular schools and what is at times taught in Christian schools is this: One can expect it from and therefore prepare for it in a secular environment. One may argue that these things are not taught in home schools. Unless the student is not exposed to the popular media and even the public library, it will be taught there—though unwittingly so to the parents.

If knowledge is needed, but knowledge can be dangerous, how does one know what to accept and what to reject?

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### **The Test For Discerning Wisdom**

Here is the simple test: Did the knowledge come from God? Job indicated that though man be technologically gifted and materially rich, without God he does not have wisdom. He wrote,

Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone. He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men. As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold. There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing. He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels

of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding. (Job 28)

Paul contrasted the wisdom of this world—the product of being learned after the world (which he being extremely educated could understand)—with the wisdom of God, the product of prayerfully seeking wisdom from God (Jas. 1:5-6). Paul wrote,

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are

called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God [Paul is using this expression accommodatively, as if to say, "... **if** there were foolishness with God, it would excel the greatest wisdom of man," DFC] is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (1 Cor. 1:20-31)

Why seek wisdom from God? Paul's statement is conclusive: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are his* judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:33). God never had to be taught a thing; wisdom and knowledge originated with Him; accordingly, they must be sought from Him.

### **The Place For Knowing Both**

It is good to know human wisdom; it is better to know Divine wisdom; it is best to apply the latter! One who wishes truly to be "learned" will know what man teaches and what God teaches and

be able to discern between them. That requires work on the part of the learner. What work must be performed by the one who would have true wisdom? First, the learner must practice righteousness, exercising his ability to use knowledge. Paul wrote, “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). Second, the learner must pray for wisdom as James wrote (Jas. 1:5-6) and as Solomon prayed, “Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?” (1 Kings 3:9). Third, such an one should not occupy himself with that which is foolishness (1 Tim. 6:20; 1 Tim. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:6; 1 Tim. 4:7; 1 Tim. 6:4-5; Rom. 14:1; Tit. 1:14; Tit. 3:9). Fourth, that one must accept Scripture as final, complete, and authoritative (2 Tim. 3:14-16; 2 Pet. 1:3). Fifth, he must judge all as to its worthiness (1 Cor. 2:15; Phil. 1:9-10; 1 Thess. 5:21).

May all be ever ready and willing to learn, but more so able to discern that which is right!

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# **The Pasture of Jethro**



## CHAPTER 6

# Keeping The Flock: What God Taught Moses On The Backside Of The Desert

*James Segars*

### **Introduction**

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 (King James Version, Exod. 3:1).

When Moses left the land of his birth, he escaped to Midian, a country named for one of the sons of Abraham. Between Egypt and Midian lies the Red Sea. There are two forks at the north end of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Suez to the west and the Gulf of Aqaba to the east. Midian was on the eastern side of Aqaba.

Between Suez and Aqaba, there is an inverted triangle known as the Peninsula of Sinai. Near the apex of the triangle is the Horeb mountain range and the peak is Mount Sinai. At the foot of the mountains there were valleys with grass and streams of water. This is where Moses regularly led Jethro's flocks when the pasture land was dry in Midian.

The trail from Midian to Horeb was desert. Pasture and water were found beyond the desert on the backside. One English version calls it the west side of the desert. This faraway spot is where our text locates the shepherd, Moses.

### **What Moses Took With Him To The Backside Of The Desert**

Unknown to Moses, this was his last journey from Midian to Horeb. We are interested in what Moses took with him on this fateful journey.

First, Moses held in his heart the awareness of a promise now 400 years old. God made the promise to Abraham.

Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shall go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. (Gen. 15: 13-16)

Moses knew that the time had come. The 400 years were past. He did not know that God had chosen him to lead in fulfilling that promise. Forty years had passed since Moses left Egypt. Perhaps his confidence in that promise had grown weak. Nonetheless, Moses knew that it was time for his people to receive their land.

Second, as Moses led his flock he also took with him a large dose of obscurity. Did these Midianites not know that Moses had received the best education the world had to offer? Had these people not heard that he grew up in the palace of the Egyptian pharaoh? Did they not care that he gave up everything to become a slave with his people? Had the news not reached them that Moses risked his life to protect a brother? Moses learned that he could do his work without earthly recognition.

Paul wrote that we should give honor to whom honor is due (Rom. 13:7). This is both good and appropriate. However, we should remember the rebuke of our Lord. "How can ye believe, which receive

honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44). Some of God's greatest servants have labored as unknowns. Moses learned that obscurity is not a bad thing.

Third, Moses carried with him a sense of banishment and humiliation. He had been rejected. Moses named his first son Gershom for he said, "I have been a stranger in a strange land" (Exod. 2:22). The American Standard Version reads, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." It was for this reason he must have experienced the depths of loneliness. It is implied that even his wife did not understand and support him (Exod. 4: 24-26). When a Christian stands for what is right, at times he must stand alone and risk rejection. Moses knew how to stand by himself.

Finally, when Moses went to Horeb, he took with him God's providence. God was preparing him for a great work. The psalmist wrote, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Psa. 37:23-24). Moses believed this. He also believed the words of Solomon. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6). We do not know what the future holds, but we are sure that God holds the future.

### **What Moses Came To Know On The Backside Of The Desert**

First, all feelings of pride and self will were gone. He earlier was judged as a man who envisioned himself as "a prince and a judge" over his people (Exod. 2:14). If these presumptuous feelings ever existed, they were gone now. He was a simple shepherd who had tried and failed to lead Israel.

It was said of our Savior that He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7-8) Paul wrote of an elder that he should not be a novice

“lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6). Moses had no desire to establish his reputation. He had learned the meaning of servitude.

Second, Moses came to know his identity. He was comfortable with who he was. He knew his strengths and his weaknesses. He did not judge himself by others. He came to understand what he was capable of doing. This gave Moses a feeling of self-confidence.

Intimidation can be a destructive enemy. It leads to jealousy and bitterness. When a Christian knows who he is, he does not need to measure himself by others or tear others down. It is important to set goals and to experience accomplishments. It builds self-confidence and overcomes an inferiority complex.

Third, Moses now had an unshaken faith in God. He named his second son Eliezer for he said, “The God of my father, said he, was mine help, and he delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh” (Exod. 18:4). By his faith Moses could see the invisible God (Heb. 11:27). God gave Moses time for his faith to grow strong. His confidence in the 400-year-old promise now was filled with expectation.

Last of all, Moses experienced an unconditional surrender to the will of God. Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37). This deep commitment Moses made at Horeb. God requires this surrender of all His children.

### **What Moses Took With Him When He Left The Backside Of The Desert**

Moses now held **the greatest challenge of his life**. God had said to him, “I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt” (Exod. 3:10). Moses’ peaceful life was suddenly disturbed by a call to duty. He had no clue that it was about to happen. Now weighty decisions and heavy responsibilities are on his shoulders.

Christians also face challenges. God may be preparing you now for an opportunity to serve. And it may be unexpected. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men” (Gal. 6:10).

Moses responded to his challenge with *strong assurance*. He was endowed with supernatural power to confirm that he was on a mission for God. Moses could work miracles before the Israelites, Pharaoh, and the Egyptians. He could boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6).

God has not given us miraculous power, but he has provided his people with assurance. When the church is invaded with liberal teaching, we need not flinch. When worldliness threatens, there is no reason to compromise. When indifference tries to pull us down, why should we be discouraged? “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10). We must be convinced that God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Moses had finally reached a level of *maturity* which would enable him to respond appropriately as the leader of his people. Paul wrote, “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). Some English versions substitute the word *mature* for the phrase *of full age*, and the verb *exercised* reads *trained by constant practice*. God let Moses grow for eighty years.

Nothing can take the place of maturity and this is produced by experience. Youth is a tremendous asset, but it should be guided by maturity. We must attach great value to the wisdom of age.

So, Moses left Horeb with a great challenge, with strong assurance, and with irreplaceable maturity.

### **Conclusion**

Moses learned that there is no permanent home while here on earth. He, like Abraham, “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”(Heb. 11:10). Here we are “strangers and pilgrims” just passing through. If Moses could visit us today, he would tell us this earth is not our home. Nothing matters here if we do not reach heaven.

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## CHAPTER 7

# Standing On Holy Ground

*Bobby O'Dell*

### Introduction

God's call to Moses in Exodus 3:1-6 is a fascinating scene. One brings to mind verse 2 where the angel of the Lord appears to Moses "in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush" (New King James Version). Our attention is riveted at the discovery that "the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed" (Exod. 3:3). Our hearts stand in awe of a God so great that merely the presence of His glory required Moses to be informed "the place where you stand is holy ground" (Exod. 3:5). No doubt we can identify with Moses' reaction in verse 6, "And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." Imagine, dear reader, the blessed privilege of standing on *holy ground!*

The concept of holy ground is a much needed study today. There is a growing trend to treat as common things that should be holy. God's name is thrown around in a casual manner. Sacred relationships are not always valued as God intended. Core convictions are ridiculed and made the source of humor. Even the church, the bride of Christ, is mocked and reviled. Much of what has brought us to the point where we find ourselves today is a disrespect for God, a disrespect for things that are holy and reverend, a disrespect for God's Word, a desire to be entertained, and a desire to please self instead of God. Our day is a day of disrespect for both reverence and authority.

Sadly, even some within the church have attempted to transform areas of *holy ground* into places of common human innovation. One of the areas of *holy ground* that has become a *battleground* is the

matter of our worship before God. It was the apostle Paul who wrote in Colossians 3:17, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” So it is the case that everything one does and says in matters spiritual must be in complete harmony with what is found on the pages of Scripture. However, some are convinced that man’s desire trumps God’s expressed Will. Many of the changes we are witnessing in worship today have come because good young men have gone to denominational schools for higher education and have been trained at the feet of men that have little or no respect for the Bible. They come from those schools with Doctorate degrees, but also with minds filled with denominational practices. So, with an awareness of this current digression, this writer considers the topic “Standing on Holy Ground.” As it pertains to our worship, at least three concepts must be grasped in order to achieve the proper respect and obedience when coming into God’s presence.

### **The Holy Ground Of Worship Requires Understanding The Concept Of AWE**

First, one will understand the concept of “awe” if they appreciate the **definition** of worship. A proper grasp of what the word *worship* means helps show how sacred it is. The word *sacred* simply means “holy, entitled to reverence, and respect” (“Worship”). Truly, when we come before God with worship we are standing on sacred and holy ground.

It is very interesting to study the Old Testament and look at the attitudes that some had when they approached God in worship. Those who worship God correctly had a very reverential attitude when they did so. They understood the principle of that sacred and holy occasion. In Genesis 24 the marriage of Rebekah and Isaac is outlined. Verse 52 reveals the action of the servant when he realized that these two were to be married, “And it came to pass, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, that he worshiped the LORD, **bowing himself to the earth**” (Gen. 24:52, *emph. throughout mine, BD*). What a marvelous statement that is about his reverence for this holy occasion.

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The student of the Old Testament can find a similar idea in 2 Chronicles 7 when Solomon was praying on behalf of the children of Israel. Notice the reaction of the people in verse 3 after God approved of that prayer: “When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on the house, **they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement**, and worshiped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endures forever” (2 Chron. 7:3). By their actions one can see something about the definition of worship.

The inspired pages of the New Testament also reveal much about the definition of worship. Understand that this bowing down is not about physically bowing. The concept is one of awe because of a disposition of heart for the holy occasion. The New Testament words for worship (*proskuneō*) carry the idea of “to make obeisance, do reverence to, an act of homage or reverence” (Vine).

It is interesting that even Satan understands the definition of worship. Matthew 4 records the account of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness. Notice what the Bible says in verse 8. “Again, the devil took him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; And he said to him, All these things will I give you, **if you will fall down and worship me**” (Matt. 4:8). Even Satan understood that worship is a holy and sacred thing. He requested Jesus to bow down at his feet.

Satan was not the only one who recognized that worship requires awe. In Matthew 2:10 one finds that the wise men also understood the sacredness that goes with worship. “When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, **and fell down, and worshipped him**; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to him; gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matt. 2:10-11). Time and time again one finds that Bible characters understood that there is something sacred about worship.

What does it mean to worship the one true and living God? Jehovah alone is the focus of acceptable worship in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament we read,

“For you shall worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exod. 34:14). In the New Testament we read, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve” (Matt. 4:10). So then the purpose of our worship must be to glorify God, to give Him honor and praise. Our worship must show our adoration and reverence for God. An example of true worship is seen in Exodus 34:8. There the Bible says, “So Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.” Worship is a holy time of coming before God in humble submission.

Revelation 4:10 gives us a picture of the proper reverence and adoration for God that should be seen in worship. “The twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne.” Worship is the response of a human heart giving God the praise that is due Him. David wrote about this holy ground with these words, “Give unto the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psa. 29:2). Worship is to regard God as a divine being, worthy of honor and respect.

Second, one will understand the concept of “awe” if they appreciate heaven’s **aspiration** for worship. Stop to ponder this question: Why does God really desire man’s worship. Man really is the object of God’s affection. In Revelation 4:11 the Bible says, “**You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power:** for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created.” In the book of Genesis one finds that after God created the world He said in verse 25 that it was “good” (Gen. 1:25). At that time man and woman had not been created. However, after mankind is brought into existence, verse 31 says God appraised things again, but this time it was “very good” (Gen. 1:25).

In Psalm 8:4, David is perplexed that a God who created this vast universe would even be interested in mere mortal man. Think about it; here is David contemplating the greatness of this universe, and in response he says, “How could God care so much for little me?” Verse 4 records, “What is man, that you are mindful of him? and the son of man, that you visit him?” Now watch his response, “For you

have made him a little lower than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor” (Psa. 8:4-5). This writer expresses this very humbly, but man is the very crowning apex of God’s creation. Such being true, since man means so much to God, worship has the capacity to bring pleasure to God. When man worships Him correctly, there is no doubt that the Lord receives great satisfaction from it.

God made man for companionship with Himself. In a very real sense, Adam and Eve walked in close fellowship with God. “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (Gen. 3:8). God is our loving Father. He seeks our worship, just as we want to be with our children. “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: for the Father is seeking such to worship him. God is Spirit: and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). Jesus expressed His desire for worship with His disciples in the words of Luke 22:15, “Then He said to them, With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” It is the desire of Jesus that we worship God through Him.

Those that come to see God as our great Creator will worship Him or give Him “worth.” The psalmist wrote, “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psa. 46:10). God deserves our worship because He is Creator or Maker. His “will” caused all of creation. The Bible says, “Know that the Lord he is God: it is he who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (Psa. 100:3). Worship grows out of thankfulness for and appreciation to God for His goodness and greatness. The unthankful will not worship as they should. “Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were thankful; but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Rom. 1:21). I should desire to stand on the holy ground of worship, just as God desires that I come before him as His child.

Third, one will understand the concept of “awe” if they appreciate God’s **location** when man worships. The sacredness and seriousness of man’s worship is seen in the very fact that God is present when man worships. This writer is not talking about a physical manifestation of God. However, the worshiper must understand that God is very aware of everything that is going on.

A study of Genesis 4 might help cause an appreciation for the location of God. This account reveals for us the second recorded controversy that God ever had with man, a controversy over the matter of worship. Genesis 4:4 explains, “Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering; But He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.” As the story develops, one discovers that Cain becomes so angry over his rejected worship that he murders his brother. Please observe what happens in verse 16: “Then Cain **went out from** the presence of the LORD.” God was very much present during and aware of the worship that Cain and Able offered, and He was only pleased with one. There can be no doubt that God is present when man worships Him. In Hebrews 11:4, the inspired writer comments on this specific matter. The Bible informs us, “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God **testifying** of his gifts.” The word *testifying* here teaches that God was an eyewitness to Abel’s worship.

Consider the concept mentioned above for just a moment. God really is an eyewitness to worship. One can be sure that God is an eyewitness of what happens in every religious assembly across our land. Such must always prompt the question, Is God pleased with what He is seeing with the worship of this reader? If the Lord were here in a physical manifestation, would the reader of this chapter change his approach to Him? If the Lord were physically present, would it change enthusiasm during the song service? If the Lord were physically present, would it change thought patterns during the observance of the Lord’s Supper? Would it change giving habits if His nail-scarred hands passed the collection tray? If the Lord were

physically present, would it change the reception of the Word of God? Just because one shows up to the assembly on the first day of the week does not mean that his worship has been correct. I must be in awe of the fact that I am standing on holy ground.

### **The Holy Ground Of Worship Requires Understanding The Concept Of ATTITUDES**

In the classic text on worship Jesus said to worship “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). The idea from this passage is that one must do it with the right heart and in the right way. It has not been left up to man to make up his own innovations in worship. To be acceptable, one must have the attitude that worship must be done God’s way every time. A study of Scripture shows that God reacts to man’s innovations in a very serious way.

One famous example of people trying to bring their own innovations into worship is in Leviticus 10. In verse 1 it is stated, “Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered **profane fire** before the LORD” (Lev. 10:1). The word *profane* indicates that they had brought their own innovations. Such can be seen in the next phrase, “which he had not commanded them.” Today the appalling attitude would go forth from some, “Listen, fire is fire, what does it really matter?” Others might argue, “It is the same temperature, it is the same color, what difference does it make?” The lesson to be learned from Nadab and Abihu is that attitude toward worship makes an eternal difference.

God has always been serious about worship. And Malachi 3:6 reminds the modern-day worshipper that the God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. God has not changed. God always has and always will take a sober approach to worshipping Him. The question therefore must be asked, How serious, dear reader, is your attitude about worship?

It should also be noted that some have mistakenly had the idea that, in order to be serious, one must be gloomy. This wrong concept of attitudes says that in order to have reverence one must be ritualistic.

Some would contend for cold formalism in order to achieve a sense of awe. Such is an unnecessary and uninformed approach. One should never feel that he must grudgingly endure through the five acts of worship. True New Testament worship demands finding the middle ground. It must not be the cold, gloomy, formal ritualism that some mistakenly call reverential. It is not the no-holds-barred, anything goes, entertainment approach either.

Acceptable worship is a very serious matter and will not happen by accident. Worship should cause us to think about God's greatness and our own frailty. Our attitude in worship will help determine if our worship will be acceptable to God. When our attitude is right it will cause us to become like the God we worship—spiritual. Our worship is an expression of love and awe to the God that gives us more than we deserve. Our attitude must be that worship is about us submitting ourselves to the desires of God, as expressed in His Word. This attitude helps us to stand properly on holy ground.

### **The Holy Ground Of Worship Requires Understanding The Concept Of AUTHORITY**

There is a lot to be said about the authority of the scriptures as it relates to man's worship. The "anything goes" concept that some have about worship is foreign to the Bible. This writer does not deny that emotion will be involved in the process. However, God has based our worship on the intellect first. God desires the mind to be engaged so that one might think about what he is doing.

Those who reject Bible authority can ridicule if they so desire, but when speaking of authority, there are only five acts that are authorized by God in worship. How can it be known that such is true? Simply by going to the New Testament and finding what God commanded or that on which He placed His stamp of approval. If there is something that the Bible pattern reveals the New Testament church did with God's smile of approval, one is then authorized to do the same. That is why verses like Colossians 3:17 exist. "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."



First, one has authority as a New Testament Christians to pray to God. Acts 2:42 places a divine stamp of approval upon worshipping God through this avenue of communication. Second, one has scriptural authority to come together and partake of the Lord's Supper upon the first day of the week according to Acts 20:7, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." Third, one has the authority to worship God by singing spiritual hymns. Ephesians 5:19 instructs in this area when it says "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Studying God's Word is a fourth activity one is authorized to do in worship (Acts 20:7). Fifth, giving of one's means upon the first day of the week is another authorized method of worship. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 instructs in this area, "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper." These are five items in which one can engage with the full backing of the Word of God.

Consider a couple of questions regarding these matters. First, can one do all five of those acts of worship and still be displeasing to God? The answer is a resounding yes. As discussed earlier, if one has not approached God with the right attitude, then he has not worshipped in spirit. Second, can one do all five of those things and still have vibrant and meaningful worship? The world says, No way! Such people would reason, I just don't get anything out of those same old boring five acts. This writer submits that a comment like that reveals much about the poor condition of such an individual's heart. Can one engage in those five acts and still have something that is vibrant and meaningful? Not only is it possible—it is a must! Worship needs to be according to the prescribed manner. However, this writer also believes it can and must be vibrant and meaningful.

Coming before God on the holy ground of worship also demands that we respect God's desire that our worship be both steadfast and regular. Hebrews 10:23-31 is a warning to Christians.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without  
wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And

let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. And again, The LORD will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Christians are commanded not to forsake assembling for worship. Acts 20:7 tells us how the early Christians assembled for worship every Lord's Day or Sunday. Forsaking worship indicates that you are neglecting salvation (Heb. 2:3). Those that deliberately miss worship are allowing their salvation to slip away (Heb. 2:1). Christians grow weak and sickly without the strength of worship (1 Cor. 11:30). Therefore it is important that Christians encourage one another so none will be hardened by neglecting worship (Heb. 3:13). Surely no one would want to miss the blessed opportunity of standing on holy ground.

Worship is not intended to be an amusement park experience. The purpose of worship is not to entertain us. The problem with worship designed to entertain is the change from what God designed and

desired to what man designed and desired. Jesus said, “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying; These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:7-9). Our sense of reverence and adoration for God must never give way to selfish desire to be entertained. Love for God motivates us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. “I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies” (Psa. 18:1-3). The concept of standing on holy ground reminds us to worship as God commands.

### **Conclusion**

To stand properly on the holy ground of worship before God involves understanding the principles of awe, attitude, and authority. Our attitude toward worship should be that expressed by David in Psalm 122:1, “I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” Let us worship for our own spiritual strength and growth. Let us worship to encourage others. Let us worship because it is our duty to God. But let us always remember that when we worship we are on holy ground.

One must remember that to follow God’s Will successfully he must go back to The Book. As one song reminds, “Give me the Bible.” People would not sing “Give me the Denominational Manual,” or “Give me the Creed Book.” Who would support singing “Let us listen to the commands of the hierarchy,” or “Let us decide in the annual convention?” Who would advocate singing “Give me what my parents have always done?” There is a good reason why people sing “Give me the Bible.” Whenever one simply returns to the Bible alone, they will become what they imitate—New Testament Christians. They become a people who do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names. They are standing on holy ground.

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## CHAPTER 8

# Here Am I: Answering The Call To Lead God's People

*Bobby Liddell*

### Introduction

The remarkable man Moses, son of faithful Amram and Jochebed (King James Version, Exod. 6:20; Heb. 11:23), by the providence of God, had spent forty years in Egypt in the palace of Pharaoh (Exod. 1:1-2:15; Acts 7:23). Spared from death, and nursed by his own mother, in spite of Pharaoh's murderous designs, Moses benefited from the best in training the Egyptians could offer, while learning from his mother the way of God (Acts 7:22; Exod. 2:5-10; Heb. 11:24-29). When he left Egypt to escape Pharaoh's punishment (Exod. 2:11-15), he came to Midian where he met Reuel, "the priest of Midian" (Exod. 2:16; Exod. 18:9-12), whose daughter, Zipporah, he wed (Exod. 2:21). There, he lived for forty years and begat two sons (Acts 7:29-30). Little did he know that God was preparing him for a great task that would occupy the last forty years of his life as prophet (Deut. 34:10; Acts 3:22), lawgiver (John 1:17; John 7:19), and deliverer of His people (Exod. 3:10). To the leadership of His people, God called Moses at Horeb. How would he answer God's call, and what lessons can we learn about leadership today?

### God's Call To Moses

After spending the first forty years of his life in Egypt, Moses had been away from his people for another forty years, learning life lessons. How many times had he wondered how his people were doing under Pharaoh's dominion? Did he consider whether they

had one to lead them? Had he ever thought he had responsibility to do something to help them? At the age of eighty (Exod. 7:7), Moses received God's call to lead His people out of Egypt. Equipped with the wisdom of fourscore years (though still strong physically), with diverse experiences from the palace to the wilderness, from being Pharaoh's son, knowing the life of a king, to being a shepherd in the wilderness, tending the flock of Jethro (Reuel), his father-in-law, and having received training from the Egyptians, and instruction from his godly mother, Moses was well able to accept the task given him by God. It was neither time to retire, nor to relax, but to begin a new work, the greatest work of his life, leading God's people. At least, that was God's plan.

When Moses brought the sheep to Horeb (the mountain of God [Exod. 3:12; Exod. 19:3]), "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" (Exod. 3:2; Acts 7:30). Who was the "angel of the Lord"? The text shows the "angel of the Lord" appeared to Moses in the burning bush, but the text also reveals God spoke to Moses from the bush (Exod. 3:4). Therefore, many commentators consider this an appearance of the second person of the Godhead, the Word who would be Christ (John 1:1ff).

The angel of Yahweh appeared to Moses in flames of fire from within a bush. This is not a visionary or inner experience. What happened there cannot be explained on any naturalistic basis. This was a genuine theophany, a manifestation of God. (Smith 252)

### **"Here Am I"**

Moses turned aside to see the marvelous miracle of a bush that burned with fire but was not consumed, and the Lord spoke to him out of the midst of the burning bush, saying, "Moses, Moses." Moses replied, "Here am I" (Exod. 3:3; Acts 7:31). Consider other great men

of the Biblical record, whom God has called to leadership, and their same responses. (Bold added for emphasis throughout.)

And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, **Abraham**, Abraham: and he said, **Here am I**. (Gen. 22:11)

And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, **Jacob**: And I said, **Here am I**. (Gen. 31:11; cf. Gen. 46:2)

That the LORD called **Samuel**: and he answered, **Here am I**. And he ran unto Eli, and said, **Here am I**; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, **Here am I**; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again...And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, **Here am I**; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. (1 Sam. 3:4-8)

(**Isaiah**) heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, **Here am I**; send me. (Isa. 6:8)

As God knew Moses, so God knows who we are, of what we are capable, and where we are, both in location and in life, before He calls. The question is, are we ready to say, “Here am I”? Sometimes, the challenges of leadership are frightening, and the cost is great. We may hesitate to respond because we, like Moses, question our abilities or our worthiness to lead. While self-examination is not wrong, allowing doubts and fears to paralyze us is wrong. Shirking

responsibility to the hurt of the Lord's people (and ourselves) is wrong. Avoiding leadership because of unwillingness to make a commitment of time, effort, energy, or resources to the greatest cause of Heaven and earth is wrong. When God calls, let us answer, "Here am I," with a willingness to follow His direction, to lead.

God told Moses the ground upon which he stood was holy; thus, he was to put off his shoes (Acts 7:33).

Holy Ground. This could not refer to the essential quality of the earth for it was the same place where Moses had been taking the sheep for pasture. Besides, inanimate substance is not spoken of as being holy in itself. But in the present instance it is holy because of the person who is present and the purpose of the appearance of the angel at this time. Any place is sacred or holy where and when holy proceeding takes place. (Zerr 108)

To appear before God is to be on "holy ground." In the presence of God, Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look upon God. God identified Himself by saying: "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. 3:6; Acts 7:32). From this statement, Jesus affirmed both the continued existence of men after death and the resurrection, "For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him" (Luke 20:37-38; cf. Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26-27).

God told Moses He knew of the affliction of His people in Egypt, that He had "come down" to deliver them, and that He would bring them to the fertile land of Canaan.

The key word in Exodus is *deliver* which occurs in various forms some nine times. The key expression is "As the Lord commanded Moses." The key thought is *redemption*. God redeemed his people from the bondage of Egypt. While



Genesis focuses on several human actors, Exodus highlights only one, Moses. He is the key character in this book. (Smith 235).

With this background, God informed Moses what part he was to have in the deliverance of the Israelites, as the leader of God's people.

Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. (Exod. 3:9-10)

While the work before Moses was challenging and dangerous, the assurance given him by God was sufficient. God, "at the proper time," had called Moses to the leadership of his people (Free 81). Moses was reluctant to return to Egypt—and to do what God called him to do; thus, he attempted to escape the responsibility and offered futile excuses to God. Although God knew Moses was qualified and able, Moses did not believe he was. How many, in the Lord's church today, are crippled by the same lack of confidence to do the work they are well able to do for the Lord?

Moses and God were on a collision course. The Lord was determined to save the Israelites; Moses was determined to forget about them. The famous call of Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3-4) is where the two collide. The resulting debate is classic and powerful. God called Moses to go back to Egypt and lead the Israelites out of their slavery. Moses raised four objections, all of which God answered. Finally Moses simply

refused to go: “please send someone else” (4:13).  
(Arnold and Bayer 105)

Why would Moses make an excuse, for not doing what God called him to do? Perhaps his earlier encounter, when he sought to deliver his Hebrew brother from the Egyptian smiting him but which resulted in his having to flee Egypt and spend forty years in the wilderness of Midian, had so convinced him he did not want to be a deliverer, or that he could not be, that now he could hardly accept the responsibility. He had failed then; how could he expect now to succeed?

Did Moses not love his own people? Did he not want to obey God's direction to lead them out of Egyptian bondage? Earlier, Moses' authority, or ability, to be a deliverer of his people had been questioned by one of his own people: “Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?” (Exod. 2:14). Did Moses think he had no right to lead his people because of this disappointing event in the past? Too many will not allow themselves to get over the past, whether good or bad, in order to go forward to a profitable future (cf. Phil. 3:13-14; 1 Tim. 1:12-16). Was Moses simply being humble? Humility “is no excuse for disobeying God. That is a false humility” (Nichols 44). Whatever his reason for attempted refusal, Moses missed the main point: **God** would bring the people out of Egypt (Exod. 3:8), but God has always had a place for leadership in His work. When the excuses were over, God had answered each one, and Moses was still His choice to lead the Israelites from Egyptian bondage to the Promised Land.

### **Good Leadership Requires Confidence**

Every organization needs leadership. To be a leader, one must have certain qualities, or he must have the ability to acquire these qualities (both to grow into leadership and to grow in leadership). Sometimes, one recognizes these qualities in himself, but sometimes he may not, and it takes another to recognize them, to encourage him, or to commission him to lead, as did God with Moses. For

example, God called Joshua to lead, after the death of Moses, for God saw within him the characteristics of a leader (Josh. 1:1-9).

God's appearance to Moses (in the burning bush) would be sufficient assurance that God would be with him as he labored to deliver the Israelites. Moses should have been encouraged, as should we as we read of God's powerful presence with His people (1 Sam. 17:37-47; Dan. 6:22-23; Matt. 28:20; 2 Tim. 4:16-17; Heb. 13:5-6). In addition, God said, **when** (not **if**) Moses brought forth the people, they would serve God at Horeb (Mt. Sinai; cf. Exod. 19:1ff). There was no doubt that God's plan would work just as He revealed it to Moses. Take note: God's plan will work today (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2). Yet, we must "work the plan."

The wonderful miracle of the burning bush before Moses confirmed the Word from God (Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:3-4). Thus, Moses did not have to worry about what God would do. God gave Moses correct and complete information about how to lead His people out of Egypt, provided him with three miraculous signs of proof of God's call, and promised to be with Moses (Exod. 3:16-4:9). The question was now upon Moses. What would he do? After Moses' experience, God's repeated assurance, and the miraculous signs given him, surely he should have been ready and excited, about leading God's people from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the land that flowed with milk and honey. Moses should have been confident.

Not only must leaders have confidence, good leaders will inspire confidence in those who follow. If leaders approach problems with optimism and opportunities with enthusiasm, followers will as well. We have enough people, and the Devil, too, telling us we cannot do what God clearly says we can do. We need leaders who will **trust God and follow Him**. Only when one follows God can he lead others correctly. Leaders who doubt their own abilities, who doubt that the church will follow their leadership, who doubt that God will bless their efforts for good, or who doubt that challenges can be met and problems can be solved will not only fail, they will stifle the church, thwart others' efforts for good, and will, eventually, kill the congregation.

We must never put a fretful, pessimistic, easily discouraged man into a position of leadership. He will be like a pernicious plague, infecting others with his defeatist gloom and despair until the whole church agrees with him, “We cannot do it,” and sinks into the soul-numbing death throes of keeping house and playing church. Of all the people upon this earth, Christians ought to be optimistic! Leaders ought to be in front, urging all to follow them, as they joyfully pursue the course our Lord has charted, and to which He calls us. Be warned: if one has shown no passion, in the past, for the Cause of Christ, making him a leader will **not** instill that necessary passion within him (regardless of how much success he has had in the business world). Remember, God has assured victory to His people. There is no doubt. Why, then, should we live in doubt of the Lord’s people accomplishing the Lord’s will? God is our Father. Jesus is our Savior. The Holy Spirit given Word is our guide. Let us answer, “Here am I,” and get busy with the work.

### **Good Leadership Requires Commitment**

Often, the ability to lead grows with time and experience, and that experience may include learning some lessons by trial and error. For one to lead others to the goal, he must never lose sight of it, become distracted by failures or the insignificant, or be burdened with the less important matters that others can handle (cf. Exod. 18:13-26). Good leaders stay focused on that which is important and stay on track. If one becomes so bogged down with the minor, trivial matters, he will never accomplish the real purpose before him. Too often, leaders in the church spend fifty-five minutes (of an hour-long meeting) deciding on paving and painting, and five minutes on the spiritual welfare of the people of the local congregation—for whose souls they watch (Heb. 13:17). They expend their energy and interest on light bulbs and baptistery heaters, while people living next door to the building grope in darkness and have never heard of the salvation that comes when one is baptized into Christ. The work of the church is saving souls. The work of elders is leading the church in saving souls. This means not only a commitment to good decisions about

the work, but also a commitment to being exemplary in leading the way in saving souls.

Leaders who are committed to the work of reaching a worthy goal will show their followers the importance of expending the time necessary. Imagine an eldership announcing the congregation is going to be involved in a good work, and all members need to participate—but the elders do not participate. How many would (or should) think the goal is worthy of their commitment? We cannot hire or appoint someone to take our own personal responsibilities or to do our work for us. Good leaders show by their example the value of commitment as they expend their efforts in focusing their lives upon the goal.

### **Good Leadership Requires Commitment To Good**

Antiochus IV (who called himself Epiphanes, i.e., “the manifest God,” but whom the Jews called Epimanes, or “mad man”) was one whom the Bible prophetically, and accurately, records would be:

a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries... And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. (Dan. 11:21-36)

Some seek to lead for wrong reasons, when they are not qualified, and may (by force, cunning, or deceit) obtain a position of leadership without the approval of God, or seize a position of leadership without the approval of those whom they would lead. A leader must have pure motives in order to lead by example, and his example must be an accurate representation of his inner person. (Note that leading by example does not mean elders do not have

authority, or that they lead by example only [Heb. 13:17].) Good leaders will wisely consider both sides, seek all the facts, and make decisions with due consideration, not with hasty jumping to wrong conclusions. Confidence in the ability to lead will inspire others to follow.

Good leaders are men who have earned respect and trust because they have an established moral compass; i.e., a set of values has created, for them, a good reputation. They demonstrate fairness in dealing with others, uprightness in their own lives, and the ability to make the right decision—because it is right, not because of pressure, or convenience. Commitment to good means one will treat others with respect and fairness. One loses the respect of followers when he loses his temper. Lack of self-control indicates an inability to address soberly the challenges of leadership. Rash actions, biased decisions, and unfair treatment of others indicate a man (or an eldership) is unqualified to lead. If one treats others as he would want to be treated by them, he will find appreciation and approval from those who follow (Matt. 7:12). Leaders who expect others to have confidence in them and in their leadership do right because it is right—not because someone is watching, or someone will find out eventually, but because it is always right to do right.

### **Good Leadership Requires Communication**

One cannot be a leader without having those who follow. Some define leadership as the ability to get others to follow willingly. To be good leaders, as those whom God would approve, men must have those who follow him willingly, and who submit to their authority joyfully. Men will not, and should not, follow leaders who do not lead them toward a meaningful, valuable, proper goal, or purpose. Some call this goal a dream or refer to it as vision.

Having a commendable purpose does not necessarily mean men will rally behind one, for example, “And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30). Instead of joining with him, the congregation murmured and rebelled because of the

evil report of ten of the twelve spies, and their “carcasses fell in the wilderness” (Heb. 3:17).

Having a goal is not enough by itself. A leader must be one who can accurately communicate the goal with enthusiasm and clarity. Communication must be precise, concise, and easily understood. Ambiguous, confusing direction inspires no one. Endless planning and discussion without action accomplishes nothing. If one is a leader, he must lead (not drive); that is, he must have the strength and courage to make the right decision, to communicate that decision, to stand by his decision, and to lead others in accomplishing it.

Likewise, a leader must be a good listener, ready to receive helpful suggestions and constructive criticism. How many good ideas have been shot down when leaders dismissed them because someone else thought of them? Thus, proper appreciation, expressed openly and often, for those who follow, as well as for those who assist in leading, comes from one who is not arrogant, selfish, insecure, or jealous. Even when he is not personally responsible, he accepts the responsibility as leader, and those who follow have no misunderstanding about who is leading, or in what direction they are to go.

### **Good Leadership Requires Courage**

Being a leader of God’s people is not an honorary position, but a solemn responsibility. Still, leadership is not just a job but is also a great opportunity. Leaders must have courage to face the challenges of opposition from without, and their own fears from within, without being shaken. Courage does not mean one does not recognize opposition, or that one does not have fears. Courage does not require striving, but it does require standing. Courage means going forward in spite of these things, keeping on, keeping on, even when it would be easier to quit, to give up, or just to do nothing. The Lord’s church needs men who are not afraid of leadership, men appointed to lead who will not disappoint because they lack courage.

Moses was somewhat like another shepherd, David, who received the call to lead God’s people. David, whether he realized

it or not, had prepared himself to face the Philistine giant, Goliath, and defeat him. David's life was one of preparation for greater future service, and victory over every foe, even before his knowing of God's plan for him to be the leader of His people (1 Sam. 17). Let us pay particular heed to this lesson: David did not have to begin, on that day, to prepare himself to face the giant with courage, for he had been preparing for that day all his life.

### **Conclusion**

At the age of eighty, Moses, a simple shepherd, living an isolated, quiet life, received a call from God to the important work of leading his people to freedom and blessing in Canaan. It was a great task, but the great God of his fathers backed it. With reassuring promises, positive prophecies, and wondrous signs, God instructed and equipped Moses for his job. After excuses which Moses offered, but which God answered and refused to accept, Moses set out. Yet, his failure to circumcise his son, perhaps at the insistence of Zipporah, almost cost him his life, and teaches all of us the lesson that God's servant must first be God's faithful child.

From the events recorded in Exodus 4:18-23, we should notice that Moses, as great as he was (cf. Num. 12:3; 1 Chron. 23:14; Josh. 1:1-2; Jer. 15:1; Heb. 3:5; Heb. 11:24ff; Rev. 15:3), was not above obedience to all the commands of God, nor was he granted immunity (cf. Num. 20:7-12). Neither did God look upon him as the only one who could accomplish the task before him (cf. Esth. 4:14). "That even as important a man as Moses will be sacrificed if the dignity of God's ordinance demands it" (Zerr 111).

Let us also observe how the above incident teaches us another most important lesson in connection with service. Before God suffered Moses to go and minister to Israel, He first required him to set his own house in order.



Not until this had been attended to was Moses qualified for his mission. (Pink 40)

In view of the above, honest, unflattering portrayal of Moses in Scripture, including all his excuses and his failure to keep the covenant of circumcision, one might ask, “How could Moses lead God’s people?” Let this be a lesson to us to trust God, obey His commands, and serve Him. There is no task too challenging, no difficulty too hard, and no cost too great, for us to excuse ourselves from doing what our Lord said do (Luke 6:46). It will surely be as God has said (Rev. 2:10).

Reunited with Aaron, Moses informed him of God’s call, and together they began to carry out God’s plan. The reception from the people was as God had promised, and the result was the first step was taken to leading the great nation of Israel out of Egypt and into the land flowing with milk and honey.

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## CHAPTER 9

# And He Began To Make Excuse: Who Am I?

*Gary Hampton*

### The Beginning Of Man's Excuses

**E**xcuse making is almost as old as man. The Biblical record only tells of one law that God gave man in the garden. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'" (New King James Version, Gen. 2:16-17). The word *commanded* makes it plain "that man's duty is to do the will of God. As His creature, man owes his Creator willing and perfect obedience" (Allis 17).

After eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, both Adam and Eve offered God an excuse. Adam said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12). He was trying to excuse himself by passing the blame on to woman and, ultimately, God who had made her and given her to man. Eve seemingly took her cue from her husband and tried to pass the blame to the serpent when she said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Gen. 3:13). In other words, both were attempting to deflect the force of their sin and the punishment it would bring. It is important to note

that the word rendered "hear" in iii. 8, 10 is the same in the Hebrew as the word rendered "hearken unto" in iii. 17. This Hebrew verb occurs more than 1,000 times in the Old Testament. It is usually rendered by "hear, hearken, obey".

E.g. “hear” (Deut. Vi. 4), “hearken unto” (Exod. Xviii. 24), “obeyed” (Gen. xxvi. 5). Consequently “hearing” ears are “obedient” ears.” (Allis 17)

Thus, anyone who hears the will of God and attempts to avoid doing as He says is disobedient, excuses notwithstanding.

### **God's Commission To Moses**

Those thoroughly acquainted with Moses at age forty might anticipate an eager acceptance of God's commission as recorded in Exodus 3:10. “Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” Stephen reports,

Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. (Acts 7:23-25)

“But Moses was no longer the noble Prince of Egypt, leader of men. For forty years he had been a humble shepherd” (Manor 289). So Moses tried to excuse himself through asking, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exod. 3:11)

When we remember that Moses was alone, that he had no army, not even any bosom friends and associates with any power or influence, and when we remember that he is to go to the most powerful king of the most powerful nation on earth and demand that some two million

souls shall be released to leave the land, we can appreciate Moses' hesitancy. (Lanier 34)

In what may be a stark contrast to the man he was forty years before, Moses was now a humble man. Lard observed, "Moses' humility and meekness were essential qualifications for this great work.... Envy and jealousy of others are the very obstacles in the way of some men. Lack of humility and meekness and much self-esteem and self-conceit stand greatly in the way of some's accomplishing much in preaching the gospel" (213). In short, God had been preparing a leader for His people in the land of Midian.

### **God's Promise**

Man, even one as faithful as Moses, focused on his own assets and abilities can be overwhelmed by the challenges that confront him. God's answer is simple, but powerful, "I will certainly be with you." God's great power would be the delivering force. It could be said that anyone is someone with God on his side! God's words to Moses on this occasion are reminiscent of the words He spoke to Abraham after the victory over the four kings. "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (Gen. 15:1b). "The divine promise to be a shield to him, that is to say, a protection against all enemies, and a reward, i.e. richly to reward his confidence, his ready obedience" (Keil 210-211). It will become apparent that there are many thoughts from the covenant God made with Abram that play a role in Moses' commission.

When Saul questioned the ability of a young David to go up against the giant, Goliath, David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:37). In much the same way, Isaiah wanted Israel to see the power and ability of God which was readily available to those who would follow Him.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the

ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. (40:28-31)

Seemingly insurmountable tasks can be overcome by those who have God on their side.

### **The Proof Of The Promise**

As proof of the veracity of His words, the Almighty gave a sign, “When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain” (Exod. 3:12). The Almighty had already identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is possible that mention was intended to bring to mind the time when Abram, fresh from the defeat of the four kings, offered tithes to Melchizedek, priest of God most High. Remembering that event should have also called to mind Abram’s question about an heir and how God brought him outside to see the stars and promised him that his descendants would be like them in number (Gen. 15:1-5). Moses knew that promise, though unimaginable at the time it was given, had been fulfilled in the marvelous growth of Abram’s descendants. However, at the time it was given, Abram could only trust God would complete what He promised. “And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6).

God was now speaking to Moses in much the same way as He had to Abram. “The promise that God would have the people serve Him in that place was an assurance, if fully believed, that all intervening obstacles would be removed by His power” (Cook 13). Clearly, Moses was expected to act on faith since, “The reality of the appearance of God formed the pledge of His announcement,

that Israel would there serve its God; and this truth was to fill Moses with confidence in the execution of the divine command” (Keil 441).

### **God’s Authority**

If he was going to tell the people of Israel that the God of their fathers had sent him and they should listen, Moses wanted to know what he should say God’s name was, if they should ask (Exod. 3:13). In other words, Moses was not going to be operating under his own authority and needed to be able to tell the people by whose authority he came.

What Moses needed was not a new name, but direction to use that name which would bear in itself a pledge of accomplishment. Moses was familiar with the Egyptian habit of choosing from the names of the gods that which bore specially upon the wants and circumstances of their worshippers, and this may have suggested the question which would be the first his own people would expect him to answer. (Cook 13)

Or, as Keil wrote, “The question, ‘What is His name?’ presupposed that the name expressed the nature and operations of God, and that God would manifest in deeds the nature expressed in His name” (442).

### **The Great I AM**

God’s answer was simple, but powerful. “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exod. 3:14). This describes “God either as the One who is, the self-existent and eternal, or as the One who reveals Himself (‘I will be what I will be’) in word and deed” (Allis 63). “This name precluded any comparison between the God of the Israelites and the deities of the Egyptians and other nations, and furnished Moses and his people with strong consolation in their affliction,

and a powerful support to their confidence in the realization of His purpose of salvation as made known to the fathers” (Keil 442).

No human being can comprehend the nature of a being who had no begetter; not explainable is it how a being could exist who had no beginning, who is his own cause for being. Everything else must have a cause, and ultimately the cause for everything is God, but for God there was no cause. He is the uncaused Cause.

...The very nature of deity is self-existence. This cannot be explained. It must be accepted by faith. He who comes to God must believe that he is (Heb. 11:6), but he cannot know why or how he exists.

...The fact that we cannot explain how or why God exists does not weaken the fact that he is. If something is, something always was, for out of nothing, nothing comes. Something therefore always has been. To reason that, since everything is caused, God himself would have to have had a cause, appears logical until one surveys an unending, an infinite series of causes, each of which is contingent on a cause back of it. Then one's reason tells him there had to be an original, an uncaused Cause, else nothing ever could have gotten started. If in his reasoning one never gets back to a first cause which itself is uncaused, then no explanation is possible how anything came to exist. Logically therefore, a first Cause must exist who himself was not caused, namely, the self-existent one, Yahweh. (McCord 16-17)

The very meaning of the name “I AM” seems to carry with it the force of Jesus' words to John in Revelation 1:4. “Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come.”



### I AM Designates Deity

The Jews of Jesus' day fully understood that anyone saying he was the I AM was saying he was deity. Jesus, in a discussion with the Jews said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." As McGarvey wrote, "'I was' would simply have expressed priority, but 'I am' marks timeless existence. It draws the contrast between the created and the uncreated, the temporal and the eternal" (461). The Jews in the temple fully understood the significance of the statement and "took up stones to throw at him" because they counted Him a blasphemer (John 8:58-59). Yet, He was merely stating the truth.

John proclaimed, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3). There is no need to wonder who the Word was since a few verses later John continued by saying, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The Word, then, was the incarnate Son of God. After an angel of the Lord explained to Joseph that the child Mary was carrying was conceived of the Holy Spirit, Matthew stated, "So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying; 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us'" (Matt. 1:18-23; Isa. 7:14).

### The God Of Abraham, Isaac, And Jacob

After telling Moses He was the I Am, God went on to say, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations'" (Exod. 3:15). "That is to say, God would even manifest Himself in the nature expressed by the name Jehovah, and by this He would have all generations both know and revere Him" (Keil 442).

The word translated *LORD* is the Hebrew word *Yahweh*. This is certainly not the first use of this name for God. Thirty-four times

from Genesis 1:1 to 2:3, Moses used the name God, or Elohim. “Then Moses introduced the name ‘Yahweh’ and used it 19 times in Genesis 2:4–3:24 coupled with the word ‘God’” (McCord 15). God’s inspired penman does not specifically state why he used this fuller name, but these initial instances of using God’s most personal name, Yahweh Elohim, occur “in a context of very personal relationships between God and man, between Yahweh and Adam. The context reflects Yahweh’s breathing into Adam’s nostrils, garden planting, garden walking, the making of Eve, and direct conversation between Yahweh and Adam and Eve” (McCord 15). Yahweh, which is found about 6,823 times, is used more than any other designation for God in the Old Testament.

The Israelite fathers

“were quite familiar with the phrase ‘El Shaddai, God Almighty, but ‘as to [the meaning of] my name Yahweh I was not known to them,’ said the Lord (Ex. 6:2). Now, however, at Moses’ request and to beget faith in the Israelites, God for the first time completely revealed the meaning of his name.” (McCord 16)

### **Moses’ Message For The Elders of Israel**

Moses was commissioned to go under the authority of the God of the Israelite fathers and gather the elders of Israel together. He was to tell them that God had seen their suffering and was going to deliver them from Egypt and take them to the promised land. This is a direct fulfillment of the God’s promise to visit His people, as delivered through Joseph.

So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father’s household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. Joseph saw Ephraim’s children to the third generation. The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph’s

knees. And Joseph said to his brethren, "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. (Gen. 50:22-26)

When Moses went and told the Israelite elders all that God had said, He told him they would listen to him and go with him to Pharaoh. They were to ask the king to let them go three days' journey into the wilderness to worship their God. "This was a demand quite in accordance with Egyptian customs" (Cook 13). However, God also foretold that Pharaoh would not let them go, even by a powerful hand. When they finally were released, God said He would cause the Egyptians to send them out with great abundance. In fact, He said they would plunder Egypt (Exod. 3:13-22)!

The elders of the people should have recognized all of this as an exact fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. "Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions'" (Gen. 15:13-14). Perhaps that is why they went with Moses to see Pharaoh.

### **Hear God With An Obedient Ear**

A close examination of the first excuse Moses gave in response to God's call for him to go to Egypt and serve as the instrument the Almighty would use to deliver Israel offers a number of good lessons for today. For instance, it is evident that excuse making arises from a desire to do something other than follow the command of God, as

Adam and Eve well demonstrate. Moses teaches the power of doing as God directs. When he obeyed, God powerfully delivered His people from bondage in Egypt.

Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). James, by inspiration, expounded upon the same theme when he instructed,

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (Jas. 1:21-25)

Any follower of Christ who would experience the blessings of God must give close attention to the things spoken in the word of God.

### **Humbly Pursue God’s Commission**

After forty years in the wilderness, Moses had learned the humility necessary to accept the commission of God. Today, God’s messengers have a similar commission given by Jesus who had been given authority by His Father. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

Those effectively carrying out that commission should pursue it with humility knowing that the power is in the message preached, not the messenger. The apostle Paul declared, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:1-2). It is apparent that he understood the power to save is in the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18). Rather than placing the emphasis upon himself or other men, the apostle pointed the Corinthian Christians to the real source of church growth. “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

### **God Has Promised To Be With Us**

Moses asked God who he was to take on such an awesome task. God responded by saying He would be with him. When Jesus gave the great commission to His apostles, He promised to be with them as they carried it out. That reassurance should give God’s people all the confidence they need, as Paul made plain in his rhetorical question. “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

The writer of Hebrews exhorted his readers to stay away from the world’s greed and be happy in the state in which they found themselves (Heb. 13:5-6). He urged them to recognize that this could be achieved by using a series of quotations from the writings of Moses and the Psalms. He reminded them of the promise God delivered through Moses to Joshua as he took over the mantle of leadership over God’s people. The God of Israel powerfully promised to never leave or forsake His people (Deut. 31:6-8). In confirmation of the trustworthiness of that promise, the singer of Israel confidently observed, “I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread” (Psa. 37:25).

### **The Assurance Of The Promise**

Moses only knew God would deliver the children of Israel through faith, since God confirmed His promise by saying they would worship God on the very mountain where he had heard Him speak from the burning bush. In much the same way, Christians possess eternal life in prospect through God's promise. The Lord said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30). Peter reassured the scattered Christians when he wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

The promise of heaven belongs to those who hold fast the gospel they heard. Joseph understood that God's promise would be accomplished and based his instructions concerning his body upon that confidence (Gen. 50:24-26). Similarly, Christians can fully trust God's promise and should order their lives on that basis. As John confidently stated, "And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life" (1 John 2:25). A few verses later, John stated his purpose for writing. "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life" (English Standard Version, 1 John 5:13). Literally, John was writing to those who would keep on believing, which is the force of the verb the apostle used.

After powerfully reminding the Ephesian Christians of the redemption they had found through Christ's blood, Paul went on to state, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our

inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:13-14).

Thus, it could be said the Holy Spirit is like a down payment or guarantee that the Christian will be allowed to enter heaven. The redemption Christians still look forward to is that of their bodies from the tomb. When we come forth, it will of course be to the glory of God.

### **God’s Authority In Religion**

Just as surely as Moses could anticipate being asked by what authority he came, Christ’s followers today can expect to be asked by what authority they do the things they do in religion. In truth, God’s people should insist that others hold them to that standard. Peter may have been speaking of miraculous gifts in 1 Peter 4, but his injunction would be just as important for those speaking for God today. “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11a). The word for “oracles” is the Greek word *logion*, meaning “the utterances of God through Christian teachers” (Thayer 379). The man who would be God’s preacher must then be sure to get his message from Scripture, since Paul told Timothy, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

### **Yield To God’s Authority**

When Moses went to the elders of Israel backed by Jehovah God’s authority, they yielded to his message and went with him to Pharaoh. The ancient Bereans similarly heard the message of Paul, checked its truthfulness by comparing it to God’s authoritative word, and yielded to the will of the Almighty (Acts 17:11). Those today who hear a message clearly presented with the authoritative support of the Word of God should likewise yield. The Red Sea tomb of Pharaoh and those who drove his chariots proclaims any other approach will surely lead to death (Rom. 6:23).

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## CHAPTER 10

# And He Began To Make Excuse: But Behold, They Will Not Believe Me

*Kevin Beard*

In the history of God's people, few men if any have shown themselves to be leaders as admirably as did Moses. For forty years he led the Israelites toward Canaan, the land God had promised to give to Abraham's descendants. This great man bore with the stubborn and rebellious Israelites in a way that boggles the mind of the average person. He was a lawgiver, a prophet, a leader, and a judge to a nation that seldom seemed to appreciate his greatness. Despite the ingratitude and shortsightedness of the people, Moses continued to serve the Lord by leading the people to the Promised Land.

Examining only the last forty years of Moses' life might lead a person to assume that this great man had always shown the strength of character for which he is so fittingly known today. After all, a man with so many noble qualities must be more than the average person; surely he must never have struggled with the weaknesses, temptations, and shortcomings that the average person must strive to overcome. Such an assumption is wrong. Moses' first forty years of life were spent in Egypt in the household of the Pharaoh. During this time he likely received much worthwhile experience and education that would serve him well in his life as the leader of God's people. At the end of this phase of his life, Moses thought he was ready to step into the role God was preparing him eventually to take. Stephen spoke of Moses' desire: "For he supposed that his brethren would

have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand” (New King James Version, Acts 7:25). However, the time was not right for him to take this step. God had forty years in a much more humble setting in store before Moses would be fully prepared to fulfill his ultimate mission. In exile from Egypt after killing an Egyptian, Moses married a woman in Midian and served her father by tending his flocks. Forty years in Midian probably brought unique opportunities for the development of Moses’ character, qualities that would be perhaps even more important to him in the wilderness than all the education and training Egypt had provided. It was after these eighty years of preparation that God was ready to send Moses on his important mission; but was Moses ready?

God revealed Himself to Moses in an amazing way by speaking to him from a bush that was on fire but was not being consumed by the fire. One might think that someone like Moses, upon hearing the voice of the Lord emanating from that burning bush, would have quickly submitted himself to God’s desires; but he did not. The great man Moses initially responded to God’s commission by coming up with excuses for why he was not the man for the job. Sometimes it may seem that great men like Moses were above the kind of struggles that often frustrate “ordinary” people. Seeing how God dealt with Moses’ excuses can be encouraging for anyone who finds himself struggling with uncertainty or insecurity in serving the Lord. There is also much to learn about God’s means of revealing Himself to mankind in examining the specific excuse Moses offered when he said, “But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you’” (Exod. 4:1).

### **God’s Response To Moses’ Excuse**

The word *excuse* often carries a negative connotation, implying an attempt to avoid some kind of responsibility. Was Moses offering an excuse in that sense of trying to avoid the responsibility God was giving him? It seems that this was at least partly the case. After hearing God’s responses to his excuses, Moses still wanted God to choose someone else to do the work. God’s reaction shows that He

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was not pleased with how Moses responded to the commission: “But he said, ‘O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.’ So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses” (Exod. 4:13-14). Moses said, “Suppose they will not believe me,” but it could have been that Moses himself had lingering doubts. How often is it the case that someone will try to hide his own opinions by painting them as the opinions of others? Wiersbe thought Moses was doing this. He wrote, “‘They will not believe’ really means ‘I do not believe’” (183). Did Moses really lack faith? Some find it hard to accept that a man like this could be deficient in his faith. One writer put it this way: “However, because Moses finally did obey, and because he is called a man of faith (Heb. 11:24-29), we are reluctant to say he lacked faith” (Fields 109-110). There is a difference between complete disbelief and doubt, and faith is a living thing that is subject to growth. Certainly Moses believed that the One speaking to him from the bush truly was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but does that preclude the possibility of his experiencing doubts nonetheless? His doubts seem to be more focused on himself than on God. So to say he lacked faith seems to draw more attention to his realization of his own inadequacy than it does to his level of belief in God.

Even the great men and women of faith whose lives are recorded in Scripture struggled with the difficulties of living by faith in a world opposed to all that is holy. Such struggles do not necessarily indicate character flaws; instead, they show that those people were ordinary people who learned how to rely on a faith that required opportunity to grow. God is not displeased with His children when there is still room for their faith to grow, so long as they continue to allow their faith to grow. Paul considered such a thing to be worthy of giving thanks: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other” (2 Thess. 1:3). As faith grows, the Christian’s ability and willingness to work in God’s kingdom also grow. Of this truth Paul was confident: “For it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; not boasting of things

beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment" (2 Cor. 10:14-16).

What might have caused Moses to question his ability to do what God wanted him to do? Perhaps he could only imagine trying to convince the people by his own abilities. One man humbled by 40 years of herding livestock certainly would not be successful in such a daunting task if he had to work all on his own. Think of how poorly he might have been received by his own people: they had suffered at the Egyptians' hands for generations; they had no claim to any recourse concerning their mistreatment; there had been no apparent indication of God's interest in their deliverance. Why should they believe Moses? Even if they remembered his past relationship with Egyptian royalty, there was no reason now to believe that he was capable of delivering them. Also, why should they believe his claim of receiving a divine mandate? Anyone can claim that God has spoken to him, but since no one can see God, and no one can go have a conversation with Him to confirm the claim, a person making such a claim has only his word as proof. Even if Moses could convince the Israelites, his task would only become more difficult when the time came for him to convince the Egyptians. At least the Israelites would have wanted to believe that God was sending someone to deliver them, but the Egyptians had no such desire. The Israelites also believed in Jehovah, but the Egyptians had their own gods in whom they trusted. Those Israelites who remembered Moses might have initially looked upon him favorably when they remembered he had fled Egypt for killing an Egyptian taskmaster; but the Egyptians would not have been pleased with his actions from those days. With all of these hindrances, is it any wonder that Moses hesitated to accept the mission God gave him? It would seem to be the quintessential "Mission Impossible."

There is a problem with this kind of evaluation of the task. It directs all of the attention to man and none to God. Who wanted

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the people of Israel to leave Egypt? God did! He had already told Moses,

I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. (Exod. 3:7-8)

God had made it clear that He intended to deliver the Israelites from Egypt and to give to them the land of Canaan. If God intends to do something, no human power can prevent His success. God intended to deliver Israel and He intended to do it with Moses as His leader. Yes, the task would be difficult for Moses and it would require great personal sacrifice, but faith in God should have led him to the conclusion: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26).

God addressed Moses’ problem by redirecting his focus from himself to the power of God. This is the key to overcoming self-doubt. Rawlinson noted Moses’ objection and said, “This was plain want of faith; but not unnatural, and not, in God’s sight, inexcusable. God therefore condescended to the human weakness of his servant, and proceeded to show him *how* he intended that he should persuade the people of his mission. He should persuade them by producing the credentials of miracles (vers. 2-9)” (85). Three miraculous signs would confirm to any who would question Moses that God had indeed sent him to deliver Israel. These signs also would strengthen Moses’ own faith that it was God, and not himself, who would deliver.

God commanded Moses to throw his rod onto the ground. There was nothing special about the rod; it was probably just the

staff he had used in tending the flocks. Tossing it onto the ground was no great feat, either; he must have done this so often in the past that he would think nothing of it under ordinary circumstances. This was no ordinary circumstance, though. Upon casting the rod to the ground, “it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it” (Exod. 4:3). This was no parlor trick or sleight of hand. Moses feared the thing that had once been his trusted tool. There is no way to identify the species of snake the rod became, but it seems reasonable to assume that whatever it was, Moses knew it to be dangerous because he ran from it. This provided the opportunity for Moses’ faith to be strengthened. “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Reach out your hand and take it by the tail’ (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand)” (Exod. 4:4). If someone fears being bitten by a poisonous snake, he will probably not try to pick it up, and if he did try to pick it up, it would certainly not be by the tail. Yet this is exactly what God told Moses to do. Obeying God’s instruction would require faith, and once he obeyed, Moses’ faith would grow stronger. One writer noted, “Considering the light in which Moses had viewed this serpent, it required considerable faith to induce him thus implicitly to obey the command of God; but he obeyed, and the noxious serpent became instantly the miraculous rod in his hand! Implicit faith and obedience conquer all difficulties; and he who believes in God, and obeys him in all things, has really nothing to fear” (Clarke 309).

Too often children of God limit themselves in their service to the Lord because they evaluate situations in the same way Moses seemed to do; they look only to their own strengths and abilities. Consider a better way to approach such things. First, determine whether the task at hand is according to the will of God. Moses had no doubt that his task was according to God’s will because God told him it was. Though God does not communicate His will from burning bushes today, His children still have the confidence to know what that divine will is because God has revealed it in Scripture. The Lord’s servants cannot hope to know and do the will of God without diligently studying the Bible. Second, consider the fact that God wants His will to succeed.

The Lord declared through Isaiah: “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isa. 55:10-11). If God intends for His will to succeed, does it not stand to reason that He will provide for its success? Paul told the Philippian church, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). In encouraging the Corinthians to give liberally, he said, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8). Knowing what the will of God is and trusting that God both intends for His will to succeed and provides for that success ought to produce a confidence in God that will enable the Christian to go out and do his best to accomplish great things for the Lord’s cause.

### **Miraculous Confirmation Of God’s Word**

Moses’ hesitation to obey the Lord is understandable. What reason did the Israelites or the Egyptians have to believe him? Without some proof, his claims would carry no weight. This fact lies behind Moses’ objection: “But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you’” (Exod. 4:1). It is completely understandable that Moses would have such concerns. “It is quite probable that the Israelites would have so spoken, if Moses had had no sign to show. There had been no appearance of Jehovah to anyone for above four hundred years. And the Israelites, who had not seen Moses for forty years, would not know whether he was a veracious person or not” (Rawlinson 85). Anyone can claim to have received some divine revelation, but there must be some kind of extraordinary proof to validate that claim. The miraculous signs recorded in the Bible were such extraordinary proof.

Many people today speak of miracles in very common terms. For example, some speak of “the miracle of childbirth.” Others

may refer to some unlikely occurrence, such as surviving a terrible accident, as a “miracle.” These usages of the word *miracle* do take into consideration some of the qualities of the genuine miracles, like the wonder and amazement they caused, or the unlikelihood of their occurrence. However, true miracles cannot be explained by natural processes. Consider this description: “A miracle is a divine operation that transcends what is normally perceived as natural law; it cannot be explained upon any natural basis” (Jackson). For something to be a sign of God’s endorsement, it must clearly be something attributable to God and to no other means. Otherwise, doubt may remain in the minds of those who need to be convinced. The signs God gave Moses were clearly miracles in this true sense of the word.

When Moses’ rod transformed into a serpent, no natural explanation for the phenomenon could have been found. Moses knew the rod was merely a rod since it belonged to him and he had been using it in herding the flocks. When Pharaoh’s magicians attempted to duplicate the feat (Exod. 7:11-12), there was no way for anyone to verify that the magicians’ rods were in truth common rods. Rawlinson suggests,

The magicians, aware of the wonder which would probably be wrought, had prepared themselves; they had brought serpents, charmed and stiffened so as to look like rods (a common trick in Egypt: ‘Description de l’Egypte,’ vol. i. p. 159) in their hands; and when Aaron’s rod became a serpent, they threw their stiffened snakes upon the ground, and disenchanting them, so that they were seen to be what they were—snakes, and not really rods. (166)

Regardless of the true means used by the Egyptian conjurers, Moses had no doubt that the rod he threw to the ground was no magician’s prop. What else could explain its transformation? God must have done it.



God may have chosen this sign specifically for the effect it would have in light of the circumstances in Egypt. Though the Bible does not specify the following things as motives behind God's choice, they do provoke interesting thought. The Egyptians despised shepherds (Gen. 46:34) and God chose a shepherd's staff as the instrument through which He would demonstrate His power. Was this intended to be a subtle message to the proud Egyptians? Coffman believed this to be likely:

...it [Moses' rod] could hardly have been anything else except the usual shepherd's crook distinguished as the invariable instrument of shepherds. How appropriate was such a choice on God's part! The Egyptians despised shepherds; and now, it was to be a shepherd's staff that would humble and overthrow the all powerful enemies of God's people. The might and glory of Egypt would be humbled and destroyed by it, yet it was merely an instrument in the hands of an instrument (Moses) of God! (41)

Additionally, consider the choice of a snake as the sign demonstrating God's involvement in these things. The species of reptile is not indicated, "The word here used for 'serpent,' *nakhash*, is a generic word applicable to any species of snake" (Rawlinson 85), and thus no definite ties to any symbolic significance can be made. However, it is at least interesting to consider a possibility suggested by some. "This miracle had a meaning which Moses could not mistake. The serpent was probably the basilisk or Uraeus, the Cobra. This was the symbol of royal and divine power on the diadem of every Pharaoh. The conversion of the rod was not merely a portent, it was a sign, at once a pledge and representation of victory over the king and gods of Egypt!" (Barnes). Coffman agreed: "Here again, the symbolism is most important, showing God's power as infinitely superior to the serpent-crowned rulers of Egypt" (41). Whether or

not God intended these things to be gleaned from changing Moses' rod into a snake cannot be determined beyond doubt from the Scriptures, but it certainly is consistent with the power and nature of God to provide miraculous signs that would be most perfectly suited for the purpose at hand.

For a second sign, God instructed Moses to place his hand "in his bosom," that is, inside his clothing, next to his chest, "And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow" (Exod. 4:6). Leprosy, a dreaded disease that manifested with various severe symptoms in the skin, did not ordinarily appear suddenly in its advanced form; it gradually developed and spread over the body as the disease progressed. The Law of Moses specified a list of diagnostic criteria for the priest to follow when determining whether a person had leprosy (Lev. 13). These criteria illustrate the gradual spread and development of the disease in its natural form. Only a miracle could account for the immediate onset of full-blown leprosy. Such a miracle would have a special impact on those who witnessed it.

The leprosy, at least among the Jews, was a most inveterate and contagious disorder, and deemed by them incurable. Among the heathens it was considered as inflicted by their gods, and it was supposed that they alone could remove it. It is certain that a similar belief prevailed among the Israelites; hence, when the king of Syria sent his general Naaman, to the king of Israel to cure him of his leprosy, he rent his clothes, saying, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? 2Ki 5:7. This appears, therefore, to be the reason why God chose this sign, as the instantaneous infliction and removal of this disease were demonstrations which all would allow of the sovereign power of God. (Clarke 309)

Here again, the miracle's purpose shines through. If a man performed a deed that could only be accomplished by divine power, then he must be acting with divine approval.

As with the first sign, could it be that God intended an additional impact for those who witnessed this second sign? People of that era feared leprosy. As noted above, some may even have considered it to be a specific form of punishment from the gods. If Moses could cause the disease to appear and then to disappear at will, surely he must have God's punitive and destructive power at his command. One writer observed, "The instantaneous production and cure of the most malignant and subtle disease known to the Israelites was a sign of their danger if they resisted the command, and of their deliverance if they obeyed it" (Barnes). Another said, "What might not he do to smite or to save on whom God had bestowed such power over the human organism? Each man would naturally fear to resist or disobey one so dangerously gifted" (Rawlinson 86).

If the first two miracles failed to convince those who doubted Moses, God assigned a third to be performed in Egypt. "And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land" (Exod. 4:9). Since Moses was to perform these signs upon returning to Egypt, the river God mentioned must have been the Nile. Nothing affected Egypt's physical existence as did the Nile. "Cultivable Egypt is altogether the product of the Nile, every particle of the soil having been brought down by the river from the heart of the continent and deposited along the banks and especially in the delta at the mouth of the river" (Kyle). Because the great river gave life to Egypt, the people revered and worshiped it. "The seasonal festivals recognizing the Nile took place at a number of points along the river, with various offerings, amulets, and figurines. At times there was even human sacrifice to the Nile" (Huffman). Seeing Moses change the life-giving water of the Nile to blood should have convinced the Egyptians that God, Whom Moses represented, reigned supreme over their supposed deities.

God used those miraculous signs to convince everyone involved that He was God and that Moses was His spokesman. He continued to use miraculous works to bring about the same kind of results to the First Century. John said of Jesus' miracles, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). God's message of salvation "was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 2:3-4). As it was with Moses, so it was with Jesus and the Apostles: anyone can claim to have a message from God, but without genuine proof, the claim cannot be validated.

Those miracles convinced those who witnessed them firsthand, but what about people of succeeding generations who were not there to see them? Must God continue to provide miraculous confirmation of truth? Some people desire this. There are those who claim to exercise miraculous abilities, such as speaking in tongues or healing the sick; however, a close examination will show that their claims fall short of what genuinely took place in the First Century. There are others, though, who desire some sort of direct communication or manifestation from God to convince them. Some declare, "If only God would come down and tell me what He wants me to do!" They want some kind of miraculous demonstration to convince them; yet they reject the miraculous confirmation God has already given. Once truth has been confirmed, there is no need for continued verification. Did Moses need to repeat the signs God gave him over and over, or did the fact that he was God's spokesman stand confirmed upon the original performance of the miracles? Though Moses continued to demonstrate the power of God through miraculous means in his dealings with the people of Israel, it was not to convince them that God had spoken to him and had sent him to deliver them. The same principle governs the miraculous confirmation of Christ and the gospel. Notice the following: "If it can be established that those early miracles do corroborate the testimony of Christ, and

those commissioned by him; and further, that the recording of these events in the New Testament was designed to perpetually accomplish that function, then it stands as demonstrated that the repetition of such signs is not needed today” (Jackson). Mark said of those early followers of Jesus, “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen” (Mark 16:20). They confirmed the word through the miraculous signs. Those miracles did have their intended effect; but what about those who never had opportunity to witness them? John said, of the signs Jesus performed, “These are written that you may believe” (John 20:31). According to Jackson, “He declares that the ‘signs’ of Christ, which he records in his gospel account, ‘are written [gegraptai—perfect tense, abiding effect] that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God’ (John 20:31).” The Scriptures provide the continuing confirmation of truth by their accurate record of the miracles that were performed. Jackson concluded, “It ought to be abundantly clear, therefore, that since the miracles of the Bible continue to accomplish their original purpose, there is no need for a repetition of them today.”

What benefit would there be to the kind of miraculous demonstration or revelation that some say they want today? By rejecting the Bible’s record, they reject as insufficient the signs already given. The Pharisees in Jesus’ day did the same. “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You’” (Matt. 12:38). Had there not already been signs given? Of course there had, but those men had rejected them. So Jesus responded, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah” (Matt. 12:39). No one should expect his own private miracle to confirm God’s plan for him. The signs have been given and all doubt as to God’s Word has been removed. Additionally, consider the real effects such personal signs would have. Jesus told of a rich man who died and found himself in torment (Luke 16:19-31). This rich man made some special requests of Abraham when he realized his fate, one of which was, “I beg you therefore, father, that you would

send him [Lazarus] to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment" (Luke 16:27-28). Apparently, this man thought a special, personal miraculous sign would convince his brothers. Abraham's response is telling: "Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead'" (Luke 16:29-31). The Scriptures are sufficient to convince anyone who genuinely seeks to know the will of God.

### **Conclusion**

Few people on earth have proven themselves to be faithful to God in the way Moses did. He is truly a man to be admired and respected, but he must not be so elevated in people's opinions that they think he was without weakness or fault. Thinking this way about any of the great examples in the Bible can discourage Christians rather than encourage them. Moses was a human being with the same kinds of weaknesses, flaws, and shortcomings that all people experience. This fact can bring comfort and encouragement to anyone who seeks to serve God in spite of his own shortcomings. When God called upon Moses to go to Egypt, his first reaction was to make excuses and to see his own inability. However, knowing that God helped Moses to see things from the divine perspective and that God provided Moses with everything he needed to accomplish the task can be a great lesson to learn today. God still wants to turn His servants' eyes to Him and His power and have them trust His promise to provide. Such faith will motivate the people of God to take His cause to the world.

The miraculous signs God provided Moses also provide help for today. Those signs confirmed God's message then and the signs performed by Jesus and the Apostles confirmed the message of the gospel in the First Century and in all centuries that have followed it. There is no need today for ongoing miracles. Once God's Word

was confirmed and recorded, all doubt and all confusion regarding God's Will for mankind was removed. Today, knowing God's mind requires only the study of the Bible.

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## CHAPTER 11

# And He Began To Make Excuse: O, My Lord, I Am Not Eloquent

*Jason Hilburn*

### Introduction

What is one man against the illustrious ruler of Egypt and a battle hardened Egyptian army? Perhaps such thoughts entered Moses' mind as God commanded him to return to Egypt and confront Pharaoh. After all, Moses had already attempted to help the Israelites in the past and failed. Some forty years before God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, Moses had shown compassion upon his fellow Hebrews and made efforts to help them (King James Version, Exod. 2:11-13; cf. Acts 7:23; Acts 7:30). When Pharaoh heard of Moses' efforts, he sought to slay Moses, and Moses had fled from Egypt:

And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard

this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well. (Exod. 2:11-15)

Such memories would not likely have left the mind of Moses; however, now God would be with Moses if he returned to help the Israelites, which would make all the difference! Not only would God show His superiority over Pharaoh, He would also show His superiority over all the false gods of Egypt and destroy the Egyptian army in the midst of the Red Sea. To be chosen as the ambassador of God in such an epic mission was the greatest of honors, but Moses' fear was greater than his faith at this point; so instead of thanking God for such an opportunity, he began to make excuses. How sad and disappointing it is when God gives people great opportunities to serve Him, and people do not have enough faith to carry out His will. If God is on our side, it does not matter who or what is lined up on the other side! "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

God told Moses, "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Exod. 3:10). Instead of being eager to obey God, Moses began making excuses: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exod. 3:11). God reassured Moses by promising that He would be with him, and that His plan would work: "And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exod. 3:12). Moses' second excuse was "behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee" (Exod. 4:1). God explained to Moses that he would be able to do miraculous signs "that they may believe that the

LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee” (Exod. 4:5; cf. Exod. 4:2-9).

Moses then offered a third excuse:

And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs. (Exod. 4:10-17)

Moses’ other excuses did not stand before God, and neither would this one. The writer will now consider this text, making observations and applications using the following points: The Inarticulate, The Interrogation, The Insubordination, The Indignation, and The Intervention.

### **The Inarticulate (Exod. 4:10)**

Moses begins his third excuse with the phrase, “Oh my Lord.” Coffman stated that this is “an expression of unusual force. It is identical with that which Joseph’s brothers used in addressing the steward of Joseph’s house (Gen. 43:20). Judah used it when pleading with Joseph to spare Benjamin (Gen. 44:18). Aaron used it when pleading for Miriam (Num. 12:11). And Joshua thus addressed God when speaking of Ai (Josh. 7:8).” Moses goes on to state that he is not “eloquent” (neither before nor after God had spoken to him); and that he is “slow of speech,” and “of a slow tongue” (Exod. 4:10). The word *eloquent* can be defined as “speaking readily, clearly, and effectively” (Lewis). There are similar statements of Moses recorded in chapter six: “And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?” (Exod. 6:12; cf. Exod. 6:30).

One may wonder if Moses truly had a lack of eloquence after reading what Stephen revealed: “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds” (Acts 7:22). However, God’s reaction to Moses’ statement does not seem to imply that Moses had been dishonest in the offering of this excuse: “And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say” (Exod. 4:11-12). Could it be that Moses possessed an extensive vocabulary, but simply lacked skill in delivering those words? Burton Coffman noted the following:

In his forty years as a shepherd, Moses had found little opportunity to exercise his speaking talents, no doubt having forgotten through neglect much of the Hebrew language which he might not have used for such a long period. Although that might have been Moses’ problem, most commentators

seem to believe that there was some speech handicap...According to Jewish tradition, Moses had difficulty in pronouncing the labials b, m, v, ph and p.

Adam Clarke offered three possible explanations for the apparent difficulty regarding Exodus 4:10 and Acts 7:22:

1. Moses might have had some natural infirmity, of a late standing, which at that time rendered it impossible for him to speak readily, and which he afterwards overcame; so that though he was not then a man of words, yet he might afterwards have been mighty in words as well as deeds.
2. It is possible he was not intimately acquainted with the Hebrew tongue, so as to speak clearly and distinctly in it. The first forty years of his life he had spent in Egypt, chiefly at court; and though it is very probable there was an affinity between the two languages, yet they certainly were not the same. The last forty he had spent in Midian, and it is not likely that the pure Hebrew tongue prevailed there, though it is probable that a dialect of it was there spoken. On these accounts Moses might find it difficult to express himself with that readiness and persuasive flow of language, which he might deem essentially necessary on such a momentous occasion; as he would frequently be obliged to consult his memory for proper expressions, which would necessarily produce frequent hesitation, and general slowness of utterance, which he might think would ill suit an ambassador of God.
3. Though Moses was slow of speech, yet when acting as the messenger of God his word was with power, for at his command the plagues came and the plagues were stayed; thus was he mighty in words as well as in deeds: and this is probably the meaning of St. Stephen.

Regarding Stephen describing Moses as “mighty in words and deeds,” even if Moses did not have the most refined speaking skills, we know that when he revealed God’s Word as a prophet, those were the mightiest words that anyone could have spoken; and when Moses did miracles by God’s power, those were the mightiest deeds anyone could have done.

Even if Moses were truly inarticulate, should he not have had faith that God would enable him to accomplish His will, regardless of any of Moses’ supposed inadequacies? It is not man’s place to tell God that His commands will not work; it is man’s place to find out what God commands and obey Him! God does not give man commands that he cannot obey: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). Why have so many throughout history claimed to believe in God and yet hesitated to obey Him? When a person hesitates to do as God commands, it reveals an unwillingness to serve God and a lack of faith. Lot’s hesitance to serve God when Sodom and Gomorrah were about to be destroyed almost resulted in his death and the deaths of his family members:

And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. (Gen. 19:15-16)

Gideon hesitated and gave an excuse when God chose him to deliver Israel from the Midianites:

And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from

the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. (Judg. 6:14-16)

When God told Jeremiah that he was going to be a prophet, Jeremiah brought forth an excuse similar to Moses' third excuse:

Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. (Jer. 1:4-7)

Peter had to be remonstrated several times when he was commanded to kill and eat certain foods in a vision: "And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven" (Acts 10:13-16).

Just as many in Bible times hesitated to obey God's commands and made excuses, many today make excuses to avoid laboring for the Lord. Is it not true that Moses' third excuse (Exod. 4:10) is the same excuse many members of the Lord's church use today? Are there any in the Lord's church who refuse to be evangelistic, claiming that they are not "good with words"? Some may even say, "After all, that's what

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we pay the preacher to do,” without realizing or acknowledging that they are also under the Lord’s Great Commission! Are there any who refuse to teach Bible classes simply because they do not consider themselves to be good speakers? Are there any in the Lord’s church who do not pray much because they feel they are not eloquent enough? Are there any in the Lord’s church today who refuse to sing songs of praise because they say their singing ability is not good enough? God is much more concerned about obedience from a sincere heart than He is concerned about some grand presentation of oratorical skills, lengthy prayers, or singing that merely sounds good to human ears. This principle has been stressed by God throughout the Scriptures (1 Sam. 15:22-23; Mic. 6:6-8; Matt. 6:2; Matt. 6:5-7; Matt. 6:16; John 4:24; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 2 Cor. 9:7, et al.). God’s people must remove all selfish fears of embarrassment or failure and have enough faith to serve the Lord as they should in faithful obedience from the heart. When excuses are used instead of obeying God, His anger is provoked.

Moses had fled Egypt in fear some forty years earlier (Exod. 2:14-15), and perhaps Moses was now afraid to go back to Egypt, but fear was no excuse to disobey God’s command to “go.” On the Judgment Day, fear will not excuse disobedience (Matt. 25:25; Rev. 21:8). When God gives a command, His followers should have enough faith to carry it out rather than doubt and lean on their own understanding. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7). It was fear that kept great numbers of people from entering the promised land of Canaan (Num. 13:31-33; Num. 14:30-37). The writer of Hebrews called their fear “unbelief,” because their fear was basically nothing more than a lack of faith! (Heb. 3:7-19). He also wrote that Christians should not follow their poor example, lest they fail to enter the Promised Land of Heaven: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Heb. 4:1). The writer of Hebrews relates that when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, he did not leave in fear, because he knew that God was with him: “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the



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wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27). While Moses would go on to develop and display great faith in God in many difficult situations, ultimately he would not enter the promised land of Canaan. God said the reason was “because ye believed me not.”

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. (Num. 20:7-12; cf. Deut. 3:25-28; Deut. 32:52; Deut. 34:4)

Christians must follow the positive examples of those who did not hesitate to obey God, such as Caleb: “And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30). Andrew and Peter immediately followed Christ: “And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his

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brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him” (Matt. 4:18-20). Saul of Tarsus began preaching Christ “straightway” after his conversion: “he...arose, and was baptized...Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9:18-20).

The great chapter of faith, Hebrews 11, is replete with examples of people who did not balk at God’s commands; therefore they overcame seemingly insurmountable odds through faith in God. One of the greatest examples of them all is Abraham. Even though Abraham was given the extremely difficult command of offering his son Isaac, Abraham had enough faith to believe that God would raise Isaac from the dead if He chose to do so: “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. 11:17-19).

One thing to be remembered about people like those mentioned in Hebrews 11 is that while they had many great qualities, they were ordinary people. They fell short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 5:12) and needed a sinless, perfect Savior (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Heb. 4:15). Such people of faith are not people who are perfect in every way—they simply have enough faith in God to persevere when the odds are against them and to get back up if they fall spiritually.

Although Moses would also be mentioned in Hebrews 11, which has been called the “Faith Hall of Fame,” it was certainly not because of the attitude he was displaying with these excuses! Moses would have to learn to trust in God before he could effectively lead God’s people: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:5-6). As Moses’ faith grew stronger, eventually the Israelites would look to him as a great example of

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faith to emulate (Exod. 14:10-14; Acts 7:35-36; Heb. 11:23-29, et al.). However, in the text under consideration, Moses was not yet convinced that he was the man God needed.

### **The Interrogation (Exod. 4:11-12)**

God knew all about Moses when He chose him, did He not? If God knew how many hairs were on Moses' head (Matt. 10:30), then our omniscient God certainly knew about any speech impediments Moses may have had. In any case, such inadequacies of speech perceived by Moses were irrelevant because God is the "Mouth Maker!" Notice God's reply: "And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exod. 4:11-12). God essentially told Moses, "I am the one who made your mouth! I am the one who has all power over the human body and the whole universe! Do you not have enough faith in me to obey me? Now therefore go."

God also tells Moses that He will be with Moses' mouth, teaching him exactly what to say, implying that Moses would be speaking by inspiration of God. This may remind the reader of other passages in the Bible, such as the words of David: "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). Notice what Jesus told those He was sending out to preach: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt. 10:19-20).

Moses needed to learn something that many today need to learn: the true power is not in man—the power is in God and His Word: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Paul's speaking skills were criticized by some of his enemies: "For his letters, say they,

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are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor. 10:10). “But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things” (2 Cor. 11:6). Although Paul realized that his oratory methods were not the same as the most notable secular speakers of his day, he realized that the simple Truth of God’s Word is far more powerful than the oratory methods of men:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

With this understanding, Paul was not ashamed to preach the powerful Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16). Paul also taught that those most skilled in speaking are also often the most dangerous: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17-18).

### **The Insubordination (Exod. 4:13)**

With every excuse exhausted by Moses, and every excuse expelled by God, Moses basically refuses to go. “And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send” (Exod. 4:13). Moses basically replied, “Send somebody, Lord,” but it was Moses that God had chosen to send! “Now the man Moses

was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3), but there is a difference between being meek and refusing to serve. Moses had clearly crossed that line. Moses knew that the Israelites needed a deliverer; he knew that somebody needed to do it; he just did not want to do it himself.

How often does this happen in the Lord’s church? There is something that needs to be done, and everyone realizes that somebody needs to do it, but nobody will agree to do it.

### *EVERYBODY, SOMEBODY, ANYBODY, AND NOBODY*

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody were all neighbors in a community. These four fellows worshiped with the same congregation. Yet, they were unlike you and me, for they were more mature in their judgment.

Everybody was out of town most Sundays visiting relatives, and Somebody, a real sport, usually went fishing, hiking, hunting, or golfing. Anybody could have gone to worship service, but he thought that he wouldn’t really be missed since Nobody would be there, so Nobody went to church services.

Not long ago, one of the elders needed a teacher for one of the Bible classes. Everyone thought Somebody would teach the class, and Somebody thought Anybody could do the teaching, so they wound up with Nobody teaching the class.

It seems that Nobody was the only decent chap among them. Nobody did the work when Everybody didn’t, when Somebody couldn’t, and Anybody wouldn’t.

One day an unbeliever moved into the community. Everybody honestly believed Somebody would teach him. Somebody thought Anybody could, while Anybody thought

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Everybody had already talked to him, but in reality Nobody did.

The years went by and these four chaps (Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody) died and went to meet their Creator. Would you care to guess who finally went to Heaven? That's right - NOBODY! (*Simple Bible Studies*, Unknown Author, Adapted by JPH)

Moses' words implied that he wanted God to send someone besides him. How often do children of God speak to God in prayer, asking Him to send forth laborers to the harvest (Matt. 9:38), without realizing or acknowledging that they are the ones who must go forth? (Matt. 28:18-20). Do they pray to the Father, asking for His will to be done (Matt. 6:10), and yet refuse to do it themselves? That would be like a man praying for his daily bread, while refusing to go out and work for it as if expecting someone else to deliver food daily to his door with no effort being put forth on his part. Christians should not bother to pray for God's will to be done if they are not willing to do it themselves! It has been said, "With ability comes responsibility"; therefore, when there is a task somebody needs to do, let every Christian consider himself that "Somebody!" May all Christians have the attitude of Isaiah: "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isa. 6:8).

### **The Indignation (Exod. 4:14a)**

With each excuse offered, the Lord's patience had worn progressively thinner, and now with this final statement Moses had crossed the line from making excuses to showing no desire whatsoever to obey God. This was basically "the last straw" in the mind of God, and it sparked the anger of God against Moses: "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses" (Exod. 4:14). Arthur Pink wrote, "The faithfulness of Moses in recording his own sins, and the 'anger' of the Lord against him, is a

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striking proof of the Divine veracity of the Scriptures: an uninspired writer would have omitted such serious reflections upon himself as these” (38).

What a horrifying thought to have the anger of God Almighty aimed directly at you! David revealed in the Psalms that God defends the obedient and faithful, but he “is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:10-13). It is amazing how many people today do not want to acknowledge that God can be angry, wrathful, or severe. Some even claim that the God of the New Testament is not even the same God as the God of the Old Testament! They say that the God of the New Testament is the God of grace and mercy. An important attribute of God that is often overlooked is that God is “omni-just.” While it is true that He is “the God of all grace” (1 Pet. 5:10), the Bible reveals that God is both “good” and “severe”: “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Rom. 11:22). The God whom Christians serve and worship under the New Testament was described by Peter, Ananias, and Paul as “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers” (Acts 3:13; cf. Acts 5:30; Acts 22:14; Acts 24:14). God is the same God served by Abraham and all the faithful of past ages, and He will be severe to those who refuse to obey Him. Notice what the writer of Hebrews wrote when comparing those who despised the Law of Moses with those who despised the Law of Christ:

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much **sorer punishment**, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of

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God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:26-31, emph. JPH)

If one thinks that stoning sinners to death under the Law of Moses was sore punishment, he should consider the fact that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has an even sorer punishment awaiting those who turn their backs on His Son.

The word *kindled* was used regarding the anger of God toward Moses, implying that the wrath of God is like a great fire. The same word *kindled* was used in Numbers 11 when actual fire from the Lord literally consumed many rebellious Israelites:

And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them. (Num. 11:1-3; cf. Num. 16:35; Lev. 10:1-2; 2 Sam. 6:7; 2 Kings 1:10-12)

While literal fire does not consume those who sin against God today, the writer of Hebrews did say that Christians must “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28-29). It is interesting that God had initially appeared to Moses “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**" (Exod. 3:2; emph. JPH). The consuming fire of God's wrath can be held back by the grace of God, but there will also be a time when the fire of God's wrath will be unleashed on the wicked. Paul mentioned the Lord Jesus and His mighty angels coming in flaming, fiery vengeance: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9). The ultimate fire of God's wrath will be manifest in the eternal lake of fire and brimstone called Hell, or Gehenna (Matt. 23:33; Rev. 20:10; Rev. 20:15), and the only way sinners can be saved from God's eternal, fiery wrath is by the blood of Christ: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:8-10).

### **The Intervention (Exod. 4:14b-17)**

God, obviously very disappointed with Moses, offers a solution to the problem. The solution is Moses' older brother, Aaron:

Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou

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shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs. (Exod. 4:14b-17)

God states that Aaron can speak well. Since God said this about Aaron and did not say this about Moses, this seems to lend credence to the notion that Moses may have truly been somewhat inarticulate, although that was no reason for him to disobey God.

It appears that God decides to show mercy toward Moses by allowing Aaron to step in as the spokesman on behalf of Moses and ultimately on behalf of God. God would apparently give words to Moses, who would then give those words to Aaron, as God explained again later when they were in Egypt:

And Moses said before the LORD, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me? And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land. (Exod. 6:30; Exod. 7:1-2)

Brother Coffman wrote the following about Exodus 4:14-16:

“I will put the words...” This passage teaches much about inspiration and how we should regard the Bible. Note that it was “words” which God gave to Moses, and that those same words were conveyed from Moses to Aaron. Nothing in any part of the Bible indicates that God gave His prophets some general or nebulous idea, and that they then put it into THEIR words. We either have the Word of God in the Bible, or we have nothing at all!

“I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth...”  
God’s providence would guard the faithfulness  
and accuracy of those charged with being his  
spokesmen.

Aaron enters the picture of Exodus 4 as a savior of sorts. God needs a man to speak to Pharaoh; Moses refuses, so who will do this? Aaron will. Aaron has journeyed all this way, he loves God and his brother, and he will be willing to speak to Pharaoh. He is really the man of faith in this part of the account. Compare this situation to the events in the book of Esther—Mordecai knew that God would deliver his people somehow, whether it would be through Esther or someone else: “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esth. 4:14). Even though Aaron should be commended for his willingness to serve God, it must be stated that Aaron needed a Savior just as much as Moses did! (Rom. 3:23). The reader may recall from the Scriptures that Aaron would later be rebuked by Moses for making a golden calf for the rebellious Israelites (Exod. 32).

Moses would now agree to go to Egypt, knowing that another man would be with him. Is it not sad that he would not go when the Lord God Almighty said He would be with him?

Although there was nothing gained in the way of power, although there was no more virtue or efficacy in one mouth than in another, although it was Moses after all who was to speak unto Aaron, yet was Moses quite ready to go when assured of the presence and co-operation of a poor feeble mortal like himself; whereas he could not go when assured, again and again, that Jehovah would be with him. Oh! my reader, does not all this hold up before us a faithful mirror in which

you and I can see our hearts reflected? Truly it does. We are more ready to trust anything than the living God. We move along with bold decision when we possess the countenance and support of a poor frail mortal like ourselves; but we falter, hesitate, and demur when we have the light of the Master's countenance to cheer us, and the strength of His omnipotent arm to support us. This should humble us deeply before the Lord, and Lead us to seek a fuller acquaintance with Him, so that we might trust Him with a more unmixed confidence and walk on with a firmer step, as having Him along for our resource and portion (C.H.M.). (Pink 39)

Though Moses was not going to be the main spokesman in Egypt, God told Moses that he would take the rod and do signs:

God reminds Moses that he is to take this rod, his shepherd's staff, with which the miracles are to be done. As noted in the story of Israel coming to settle in Goshen during Joseph's time, the Bible shows that the Egyptians considered sheep herders as an abomination: "And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and show Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we,

and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians” (Gen. 46:31-34). It is worthy of notice that God chose a shepherd’s staff as the implement by which to bring certain miracles of judgment against the Egyptians. (Winton 25)

Earlier God had asked Moses, “What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod” (Exod. 4:2). What seemed to be merely a simple shepherd’s staff would become a great symbol of God’s power. There is a lesson there for Christians—they should use what they have to serve God, no matter how inadequate their resources or abilities may seem (Matt. 25:14-30).

### **Conclusion**

Even though Moses was initially reluctant to obey God, Moses would go on to be one of the great men of faith mentioned in the Scriptures. He would lead God’s people out of Egypt and would do many wonderful miracles by the power of God; he would be the giver of God’s Law often described as “the Law of Moses,” and pen the first five books of the Holy Scriptures; he had the Lord speak to him “face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Exod. 33:11; cf. Num. 12:8); he would offer himself to be blotted out of God’s book instead of the idolatrous Israelites (Exod. 32:31-32; cf. Num. 11:2; Num. 14:12-20; Num. 21:7); he would be considered a type of Christ (Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:22; Acts 7:37); and after his death he would appear with Jesus and Elijah on the mountain where Jesus was transfigured (Matt. 17:1-4). The book of Deuteronomy ends with a great tribute to Moses:

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his

land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel (Deut. 34:10-12).

As great a man as Moses was, he still made mistakes and sinned, but he always repented and grew in faith. May Christians learn from Moses' failures as well as his triumphs, and may they get back up if they fall, faithfully following God as they continue to grow in the faith.

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# **The Passage of Jericho**





## CHAPTER 12

# Moses And The Magicians

*Lee Davis*

### **Introduction**

Thank you to Wade Webster and the elders at the Southaven church for organizing and hosting this excellent lectureship. Historically, some of the most useful and reliable material has been produced in this lectureship and it continues to do so. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to contribute, in a small way, to this outstanding volume about Moses.

### **The Position Of The Magicians**

To what extent did the occult influence the lives of the Egyptians during this time frame? What place of respect was ascribed to these and all magicians during this time? Just a cursory reading of the text reveals that the Egyptians were people who were bound by superstition and idolatry (King James Version, Exod. 7:22; Exod. 8:7; Exod. 8:18-19). The magicians of Egypt held a place equivalent to a god (Gordon and Rendsburg 144), none higher than they, except for the Pharaoh (Hill and Walton 114). This being the case, God put Moses in a position that made him like a god to the Egyptians so that they would witness the authentic and overwhelming power of Jehovah as compared to the false and pretended “tricks” of the Egyptian Magicians. The Lord’s power was demonstrated to the Egyptians in the most powerful way. This was done through Moses. Pharaoh was looked upon by his people as being the incarnate sun-god Aten, or Ra (Hill and Walton 114).

The “community of scholars” is divided on the intent of the plagues God brought on Egypt. Some say that the plagues were not

directed toward discrediting any Egyptian deity in any way (Hort 84-103). These “scholars” deny the historicity of the whole account (Gordon and Rendsburg 144). This German Rationalism and the Form and Literary Criticism applied with the unbelieving worldview of these people have long produced the sad and unscriptural state of skepticism and modernism that we observe in this “community of scholars” today. It has been this way since its introduction in the 19th century. This mentality and false teaching has been exposed and refuted time and time again by men who believed in and demonstrated that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is inerrant. The Bible is verbally and plenary inspired (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Psa. 19:7-11; Gal. 1:11-12; Acts 20:32; Jude 3; 1 Cor. 2:9-13).

The Bible believer knows that the events recorded in the Bible, including the account under consideration, are historical (Thompson). This being the case, one can read his English text and know that what is recorded did, in fact, take place the way it was recorded.

The magician in Egypt held a lofty position of respect and power. It is comparable to the African witchdoctor. The questions are, were the magicians actually able to perform authentic miracles? and what was going on here in the account? Robert Milligan makes these observations.

That the rod of Aaron was miraculously converted into a real serpent there can be no reasonable doubt. But with respect to the rods of the Magicians the evidence is not so clear. And hence the ablest critics are still divided in their judgments concerning this matter. I. Some think that these extraordinary phenomena were nothing more than mere feats of jugglery, and that they were performed simply by human skill. II. Others think that they were feats of jugglery or legerdemain, but that they were performed by the joint agency of Satan and the Magicians, just as the temptation of Eve was effected through

the joint agency of Satan and the serpent. III. Others suppose that they were real miracles, wrought by Satan through the instrumentality of the Magicians. IV. And others, again, think that they were real miracles, wrought by God himself through the instrumentality of the Magicians. (87-88)

Milligan correctly affirms that the rod of Aaron did turn into a real serpent. The text bears this out. This same text also affirms that the rods of the magicians turned into serpents. The first point of Mr. Milligan's observations state that what the magicians did was only a feat of jugglery (sleight of hand). This position is not sufficient to explain the situation. The text says of these actions that could be duplicated by the magicians, that they actually took place (Exod. 8:7).

Milligan, in the second point, suggests that the Magician's actions were a mixture of legerdemain and the power of Satan. There will be more written about this point.

Milligan then points out that some believe that the acts of the magicians were actual miracles performed through the enablement of Satan. Is this position a viable option? Does the Scripture teach that Satan has ever had the power to perform supernatural acts? A couple of verses come to mind. The period of time just prior to the Destruction of Jerusalem, described by Jesus in Matthew 24, was a time where things done by false Christs would attempt to deceive the very elect (Matt. 24:24). The false Christs would show great signs and wonders to the people (Matt. 24:24). The text does not indicate that these signs and wonders were not actually miraculous. These false prophets and Christs may have been what Paul was discussing in 2 Thessalonians 2. The person who embodied "perdition," that "Wicked," would come after the working of Satan "with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:3-12). Could the false prophets and Christs of Matthew 24 be the same as the one mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2? Satan would be behind these "signs and lying wonders." Could the one in 2 Thessalonians 2 be the High Priest

of fleshly Israel immediately prior to the Destruction of Jerusalem? Franklin Camp was of this opinion (Camp mp3). If Camp is correct, then the “signs and wonders” being done by these false ones would have taken place during the miraculous age of the first century (prior to AD 70 would qualify as still being in the age of the miraculous). Therefore, these signs could have been authentic supernatural acts performed via the power of Satan that was very much akin to the place that demon possession held in the first century. Whatever the meaning in the two texts here, there is no doubt that the Scripture is not teaching some type of anti-Christ, as per the false doctrine of Premillennialism. The “lying” wonders were designed to deceive. Could Satan have empowered these false ones to perform them? Yes! Is this the case with the magicians? It is a possibility. Even if it is the case that Satan worked with them in their sleight of hand “parlor tricks,” it should be noted that every thing that the magicians did in order to try and nullify or copy what Moses did failed. The deception was in attempting to make the people “think” that what was being done by the magicians was authentic. Satan and the magicians failed to achieve their desired goal. The Truth will always out (Mosher 97)!

As to the position that God did this for the magicians, well, that should be obviously false to anyone. Jesus affirmed that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:22-30). That principle would apply here, as well. It is one thing for God to allow these things to be done so that His power can be demonstrated over Satan and these magicians; it is quite another thing for Him to be the one who originated the very challenge against Himself. Ludicrous!

The second position that Milligan enumerates seems to be the most feasible. That is, they were feats of jugglery, but they were performed by the joint agency of Satan and the magicians (87-88). This was done to oppose the truth (2 Tim. 3). I do not see a conflict in stating that the magician’s actions were done to oppose the truth and that this was done by performing authentic supernatural acts with the help of Satan. It should not surprise us that this is the case. Satan is ever ready and disposed to attempt to discredit God and His work (Milligan 87-88).

As God did with the situation of allowing demon possession during the first century so as to allow Christ and the early church to exercise power and authority over Satan, did God also bring the events into play of Moses and the magicians so as to show His power over Satan, Pharaoh, and the false gods (including the magicians themselves) of Egypt? It very well could be. Either way, the result was the same. It should be stressed at this point that if this is the case, the situation no longer exists to duplicate this exercise of the power of God over Satan's power. The age of the miraculous is no longer here (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:8-14; Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:3-4). If the situations of Moses and the magicians and demon possession are equal as far as the work of Satan is concerned, then those situations can no longer take place. The age of the miraculous in the early church enabled brethren to cast out demons and to perform other miraculous acts in order to demonstrate the superiority of God over Satan. There are no miracles today; therefore, there are no demonstrations of the power of Satan like we have in these two situations. If Satan still has this ability, then his power would be superior to the Lord's power since no one can cast out demons anymore (Cates). Whatever may be the case, it is still true that the power of God was demonstrated over the magicians, no matter the nature of the acts they performed.

### **The Mission Of The Magicians**

What was the purpose of the magicians? What did Satan use them to do? What did God allow to happen because of their actions? The Bible states that the effect of what the magicians did was to "harden" Pharaoh's heart (Exod. 7:22-23; Exod. 8:15-19). In what way did the actions and words of the magicians serve to harden the heart of Pharaoh? "The same sun that softens wax, hardens clay" (Cates). What softens and even melts the honest heart often hardens one that is dishonest (Cates). The hardening of Pharaoh's heart was not an arbitrary, miraculous act performed by God on the heart of Pharaoh. Just as the false acts and false message of the magicians served to anger and build up with pride the heart of Pharaoh, so the authentic acts and true message that Moses preached to Pharaoh served to

do the same. The attitude of Pharaoh was “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go” (Exod. 5:2)? Had Pharaoh not been so full of pride, then there would have been no hardening of his heart. As it has always been, both God and Satan worked indirectly upon the heart of Pharaoh as they do any individual. God influences through the medium of the Word and in no other way. God does not directly impact the heart of any person. Satan attempts to influence via “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15-17). Man is the one that casts the deciding vote (Turner 129). Pharaoh is an excellent, yet tragic, example of one choosing to take comfort in that which is false even though it seemed to be true. Modern-day denominationalists operate in almost the same way. They “feel” that they are right. The message of God is cast aside so as to allow one to pick up and embrace that which “tickles the ears.” The magicians, due to their actions and message, gave Pharaoh a “false sense of security” in his believing a lie instead of the truth. The Truth becomes what they consider to be a lie. How often do we bemoan the fact that people will hear and know the truth but will negate its effect in their lives by choosing not to obey the Truth. God knew that Pharaoh would do this very thing (Exod. 3:19-22). God’s knowing what Pharaoh’s actions would be did not determine the actions of Pharaoh. God would work within His will to demonstrate His power over Pharaoh and his cohorts (Hardeman 129). Jehovah used the actions of the magicians and the resulting hardening of Pharaoh’s heart to demonstrate his power over them. The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh through the message of Moses. This is what happened during the time of Isaiah. God hardened hearts through the message of the prophet (Isa. 6:9-12). Pharaoh hardened his own heart because he had put into his heart many ungodly attitudes and this contributed to his decision.

### **The Disposition Of The Magicians**

The apostle Paul in the book of 2 Timothy gives a detailed description of two magicians that fought against the truth that Moses was preaching. Jannes and Jambres are said to have opposed Moses

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and the very truth of God. Again, the skeptic denies the historical fact of their ever having been magicians specifically named who had opposed Moses (Gordon and Rendsburg 144). The faithful child of God had no doubt about the authenticity of the Biblical account. Denny Petrillo makes this statement,

Jannes and Jambres are not named in the Old Testament but are found in a number of works that deal with Moses (Targum of Jonathan on Exodus 7:11; The Zadokite Work 7:19; in the Babylonian Talmud-Menahoth 85a; Origen's commentary of Matthew 23:37; and Pliny, *Natural History* 30.1.1). This passage, and two passages in Jude (9, 14) make reference to works not found in the Scripture, but which are true nevertheless. It is important the Bible student remember that these ancient records do record some genuine facts, and are so credited by the New Testament writers. However, they never call these writings Scripture (Gk.-GRAPHE). Thus, they are not classed with the books in the canon. (137-38)

Only those that do not want to believe in the Divine origin of the Word of God have a problem with these types of things. Paul intended to identify the present men with the evil intentions and actions of these magicians of old (Petrillo 137-38). (These men were probably those already named by Paul: Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander.)

Jannes and Jambres opposed the truth. That is, they fought against it. Why would a person fight against truth? First, it is because they had corrupt minds. Their minds were depraved. Through the process of time, they had destroyed what God had given them (a pure mind) and they had filled their minds with the very opposite of what God intends. When men, no matter how innocently, depart

on any point of truth, they begin their journey to destruction, if they continue unabated. Second, when compared to the Faith, they fail the test (Petrillo 137-38). They are pronounced reprobate. The standard by which we are to determine the faithfulness of ourselves or any other individual is the system of Faith, the gospel. We will not be judged by the opinions and hyper-sensitivity of men. We will be judged by the Word of God (John 12:48).

The false teachers of Paul's day would no further progress when people would compare them with the Word of God and reject them (1 John 4:1-2). They would be stopped and shown to be counterfeit just as Jannes and Jambres were. False teachers may build and maintain great numbers of followers. That is the case only when people follow men. If people would only see the folly of such thinking and take unto themselves the Word of God as their only authority, they would avoid this pitfall (1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17).

Robert Taylor makes these observations,

Just as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses so do the false teachers depicted in Second Timothy 3 resist the truth. Such teachers are corrupt in mind and reprobate relative to the faith. Their deep depravity is hard to overemphasize. Paul says there is a limit as to how far they can proceed. Just as the proud waves of the sea can only come to a certain point and no farther (Job 38:11), so these exponents of error had a boundary or limitation placed upon them. Their folly will be exhibited before all men even as the folly of Jannes and Jambres was centuries earlier in the Egyptian court of infidelity and irreverence for God and the Cause of truth. One of the consequences of accepting and embracing error is the realization that one day that folly will be revealed before a watching world. It will occur either in this life or at the judgment. (113)



These magicians were of the most corrupt type of men. They relied on their paganism and repudiated the One true God. How are these worse than those that know the truth and then turn their backs on the Word? The difference is miniscule.

### **The Admission Of The Magicians**

Success! The magicians could proclaim this three times, no matter how inferior were their actions to the miracles done by God. They reproduced the serpents. They reproduced the first two plagues. In all, they had reproduced three of acts of Moses. Now, for number four! Failure! How do they now react? They pronounce the acts of Moses to be authentic and from God (Exod. 8:18-19). They state, "This is the Finger of God"! These magicians were the very representatives of the gods of Egypt (Williams 78)! What an amazing admission! What did they think about their paganism now? The fact is, all of the plagues served to pass judgment on the false gods of Egypt. They struck at the very heart of the power of the magicians of Egypt (87-88).

The magician's admission is, in fact, an admission that all paganism is false. It is an admission that the occultism of today has never and will never be genuine.

What is so puzzling about the account is that after the magicians admit to Pharaoh that they cannot reproduce the plague of lice, instead of Pharaoh reversing his field and becoming penitent, he still persists in his hard-hearted attitude of unbelief. The impotence of his spiritual entourage has now been demonstrated. God's power is seen and proclaimed to be superior. One would think that would be enough. But, no, it took several more plagues to move Pharaoh out of his way of thinking and acting.

### **The Submission Of The Magicians**

In what way were the magicians submissive? They were submissive in the same way all will be submissive on Judgment Day (Phil. 2:9-11). Each time Egypt had to suffer through another plague, these magicians would, no doubt, remember their helplessness when

it came to duplicating the third one. If they had a firstborn son to die on the night of the Passover, they had no choice but to submit to the will of God. They could not rationally blame God for these things. It was due to the choices they made and the hardness of the heart of the Pharaoh. Arrogant men may deny the existence and power of God, but one day, their charges and blasphemies will be seen to be blatantly false (2 Thess. 1:5-10).

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## CHAPTER 13

# Moses, Who Built According To The Pattern

*Curtis Cates*

### Introduction

When the writer began preaching more than a half-century ago, most preachers among churches of Christ preached and held unswervingly to the Lord's sacred pattern, "the faith once for all delivered" (American Standard Version, Jude 3). They were set for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:16). Preachers would adhere to the divine pattern, no matter if they were ridiculed or if they stood alone. They reacted in a loving, timely, and expeditious way to the threats to the pristine, beautiful bride of Christ, the New Testament church. Sadly and regrettably, such was not to continue.

Whereas for many generation churches of Christ were largely untouched by Satan's diabolical and vicious attacks upon the Sacred Scriptures, the pattern [realizing that only God possesses true wisdom (Job 28; Jer. 10:23)], a host of preachers in "our" pulpits and professors in "Christian" colleges have now bought into the heretical philosophies of pluralism, liberalism, post-modernism, relativism, humanism, sectarianism, and/or subjectivism. Having studied in the modernistic institutions at the feet of their "brilliant" and "scholarly" professors, they have brought that pluralism into some of our churches and colleges. One of their major approaches in undermining the faith of our young people and older Christians is through the denial of the existence of the pattern. In the midst of the pluralistic religious environment, how do churches of Christ maintain her distinctiveness, purity, and unity?

God's people must continue to hold to the "old paths" (Jer. 6:16) and be distinctive in a world which conforms to sectarian, pluralistic philosophies of men (Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:8). We must love the Lord, maintain the supreme desire to know His Will, and have the determination to adhere to the pattern. "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou has heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. 1:13-14). Do we as mere mortals really think that we can improve upon the divine instructions of the infinite God? From the Garden of Eden until the present, mankind has always been subject to law—God's law, or pattern.

The ancient order of things was/is restored when those who seek the truth of God return to the New Testament, when they do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names. We thereby attain the unity for which Christ prayed (John 17) and which God requires (1 Cor. 1:10). The New Testament pattern, the law of Christ (Rom. 8:1-2; 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:1; Jas. 1:25, et al.), is the foundation, the common ground upon which all of God's people can stand with God and with one another. It is the inspired Word of God made "sure"; it is the confirmed, guaranteed Message of the Father (2 Pet. 1:19-21). It is the certified gospel; therefore, faithful proclaimers of the sacred Scriptures give a "thus saith the Lord" (1 Pet. 4:11), and devout seekers of truth verify the message by the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). In this study, special attention will be given to Moses, the lawgiver, who was meticulous in following God's pattern in the building of His tabernacle.

### **"Pattern" Defined**

A pattern is a blueprint, guide, law, model, standard to be followed and to be imitated. One is not to vary from it in the least degree. When God delivered to Moses, "the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof," God stated, "even so shall ye make it" (Exod. 25:8). So likewise, when Paul delivered unto Timothy the "pattern of sound words," Timothy was to hold fast to

it. He was not at liberty to pick and choose the portions he would preach and the portions he would ignore; it was not his to decide which parts of the pattern would characterize the Lord's church and which would be abandoned. His "father in the gospel," Paul, "shrank not from declaring unto [the Ephesians] the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) and preached the same pattern "everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17); he commanded the same thing to Timothy.

### **"Pattern" Illustrated**

We are not unaware of patterns and have often used them. In arithmetic, teachers helped us understand the rules by working the problems on the board; in writing, the model [or guide] was written on the line above, and we were to imitate the pattern on the line below. The bridge contractor is responsible for following its blueprint, as is the carpenter who builds a house for another. [It is understood that if one is building a house for himself and will himself be the judge of its suitability upon completion, he himself can have a model or blueprint or can choose not to use such a model or blueprint. However, if he is building for another, who shall be the judge, he must adhere to the pattern]. Moses was building for another—God.

### **God's Word, the "Pattern" in Every Dispensation**

The Creator is a God of order; "for God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33). The astute student of His Word sees orderliness in His physical creation, for all His creatures were to reproduce "after their kind" (Gen. 1:12; Gen. 1:21; Gen. 1:24, et al.); He is a God of pattern.

Throughout the ages of God's dealings with mankind, God has laid out the blueprints for this life. He has given strict orders and instructions for His offspring to follow; never have men and women been given the prerogative to give input into formulating the pattern, or altering the pattern, or neglecting the pattern. "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Success or failure has always been contingent upon whether or not human beings [accountable

before God] submit or fail to submit to God's orders, His law, His sacred pattern.

### **Adam and Eve**

When the Father created the man and the woman in the Garden of Eden, He gave them strict instructions as to how they were to pattern their lives. They could partake of every herb and every fruit of the trees (Gen. 1:29-30), as well as of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9). On the other hand, they were not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). Adam and Eve violated the pattern for their lives and brought upon themselves the grievous, severe, tragic penalty. God is indeed good, but He is also severe toward violators of His covenant (Rom. 11:22).

### **Noah**

Following the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden, the rebellion and corruptness of the majority of human beings steadily and drastically increased; in the time of Noah, it had reached crisis proportions. The infinite justice of God could not allow such stark, unrestrained wickedness to continue (Gen. 6:5-7). "But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah" (Gen. 6:8). God commanded Noah to build an ark, giving him the specific instructions [or pattern] as to the material, the waterproofing, the type structure, the size, the "light" window, and its location, the door, the window from which the birds were released, the number of stories, the kinds and number of animals to go into the ark, the persons who were to enter, and the stores of food (Gen. 6:13-21, 7:2). Noah, of course, understood that the generic authority to "make thee an ark" would authorize the use of an axe or saw to cut the gopher wood; however, the specific command to use gopher wood would not authorize the use of pine or dogwood. That would have violated the pattern given by God and would have caused the barge to sink!

The historical, Biblical record states, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. 6:22). Noah adhered to God's standard, law, pattern ["according to all"]; and, the word *so* shows strict congruency between what "God commanded him" and



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what Noah did! Peter records that this “preacher of righteousness” was preserved when God “brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Pet. 2:5). In the ark, “few, that is, eight souls were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism” (1 Pet. 3:20-21). What enabled Noah to be saved by grace? “By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Heb. 11:7). His attitude was not a haughty rejection of God’s pattern but a humble submission to it.

### *Moses*

The book of Exodus records the exodus (Exodus 1-18), the giving of the law of Moses [thus the beginning of the Mosaic Dispensation] (Exodus 19-24), and the pattern, the building, and the filling the tabernacle by God’s glory [Exodus 25-40]. In Leviticus 1:1, it is recorded, “And Jehovah called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tent of meeting.” The Hebrews writer makes it clear that the tabernacle was a type of the Lord’s church [the antitype]. The Levitical priests served in the tabernacle, “a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount” (Heb. 8:5). Powerful is the affirmation in Hebrews 9:24, “For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in **pattern** to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us”!

God was very clear and detailed in revealing the pattern of the tabernacle to Moses, relative to its size, its entrance, its divisions, its materials, its court, its furniture, its use, et al. None of its details, its planning, its design were left to Moses; God was the sole architect of the tabernacle. Moses was under strict orders to follow the pattern (Exod. 25:9); God would tolerate neither deviation from, alteration of, nor pollution concerning its holy design and sacred purpose. Those persons not authorized, including the strangers, were not

to enter the tent of meeting (Lev. 16:17); in fact, “the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death,” Jehovah said (Lev. 18:7). Was God serious about His pattern? Was He serious about His decree as to the type fire He authorized? Nadab and Abihu, priests of God, found out God’s seriousness when they presumptuously “offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them” (Lev. 10:1-2); “And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah.” Sadly, they had not sanctified the Lord and glorified Him, inasmuch as they violated God’s sacred pattern (Lev. 10:3). Was He serious when He regulated that the holy ark of the testimony was to be carried by staves, thus not touched (Num. 4:5-6; Exod. 25:10-14)? David and the people went to bring to Jerusalem “the ark of God, which is called by the Name, even the name of Jehovah of hosts that sitteth above the cherubim” (2 Sam. 6:2). They placed the ark on a new cart, which was driven by two brothers, Uzzah and Ahilo. At the threshing-floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled. “Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it.... And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God” (2 Sam. 6:1-7). God is jealous of His law, His covenant, His pattern (Exod. 20:4-6).

Moses built the tabernacle strictly according to God’s specifications. He realized that God’s law and pattern were not to be altered. What “ye observe to do: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deut. 12:32). Had not Moses followed the pattern of the tabernacle [a type of the church of Christ], he would have put the antitype in difficulty [as he later would do in smiting the rock twice; Christ, the Rock of salvation (the antitype), would be smitten but once, on the cross. That presumptuous act kept Moses out of the Promised Land of Canaan]. The writer of Hebrews [I think Paul] stated that “every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward” (Heb. 2:2).

Observe the seriousness of God concerning His pattern for the tabernacle: “According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall

ye make it” (Exod. 25:9); “See that thou make them after the pattern, which hath been showed thee in the mount” (Exod. 25:40); “rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which hath been showed thee in the mount” (Exod. 26:30); “As it hath been showed thee in the mount, so shall they make it” (Exod. 27:8); “according to all that I have commanded thee” (Exod. 29:35); “that they may make all that I have commanded thee” (Exod. 31:6); “according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do it” (Exod. 31:11).

Note the obedience to the law of God: “This is the thing which Jehovah commanded” (Exod. 35:4); “make all that Jehovah hath commanded” (Exod. 35:10); “whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work, which Jehovah had commanded to be made by Moses” (Exod. 35:29); “according to all that Jehovah hath commanded” (Exod. 36:1); “The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which Jehovah commanded to make” (Exod. 36:5); “according to the commandment of Moses” (Exod. 38:21); “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 39:1); “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 39:5); “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 39:7); “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 39:21); “as Jehovah commanded Moses (Exod. 39:26); “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 39:29), “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 39:31); “the children of Israel did according to all that Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 39:32); “as Jehovah had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them” (Exod. 39:43); “Thus did Moses; according to all that Jehovah commanded him, so did he” (Exod. 40:16); “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 40:21); “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 40:23); “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 40:25); “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 40:29); “as Jehovah commanded Moses” (Exod. 40:32); “so Moses finished the work” (Exod. 40:33). “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle” (Exod. 40:34).

Without question, Jehovah knew how to communicate to the lawgiver Moses, and Moses understood the pattern. Moses had no difficulty communicating with the workmen and the other people!

Not one of them used the lame excuse “We cannot understand the Bible alike”! The people were united in work and service, and God showed His divine approval by His glory’s having come upon and entered the tabernacle. As long as His people obeyed Him and adhered to His sacred pattern of worship, God blessed them. On the other hand, when they polluted His house and made void His commandments by their traditions, He expressed extreme displeasure and abandoned them (Matt. 15:9; Matt. 15:13). In other words, the building of the tabernacle was a part of the Old Covenant [which later gave way to the New Covenant (Heb. 8:5-13; Rom. 7:4; Col. 2:14-17)].

Just as one is not to tamper with any covenant [a covenant is binding], so were the Jews forbidden to tamper with God’s covenant with them. The same is true with Christ’s covenant (Heb. 9:14-24). The very fact that we are under a covenant, by that very concept, forbids any one from making it void, adding thereunto, or taking from it, Paul stated (Gal. 3:15). Inasmuch as the law of Moses was God’s covenant with His people then [meaning no one was to tamper with the covenant], just so the law of Christ is God’s covenant with His people today [meaning that none is to tamper with God’s covenant]. In other words, God expects compliance and obedience.

### ***Solomon***

Inasmuch as the tabernacle was to be God’s temporary dwelling place as the people of Israel were traveling in the wilderness and were being situated in the Promise Land, the time came when the permanent temple was to be erected. The temple also was a type of the Lord’s church and was an integral part of God’s covenant with the Jews. Whereas David could not build the temple of Jehovah, Solomon was instructed to “build a house for my name” (1 Kings 5:3-5).

David instructed Solomon, “Take heed now; for Jehovah hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it. Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch of the temple, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper rooms thereof, and of the inner chambers thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat and the pattern of all that he had by the

Spirit” (1 Chron. 28:10-12); “All this, said David, have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of Jehovah; even all the works of this pattern” (1 Chron. 28:19). David assured Solomon that God was with him; “he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until all the work of the service of the house of Jehovah be finished.... all the people will be wholly at thy commandment” (1 Chron. 28:20-21).

“Thus all the work that Solomon wrought for the house of Jehovah was finished” (2 Chron. 5:1), and “the glory of Jehovah filled the house of God” (2 Chron. 5:14). Solomon dedicated the house of God; God would dwell in it as long as they followed His law, His covenant, His pattern (1 Kings 8). However, God’s strong warning was,

I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there forever; and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually.... But if ye shall turn away from following me, ye or your children, and not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but shall go and serve other gods and worship them; then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. (1 Kings 9:3-9)

### *Christ*

Inasmuch as the tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament were a type of the church [copies and shadows of the heavenly things (Heb. 8:5)] and inasmuch as the “the holy place made with hands [was] like in pattern to the true” (Heb. 9:24), one cannot disregard the New Testament pattern, God’s covenant with His people in the new dispensation! Christ promised to give His apostles the pattern (John 14:26); they would be guided into all truth (John 16:13). This pattern of teaching was to go throughout the world (Matt. 28:18-20). The apostles were to declare that pattern, and the disciples were/

are to continue in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). Timothy was commanded to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2).

However, some would teach false doctrine, Paul stated. How could the false teachers be identified, if there was not a pattern of sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2-3)? Yes indeed, there is the "pattern of sound words" for the Lord's church (2 Tim. 1:13) the beautiful bride of Christ. The Husband of the church stated, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15); "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

### **Pertinent Observations**

In the first place, God's law is the standard, the pattern. Any religious pattern formulated by man is constantly changing and is soon out of date. The Word of God endures and is never out of date. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). It is the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25), the truth (John 8:32; John 17:17), God's power to save (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12), all-sufficient and alone sufficient (2 Tim. 3:16-17), our rule of faith and practice (2 John 9-11), certified and confirmed (Gal. 1:11; 2 Pet. 1:19), and the new covenant (Heb. 8:6-13). Being the gospel of Christ, the sacred pattern has the full authority of King Jesus behind it (Matt. 18:18-20). He, like God the Father, is jealous of His Word!

In the second place, we are forbidden to make man the authority and man's way our pattern. Jeremiah wrote, "Thus saith Jehovah: Cursed is the man that trusteth in man" (Jer. 17:5). Our Lord makes it very clear regarding the traditions of men and the religious "plants" [churches] started by men, "And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit" (Matt. 15:1-3; Matt. 15:9; Matt. 15:13-14); it is

to “make void the word of God [the divine pattern] because of your tradition,” Christ stated (Matt. 15:6).

All creeds, doctrines, patterns of men are defective. The Word of God warns that the ways of man are “right in his own eyes” (Deut. 12:8) and “the way of a fool is right in his own eyes; But he that is wise harkeneth unto counsel” (Prov. 12:15). “It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). Our own ideas and feelings are faulty, thus are not a safe guide.

In the third place, many religionists protest loudly against the New Testament pattern. They are very passionate in attempting to affirm that there is to be tolerance, openness, and “unity in diversity.” Thus in their minds, the divine pattern is to be transformed to fit man’s wishes and theories and doctrines rather than man’s conforming our beliefs, convictions, character, and practices to the divine pattern; the objective, rigid Standard of God must be conformed to the subjective opinions of men, they say—a new “gospel” for a new age and for today’s culture. In fact, in an age of supposed “tolerance,” “broadmindedness,” and “liberalism,” it is out of vogue for virtually anyone to have studied, sound, solid convictions on any given topic or question—unless it is conviction in opposition to conviction! BUT, of this one thing we can be certain: “the firm foundation of God standeth” (2 Tim. 2:19)!

In the fourth place, the New Testament pattern covers every phase of our duties and relationships toward God and toward one another. The Lord’s church was established according to the sacred pattern with Christ as its head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23) and its foundation (Matt. 16:16-19; 1 Cor. 3:11). Christ’s church is planted in any given community when the precious seed, the New Testament pattern, is sown into the honest hearts of men, women, boys, and girls and is obeyed, thus bringing forth the precious fruit—Christians (Luke 8:11).

The pattern instructs how one becomes a Christian: hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17), believing in God (Heb. 11:6), repenting of past sins (Acts 2:38), confessing Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37), and being baptized for remission of sins (Acts 22:16).

Cleansed from sins by the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 8:12), one is thereby born into the church/kingdom (John 3:3-5), added by the Lord to the church for which He died (Acts 2:47; Acts 20:28).

The pattern instructs how to live as a holy people in fellowship with a holy God (1 John 1:3-7) and how to become a pattern of good works (Titus 2:7) and how to abide in faithfulness, in Christ unto death (1 John 2:24; Rev. 2:10).

The pattern instructs how to “worship God in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). He cannot be worshipped with men’s hands (Acts 17:25) and to worship God according to men’s doctrines, teachings, or commands is vain (Matt. 15:9).

The pattern instructs man as to the organization (Phil. 1:1), the mission and work of the church (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Jas. 1:27; Gal. 6:2; et al.), the purity of the church (1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Pet. 1:5-11), and the unity of the church (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:1-6).

### **Conclusion**

No person who abandons the sacred pattern, the gospel of Christ, is faithful to Him. The pattern is to be exemplified in our lives. In the first century, the Lord’s church was distinctive in her Head [Christ], in her separation from the world, in her scriptural name and designations, in her plan of salvation, in her organization, in her worship, in her mission, and in her destiny. Even when threatened, her preachers persisted in preaching the pure, primitive gospel (Acts 4:18-20; Acts 4:29; Acts 5:27-29; Acts 7:54-60; et al.).

Not only did Paul command Timothy to hold to the pattern (2 Tim. 1:13), but he also instructed him as to how to perpetuate the pattern (2 Tim. 2:2). When God’s directives are not followed, multitudes of man-made doctrines, apostasy, and sectarianism are the result. And the various denominations are not likely to return to the divine, original pattern, the ancient order of things because they would destroy themselves in the process. They would have to give up their human origins, their human foundations, their faith-only



doctrine, their infant baptism, their sprinkling and pouring instead of baptism, their man-made creeds, their synods and councils, and their instrumental music and other elements of worship which were not a part of the primitive, New Testament church. The sacred pattern would bring about unity in the one body of Christ, thereby doing away with division, denominationalism.

We are neither surprised nor discouraged that most religionists reject the New Testament pattern, although we are saddened by it. Most people do not understand the plea to return to the Lord's pattern. They may even think of the church of Christ as just another denomination. It is difficult for many of our friends to understand that if we obey the same message of salvation which they obeyed in the first century, we will be what they were in the first century when the Lord added to His church daily. The church that Jesus built (Matt. 16:18) was not a denomination in the first century, nor has it ever been.

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## CHAPTER 14

# Friend to Friend, Face to Face

*Mike Vestal*

### Introduction

**S**urely it has to rank among the greatest statements ever about one's relationship with God: "So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (New King James Version, Exod. 33:11). When Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses, God Himself said to them, "I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" (Num. 12:8). Again Scripture says, "There has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 34:10). Moses was known as "the man of God" (Deut. 33:1); he was in a number of ways an Old Testament type or picture of Jesus (Deut. 18:15; Deut. 18:20). But how did Moses come to have this incredibly rich relationship with God? How did Moses come to know God face to face, friend to friend? What does this mean?

It is important to appreciate what the "face to face" verses about God and Moses do **not** mean. They do not mean that Moses literally and fully saw God's face in all His glory. It is crucial to respect the various figures of speech and literary devices utilized within the Bible. "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18). God "alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see" (1 Tim. 6:16). God specifically said to Moses, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live" (Exod. 33:20; Exod. 33:23). Nevertheless,

God did give Moses some special and unmistakable evidence of His glorious presence (cf. Exod. 33:22; Exod. 34:28-29).

As great and godly as Moses was, he did not have a face to face, friend to friend relationship with God because he was perfect. It is interesting the Moses had to deal with the problems of inadequacy, pride, presumption, and anger—problems that everyone who serves the Lord has to face to some degree (cf. Exod. 3:11-4:17; Num. 20:7-13). Why then? Why did Moses have this special kind of closeness with God? Here is the reason. **Both Scripture and our own life experiences indicate that at this moment we are as close to God as we have chosen to be.** There was a desire, a consuming passion on the part of Moses, to know, love, and enjoy God intimately and richly (cf. John 17:3; Phil. 3:10; 1 Chron. 28:7-9). There was an intense yearning for communion and fellowship with the Almighty. There may be occasions when someone will say, “Oh, I wish I were closer to God,” but far too many simply are unwilling to pay the price (cf. Mark 12:30; Luke 14:25-33).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10). Nothing will so humble, expand, and transform the mind as the knowledge of God. Notice that Proverbs 9:10 contains the idea of **reverence**. There is an emphasis upon “the fear of the Lord” and “the Holy One.” This obviously has to do with a profound respect and awe for God in all His glory. Also, Proverbs 9:10 deals with the idea of **reality**. The starting point or foundation for real wisdom and understanding is in the knowledge of God. It becomes the basis of everything else in life. A third concept to be noted from Proverbs 9:10 is the idea of **relationship**. The knowledge of God is to be real, personal, and based upon His revelation of Himself. Moses had a face to face, friend to friend relationship with God because knowing God was the greatest of priorities in his life.

To say that one can and must know God does not mean that any human being knows everything about God absolutely or exhaustively. In order to understand completely and perfectly everything about God, we would have to be God! (cf. Rom. 11:33; Psa. 147:5). Yet God

can still be known due to the fact that He has revealed Himself. Not only this, but there is so much evidence concerning the reality of God through both general and special revelation that those who do not come to know Him are “without excuse” (cf. Rom. 1:18-20).

The great desire of Moses was to “see” something of God’s glory (Exod. 33:18). Is it ours, too? (Psa. 42:1-2; Psa. 63:1-3). Everything in our life and service ought to flow out of our relationship with God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31; Gal. 5:6). If there is not a deep and abiding communion with Him, everything else will be out of focus. When our relationship with God exhibits richness, intimacy, and depth, we will have a more profound love and respect for Him and all He is and does. Twice in the last chapter of Job God says, “You have not spoken of Me what is right” (Job 42:7-8). That is a statement every Christian should prayerfully consider! Flawed views of God do not lead to high views of spiritual growth and personal holiness. This study will focus on the “face to face, friend to friend” relationship Moses had with God by shining the spotlight on several of his experiences with the greatness of the Lord.

### **The Greatness Of God’s Presence**

Life can expose inadequacy in any of us because of its challenges and demands. As Christians, we must humbly admit that there simply are too many times when we do not measure up to what God desires. However, feelings of inadequacy can be a blessing in that one is forced to focus on God rather than self. We are reminded, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God” (2 Cor. 3:5). The Lord said, “Without Me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5). A healthy sense of inadequacy promotes humble obedience rather than proud indulgence (cf. Jas. 4:10). Understanding our inadequacy can cause us to have a more teachable spirit (Psa. 119:67; Psa. 119:71). Ultimately, inadequacy can help us better see the greatness, nearness, and purity of God.

Many great Biblical characters suffered at times from deep feelings of inadequacy, including Abraham (Gen. 18:27), Gideon

(Judg. 6:15), David (2 Sam. 7:18-19) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:6). Sometimes there may be too much of James and John in us. We may say, “We are able” (Matt. 20:22) without fully considering just how inadequate we really are. In Exodus 3:1-10, Moses had the glorious experience of God speaking to him from the midst of the burning bush—a bush that burned with fire but was not consumed. Interestingly enough, this appearance came at a time when Moses was painfully aware of his personal inadequacy (cf. Exod. 2:11-15; Exod. 3:11-4:17). It is so important to keep in mind that God often specializes in using people who have some glaring failures in their track record!

One of several truths which Moses learned about God to a greater degree that day had to do with the fact of **God’s presence**. The words of Moses to the Lord later in Exodus 33:15 echo a principle by which he lived the greater part of his life: “If Your Presence does not go up with us, do not bring us up from here.” This statement is a perfect human response to God’s promise in Hebrews 13:5, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Moses had a face to face, friend to friend relationship with God because he lived ever desiring the assurance of His presence! Our awareness of the **fact** of God’s presence does not necessarily mean that we **long for** and **desire** it as did Moses. In contemplating God’s omniscience and omnipresence, David would state: “Such knowledge is too wonderful to me; it is high, I cannot attain it” (Psa. 139:6). How assuring it is to know that our God is near (cf. Jer. 23:23; Acts 17:27). David, through the Holy Spirit wrote: “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psa. 16:11). God’s Word declares, “I will fear no evil; for You are with me” (Psa. 23:4). There will be problems, but there is a Presence more than capable of handling every problem! Few words should equal the comfort and assurance of the Lord’s words in Matthew 28:20, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

These eternal truths should provide great comfort and encouragement to the people of God today. God has not abdicated the throne! He cares for His people. Although many souls are

enslaved to sin and under the tyranny of Satan, Christians have the assurance of God's presence in journeying to the promised land of heaven (Heb. 11:13-16).

Whatever reservations and personal inadequacies that Moses may have had, God more than answered them in Exodus 3 and 4 by the assurance of His presence. Moses learned to long for and to trust in God's ability to provide strength for all that is lacking. It is a principle many would do well to apply better today (cf. Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Tim. 2:1). According to passages such as Exodus 15 and Psalm 90, Moses was a writer and singer of songs of praise to the Almighty. Without question, the song he learned to sing the day God spoke to him out of the burning bush and promised His presence must have been strikingly similar to "**Trust and Obey.**"

### **The Greatness Of God's Guidance**

A deep desire of every faithful child of God is for a proper sense of direction and guidance. There is an understanding of the fact that our purpose in life is to follow the Lord whole-heartedly. "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." Those who love the Lord should humbly pray, "Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me" (Psa. 25:4-5). The exodus of the children of Israel **from** Egyptian bondage, recorded in Exodus chapter 12, was a new beginning; they were delivered by God from bondage in order to be brought **to** the Promised Land (cf. Deut. 4:37-38). Exodus 13:1-16 repeatedly emphasizes the **strength** or power of God in delivering Israel (Exod. 13:3; Exod. 13:9; Exod. 13:14; Exod. 13:16). However, as has often been said, "It took God one night to take Israel out of Egypt, but forty years to take Egypt out of Israel."

It is significant that Exodus 13:17-22 emphasizes the **guidance** of God in providing direction for God's people. In Exodus 13:21 we read of another occasion when Moses experienced something of God's greatness. "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar

of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.” Deuteronomy 1:33 describes the Lord God “who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day.” Not only did Moses and the people of Israel have a real sense of guidance and direction through God’s gifts of the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, but the pillar of cloud also served as a merciful provision of shade and protection as they traveled and stayed ahead of the Egyptian army (Exod. 14:19-20; Psa. 105:39). And the pillar of fire served as a light for them by night. God also occasionally spoke from the pillar of cloud (Num. 12:5-6; Deut. 31:15-16; Psa. 99:7). By the presence of the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, Moses and the children of Israel enjoyed the guidance and direction of God. Nehemiah 9:19 states: “Yet in Your manifold mercies You did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of the cloud did not depart from them by day, to lead them on the road; nor the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way they should go.”

God has not chosen to give such miraculous guidance today, but that does not mean that we are left without His direction. Just as God’s guidance of the children of Israel was visible and objective in that they could **observe** the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, the written Word of God offers spiritual guidance that is just as visible and objective—and God wants us to observe and obey His guidance (cf. Ezra 7:10; John 8:31-32). The Word of God is a sufficient guide to the promised land of heaven. The most important question to ask about guidance and direction today is, “What does the Word of God say?” God’s Word is called both a light (Psa. 119:105) and a fire (Jer. 23:29). Truly, the Lord does not shine upon us except as we take His Word as our light. Scripture has been given to guide us about what is right, what is not right, how to get right, and how to stay right with God (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

It further needs to be stated that Scripture is not merely a **sufficient** guide; it also is the **supreme** guide. God has revealed in Scripture all that we need to know about His will concerning life and



salvation (John 14:26; John 16:13). God in His “divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who has called us by glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). God “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Heb. 1:2). There is the air of finality in the word *spoken* in this passage. God’s final, sufficient, and supreme Word is “by His Son.” The story of divine revelation is progressive up to Jesus, for there is no progression beyond Him and what He authorizes through the teaching of the New Testament (cf. Jude 3; Gal. 1:6-9).

Many questions about decisions or directions that should be taken or not taken in life are directly answered by Scripture; others are dealt with indirectly, with the Word of God helping us to come to a conclusion. Admittedly, some decisions are not so cut-and-dried. However, consulting God’s Word must **never** be neglected or thought unnecessary. The Word of God must not be minimized or considered passé. It is amazing how often, through prayerful meditation upon God’s Word, an individual comes to see that what he is presently studying sheds light on some area or decision in life where help has been desperately needed.

“You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psa. 73:24). Surely these words convey an attitude to which every Christian should aspire. It is one thing to **know** that God’s guidance is available; it is an altogether different thing to **long for** and **desire** it as did Moses. The counsel and advice of others can prove helpful (Prov. 11:14), but this must never be a substitute for knowing God’s will as revealed in Scripture. Psalm 25:9 stresses the necessity of humility in seeking God’s guidance when it says, “The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way.” Proverbs 3:6 reminds us, “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

Moses had a “face to face, friend to friend” relationship with the Lord because he had an insatiable desire to be guided by God throughout life. One need not question the way when one knows and trusts the Guide. Moses learned to sing another hymn over the years as he contemplated God’s guidance of the people by the

pillar of cloud and pillar of fire. Moses learned to sing the song as he reflected on how God led them out of bondage to the door of the Promised Land. Amazingly, the song must have sounded a great deal like **“Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah.”**

### **The Greatness Of His Holiness**

No attribute or quality of God is accentuated more frequently in the Bible than the fact of His holiness. Scripture twice declares God to be, “Holy, holy, holy” (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8). The Father is called holy (John 17:11). The Son is called holy (Luke 1:35; Acts 4:27-30). And the Holy Spirit is holy as well (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-13). God is glorious in holiness (Exod. 15:11). “No one is holy like the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:2). “Holy and awesome is His name” (Psa. 111:9). God is holy and true (Rev. 3:7). A holy God calls His people to holy living (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2 Cor. 7:1). It is inconceivable that it should be otherwise.

Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God. What health is to the human heart, holiness is to the immortal soul. Holiness is not merely applied like make-up to the outside of our personalities but comes from an inner transformation (Rom. 12:1-2). What is meant by saying that God is holy? Simply stated, God’s holiness has to do with His pure and absolute hatred of sin (Hab. 1:13; Isa. 59:1-2) along with His pure and absolute love of what is righteous and good. Holiness for God’s people means that we seek to love purely and absolutely what is good and hate what is evil (Psa. 97:10; Amos 5:15).

In no place in the Old Testament is the holiness of God more obvious than in the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai (cf. Exod. 19:10-23). Everything linked with the occasion stressed the holiness and awesomeness of God. First, the children of Israel were to be “sanctified” and “washed” (Exod. 19:10-11; Exod. 19:14). Second, boundaries were to be set to keep the people from going beyond God’s prescribed limits and touching the mountain. If the boundaries were trespassed, the guilty were to be put to death (Exod. 19:12-13). There is a triple emphasis in Exodus 19 on making sure these boundaries were respected (Exod. 19:12-13; Exod. 19:21-22;

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Exod. 19:25). Oh, the danger of rushing thoughtlessly and presumptuously into the presence of God! Third, there was witnessed an impressive display of cosmic disruptions: thunder and lightning (Exod. 19:16), an exceedingly loud trumpet blast (Exod. 19:16; Exod. 19:19) and the smoke that covered the entire mountain while it violently trembled as God descended upon it in fire (Exod. 19:18). “The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel” (Exod. 24:17). The people of Israel were to understand that they were in the presence of the glorious majesty of the Holy God, and that He was revealing something of His Person and character in the giving of the Law. According to Hebrews 12:21, “And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.’” Even the greatest and godliest of men tremble with profound humility in recognition of the awesome nature of the Lord’s holiness!

Moses already had learned much about God and His holiness over the years. However, being on the mountain for forty days and receiving the Law from the Lord had to have been an amazing crash course on holiness (Exod. 24:18). It is fitting to ask, “How did this experience of God’s holiness bless the life of Moses?” For one thing, he learned that the very people who experience something of God’s holiness may still behave in ways that are terribly sinful (cf. Exod. 32:1-6). While Moses was receiving the Law, the children of Israel were guilty of “a great sin” by making and worshiping the golden calf (Exod. 32:21; Exod. 32:30-31). For another thing, from his time on the mountain with God, it was re-emphasized to Moses just how much God in His holiness hates sin (Exod. 32:7-10). The wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18).

Moses also learned even more about the need for intercession while up on that mountain with God (Exod. 32:11-18; Exod. 32:30-35). His time with God helped better prepare him to deal with the problems that would arise while dealing with people. The intensity and selflessness of his intercession grew out of his closeness to God. He not only refused to profit personally at the expense of God’s destruction of the children of Israel, but he was willing to be blotted

out of God's book for them to be spared (Exod. 32:32). Those closest to God truly see the necessity of interceding for others. Again, his time with God helped Moses to rebuke sin plainly and powerfully and to do so with the proper spirit (Exod. 32:19-24). Finally, Moses was reminded that nothing is more important than being on the Lord's side (Exod. 32:26-29; cf. Josh. 24:15; 1 Kings 18:21). God is worthy of our trust and obedience, even when those we love and are closest to on earth go astray. In the case of this "great sin" Moses' own brother, Aaron, was especially involved. The heart of Moses was broken over Israel's sin, but even more, his heart was broken because God's heart was broken over that sin. Throughout his mountaintop experience with the Lord, and for the rest of his life afterward, Moses sang of God's holiness in the key of E flat major (the "E" standing in this case for **Exalted**). The title of the hymn had to be "**Holy, Holy, Holy!**"

### **The Greatness Of His Graciousness and Goodness**

Moses had a face to face, friend to friend relationship with God because he sincerely longed to find grace in God's sight. It is highly significant that the desire of Moses to find "favor" or "grace" before God occurs five times in Exodus 33:12-17, a passage dealing with the aftermath of Israel's sin in the golden calf incident. For example, "Show me now Your way, that I may know You, and that I may find grace in Your sight" (Exod. 33:13). The repetition is there for a reason: it reveals much about the character of Moses and what mattered most to him. The same immediate context speaks of the presence of God (Exod. 33:14), the goodness of God (Exod. 33:19) and the glory of God (Exod. 33:18; Exod. 33:22). God's attributes do not exist in isolation from each another. God responds to the desire of Moses for grace with three comforting words of assurance: (1) "I will give you rest" (Exod. 33:14); (2) "I will be present with you" (Exod. 33:15-17); and (3) "I know you by name" (Exod. 33:17). What a way to describe grace!

"Please, show me Your glory" are the words of Moses in Exodus 33:18. Moses wants to "see" more fully something of God's glory.

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God again offers words of assurance. He says, (1) “I will make all My goodness pass before you” (Exod. 33:19); (2) “I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you” (Exod. 33:19); (3) “I will be gracious” (Exod. 33:19); (4) “I will have compassion” (Exod. 33:19); and (5) “I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you by My hand, while I pass by” (Exod. 33:22). God graciously assures Moses that He will grant his request as much as possible, with the stipulation that no one could see His face and live (Exod. 33:20; Exod. 33:23). Moses would be allowed to see something of God’s “back” (Exod. 30:23). How fitting that Moses would experience the Lord Who was his Rock (Deut. 32:4) while standing on the rock! (Exod. 33:21-22).

“And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin’” (Exod. 34:6-7). Moses got to “see” and hear that God is a God of overwhelming graciousness, abundant goodness, and steadfast, incomprehensible love. When Moses came down from the mountain with the two tablets, he “did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him” (Exod. 34:29). “Seeing” and hearing of God’s great grace and goodness had caused Moses’ face to glow! He had seen a glimpse of God’s glory. He did not realize at first that he had “absorbed” some of that glory and that he was reflecting it to others (Exod. 34:30-35). Moses did not see or sense the glory of his own face because he was so focused on the glorious grace and goodness of God!

What of us today? We should surely see that Christianity stands or falls on the themes of God’s grace and goodness. New Testament Christianity is distinct from all of the religions of the world in that the gospel is a message of God’s grace and goodness (Acts 20:24; Rom. 2:4). The Gospel reveals that God is gracious in His very character or nature (cf. 1 Pet. 2:3; 1 Pet. 5:10). The Gospel reveals that Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God’s grace and goodness (John 1:17; 2 Cor. 8:9; Heb. 2:9). How we need to tell people of what God did in Christ **before** we tell them how to respond to the gospel! The Gospel declares that we are saved by grace (Acts 15:11). We can and

must joyfully declare salvation to be by God's grace and goodness without falling into the trap of teaching salvation by "grace alone" (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8-10). The Gospel reveals that the grace and goodness of God should empower Christian living (Tit. 2:11-14; 2 Thess. 2:16). What draws sinners to God in the first place should be powerful motivation to keep people growing in the faith (Col. 1:27; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Moses got a glimpse of God's graciousness and goodness. We have been blessed not merely with a glimpse but with a perfect picture. We have been blessed with Jesus, "God manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). One suspects a day never went by when Moses did not think of "seeing" something of God's great grace and goodness while up on that mountain. The more he contemplated the thought, the more he longed for communion with the true God who is the embodiment of all that is good and gracious. But also, the more he thought about the experience, the more he simply had to lift his voice up to God in praise. One cannot know the exact words of the tune Moses sang, but it likely sounded a great deal like "**O Thou Fount of Every Blessing.**"

### **The Greatness Of His Gloriousness**

One great experience of God that Moses had took place literally hundreds of years after he had died. This particular experience occurred at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 16:28-17:9; Mark 9:1-9; Luke 9:27-36) and had to do with the glory of God. "I am the Lord, that is My Name; and My glory I will not give to another" (Isa. 42:8). In Isaiah 48:11, God states, "I will not give My glory to another." We were created for God's glory (Isa. 43:7). God's glory can be defined or described in a couple of different ways. First, God's glory has to do with His honor and excellence. Second, God's glory has to do with the brightness or brilliance that surrounds His revelation of Himself. In this second sense, God's glory can refer to the sum total of all His attributes.

In one sense, glory is intrinsic to God. In another sense, it can be ascribed. While God's intrinsic glory is who He is and the making

known of His attributes to us, ascribed glory is the glory (declaring His honor and excellence) that we give God based upon His identity and perfection. Scripture speaks of God as the King of glory (Psa. 24:7-10). He is called the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8). He is referred to as Excellent or Majestic Glory in 2 Peter 1:17. The apostle Peter spoke of the Transfiguration when he penned, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16). At the Transfiguration, more light would be shed on a truth about which the Apostle John would later write: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14; John 17:5; Phil. 2:5-11).

The Transfiguration shows that the glory of Jesus surpasses all human expression because He is fully God. Briefly let us notice several particulars regarding the glory of Jesus that may be seen from this incident, along with the effect it would have had on Moses. There was a **glorious attestation**. According to Matthew 17:2, Jesus was “transfigured.” Divine glory radiated from His face and even illumined His garments. The face of Jesus “shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as light.” According to Mark’s account, “His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them” (Mark 9:3). Those present on the occasion were privileged to see something of Christ’s pre-incarnate glory and the glory that would again be His after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Second Peter 1:17 says regarding this occasion: “For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

There also is a **glorious clarification and confirmation**. Jesus is not Moses or Elijah, for both of these prophets appear and talk with Him (Matt. 17:3). Moses was the type for the Prophet who would come (Deut. 18:18; Deut. 18:20) and Elijah for the forerunner, John the Baptizer (Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 11:7-11; Matt. 17:10-13). Both prophets had experienced a vision of God’s glory, one at Mount Sinai (Exod.



33:18) and the other at Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:8ff). Together they summarize well the Law and the Prophets. The emphasis in the entire account is that Jesus is superior to both Moses and Elijah and that He supersedes them (Matt. 17:5; Matt. 17:8).

In the Transfiguration we see a **glorious demonstration**. Luke 9:31 says that Moses and Elijah “spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” They were speaking to Jesus concerning His “exodus.” They were discussing the divine plan for man’s salvation, a plan which involved the death and resurrection of Jesus. Going to the Cross for our sins was not merely an afterthought or part of some alternative plan. It was a crucial aspect of “the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:11).

In the words of the Father at the Transfiguration we see a **glorious identification**. Out of a bright cloud, strikingly similar to the pillar of cloud in Exodus 13:21, a voice said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 17:5). In its context, this verse places Jesus above Moses and Elijah. The Father apparently blends two Old Testament prophecies, Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, to speak of Jesus as both His Son and as His Servant in Whom He delights. The Son of God is “the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3).

In this narrative we also see a **glorious application**. This is seen in the Father’s emphatic words, “Hear Him!” (Matt. 17:5). We hear and listen to so many things in life, but one wonders if we really hear Jesus enough! The message of Jesus needs to fill our hearts, minds, and lives (Col. 3:16; Psa. 19:11). How we need to hear and to build our lives wisely upon the Savior’s words (Matt. 7:24-27; Jas. 1:21-22).

What a blessing it must have been for Moses to have this experience of God’s greatness! He was able to see the glory of Jesus and to discuss with Him something of the eternal plan that would lead to the salvation of men. Moses saw in Jesus both the Cross and the Crown! Moses unquestionably left the scene with a song in his heart. How could it be otherwise? While we do not know the actual



lyrics, the hymn of praise must have sounded much like “**When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.**”

### **Conclusion**

You and I are at this very moment as close to God as we have chosen to be. Do we, like Moses, have an insatiable desire to know, love, and serve God? Is this our greatest longing? Is this our most compelling pursuit? Do we yearn to know God in a “face to face, friend to friend” way? The greatest and sweetest of all relationships is at stake. And so is a heavenly home with our glorious God.

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## CHAPTER 15

# When The People Murmur

*B. J. Clarke*

**I**t was a time of celebration! The Israelites, by the grace and power of God, were on their way to freedom from Egyptian bondage. They had groaned under the burden of their Egyptian taskmasters, but God had heard their cries (King James Version, Exod. 2:23-24). They had seen the amazing power of God in the plagues He sent upon Egypt (Exod. 7-12). They had seen the grace of God further demonstrated in their exemption from these plagues (Exod. 9:4; Exod. 9:26; Exod. 11:7; Exod. 12:13). Now, they were traveling away from the land of bondage, and they were headed for the land of promise (Exod. 12:37ff).

Their time of celebration quickly turned into a time of apprehension! Although the Israelites were joyous at leaving the land of bondage, they went suddenly from cheerful to fearful because “when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD” (Exod. 14:10). The *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* observes that the Hebrew word for “cried” probably came from a word that means “to sound as thunder” (“Tsâ ‘aq”). Hence, this was no meek whimper. The children of Israel expressed their fear to God with a vocal clap of thunder!

This would not be the last time they would raise their voices in opposition to God and toward God’s appointed leaders. In fact, a study of the history of Israel is a case study in the causes and consequences of a murmuring spirit. In condemning the faithlessness of the ten spies, God said,

Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and **have tempted me now these ten times**, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it. (emphasis mine throughout, BJC, Num. 14:22-23)

The expression *these ten times* could be merely a device to denote that the Israelites had provoked God on multiple occasions. On the other hand, the *Believer's Bible Commentary* sees this as a reference to ten specific occasions when the murmuring rebellion of the children of Israel stood out:

The Israelites had tempted God ten times (Num. 14:22). These temptings were as follows: at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:11, 12), at Marah (Ex. 15:23), in the Wilderness of Sin (Ex. 16:2), two rebellions concerning the manna (Ex. 16:20, 27), at Rephidim (Ex. 17:1), at Horeb (Ex. 32:7), at Taberah (Num. 11:1), at Kibroth Hattaavah (Num. 11:4 ff.), and at Kadesh (the murmuring at the spies' report—Num. 14). (Macdonald, "Num. 14:20-38")

The common element in nearly all these events is the murmuring of the people against God, and His appointed leaders. A survey of these episodes reveals that when the people murmur...

### **The Fretful Become Forgetful**

When the Israelites saw the Egyptians approaching, they became fretful, i.e., worried and agitated in mind. Their initial cry was to God, but they turned their attention quickly from God to Moses.

And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. (Exod. 14:11-12)

These murmuring words from the children of Israel demonstrate that, at the first sight of the Egyptians, the Israelites lost sight of Who was really in charge. Faithlessly, they concluded that their deaths were a foregone conclusion. How could they ever hope to stand against the mighty Egyptians?

It is amazing how quickly the fretful become forgetful. Had not God, in the ten plagues, put on an exhibition of power like the world had never seen? Had not the children of Israel witnessed the impotence of the Egyptian gods in contrast to the power of the one true God (Exod. 12:12)? One cannot help but wish they had reasoned, "If God cared enough to deliver us from Egyptian bondage in the first place, surely, He will not abandon us now!"

Yet, instead of trusting God to deliver them from the puny Egyptians, they blamed Moses for taking them away to die in the wilderness. Their words of accusation and exaggeration reveal that the people had also forgotten the character and integrity of Moses. How quickly the fretful become forgetful of a good man's character! Moses had never done anything against the people to warrant such charges.

How did Moses react to the murmuring Israelites? Did he lash out at his accusers with some accusations of his own? Did he lecture them for their faithlessness?

And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he

will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. (Exod. 14:13–14)

The character of Moses stands out in his response to the people. What he did **not** say is every bit as revealing as what he did say. What would we have said to the people who murmured against us with false allegations? Would we have been as restrained with our words?

As commendable as the words of Moses appear at first glance, God's response demonstrates that well-spoken words were not enough on this occasion.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. (Exod. 14:15–16)

Interestingly, the word translated *criest* in this passage is from the same Hebrew word used to describe how the children of Israel vocalized their fear unto God when they saw the approaching Egyptians. Essentially, God said to Moses, “Why are you thundering these words unto me? Direct your words to the children of Israel. Tell them to go forward toward the water, and then take your rod and divide the waters. Then, when it is time, command the children of Israel to go through on dry ground to the other side.”

There is something for us to learn from the approach of God toward the murmurers versus the approach of Moses toward them. Moses was looking for a way to get the murmurers “to hold their peace.” He tried to reassure them that the same God who brought them to this moment in time would fight for them to deliver them from the Egyptians. To his credit, he harbored no ill will against

what they had just said to him. He put all of that aside and gave them a spiritual pep talk. However, God's approach shows an even better way to deal with murmuring among the people. Give them something to do! Moses told the people to "**stand still.**" God said, "**Get them moving!**" When the people are standing still, they have too much time on their hands, and the murmuring is sure to follow.

The final moments leading to their deliverance were dramatic, to say the least. Think of what the children of Israel witnessed! They watched as

the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness *to them*, but it gave light by night *to these*: so that the one came not near the other all the night. (Exod. 14:19-20)

This amazing sight was followed by one stupendous event after another. They watched Moses stretch his hands out over the sea, and saw the LORD cause the sea to divide (Exod. 14:21). They walked down into the midst of where the waters had been and found dry ground. Meanwhile, the waters of the sea were walled up beside them on their right hand, and on their left (Exod. 14:22).

They watched as the LORD troubled the Egyptian pursuers by taking off their chariot wheels and causing them to flee from the face of Israel (Exod. 14:23-25). As they continued to behold the power of God, "Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, *and* all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them" (Exod. 14:27-28).

The Bible summarizes that “the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And **Israel saw that great work which the LORD did** upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses” (Exod. 14:29-30). In view of all that Israel saw, one would think their faith in the power of God to protect and provide for them would be solidified forevermore.

### *Murmuring At Marah*

However, we soon see the children of Israel go from faithful to fretful, and then from fretful to forgetful! The record declares “they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And **the people murmured against Moses**, saying, What shall we drink?” (Exod. 15:22-24).

The word *murmured* in this passage translates a Hebrew word which means to “grumble against, blame, i.e., make a verbal complaint against another, whether proper or improper” (Swanson #4296). The Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) uses a form of the Greek word *gonguzo* in this text. This word is also used numerous times in the New Testament. *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines *gonguzo* as meaning “to mutter, murmur, grumble, say anything in a low tone (Eng., ‘gong’), an onomatopoeic word, representing the significance by the sound of the word, as in the word ‘murmur’ itself” (“Murmur”).

Spurgeon wrote, “The very word *murmur*, how simple it is, made up to two infantile sounds—*mur mur*. No sense in it, no wit in it, no thought in it. It is the cry rather of a brute than of a man. Murmur—just a double groan” (129). Spurgeon’s observation should be remembered in reading this chapter, for some of the words/phrases employed in developing this subject have been chosen deliberately because of their onomatopoeic, and sometimes infantile sounding, flavor. Hence, if the reader comes across a word that seems unusual, or sounds silly, let it be remembered that this is an intentional device to remind us all of the nature of murmuring.



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The Greek word that is actually used in the LXX of Exodus 15:24 is *diagonguzo*, which means “to murmur through” (*dia*, i.e., “through a whole crowd,” or “among themselves”), and Vine’s says that “it is always used of indignant complaining, Luke 15:2; 19:7” (“Murmur”). Hence, when the people discovered that the water was undrinkable, a grumbling began rumbling through the crowd. It is not hard to imagine the types of things they could have been saying to one another: “Moses led us out here in the wilderness, and now we have nothing to drink. Moses led us to water, all right, but it is toxic! Why would he lead us to poisonous water? If we drink this, it will kill us all. What is he doing anyway? This seems like a suicide mission.”

Imagine how sweet it would have been if the people had started saying to one another instead, “Well, the good news is that God, through Moses, has led us to an abundant supply of water; the bad news for now is that the waters are bitter and undrinkable. However, the best news is that our God has already demonstrated His supremacy over nature. If God can part the waters of the sea, surely He can purify water for drinking! Let’s join Moses in prayer and ask God to purify these waters for us.” Yet, no such words are recorded in the text. Instead, the fretful had become forgetful! It should be noted that, even though they directed their comments to Moses, their fretful words really betrayed a lack of confidence in God to supply adequately their needs.

In addressing the sinfulness of murmuring against God, Charles Simeon makes some outstanding observations regarding their question to Moses, “What shall we drink?”:

Had the question they put to Moses, been nothing more than a simple interrogation, it had been innocent enough: but it was an unbelieving, passionate complaint. (How often are *our* words also, or our actions, inoffensive perhaps as to their external form, while, on account of the spirit with which they are blended,

they are most hateful and detestable in the sight of God!). (410-11)

Simeon continues:

But why should they murmur against Moses? He had not conducted them thither of his own mind, but by God's command. Their displeasure against him was, in fact, directed against God himself. (And it will be well for us to remember, that in venting our wrath, and indignation against the instruments by whom God at any time afflicts us, we vent it in reality against him who uses them.) (410-11)

Simeon concludes his comments with a series of questions:

And why should they murmur against God? Had he committed an oversight in leading them into that situation? Had he forgotten to be gracious? Was he so changed within the space of three days, that he could no longer devise a way for their relief? Or was his ear become so heavy that he could not hear, or his hand so shortened that he could not save? Should they not rather have concluded, that now, as on many recent occasions, he had permitted their trial to be great, in order that he might the more abundantly magnify his own power and mercy in their deliverance? Doubtless this would have become them who had seen so many and such stupendous miracles wrought in their behalf. (410-11)

In spite of their faithlessness, God miraculously purified the waters at Marah (Exod. 15:25). He then led them to Elim where there

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were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees (Exod. 15:27). These two actions on His part should have served as a refresher course on His ability to provide for their needs. Perhaps now the people would always trust God to be their leader! Perhaps now they would grasp His greatness and tender loving care. Then again, perhaps they would not. The sad truth is they would murmur again very soon, in larger numbers than ever before, and with more intensity than ever before.

### *Murmuring In The Wilderness*

The Israelites left Elim and came unto the wilderness between Elim and Sinai. They arrived on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of Egypt (Exod. 16:1). The date is important because they had been out of bondage now for exactly one month (Exod. 12:6ff). The recent events at the Red Sea, and God's miraculous purification of the waters at Marah, should still have been very fresh in their memories. Yet, we read, "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness" (Exod. 16:2). Note the progression of the murmuring spirit among God's people. We go from "**the people** murmured against **Moses**" (Exod. 15:24) to "**the whole congregation** murmured against **Moses and Aaron**" (Exod. 16:2). This time, the issue is not water, but food. Apparently, the food supplies they brought with them from Egypt (Exod. 12:34; Exod. 12:39) were now waning, or depleted.

It would be wonderful to read something in the text like, "Although their food supply was diminishing, the children of Israel prayed with Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, thanking God for what He had done already on their behalf, and trusting Him to provide what they now needed." Regrettably, this is not what we find in the Divine Record. Instead, the children of Israel said, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exod. 16:3). Their words prove once again that the fretful become forgetful! The *Pulpit Commentary* laments:

Yet, instead of bearing the trial, and doing the best they could under the circumstances, they began to murmur and wish themselves dead. They did not reflect upon the past; they did not use it as a standard by which to estimate the future. They acted exactly as they might naturally have done, had they had no previous evidence of God's power to deliver. (Rawlinson 2:31-33)

Furthermore, their words, concerning their time in Egypt, paint a much rosier picture than what we read in Exodus 2:23: "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage." Had the children of Israel truly forgotten how bad things were in Egypt? Or had the criers become liars?

Regarding the murmurers' description of their time in Egypt, commentator John Butler minces no words: "This is all a big fat lie. They did not want to die in Egypt, and in Egypt they did not 'eat bread to the full.' They were slaves and treated cruelly by the Egyptians. Murmurers, however, pay little attention to the truth, for if they did it would stop their murmuring" (147).

Whether they repressed the memories of their painful past, or deliberately misrepresented their past in order to stimulate discontent among the crowd, the bottom line is the same. The groaners had become grumblers! And why was this so? They were so fretful because they were so forgetful, forgetful of the goodness and glory of God! It may seem to the reader that we are belaboring the point, but the inspired testimony of the Psalmist also repeatedly emphasizes the forgetfulness of the Israelites who left the land of bondage:

Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; **they remembered not** the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea. Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty

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power to be known. He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they his words; they sang his praise. **They soon forgot his works;** they waited not for his counsel...they forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt. (Psalm 106:7–13; Psalm 106:21)

The *Pulpit Commentary* elaborates:

And men still act much the same. Oh! for the delights of boyhood, they exclaim, forgetting all its drawbacks. Oh! for the time when I occupied *that* position, which I unwisely gave up (because I hated it). The present situation is always the worst conceivable—its ills are magnified, its good points overlooked, thought nothing of. Again, how unreasonable! (Rawlinson 2:31-33)

One may ask, since we do not live in the age of miracles, can we really identify with the children of Israel when it comes to forgetting God's wondrous love toward us in the past?

We do not witness miracles, but we witness signal deliverances of various kinds—an enemy defeated at the moment that he seemed about to carry all before him—the independence of a nation saved when it appeared to be lost—drought succeeded by copious rains—overmuch rain followed by a glorious month for harvest. Yet, each time that a calamity threatens, we despond; we forget all the

past; we distrust God's mercy; we murmur; we wish, or say we wish, that we had died before the trial came. (Rawlinson 2: 31-33)

The reaction of both God and Moses toward the murmurers of Exodus 16 is quite revealing. In the first place, it is amazing to consider what God did not do. Butler observes:

It would have been justifiable if God had said He was going to rain brimstone of judgment upon the murmurers, but instead grace prevailed and it was bread, not brimstone. The whole matter of manna was a manifestation of the grace of God for the Israelites. And in typology, the whole matter of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, is all a manifestation of the grace of God for the sinner. (147-48)

As for Moses, he and Aaron focused the attention of the people upon what God had already done for them, and promised them that in the morning they would again see the glory of the LORD (Exod. 16:6-7). Butler's comments are again right on target:

It is significant that the countering of the murmuring started with an emphasis upon the right perception of God. If you want to improve man's behavior, you need to start with his perception of God. Man's knowledge and attitude about God is the key to his behavior. Social agencies do not recognize this fact nor do psychologists and other counselors, but the Bible teaches it. (146-49)

Apparently, the children of Israel had also become forgetful of God's omniscience and omnipresence. In Exodus 16:7-12, Moses

reminds the people four times that God had heard their murmurings. They should have realized that if God was able to hear their groanings (Exod. 2:23-24; Exod. 6:5), He was able also to hear their grumblings. Modern day murmurers must remember this truth as well. The Psalmist said to God, “Thou understandest my thought afar off... there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether” (Psalm 139:2-4).

Although they did not deserve it, God graciously sent bread from above and Moses gave the people very clear instructions concerning the proper amount to gather. He explicitly said, “Let no man leave of it till the morning” (Exod. 16:19). How well did the people regard his words? The text records, “Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them” (Exod. 16:20). It is entirely possible that the people were so busy murmuring they did not hear the clear instructions given by Moses.

It is often the case that murmurers can not hear anything else above the shrill sound of their own griping and grumbling. Paul Lee Tan’s *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* relates one of Aesop’s fables, which tells of a heavy wagon being dragged along a country lane by a team of oxen. The wheels groaned and creaked terribly. The oxen turned around and spoke to the wheels: “Hey, there! why do you make so much noise? We bear all the labour, and we, not you, ought to cry out” (#3754). Usually, those in the congregation who creak, and groan, and make the most racket, are those who are just along for the ride, while others do the heavy lifting.

Be that as it may, now that God had purified the waters at Marah (Exod. 15) and provided manna for His people day after day (Exod. 16), would the people finally trust Him? We do not have to read very far to discover that soon the people would murmur again. A study of Exodus 17 reconfirms that when the people murmur...

### **The Friction Will Lead To Fiction**

When the people pitched in Rephidim, “there was no water for the people to drink” (Exod. 17:1). Regrettably, the people did

not approach Moses with a calm and reasonable explanation of the problem. Instead, “the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink” (Exod. 17:2). According to *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, the word translated *chide* in this passage is from a Hebrew word that is synonymous with striving, quarreling, contending, and disputing. The word is used sometimes to convey the idea of filing a lawsuit against someone (Holladay, Kohler, and Kohler 338).

Essentially, Moses responded to the people by saying, “Why are you bringing charges against me? Do you not realize when you accuse me you are really bringing an indictment against the LORD? I am merely following His lead. He is in charge. Take it up with Him.” John Calvin also notes the foolhardiness of blaming Moses for their circumstances. Concerning the Israelites, he wrote:

They know that fountains and rivers cannot be created by mortal man; wherefore, then, do they quarrel with him, and not call directly upon God, in whose hand are the waters as well as all other elements? Certainly, if there had been a spark of faith in them, they would have had recourse to prayer. (*Calvin’s Commentaries*, “Exod. 17:1”)

The text appears to suggest that the words of Moses temporarily quelled the murmuring, but not for long. The words of Moses did not quench their thirsts (Exod. 17:3), or the friction that was increasing in the congregation against the leadership. On the contrary, “The people murmured against Moses, and said, ‘Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?’” (Exod. 17:3). Years later, they would make an even more outrageous accusation against God Himself. Influenced by the negativity of the ten faithless spies, they rebelled against God’s commandments, and murmured in their tents, saying, “Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us” (Deut. 1:27).



How in the world did the children of Israel come to believe that God and Moses were out to get them? Where did such an outrageous fabrication originate? It is improbable that the entire congregation started thinking such things at the exact same time. It is more likely that someone started to verbalize his/her doubt to another, and then to another, and then another, and so on, and so forth, until what began as the whimper of a single individual, turned into the grumblings of a few, which grew and grew until it escalated into a crescendo of doubt and despair.

The murmurings of the past, combined with present accusations and exaggerations, simmered among the people until they finally boiled over with outright fabrications against Moses, and even against God. The more this fiction spread, the greater the friction became, and the greater the friction became, the larger the faction became against Moses, and against God! How did Moses respond to their charges? His response reveals that when the people murmur...

### **The Murmuring Could Lead To Murdering**

Moses could sense the escalation of emotions in this episode of murmuring (Exod. 17). The people had murmured in the past, but something was different this time. The intensity of their demeanor led Moses to believe that his life was in danger. He thought their moaning was about to lead to a stoning—with him as the victim! Hence, he cried out to God, “What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me” (Exod. 17:4). There is no reason to doubt the veracity of Moses’ assessment of the danger he faced. He was not merely being dramatic. He could see the angry mob mentality brewing among the congregation.

It may seem far-fetched to suggest that religious people could become angry enough to stone their own religious leaders to death, but one cannot forget what happened to Stephen (Acts 7:57-60), to Paul (Acts 14:19; 2 Cor. 11:25), and almost to Joshua and Caleb (Num. 14:10). In Exodus 17, Moses thought it was about to happen to him. Hence, he petitioned God for help, showing us that,

when the people murmur, the very first thing to do is to turn to God in prayer!

God's response to Moses is educational for us. He told Moses to gather up the elders of Israel, and to take them to the rock in Horeb. God promised, "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink" (Exod. 17:6). A very significant phrase occurs next in the passage: "And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel" (Exod. 17:6). Although God was the source of the water (Exod. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4), His use of Moses as the striker of the rock would serve as a Divine endorsement of his credentials as God's chosen leader. God wanted the elders of Israel to see Moses as such, and in turn to tell the children of Israel how Moses exercised his leadership authority to bring the water gushing out of the rock. God wanted the murmuring people to realize that the very one they accused of trying to kill them with thirst was the very one who had been instrumental in leading them to the life-saving water which God supplied.

The lessons for us are numerous. Much moaning and groaning occurs in the local church and in the brotherhood at large. This moaning and groaning may not lead to the actual stoning of a brother, but the murmuring can still lead to "murdering" in the form of character assassination. Some in the local church throw verbal stones at the elders, the preachers, deacons, etc., and their statements often are saturated with fiction. Some in the brotherhood throw stones at good brethren in an attempt to kill their influence, and even to kill the good works with which they are involved. They will resort to anything to accomplish their intent, even if they have to manufacture false accusations. They think nothing at all of falsely accusing a brother of things he never dreamed of believing or doing. As was the case in the days of Moses, their fiction produces friction, which in turn produces factions in the church/brotherhood.

What do falsely accused brethren need from us? When false charges are filed against an elder, a preacher, or any brother/sister in

Christ, if we are certain of their innocence, we should let them know they still have our backing and endorsement. Our endorsement of a faithful eldership, or faithful preacher, etc., may go a long way toward causing others to reconsider what they have heard about “Brother So and So.” When the negative reports of the ten spies influenced “all the children of Israel” to murmur against Moses and Aaron (Num. 13:28-14:2), Caleb did not follow the crowd. Instead, he attempted to still the murmuring people (Num. 13:30), and he and Joshua stood up for Moses, and for God, even at the risk of being stoned by the murmuring crowd (Num. 14:6-10).

Refreshed by God’s very visible endorsement of his leadership authority, Moses sent a message to the people by calling the name of the place Massah (place of temptation/testing) and Meribah (place of strife). Moses indicted the people for tempting the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?” His words remind us that when the people murmur...

### **The Doubting Causes The Pouting**

Why did the children of Israel keep on pouting and spouting their complaints time after time after time? Actually, their pouting was much like the cobwebs that keep showing up in the corners of the ceiling. You can clean them out, week after week, but until you kill the spider that is causing the cobwebs, they will come back again, and again, and again.

So, what was “the spider” that kept producing the cobwebs of murmuring among God’s people? Their doubting was producing their pouting! The fact that they constantly doubted God is virtually inconceivable, considering all they had seen. How could they possibly ask, “Is the LORD among us or not?” (Exod. 17:7). The *Pulpit Commentary* rehearses the amazing things the Israelites had seen:

The Israelites had been brought out of Egypt “by a mighty hand”—delivered through means of a series of wonderful miracles. They had escaped

the pursuit of Pharaoh by having a path made for them through the waters of the Red Sea. They had witnessed the destruction of Pharaoh's choicest warriors by the return of the waves on either side. They had very recently thought themselves on the point of perishing with thirst; and then by the simplest possible means God had made the bitter water sweet and agreeable. (Rawlinson 2:31-33)

When things were going well, the murmuring would subside. But at the first sign of difficulty or trial, the people displayed the doubt within them by the murmuring that came forth from their doubting hearts. John Calvin accurately remarked, "Now, temptation is the mother of contentions; for as soon as anything occurs contrary to the wishes of one who distrusts God, he has recourse to murmuring and dispute" (Comments on Ex. 17:1). Thus, the root of their problem was unbelief. The psalmist summarized the mentality of the people when he wrote that "they believed not his word: but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD" (Psa. 106:24-25). They did not appreciate properly the true power of God and they did not believe Him to be true to His promises. The *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* contains one of the choicest quotes this author discovered in researching this subject: "To swear is wicked because it is taking God's name in vain. To murmur is likewise wicked for it takes God's promises in vain" (Tan #3755).

### **The Blurting Will Lead To Hurting**

Who are the blurting ones? The blurting are those who blurt, i.e., "say something without thought and careful consideration." So much of the Israelite murmuring was because the people said whatever came to their minds without evaluating its accuracy or propriety. How did this work for the Israelites? Time and again, we see that their blurting led to their own hurting. The children of Israel learned some things the hard way.

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### *Your Yearnings May Lead To Your Burning*

A yearning is not necessarily evil. What we yearn for makes the difference. Yearning for righteousness is a good thing (Matt. 5:6). However, if we yearn for the wrong thing, our yearning will lead to a burning. Consider some proofs of this truth.

**Taberah.** In Numbers 11:1, we read that “the people complained.” Moreover, “it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it” (Num. 11:1). Numerous commentators note the expression *it displeased the LORD* could be translated most literally *it was evil in the ears of the LORD*. The exact words of their complaint are not recorded here, but it is not hard to fill in the blanks by what we know from other Scriptures. In fact, the original accusation, that God and Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to kill them in the wilderness (Exod. 14:11; Exod. 16:3), remained constant throughout their years of grumbling and griping (Exod. 17:3; Num. 14:2; Num. 20:3-5; Num. 21:5). Apparently, they thought if they said the same thing loud enough, and long enough, eventually it would become true.

Whatever their exact words were on this occasion, God’s “anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp” (Num. 11:1). Remarkably, the same carping critics who had criticized Moses so much in the past suddenly decided that they needed him in the present. “And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them” (Num. 11:2-3). To the credit of Moses, he did not hesitate to pray for the very people who had so spitefully treated him. His prayer quenched the fire, but for some it was too late. Their improper yearning had led to their burning.

**Miriam.** In Numbers 12:1-15, “Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman” (Num. 12:1). However, as the record continues, we learn that another issue appears to have been the underlying source of Miriam and Aaron’s murmur against Moses. They said, “Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by

Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it” (Num. 12:2).

The following verses reveal how God called Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to the tabernacle. The LORD descended in the pillar of the cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle (Num. 12:5). The LORD then summoned Aaron and Miriam and informed them of His special revelatory relationship with Moses. He angrily rebuked them for speaking against His servant Moses, and then departed (Num. 12:6-9). When the cloud departed from off the tabernacle, Miriam became leprous (Num. 12:10).

How does Miriam becoming leprous fit the description of her yearning becoming a burning? Leviticus 13:24 describes one of the symptoms of leprosy as “a hot burning.” A doctor of dermatology explained, “Since sensory nerve changes are present in leprosy, some patients notice a sense of burning or itching” (Spinka 17-20). Thus, Miriam’s yearning for recognition and personal glory ended with her experiencing the burning sensation of leprosy.

Fearful at what he saw, Aaron turned to Moses, confessed his foolish and sinful behavior, and begged him, “Lay not the sin upon us” (Num. 12:11). He made a special appeal to Moses on behalf of Miriam: “Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother’s womb” (Num. 12:12). Once again, Moses proved his meekness by graciously pleading with God to “heal her now” (Num. 12:14).

**The 250 princes.** In Numbers 16, we read of 250 princes who were “famous in the congregation, men of renown” (Num. 16:2). Apparently, they did not feel “famous” enough, for they joined hands with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and “gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron” (Num. 16:1-3). They accused Moses and Aaron of taking too much authority. They said, “Seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?” (Num. 16:3).

It is not hard to see the ulterior motives of this group of grumblers. They were obviously envious of the positions of leadership to which

God had called Moses and Aaron. They were arrogant and did not want to submit to anyone else's charge. Tragically, their yearning for prestige ended in a burning humiliation, for "there came out a fire from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense" (Num. 16:35).

### ***The Things You Crave May Lead To Your Grave***

A number of historical events in the book of Numbers sends this strong and clear message. Reflect on a few instances.

**The Graves of Lust.** As noted above, at the beginning of Numbers 11, the fire of the LORD was sent to consume some of the complaining Israelites. In view of this, one would think that the children of Israel would "walk softly," at least for a while. We do not know precisely how much time elapsed between the burning of the complainers in Numbers 11:1-3 and what we read next, but it is absolutely astonishing that the children of Israel just never seemed to "get the memo." In truth, God had sent more than a single "memo" to His people. The Israelites should have seen the "post it notes" piling up on their doors, so to speak, but they just ignored the messages. It is probably more accurate to say that God had sent them the equivalent of dozens of Divinely certified letters, but they refused to sign off on them or pay them any mind.

Thus, it is amazing, but not completely surprising, to see that no sooner had the fires of judgment been quenched when the mixed multitude that was among them "fell a-lusting" (Num. 11:4). Most literally, the Hebrew means that they "lusted a lust." The American Standard Version translates it "lusted exceedingly," while the New King James Version renders it "intense craving." The children of Israel joined this mixed multitude, weeping and asking the question, "Who shall give us flesh to eat?"

In particular, they were craving the food they had, or alleged they had, in Egypt (Num. 11:5). Their Egyptian menu was likely not as good as they remembered, but it is not unreasonable to believe that they ate fish and the other items mentioned in Numbers 11:5. It is not likely that they had these items on a regular basis. Nevertheless, they were growing tired of the manna God had graciously provided

for their sustenance. While we understand a desire for variety, their manner of requesting additional items on the menu was hardly tempered with grace or seasoned with salt. To say, as they did, “But now our soul is dried away” was a bit dramatic, considering the fact that God had provided ample nutrition for them by means of the manna. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* offers the following insight:

We may suggest that they were exaggerating the variety and plenty of their diet in Egypt. But the contrast was sure: there are no fish or vegetables to be had in the desert. The focus of faith, however, is that there should have been no food at all in the desert. That there was anything at all to eat was solely by God’s mercy. To spurn a regularly occurring, abundant and nutritious food only because it is boring is understandably human—a pitiable mark of our tendency toward ingratitude. (790)

The manna from above may not have been the food they wanted, but in order to survive it was the food they needed. Indeed, **there is a tendency for the needy to become greedy.**

Somehow, the people got so worked up into an emotional frenzy that Moses could hear family after family weeping. To hear the weeping coming out of the tents, one would think that scores of people were starving to death. Yet, their weeping was not due to a lack of food—it was about wanting a different food. Their theatrics left the false impression that the Israelites were terribly deprived and withering away to nothing. This kindled the anger of their LORD greatly, and Moses was also displeased (Num. 11:10). Probably all of us have heard a parent say to his crying child, “If you cry over nothing, I’ll give you something to cry about.” Charles Spurgeon told of hearing a mother say such a thing, and he commented, “From the sound of her hand, I gathered the moral that those who cry about



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nothing are making a rod for their own backs, and will probably be made to smart under it” (44).

This is exactly the nature of the message God instructed Moses to give the people. Essentially, God told the people through Moses, “I have heard your complaint against me, and how well you had it in Egypt, and how deprived you have been of the food you need ever since you left the comfort of Egypt. You want meat? I’ll give you some meat. In fact, I’ll give you so much meat it will be coming out of your nostrils. You’ll eat so much of the meat you love that you’ll end up hating it!” This is one time when it would have been appropriate to say, “Be careful what you ask God for—you just might get it!” Did they ever get what they craved?

The promised meat came in the form of a swarm of **quail**. Verse 31 may mean that the quail flew two cubits off the ground or were piled **two cubits** deep on **the ground**. The latter is not impossible; quail that were exhausted by migration have been known to land on a ship in sufficient quantity to sink it. The people went forth to feast on the meat, but many were soon struck by a terrible **plague**. The place was called **Kibroth Hattaavah** (“the graves of lust”) because the people’s **craving** brought them to the grave. (MacDonald, “Num. 11:31-35”)

So significant was this event in the history of Israel, that the book of Psalms, written hundreds of years later, spends a great deal of time rehearsing the episode, as well as its prelude and aftermath. The psalmist recalls the evidence of how God “clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers” (Psa. 78:15-16). How did Israel respond to these acts of kindness from God’s gracious hand?

And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people? (Psa. 78:17-20)

What did God do when He heard their words of sarcasm and doubt?

Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: **so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel**; Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. (Psa. 78:21-28)

Hundreds of years after it happened, the Holy Spirit led the psalmist to summarize the events described in Numbers 11:31-34:

**So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; They were not estranged**

**from their lust.** But while their meat was yet in their mouths, The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. (Psa. 78:29–31)

This is not the last time the psalmist brings this subject up for discussion. Describing the mentality of the children of Israel toward God's great works, he wrote, "They soon forgot his works: they waited not for his counsel: but **lusted exceedingly in the wilderness**, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." (Psa. 106:13-15)

This last phrase is fascinating to consider in comparison to the self-assessment of the Israelites in Numbers 11:6 concerning their condition. When they had only manna to eat they said, "But now our soul is dried away." This implies that once God showered mounds of meat upon them they would no longer view themselves as impoverished. Yet, from God's point of view, it was after He "gave them their request" when they would truly experience a "leanness" of soul (Psa. 106:15).

No doubt, at first they rejoiced that their cravings were about to be satisfied. Yet, what some viewed as a blessing was actually the prelude to their judgment. Before some could finish the first bite of flesh, their soul would be required of them! Be careful what you crave, for it may hasten your trip to the grave! What a bitter lesson to learn the hard way. We know "it is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. 9:27), but sadly, some go to the grave sooner than necessary because of the things they crave! In the case of Israel, their lust hastened their return to the dust (cf. Gen. 3:19)!

**The Wanderers in the Wilderness.** Those who left Egyptian bondage were going to die someday, but God never intended them to make their grave in the wilderness. They brought that on themselves by desiring to return to life in the bondage of Egypt, rather than living in freedom and trusting God to be their Provider and Sustainer (Num. 14:1-8). Their longing for Egypt was a slap in the face of the Almighty! Thus, God said of them,

How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me for all the signs which I have shown among them?... Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice: Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it...But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness. (Num. 14:11; Num. 14:22-23; Num. 14:32)

Their story cries out to all men of all ages, “Be careful of the things you crave, for they might just bring you to an early grave!”

**Korah and Company.** Korah (a Levite) and Dathan and Abiram (Reubenites) conspired together to question the authority of Moses and Aaron. Moses told them to come back the next day and to make sure they brought their censers (Num. 16:6). He informed them that they were actually the presumptuous ones (Num. 16:7). He reminded them of the privileges of service they already enjoyed and chided them for seeking self-exaltation (Num. 16:8-10). Most importantly, He brought them face to face with the fact that they were ultimately gathering themselves together against the LORD (Num. 16:11).

When Moses called for Dathan and Abiram to convene with him, they refused to come. However, they did send Moses a message consisting of an accusation he had heard so many times before:

Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out

the eyes of these men? We will not come up.  
(Num. 16:13-14)

Angry at their false allegations, Moses poured his heart out to God (Num. 16:15). He then sent word to Korah and company and demanded their presence on the morrow in order to settle this matter once and for all.

When Korah's company gathered at the door of the tabernacle the next day, "the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation" (Num. 16:19). God instructed Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the congregation so that God could "consume them in a moment" (Num. 16:21). Remarkably, Moses and Aaron interceded on behalf of the people (Num. 16:22). God then commanded Moses to tell the congregation to get away from the dwelling places of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16:26).

Moses explained to the congregation how they would be able to tell who really had God's stamp of approval. He said,

If these men die the common death of all men,  
or if they be visited after the visitation of all  
men; then the LORD hath not sent me. But if  
the LORD make a new thing, and the earth  
open her mouth, and swallow them up, with  
all that appertain unto them, and they go down  
quick into the pit; then ye shall understand  
that these men have provoked the LORD.  
(Num. 16:29-30)

As Moses finished speaking these words, "the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods" (Num. 16:31-32).

Those who witnessed this unforgettable moment began to flee for fear that they too would be swallowed up. The 250 princes who had aligned themselves with Korah probably thought they had narrowly

escaped death when they found themselves still on the topside of the earth. However, “the fire of the LORD” consumed them shortly after the earth had devoured their co-conspirators. Although they experienced more of a cremation than a burial, their death was premature and avoidable. They had not planned to die that day. If their desire had been to glorify God, instead of themselves, they would not have met an untimely death. They could have avoided the fire with a holy desire!

**The 14,700.** The day after God’s judgment upon Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their families, “all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD” (Num. 16:41). What audacity! Some people just do not know when to leave well enough alone. Had they not seen or heard what happened to the sowers of discord just the day before?

Furthermore, what a ludicrous charge they leveled in accusing Moses and Aaron of killing the people who died the day before. Since when did Moses and Aaron possess the power to command the earth to open up, swallow up, and close up? Since when could Moses and Aaron call down fire from heaven in a precision strike designed to take out 250 specific princes? What had happened the day before was obviously an act of God. Consequently, one would think that the Israelites would tread carefully before confronting God’s appointed leaders. Yet, the congregation “was gathered together against Moses and against Aaron” (Num. 16:42) as if they were completely oblivious to what happened the day before.

As the people were confronting Moses and Aaron, “the cloud covered the tabernacle, and “the glory of the LORD appeared” (Num. 16:42). God told Moses and Aaron, “Get you up from among the congregation that I may consume them as in a moment” (Num. 16:45). Moses knew that wrath was gone out from the LORD and thus he instructed Aaron to make an atonement for the people as quickly as possible. Before the plague was stayed, 14,700 human beings died (Num. 16:49). Because they did not restrain their murmuring tongues, their tongues were silenced in death.

Someone has said our murmuring is the devil's music. This is certainly true, but God can interrupt this sinful song and bring it to silence.

**Miriam and Aaron.** Even Miriam and Aaron would tell us, "Be careful about what you crave, for it may put you in an early grave." We learn from Numbers 12 that they both craved the recognition and position that Moses had. God rebuked them both, and initially punished Miriam with leprosy, whereas Aaron was not smitten. Perhaps this is because Miriam was the more aggressive of the two in the matter. Whatever the reason, Aaron appealed to Moses on behalf of Miriam, and her leprosy was short-lived, though followed by a time of quarantine. Nevertheless, Miriam died in Kadesh and was buried there (Num. 20:1). She did not live long enough to enter the Promised Land. Her life was cut short.

Likewise, God took Moses and Aaron aside in Mount Hor and gave them some news: "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into this land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah" (Num. 20:24). The congregation watched as Moses, Aaron, and Eleazar went up unto Mount Hor. Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and transferred his priestly responsibilities to his son Eleazar. Afterwards, Aaron died there in the top of the mount (Num. 20:28). The Scriptures make it very clear that Aaron died sooner than he otherwise would have because of his participation in the transgression in Numbers 20.

### ***Your Biting Words May Bite You Back***

It is hard to believe, but even after seeing countless evidences of God's wrath against the murmurers, yet again "the people spake against God, and against Moses, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread" (Num. 21:5). Their snarky disposition in verse 5 led to the snakes of verse 6: "And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died" (Num. 21:6). In one verse they were biting at God and Moses with

their words; in the next verse they were the ones being bitten by fiery serpents.

Sometimes the words we say, which are intended to hurt others, end up hurting us the most in the end. Thomas Brooks relates an interesting story that shows when we lash out at others, we often injure ourselves in the end:

I have read of Caesar, that, having prepared a great feast for his nobles and friends, it fell out that the day appointed was so extremely foul that nothing could be done to the honour of their meeting; whereupon he was so displeased and enraged, that he commanded all them that had bows to shoot up their arrows at Jupiter, their chief god, as in defiance of him for that rainy weather; which, when they did, their arrows fell short of heaven, and fell upon their own heads, so that many of them were very sorely wounded. **So all our mutterings and murmurings, which are so many arrows shot at God himself, will return upon our own pates, or hearts; they reach not him, but they will hit us; they hurt not him, but they will wound us therefore, it is better to be mute than to murmur;** it is dangerous to contend with one who is a consuming fire. Heb. 12:29. (Spurgeon 43)

When the people murmur, they wound themselves most of all! It is also true that when the people murmur...

### **Their Grumbling Leads To Stumbling**

An oft-heard poem begins with the line, "If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn." We do tend to mimic the actions of those around us, and so it is no wonder the Bible contains so many warnings about the dangers of evil companions (Prov. 1:10ff;



Prov. 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:33). A study of the history of Israel provides ample confirmation that bad company corrupts good character. It did not take long after the Exodus for the “whole congregation of Israel” to become infected with the murmuring mentality (Exod. 16:1-2). Things did not improve with the passing of time. Instead, their grumblings constantly contributed to stumbling among God’s people. Consider a few examples.

### ***The Stumbling Of The 603,448***

The grumbling of the ten faithless spies fueled the stumbling of “all the congregation” as they “lifted up their voice, and cried, and the people wept that night” (Num. 13:25-14:1). As the rumbling of these grumblings spread throughout the congregation like kudzu, “all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron” (Num. 14:2). They even said one to another, “Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt” (Num. 14:4).

In supplication to God, Moses and Aaron “fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel” (Num. 14:5). While Moses and Aaron were talking to God, Joshua and Caleb attempted to exert some positive peer pressure by convincing the people that God was more than capable of bringing them into “a land which floweth with milk and honey” (Num. 14:6-9). Unfortunately, the negative peer pressure of the grumblers had produced such a mob mentality that “all the congregation bade stone them with stones” (Num. 14:10).

God had been patient with the people but their faithlessness had finally exhausted His patience. Thus, He promised that of the 603,550 who were 20 years old and upward and able to go forth to war (Num. 1:45-46), only two would enter into the Promised Land:

How long shall I bear with this evil congregation,  
which murmur against me? I have heard the  
murmurings of the children of Israel, which  
they murmur against me. Say unto them, As  
truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken  
in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses

shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness. (Num. 14:27-32)

Note carefully that the grumbling of the ten spies contributed to the stumbling of the congregation, and is thus very severely dealt with by God:

And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, **and made all the congregation to murmur against him**, by bringing up a slander upon the land, Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still. And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly. (Num. 14:36-39)

It is a remarkable tribute to Joshua and Caleb that they would not allow the people's grumbling to precipitate their stumbling! Their faithful spirit remained "stedfast" (Num. 14:24; Num. 14:30). Regrettably, however, the grumbings of the Israelites would contribute to the stumbling of three individuals who were in the highest levels of leadership in Israel.

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### *The Stumbling Of Miriam And Aaron*

It is bad enough that Moses had to deal with constant murmurings against him from the disgruntled Israelites, but imagine how he felt when his own family joined in the chorus of criticism (Num. 12:1-2). He was accustomed to hearing the clamor of the children of Israel, but this grumbling from Miriam and Aaron was so unexpected. Aaron had been on the receiving end of numerous verbal assaults, but now he has teamed up with Miriam to do some complaining of his own. What caused this turn of events?

This chapter has already documented the contagious nature of murmuring among the Israelites. Dr. Todd E. Linaman elaborates:

It can be easy to fall into the trap of criticizing others when you're around a critical person. Joining in on the criticism only serves to legitimize the behavior in the mind of the critic, and the transition into gossip is close behind. Today the criticism is about someone else—tomorrow it could be directed toward you. (qtd. in "Children Learn What They Live")

It is entirely possible that the constant drone of the Israelites' negativity toward Moses had an adverse effect on even Miriam and Aaron. While it was not the only factor involved, it is nevertheless true that the grumbling of the Israelites contributed to the stumbling of others, perhaps even Miriam and Aaron.

### *The Stumbling Of The Companions Of Korah, Dathan, And Abiram*

Can the grumbings of a few contribute to the stumbling of the many? Numbers 16 answers with a decisive "Yes." Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were the ringleaders of grumbling against Moses and Aaron. Their evil influence misled their families, at least 250 of the princes, and countless others. As we have learned already, their murmuring mentality was costly, not only to them, but also to all who blindly followed them into destruction (cf. Matt. 15:14).

### *The Stumbling Of Moses*

For the better part of his time as leader of Israel, Moses was able to rise above the level of the grumblers and show a better way. On most occasions, he reacted to their criticisms by first turning to God in prayer. It is amazing to consider that he was often so willing to intercede to God in prayer on behalf of the very ones who mocked his leadership and taunted his authority. What a man he was!

But he was just a man. It would be foolhardy to say that he was completely unaffected by the murmuring of the people. Was it possible for the grumbling of the people to contribute to the stumbling of a man as great as Moses? Did the constant blathering of the people ever get to Moses and affect his emotional equilibrium?

In Numbers 11, the context is that the people were complaining and weeping. It is not like Moses had never seen this before. He had seen it time and time again, and therein lies part of the problem. Moses was emotionally wearied by it all, so much so that he vented his emotional anxiety to God:

And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. **I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.** And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness. (Num. 11:11-15)

God bore patiently with Moses and even provided a plan for distributing the burden among 70 chosen men of Israel (Num. 11:16-17).

God told Moses to tell the people that their request for meat would soon be honored with more flesh than ever they could hope to eat. The response of Moses to this information is further proof that the grumbling of the people was, on this occasion, causing him to stumble in his faith, at least to some degree.

And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? (Num. 11:21-22)

These are surprising words from Moses, compared to what we usually read from him. If anyone had been given a front row seat to witness the Almighty power of God, it had been Moses. He had seen the plagues, up close and personal. He was there front and center, when God parted the Red Sea.

He was normally the cheerleader, trying to get the rest of the people to believe that God could and would do as He promised. However, the constant drone and demand of the people has brought him to a low point. His question to God is essentially, “Do you realize how much meat it would take to satisfy the hunger of 600,000 soldiers alone, not to mention the women and children? Even if we killed all the flocks and herds, and gathered all the fish of the sea, that would not be enough to satisfy these people. They are insatiable!”

God’s response to Moses was a mixture of mild rebuke and tender mercy. God knew that this was not the normal mentality of Moses. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psa. 103:13-14). Nevertheless, God could not allow his

power to be questioned. Thus, He said unto Moses, “Is the LORD’S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not” (Num. 11:23).

Moses rebounded well from this low moment, but “then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there” (Num. 20:1). No doubt, both Moses and Aaron were grieved by the loss of their sister Miriam. Bereavement is a tough time for anyone, and on the heels of Miriam’s death, Moses and Aaron had to deal with the children of Israel gathering themselves together against them because there was no water for the congregation (Num. 20:2).

The talking points of the murmurers were the same old, tired ones Moses had been listening to for years: (1) We wish we were dead; (2) Why did you bring us into the wilderness so that we could die of thirst? (3) Why did you force us to leave that wonderful land of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? (4) Where is this land of milk and honey you promised us? There is no seed; there are no figs or pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.

It is rather amazing that Moses did not snap. He was grieved already emotionally at the loss of his sister. No doubt, he was also grieved at the constant faithlessness of the people. Had they not seen circumstances like this when they were in Rephidim? Had not God miraculously provided water for them at Rephidim? Moreover, did the people think they were the only ones who wanted a drink of water? Did Moses ever get thirsty? Surely, he wanted a drink of water as much as anyone but was willing to trust in God’s timetable for the arrival of the blessing.

He and Aaron fell upon their faces “and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them” (Num. 20:6). God then gave Moses some very specific instructions:

Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and **speak**

**ye unto the rock before their eyes;** and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. (Num. 20:8)

Moses started out well, for he took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him (Num. 20:9). Then Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation before the rock—and that is when it happened. In a single moment, Moses did something, and said something, that would change the course of his earthly life. Before any of the water came gushing forth from the rock, years of pent-up frustration with a murmuring multitude came gushing forth from Moses. He said unto them, “Hear now ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” (Num. 20:10).

God told Moses to speak to the rock, but he spoke to the people instead. At this moment, he was thinking more about telling the people what he thought of them (“ye rebels”) than he was about doing precisely what God had said to do (“speak ye to the rock”). Consequently, Moses “lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and the beasts also” (Num. 20:11). God knew the congregation needed water, and in His goodness, He supplied it. However, He is also the God of severity, and the disobedience of Moses and Aaron had to be addressed. He spoke to them, “Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them” (Num. 20:12).

The fact that God also rebuked Aaron and told him he would not be allowed to enter the land raises an interesting question. What did Aaron do wrong? He did not strike the rock, but Moses did. Why then would Aaron be banned from the land because of something that Moses did wrong? The answer to these questions also enhances our understanding of precisely what it is that Moses did wrong.

It does not go far enough to say that the sin of Moses was in striking the rock. His transgression certainly included the unauthorized striking of the rock, but it goes much deeper than that. A passage from the book of Psalms enlightens us as to what went wrong: “They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, **so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips**” (Psa. 106:32–33). Hence, we learn that Moses offended God not only by striking the rock, but also by what he said. He “spake unadvisedly with his lips.”

What did he say that was so wrong? He said, “Hear now, ye rebels; must **we** fetch you water out of this rock?” (Num. 20:10). Note carefully the emphasis on the word *we* in this text. The words of Moses made it appear as if he and Aaron were the sources of the blessing. He says nothing about God as the source of the blessing. We are not told whether Aaron said anything similar to what Moses said, but neither did Aaron correct the omission of God as the source of the blessing. It is no wonder then that when God corrects Moses and Aaron, He said, “Because **ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel**, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them” (Num. 20:12).

The passage from Psalm 106:32-33 is important also because it brings us back to the main emphasis of this section—when we grumble we make it easier for our brother to stumble! Look at the passage again: “**They angered him** also at the waters of strife, **so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes**: Because **they provoked his spirit**, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips” (Psa. 106:32–33). Surely, this was an occasion of stumbling for both Moses and Aaron, but the inspired text confirms that the grumbings of the people helped to produce the stumbling of Moses and Aaron. This does not justify the “stumbler,” but it does make accountable the grumbler. God will judge both the grumblers and the stumblers!

### **Do The People Still Murmur?**

It would be nice to affirm that the spirit of murmuring died in the wilderness right alongside of the grumbling Israelites. Yes, it would



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be nice, but it also would be naïve. A study of the New Testament clearly demonstrates that the menace of murmuring survived the Old Testament wilderness. Some murmured at the house of Simon the leper when the woman broke her alabaster box of precious ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus with its costly fragrance (Mark 14:5). The scribes and Pharisees murmured against the disciples for eating and drinking with publicans and sinners (Luke 5:30). They grumbled against Jesus for the very same reason (Luke 15:2; Luke 19:7).

The Gospel of John records a fascinating episode of murmuring against Jesus—fascinating for its similarities to the murmuring of the Jews in the wilderness.

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves (John 6:41–43).

Beale and Carson aptly note:

The Jews' murmuring against Jesus in 6:41, as we noted, parallels the Israelites' murmuring against Moses in the wilderness (cf., e.g., Exod. 17:3; Num. 11:1; 14:27, 29). There are obvious parallels between Jesus' Jewish opponents and wilderness Israel (cf. Exod. 16:2, 8–9; Num. 11:4–23). Just as the Israelites grumbled about the first giver of bread, Moses, likewise they grumbled about the second, Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 10:10), and just as in the wilderness, the Jews' grumbling here is ultimately directed against God himself. (447)

The early church in Jerusalem acted quickly to quiet the murmuring of the Grecian widows who were being neglected in the daily distribution (Acts 6) and we do not read of any reoccurrence of the murmuring. However, the church at Corinth experienced sustained friction, and so it is not surprising to read Paul's reminder to the Corinthians that the murmuring of the Hebrews in the wilderness led to their destruction (1 Cor. 10:10).

In the centuries since the New Testament church was established, the New Testament books have been completed, thus giving us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Now that we have God's completed revelation, surely the problem of murmuring has nearly ceased. Right? On the contrary, the problem of strife has continued to beset the religious world in general, as well as the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It really does not matter which century we investigate—the murmuring mentality will be present, even among those who claim to be governed by the Bible. Jonathan Edwards, who lived from 1703-1758, was a renowned theologian of his day. Nevertheless, the church where he preached dismissed him over a doctrinal dispute. On this particular issue, he was on the right side. He held that the Lord's Supper was never intended for unbelievers to partake thereof. In his farewell message to the congregation, Edwards said:

As you would seek the future prosperity of this society, **it is of vast importance that you should avoid contention. A contentious people will be a miserable people.** The contentions which have been among you, since I first became your pastor [preacher, BJC], have been one of the greatest burdens I have labored under in the course of my ministry—not only the contentions you have had with me, but those which you have had with one another, about your lands, and other concerns—because I knew that contention, heat of spirit, evil speaking, and things of the like nature, were

directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity...Let me therefore earnestly exhort you, as you would seek your own future good, hereafter to watch against a contentious spirit. (Morgan 395)

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) was also a well-known religious author and preacher of his day. Although he lived over a century later than Jonathan Edwards, he described the grumbling disposition of the people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Speaking of murmuring, he wrote:

This is what the Hebrews did in the wilderness, and there are still many murmurers in Israel's camp. A little sickness, and we become so cross that our friends are afraid to come near us. A few days in bed, and we fret and fume like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. We peevishly ask, Why this affliction? What have I done to deserve it? We look around with envious eyes, and are discontented because others are carrying a lighter load. Beware, my reader: it goes hard with murmurers. God always chastises twice if we are not humbled by the first. (48)

But what about the Lord's church today? Is she exempt from sorrow and strife, simply because she knows the truth? The following story from ancient mythology hits uncomfortably close to home when it comes to depicting the attitudes of certain brethren, both in the local church, and in our brotherhood:

In mythology, we read about Cadmus, who slew a dragon. Then he took the dragon's teeth and sowed them broadcast in a fertile field. When he returned later, he found that each seed had sprung up into a giant. He was afraid of what they might do to him so he decided to employ

a clever ruse to cause the giants to fight each other. He threw a stone and struck one of the giants on the ear. This giant thought another giant had struck him, so a fight ensued. Soon all the giants were fighting each other and before long all of them were killed while Cadmus looked on and laughed. Our churches are full of potential spiritual giants, but Satan often sows discord among the members and they end up as spiritual pygmies, fighting one another. (Morgan 397)

Murmuring is not confined to a time or a place. Grumbling is not a matter of geography! This point is the very thrust of a brilliant poem, by an unknown author, entitled “Grumble Tone”:

There was a boy named Grumble Tone who ran away to sea,  
“I’m sick of things on land,” he said, “as sick as I can be;  
A life upon the bounding wave will suit a lad like me!”  
The seething ocean billows failed to stimulate his mirth,  
For he did not like the vessel, nor the dizzy, rolling berth,  
And he thought the sea was almost as unpleasant as the earth.  
He wandered into foreign lands, he saw each wondrous sight,  
But nothing that he heard or saw seemed just exactly right;  
And so he journeyed on and on, still seeking for delight.  
He talked with kings and ladies fair; he dined in courts, they say,  
But always found the people dull, and longed to get away  
To search for that mysterious land where he would like to stay.  
He wandered over all the world, his hair grew white as snow;  
He reached that final bourne at last where all of us must go,  
But never found the land he sought. The reason you would know?  
The reason was that north or south, where’er his steps were bent,  
On land or sea, in court or hall, he found but discontent;  
For he took his disposition with him everywhere he went.  
(Morgan 393-94)

## How To Go From Whining To Shining

In Philippians 2, the apostle Paul commanded,

Do all things without murmurings and disputings:  
That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons  
of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked  
and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as  
lights in the world; Holding forth the word of  
life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that  
I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.  
(Phil. 2:14–16)

The most literal translation of the original language here would be “Stop complaining and arguing all the time in order that you may become blameless, and innocent children of God.” It is no accident that, in addressing this subject, Paul uses the phrase *in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation*. The same phrase occurs in what has commonly been called “the Song of Moses.” In describing the Israelite people, Moses wrote, “They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation” (Deut. 32:5).

The word *crooked* in Philippians 2:15 is a translation of the Greek word *skolias*, which is similar to our English word *scoliosis*, a medical condition describing those with a spine that is out of alignment due to an improper curvature. We do not want to be spiritually misaligned. What are the steps we need to take to go from whining to shining?

**Humble yourselves in the sight of the glory of the Lord.** Of the murmurings in the days of Moses, J. Vernon McGee makes a valid observation:

Again, I call your attention to the fact that every time these people murmured or complained, the glory of the Lord appeared. God was displeased with their complaining. That should make us realize that if we are whining and complaining

saints, we are not pleasing to God. That is true no matter who you are, or where you are, or what you are doing. (“Num. 20:1-6”)

The best way to develop humility is spelled out for us in Philippians 2:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. (Phil. 2:3-9)

**Focus on your blessings rather than your bruises.** The Israelites were so busy focusing on what they did not have and what their hardships were, that they could not see their blessings. Like them, we are often so focused upon our problems that we fail to see our blessings.

Entering a department store, a little old lady was startled when a band began to play and a dignified executive pinned an orchid on her dress and handed her a crisp hundred-dollar bill. She was the store’s millionth customer. Television cameras were focused on her and reporters began interviewing. ‘Tell me,’ one

asked, 'just what did you come here for today?'  
The lady hesitated for a minute, then answered,  
'I'm on my way to the Complaint Department.'  
(Tan #744)

No matter how well things are going in our lives, or in the life of the church, some are always going to find reason to complain. Let us not be among them!

**Think twice, before you complain once.** Some of us are probably not aware of how often we murmur. We may think this sermon is for everyone else, when we need it most of all. In his book, *Anxiety Attacked*, John MacArthur reminds us:

A transformed life is the greatest advertisement for the Gospel. A negative, griping, complaining spirit is the worst. Try your best to make it through today without complaining about something. Make a note *every* time you do complain. You may be surprised to discover it has become a way of life. In addition to being highly contagious to others, a complaining spirit has an anesthetic effect on whoever possesses it. It quickly becomes so habitual that most people infected by it don't even realize what a dominant characteristic it has become.

Many who are emotionally troubled do not realize how much happier they would be if they eliminated murmuring from their daily to-do list. Complaining is one of the chief causes of anxiety!

Put a check on the complaints you utter, and you will succeed in attacking anxiety at its source. You will be affirming that God knows what He is doing in your life. To hear yourself complain is to

hear yourself affirm the contrary. The more you hear yourself talk like that, the more you'll believe it. For peace of mind, stop it now. (MacArthur)

**Stay busy in the work of the church and you will have little time or desire for complaining.** Charles Spurgeon amplified this point when he wrote:

How many churches there are which have proved the truth of what I am now going to say! **They have not tried to increase; they have not cared about conversions, and very soon there has been murmuring.** One did not like the minister; another did not like the deacons; a third objected to a brother that was introduced; and all this, perhaps, was quietly hushed up because they were too respectable to come to an open disturbance, but still there it was—the fire in the embers; and thus it kept on till, by-and-by, they come to one of two things, either lethargy or else division. (*A Collection of Sermons*)

Spurgeon continued:

Well, and when a church does get into that dreadful state, it becomes noxious as a very dunghill. And **when there is very little spiritual animation, there soon comes to be the ferment of very great division.** Somebody or other cannot bear this. Some young and fervent spirit speaks out about it, and the minister does not like it; the deacons do not like it, and they try to put him down. Then half-a-dozen more of the members think that he is right, and the life that is in the church wakes up. The trumpet is



sounded, and there is a troop led off to establish a healthy organization somewhere else, and the old corpus is left to rot as it may and to decay as many churches do. (*A Collection of Sermons*)

**Let your words be words of prayer, rather than words that tear.**

The Israelites had to be reminded repeatedly that God could hear what they were saying (Exod. 16:7-12). We need to be reminded of the same. James wrote, “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (Jas. 5:9). Murmuring is counterproductive; prayer is productive. “Ten minutes’ praying is better than a year’s murmuring” (Spurgeon 129).

If someone is murmuring against us, we need to be reminded of how willing Moses was to intercede in prayer to the LORD on behalf of the very ones who grumbled against him.

Sometimes Moses wanted to walk away from leadership because Israel murmured against him. At times he even feared for his life, crying out to God that the people were about to stone him (Ex. 17:4). He was truly a confident man, but he had moments when his patience was tested, just as we do. Yet despite his problems, Moses possessed a confidence that moved him to intercede for rebellious Israel when God was prepared to do away with them. As a result of Moses’ intercession, God’s anger was turned away (Exod. 32:9–14). Then, with confidence, Moses stood before Israel and declared the righteous judgments of God (Exod. 35:1). (Hayford and Rosenberger)

**Conclusion**

On March 26, 1862, a minister by the name of Joseph Gilmore authored a song based on Psalm 23. He entitled it, “He Leadeth

Me.” How does this relate to our subject? The main points of our investigation have demonstrated where murmuring will lead. We have learned that (1) being fretful leads us to become forgetful; (2) friction will inevitably lead to fiction; (3) murmuring could lead to murdering; (4) doubting leads to pouting; (5) blurting leads to hurting and (6) grumbling leads to stumbling.

Instead of going where murmuring will lead us, let us instead determine to go where God leads us through His Word. The third verse of Mr. Gilmore’s song, if practiced, certainly would have led to a different conclusion for the murmuring Israelites who came to an early grave. Likewise, let us endeavor to live by this philosophy so that when the people murmur, we will not be found in their number.

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,  
Nor ever murmur, nor repine;  
Content, whatever lot I see,  
Since ‘tis my God that leadeth me!

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## CHAPTER 16

# When Success Depends Upon You And Your Hands Are Heavy

*Chuck Webster*

Most of us have felt the proverbial “weight of the world” on our shoulders. Christian fathers realize their awesome responsibility and sometimes wonder if they are capable of doing it well. Mothers feel the pressures of needy babies, whining toddlers, and obstinate teenagers, coupled with the never-ending work of running a household, and question their ability to keep going. Preachers who take their work seriously sometimes doubt their abilities and often tire of the constant pressure that comes with the role. Godly elders grow weary of watching out for the church, encouraging, guarding, teaching, protecting. Sincere Christians look at their myriad to-do lists—work, family, church, household—and wonder if they can continue to juggle it all. All of us feel the pressure that seems to be the common lot of humanity.

And yet most of us cannot sympathize with how much stress filled Moses’ life. As an eighty-year-old, he was charged by God with the enormous task of leading the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity. He faced the difficulties of leadership throughout the last forty years of his life. The Pentateuch hints—sometimes quite strongly—that he often felt inadequate for the job. At times he seems ready to crack; maybe he did (cf. New King James Version, Num. 20:10-11). The following is a study of the weariness that Moses faced and what he can teach his twenty-first-century counterparts in our struggles to balance success, leadership, pressure, and weariness.

### **When Moses Got Stressed Out**

We will first look briefly at three events in Moses' life that seem to represent the stressful challenges he faced. Then we will bridge the historical gap to make application to us today.

#### ***His Hands Grew Weary (Exod. 17:12)***

Israel's first battle after the people left Egypt came against the Amalekites, a "vicious fighting people" who were probably trying to gain control of the oasis area which had recently been occupied by the Israelites (Davis 195). The Amalekites were descendants of Esau and reminders of the perpetual conflict between Jacob and Esau (Gen. 36:12). The book gives few details surrounding the battle, but the emphasis here—and elsewhere in the Exodus narrative—is that God is in control. Moses took the "rod of God" in his hand and stood on top of a hill to survey the field of battle (Durham 235). When he lifted his hands, Israel won, and when he lowered his hands, Amalek won. Usually holding up one's hands in a battle setting would have indicated an army's advance. Lowering his hands would then signal retreat. A better explanation here is that Moses' lifting his hands signaled prayer, and lowering his hands would be to cease to pray and therefore to stop depending on God for help (Cole 136-37). Moses pled with God through outstretched arms that He would give them victory (Hellwig 567). When his arms became tired, Aaron and Hur gave him a stone to sit on, then held up his arms until sunset. Consequently, Israel defeated Amalek (Exod. 17:12-13).<sup>1</sup>

#### ***His Time Became Constrained (Exod. 18:17-18)***

Like many people today, Moses made more commitments than he could reasonably fulfill.<sup>2</sup> Trying both to lead the nation toward Canaan and to deal with the minutiae of the people's daily lives proved to be unmanageable (Pfeiffer 165). He was apparently spending a big part of his time hearing legal cases, even insignificant matters. When his father-in-law Jethro witnessed his daily legal docket and "all that [Moses] did for the people," he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" (Exod. 18:14). Speaking

from the vantage point of wisdom and age, he advised, “The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself” (Exod. 18:17-18). He continued by setting forth a more reasonable judicial approach with a hierarchical system that characterizes most legal structures today. Legal issues would be assigned to different judges according to their seriousness; only the “great matters” would be brought to Moses. “If you do this thing,” Jethro said, “and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace” (Exod. 18:23). Moses accepted his advice and implemented the system; apparently the new approach worked effectively (Exod. 18:24-26).

***His Patience Grew Thin (Deut. 1:9; Deut. 1:12)***

Years later Moses explained the origin of the legal system to the new generation of Israelites that had matured in the wilderness wandering (Deut. 1:9-16). In this explanation he hinted at another factor that had caused him great stress throughout his life as leader of Israel (and which years earlier had led to his hectic schedule as judge): “And I spoke to you at that time, saying: ‘I alone am not able to bear you. The Lord your God has multiplied you, and here you are today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. How can I alone bear your problems and your burdens and your complaints?’” (Deut. 1:9-12). His pointing out their “problems,” “burdens,” and “complaints” clearly referred to the legal issues (Thompson 85), but he may have been speaking more generally of the Israelites’ characteristic demeanor that led to constant frustration in his life.

The people’s pattern of murmuring and bickering had been established early, and it had apparently never waned. Before the Exodus from Egypt even began, they complained to Moses and Aaron about their increased work load (Exod. 5:21). As they approached the Red Sea they grumbled again: “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the

word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?’ For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness” (Exod. 14:11-12). The people complained at Marah because the water was bitter (Exod. 15:24). A few days later they became hungry and cried out, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (Exod. 16:3). Shortly after that, they again complained about water, this time at Rephidim: “Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” (Exod. 17:3). After the faithless report of the 10 spies, the Israelites’ sense of hopelessness reached new depths: “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” (Num. 14:2-3). They later complained about water again, but this time they added another touch of amazing faithlessness: “And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink” (Num. 20:5). Altogether, on at least 6 separate occasions the people “complained against” or “contended with” Moses (Exod. 15:24; Exod. 16:2; Exod. 17:3; Num. 14:2; Num. 16:41; Num. 20:3). They tried to appoint another leader to take his place (Num. 14:4) and often spoke fondly of their days of slavery in Egypt from which God had just rescued them (Exod. 16:3; Exod. 17:3; Num. 14:2-4). Though Moses’ striking the rock was sinful, it is not difficult— at least from a human perspective— to understand why he eventually caved in to the pressure, lost his temper, and disobeyed God at Kadesh (Num. 20:10-12). In some ways, when we consider the nature of the pressure he was under, we find it remarkable that Moses never completely succumbed to the stress that accompanied his position as leader of a difficult group of people.



## When Our Hands Get Heavy

### *We Too Grow Weary*

Though most of us will never assume a leadership role as big as Moses', we feel many of the same pressures. Like Moses, we struggle to overcome consistent criticism from the people we are trying to help. A preacher's sermons, visitation frequency, and personality draw frequent complaints from church members. Elders' decisions evoke skepticism. Deacons' ministries are questioned. Christian parents are criticized for being too strict or too permissive.

These situations are not new, of course. Critics attacked the apostle Paul at every turn. In 2 Corinthians Paul wrote that his enemies often insulted him, giving this example: "His letters...are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:10). The Pharisees castigated the Lord for His association with "tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 9:11). They called Him a "glutton and a winebibber" (Matt. 11:19), questioned the legitimacy of His birth (John 8:41), and disputed His authority to forgive sins (Luke 5:21). Though criticism does not necessarily validate our faithfulness, it certainly puts us in good company. Our response to disparagement should be first to evaluate its accuracy. Some criticism is legitimate and should be taken seriously. It reminds us that we are fallible, and we should change what needs to be changed. Other negative comments are petty or unfair, and some are degrading. As hard as it might be, we should respond to this kind of criticism as Jesus did—deal with it directly when appropriate and at other times ignore it. In no case should we allow it to derail us.

Sometimes we also grow weary because we over-schedule. We say "yes" to every request and find ourselves drowning in the ocean of good deeds. Perhaps we become like Moses, working from sunup to sundown and wearing ourselves out in the process. Christian parents are sometimes guilty of this, believing that it is somehow unspiritual to say "no" to any good thing. Some Moms agree to every class, every committee, and every program, then find themselves too tired to meet the challenges at home. Dads commit themselves to long hours at work, volunteer to coach every child's sports team, pledge to help

everyone who needs it, then wonder why they are irritable with their wives and children in the evenings. Preachers need to turn down some outside speaking opportunities, and they simply cannot be at every event and lead every church ministry. They need to be home regularly in order to be good husbands and fathers.

### *We Need To Listen To Jethro*

Perhaps many of us should consider a 21<sup>st</sup>-century adaptation of Jethro's advice. At the root of his counsel was his recognition that Moses was managing his time poorly. If he were here today, he would almost certainly tell many of us to re-evaluate our priorities and manage our time consistently with what really matters. Are all of those overtime hours essential? Perhaps canceling the gym membership or driving a cheaper car would give more time for God and family. Do we need to join every committee? Is our favorite recreational pursuit truly worth all of the money and time we give it? What portion of our overwhelming to-do lists flows from the simple fact that we manage time poorly? Sometimes the hardest choice is not between the good and the bad; it is between the good and the better.

Most time management experts recommend that we keep a time log for a few weeks, then study the log to find where all of the time is going. Like Moses, we will probably find that some of our time investments are tasks that could be handled just as well by someone else. Some preachers occupy their hours with unending lists of "good" things, but many of them are tasks that someone else could handle, leaving more time for what preachers are uniquely qualified to do. When the apostles led the church to appoint seven special servants to take over certain ministerial tasks, it freed up time for them to pay attention "to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). From this example preachers can learn that some things they spend their days doing could be done equally well by someone else. Elders might also learn from Acts 6. Instead of their devoting their time to questions about church "business," such as the day-to-day operation of the benevolence program or ever-present building maintenance issues, they could delegate this work to deacons and devote themselves to true pastoral work that emphasizes the spiritual

well-being of the church (Acts 20:28-31). If we had a “Jethro” who shadowed us during a typical month in our lives, what advice would he give us?

*Everyone needs an Aaron, a Hur, and a Jethro*

The main point of the Exodus account of Israel’s victory over Amalek is that God gives His people victory, but it is interesting that He used Aaron and Hur to perform the menial but crucial task of holding up Moses’ hands during the battle. Where would Moses and Israel have been without them? Jethro also came into Moses’ life at a crucial leadership juncture. God used him to give Moses a needed corrective to smoothen the path that lay ahead.

Do we not all share this need? Does everyone not need support people, especially during times of great stress? Perhaps Barnabas stands as the greatest New Testament example. When the church in Jerusalem greeted the young Christian Saul with understandable skepticism, Barnabas gave him his vote of confidence (Acts 9:26-27). Barnabas’ approval apparently carried great weight in the church, “So [Saul] was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out” (Acts 9:28). Later Barnabas left a great revival in Antioch to go to Tarsus and bring Paul to the mission point, a decision that seems to have served as some sort of a beginning point for what we now know to be the ministry of Christianity’s greatest missionary (Acts 11:22-26; Acts 13:1-3). God used Barnabas in these settings to hold up Saul’s hands and give us the man who became the great Apostle Paul. Paul apparently had other such people in his life as well. At the end of almost every letter, he listed the people who were holding up his hands: Phoebe (Rom. 16:1-2), Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19), Timothy (1 Cor. 16:10-11; Phil. 2:19-24), Tychicus (Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-8), Onesimus (Col. 4:9; Phile. 11), John Mark (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11), Luke (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11), and many others.

In the life of every person, there is an Aaron, a Hur, a Jethro, or a Barnabas, a person who counsels, critiques, and supports. Who is that person in your life? Some of us stubbornly think that real leaders do it alone, that by sheer force of will and personality we must overcome all obstacles without any outside help. This kind of

thinking overlooks how God has always worked in the lives of His people. He wants us to enlist and take refuge in the support of the godly people He brings into our lives.

But an equally important observation from these episodes in Moses' life is that we should seek to **be** an Aaron or Hur in someone's life. Perhaps there is a widow in your congregation whose shoulders are drooping. There is probably a young stay-at-home mom you know who honestly thinks she is about to crumble under the pressure. Somewhere a good elder is considering leaving the eldership because he simply does not think he can carry the burden anymore. Preachers are leaving full-time ministry every week, often because they do not have a Barnabas or a Timothy. Paul recognized this innate need for support. He encouraged us to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). We should "comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (1 Thess. 5:14). Some of the greatest work in the church today is done by the Aarons and Hurs of our local congregations. We join in this work as we learn to notice the signals that point to tired arms in the lives of the people around us.

### **Conclusion**

Moses faced both physical and mental exhaustion as leader of Israel, and yet God worked with him to accomplish the Exodus from Egypt, a feat that served as a point of reference and confirmation of God's lovingkindness for hundreds of generations to come (cf. Psa. 81:10; Hos. 13:4). In spite of—or perhaps because of—his imperfections and struggles, Moses encourages us today. We sense his weariness and reflect on our own. We see his impatience and admit that we struggle with it as well. But we also draw encouragement from how God worked with him, giving him people to support and teach him. And we recognize that perhaps one of the greatest lessons that a twenty-first-century hectic society can learn from Moses is that when we minister and lead we will face weariness. But we also know that just as God walked beside Moses throughout those difficult years, He will do the same with us.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The KJV has “discomfited” here. The Hebrew (*chalash*) means “to weaken.” Because the Bible uses *nakah* instead when decisive defeat is intended, and also because of subsequent testimony, we know the Amalekites became perpetual enemies of Israel but were not completely destroyed (Exod. 17:16; 1 Sam. 15). See Langner.

<sup>2</sup> There is a verbal similarity between Exod. 17:12 and Exod. 18:18: Moses’ hands were *heavy*; the task of judgment was *heavy*. Also, in both cases Moses relied upon others to help him. See Robinson.

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## CHAPTER 17

# Weak Leaders: What Did This People Unto Thee?

*Dave Leonard*

I must begin by first thanking my brother and friend Wade Webster for his gracious invitation to contribute to this great work. I also extend my gratitude to the elders and the wonderful brethren of the Southaven Church of Christ for this opportunity to work with them. I greatly appreciate the encouragement, support, fellowship, and friendship we have enjoyed with this congregation.

### Introduction

There is indeed something in a name. As we study world history the mere mention of names such as Vlad the Impaler, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il Sung, etc. forces our minds to recall the horrors of evil leadership and the dire consequences of their regimes. A study of Biblical history reveals many more leaders and kings who were wicked men bent on rejecting God and His Will. Remember Pharaoh who refused to allow Israel to leave throughout God's demands and the ten plagues. Recall Omri and Ahab, kings of Israel, of whom it was said, they "wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that *were* before him" (King James Version, 1 Kings 16:25; 1 Kings 16:30).

However, as we read about evil or harmful situations, we are not always reading about evil men. At times we are considering good men, faithful followers of the Lord, who succumbed to difficult temptations or trials. Weakness and unfaithfulness were the defining characteristics of the moment; they were good men who made poor choices. To list the names found in the Old Testament of leaders who

would fit this profile would take pages. A few outstanding examples will suffice. Consider Lot, the just, who led his family into peril (2 Pet. 2:6-9; Gen. 13:1-13; Gen. 19); Moses, the meek, who set himself before the Lord in the eyes of the people (Num. 20:7-13); David, the man after God's own heart, whose unbridled lust ended in the murder of one of his mighty men (2 Sam. 11; 2 Sam. 23, esp. v. 39). Good men become weak leaders when they no longer view the Lord as their protector, provider, and principal. This is what we find in Aaron who is faced with the opportunity to lead his brethren in allegiance to the Lord God of Israel.

### **The Circumstance**

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. (Exod. 32:1)

Israel was camped before Mount Sinai. Three months had passed since their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The commandments of the Lord were spoken unto Moses who delivered them to the children of Israel. Three times during this period submission and obedience to the words of the Lord is proclaimed by the people (Exod. 19:8; Exod. 24:3-7). Yet, their actions do not mirror their promises.

#### ***Absence Of Moses***

Moses had been called into the mountain by the Lord to receive "tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them" (Exod. 24:12). Days and weeks passed by and there was no sign of their monumental leader. It must have seemed a long time to them under the circumstances. Forty days is easily measured: 960 hours; 57,600 minutes; 3,456,000 seconds. But



our perception of the passing of time can vary greatly. Time seems to move quickly when we are enjoying ourselves, per the adage, “time flies when you’re having fun.” However, when we face unpleasant circumstances the same amount of time can seem interminable. We can follow the journey of the faith of the Israelites as it travels the road from anxiously waiting, through doubt, to outright rebellion.

Yet, they were not without leadership. As Moses and Joshua were leaving to go into the mountain Moses instructed the elders of the children of Israel to “Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them” (Exod. 24:14). Leaders were appointed and set before them, but their impatience and restlessness regarding the absence of Moses drove them into the attitudes and actions of sin. After nearly six weeks without him, the children of Israel were ready to move on toward Canaan, to forget the man Moses, and to dismiss all he had delivered to them from God.

### *Attitude Of The People*

Dissatisfied, disrespectful, disloyal, disobedient and defiant are all descriptive of the attitude displayed by the Israelites on this occasion. Their attitude toward Aaron resembles more closely a demanding mob than an imploring people: “the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron” (Exod. 32:1). “Unto Aaron” can also be rendered “against Aaron” which illustrates the strength of their attitude and actions displayed toward Aaron. “And so the expression will denote that they came upon him in a tumultuous manner; insisting to have their demands complied with” (Benson 265).

Their disdain for Moses is evident in their words:

Especially do the two words ‘this Moses’ evidence a tone of scorn. Their complaint that they did not know what had become of Moses was inexcusable as well as scornful. They most certainly did know where he was, for Moses had duly instructed the elders where he was going

and what to do in his absence when problems arose (Exod. 24:14). (Butler 546)

Their blatant disrespect for God is also expressed in their words and actions.

### *Asking For Gods*

“Up, make us gods which shall go before us” (Exod. 32:1). Only a few weeks had passed since Moses declared the words that the Lord delivered unto him:

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.” (Exod. 20:2-5)

The Israelites had heard and acknowledged the commands of the Lord and had pledged obedience to them: “And all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do” (Exod. 24:3). They displayed their willingness to violate God’s Word and their own as well.

### **The Choice**

And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their

hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. (Exod. 32:2-6)

### *Answering The People*

Aaron and Hur had been placed in the position of authority over the people as Moses and Joshua were departing to go into the mountain (Exod. 24:14). This was a position that was familiar to Aaron as he had been instrumental in the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. He had been directly involved and, therefore, a first-hand witness to the power of God in judgment through the plagues and, thus, the necessity of strict adherence to His words. The great failure of Aaron's leadership on this occasion is that he, like the people, turns his back to God and does not approach or consult God in this critical spiritual decision.

His answer to the demand of the children of Israel was, "Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me" (Exod. 32:2). When the opportunity was presented for Aaron to make a stand, to remind the people of their true and living God and the essentiality of their loyalty to Him, we hear him conforming to their desires rather than contending or even rebuking them. Weakness and failure ruled the day.

### *Actions Before The People*

Coupled with the instructions he gave them, Aaron received the gold from the people, made it a molten calf, and fashioned it with a graving tool. Not only did he fail to restrain the desires of their sinful hearts, he also enabled them to turn away from the Lord

and pursue the wickedness they had learned during their captivity (Josh 24:14; Ezek. 20:1-16; Ezek. 23:1-16). His failure of leadership was that he did not lead; he followed their sinful demand rather than lead them in the right direction. This is a similar circumstance to the time Israel demanded “a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). Samuel was displeased with their demand and consulted the Lord to find how to deal with them (1 Sam. 8:6). Likewise, Aaron should have turned to the Lord; instead, he submits to the will of the people and builds for them a molten calf to worship and follow.

### **The Confrontation**

And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people. (Exod. 32:6-9)

And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven

upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf. (Exod. 32:15-24)

### *Announcement Of The Sin*

God's attitude toward Israel is clear when He labels them to Moses as "**thy** people, which **thou** broughtest out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. 32:7). The people had ceased following the Lord, had violated the covenant He made with them, and had replaced the mediator He had appointed [Moses]. Some have argued, due to Aaron's proclamation that "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord" (Exod. 32:5), that the children of Israel were worshipping Jehovah in the form of

the calf. However, Scripture relates to us the three-fold indictment of the Lord: first, they had **corrupted** themselves, which speaks of ruination or spoiling brought about by their own actions; second, they had departed from or rebelled against the Lord's **commands**; and, third, they had made an idol, a golden **calf**, for the purpose of worship involving animal sacrifice (Exod. 32:7-8; Acts 7:41).

Along with the stating of their sins, the Lord recognized and revealed to Moses the attitude of heart which plagued Israel throughout their history: "I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people" (Exod. 32:9; cf. Exod. 33:3-5; Exod. 34:9; Deut. 9:6-13; Deut. 10:16; 2 Chron. 30:8; Acts 7:51). Their obstinate behavior proved just how great their need was for strong, godly leadership.

#### *Anger Of Moses*

The cliché "Seeing is believing" comes to mind as we observe the progression of Moses' ire. He was **told** of the sins of the people, he **heard** the tumult of their frenzy, and then he **saw** or witnessed the wickedness of his brethren. It is not until he **sees** the actions of the children of Israel that we read of the kindling of his anger. As in many cases today, the knowledge of their sin would have been disturbing, but, upon experiencing it firsthand a flood of emotions erupted that sparked some strong actions on Moses' part. He threw down the tables of stone on which were written the ten commandments and broke them. He burned, ground up, and sprinkled onto water the calf Aaron had made and made the Israelites drink it. Then, he turned to his brother, Aaron.

#### *Accusation By Moses*

Family relationships can be difficult. There are many who will not even mention a problem to a family member for fear of causing a division. Even when one is in the wrong, his own family might not face him with it at all because of a fear of upsetting him. This, obviously, was not in the consideration of Moses. He was angry because of the terrible sin of the people and his anger was displayed toward Aaron as well for he was the leader who should have stopped this situation:

“What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them” (Exod. 32:21)? As we are watching this situation escalate, we realize this is not a question asked for the gathering of information, but an accusation given to reprove and convict Aaron of his sin in leading the people astray. He is responsible and accountable for himself and his brethren.

### *Answer Of Aaron*

Aaron reminds us of the parable of the great supper, “And they all with one consent began to make excuse” (Luke 14:18). Rather than face his wrongdoing and accepting the blame, Aaron seeks to excuse himself. In his attempt at self-defense he makes three arguments, one of which is an outright lie: “It’s not me, it’s the people. You know how they are”; “They told me to make them gods because you were gone”; and “I threw their gold into the fire and out came this calf.” There is nothing Aaron can say to allay his responsibility and guilt. His attitude in answering these charges allows us to see why the Lord was ready to destroy him (Deut. 9:18-20).

## **The Consequences**

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day. And it came

to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made. (Exod. 32:26-35)

### *Action Of The Levites*

No good decisions had been made up to this point. The people had erred in their desire to worship another. Aaron had sinned in his decision to follow the will of the children of Israel instead of leading them aright. Now Moses turns to this unbridled people and calls them asking, “Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me” (Exod. 32:36). An opportunity is presented to the Israelites to repent of their sins and reaffirm their allegiance to the Lord and His commands. The sons of Levi responded immediately. They separated from the rest of the children of Israel and sided with Moses who stood with the Lord.

It was the Lord’s command which came from the mouth of Moses (Exod. 32:28) to go in and out among their brethren and slay them with the sword (Exod. 32:27). The Levites obeyed the word of the Lord delivered by Moses and killed approximately three thousand men that day, a great loss brought about by a great sin.



### *Atonement By Moses*

Moses pled with the Lord for the salvation of his people. We read earlier in our text (Exod. 32:11-14) that he presented three arguments to the Lord: first, he appealed to the Lord to remember what He had already done for the children of Israel, delivering them from Egyptian bondage with great power; second, he pointed out that the Egyptians would accuse the Lord of evil leadership as it would appear that He brought them out into the wilderness merely to destroy them; and, third, he pleaded with the Lord to remember His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob regarding the continuation and growth of the family and their possessing the land of Canaan (Coffman 443ff). God repented of the immediate destruction He intended to bring upon Israel.

Upon his descent from the mountain and witnessing of the grievous sins of his people, Moses broke the tables of stone, burned the molten calf and caused them to drink it with their water, indicted Aaron as a leader, rallied the Levites to the Lord's call, and issued the command that ended in the death of three thousand of his brethren. The next words we read from Moses to the people were spoken on the following day: "Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Exod. 32:30).

When Moses was last in the Lord's presence, it was in the role of a spokesman receiving the word to be delivered to the Lord's people. Now his approach is as a mediator on the behalf of his people who have sinned. Yesterday, he was filled with righteous indignation and carrying out judgment on those in sin. Today, he is filled with compassion and is willing even to sacrifice himself for his brethren (Exod. 32:31-33). Such an attitude is displayed by Paul as he longs for the salvation of the Israelites, his fleshly brethren (Rom. 9:1-5). Of course, the only one who could offer Himself for others and truly atone for their sins was Jesus, the Christ, whose blood was shed for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28; Tit. 2:14; 1 John 2:1-2). Moses' offer was rejected by the Lord, the sinners would be held accountable at the time and by the means of the Lord's choosing (Exod. 32:33-35).

### **The Contrast Between Aaron And Moses**

Aaron and Moses had several things in common: (1) they were brethren, Israelites; (2) they were brothers (Exod. 7:1-7); (3) they worked together in the deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh in Egypt; (4) they led the Israelites through the Red Sea (Exod. 14), through the wilderness (Exod. 15-16), and to Sinai (Exod. 19); (5) they endured the murmuring of Israel (Exod. 16:2) and the sword of Amalek (Exod. 17:8-16); and (6) they were both acknowledged as leaders when Israel camped at Sinai and Moses went up into the mountain to receive the law (Exod. 24:12-14).

But the outstanding character traits of this occasion set them apart in stark contrast. They are diametrically opposed to one another as leaders. Where Aaron is weak, Moses is strong. When Aaron seeks to adapt to the will of the people, Moses is adamant in his stand with the Lord. While Aaron impeded the faith of Israel, Moses improved it. Aaron lowered the moral standard of the people; Moses lifted it back up to the Word of the Lord. Aaron chose a path of sin, but Moses, the path of righteousness. Aaron sought excuse when he was confronted with his sin while Moses was willing to offer himself to atone for the people.

### **Conclusion**

What a difference a leader makes, whether for good or ill. To bring this home to us, consider, if you will, the number of congregations of the Lord's church that are facing crises of leadership. Many are seeking to please men rather than God (Gal. 1:6-12). They are failing when they ignore or excuse sin rather than lead men to repentance (Acts 17:30-31). Too many elderships are focused on entertaining, socializing, and compromising; they will do almost anything to draw in a larger crowd, because, in their way of thinking, social popularity outweighs spiritual purity.

How can we tell when the leadership of a congregation is strong? Just as we did with Aaron and Moses, we compare them to the standard. Let us consider the many facets of the work of the eldership. As elders, they are to be models of spiritual faithfulness and maturity

that the church can imitate. As bishops, they must make faithful decisions and set forth godly goals for the church. As shepherds, they are responsible for feeding and nurturing the flock, as well as defending it from all harm. Their strength and faithfulness in all of these roles and responsibilities as leaders are based on their adherence to the Word of God (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-16; Acts 20:28-31).

May all who lead in the church, the home, and the nation seek to follow the Lord's commands faithfully, to be strong, courageous leaders who, like Moses, will cry out, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me."

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## CHAPTER 18

# Moses, A Great Prophet Who Personified A Greater

*Keith A. Mosher, Sr.*

In many respects there is a remarkable correspondency (sic) between Moses and Christ” (Gleanings 1). Not only is the foregoing statement (although weak in spelling, KM) correct, but Moses, himself, wrote:

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (King James Version, Deut. 18:15-19)

The most striking thing about Moses is the remarkable way in which, in so many ways, he is like the Lord Jesus Christ. And Moses’

personification of the Christ has been the most explored comparison from the Bible (Hills 3):

For example, the Sistine Chapel at Rome, the frescoes on one wall represent the account of Moses while the other wall tells the account of Christ, with corresponding events from each life's being coupled together in proximity to one another. (qtd. in Hills 3)

Keach insisted that “Types suppose the verity of some history...and when applied to Christ in the New Testament the type supposes that such a thing is true and was once done” (Preface xi). Therefore, if Keach is correct, to compare Moses and Christ is to do something true and not mystical; it is to do something Biblical and not baseless; it is to do something factual and not fanciful. However, many of the comparisons between the two are mere similarities and not types and such topics will be separated in this essay.

The main scope of this manuscript will be to offer some assistance towards the explanation of the sense of types and comparisons concerning Moses and Christ and to note the divine authority of Holy Writ contained in the predictive elements of a type. For though Christians call the Bible the Word of God, there are many who denigrate the text by denying its prophetic majesties. When prophecies or types are correctly understood, the Bible is seen as an infallible storehouse of heavenly truths, which messages are able to save one's soul (cf. Jas. 1:18). The Bible is God's Word and does **not** just contain God's message.

### Types And Shadows

To teach that Moses personifies Christ is to be involved in an understanding of the types and metaphors used in the Bible. The term *metaphor* derives from the Greek terms *meta* (beyond or over) and *pherin* (to bring or carry) (Bauer 508 and 854). Webster's Seventh Collegiate defines a metaphor as “a short similitude sometimes

reduced to a single word” (“Metaphor”). However, a metaphor is much briefer and more pungent than a simile and on the latter basis was much more frequently used by ancient writers than it is so used today. The ancients would write of one person and then predict that another would “go beyond” and “carry” the traits of the former (cf. Deut. 18:15). Dungan noted that a metaphor:

Presented characteristics by the means of a representative thought that is intended to be conveyed by calling one thing by another term which denotes the characteristics which is to be made prominent. The simile gently says what is like it; the metaphor says it is it. (252)

The word *type* is derived from the Greek term *tuptein* and means “to strike” (Bauer 830). Definitions from Dungan on a type are as follows:

1. The mark or impression of something; stamp; impressed sign; emblem. 2. Impressed form; stamp; kind; sort. 3. A figure or representation of something to come; a token; a sign; a symbol; correlative to antitype. However, a type is no longer a type when the thing typified comes to be established. (359)

It is necessary to remark concerning types that the original meaning of the Greek term *tuptein* or *type* is not the meaning of the word as generally used in the Scriptures (Bauer 830). As used in Holy Writ, *tuptein* usually does not mean **to strike** nor yet the **result of striking**. Dungan notes:

We say that we have seen a horse’s foot in the clay, when we have only seen the impression of his foot, which would be the type. But when we take the track of the foot for the foot, we really

have just the opposite of the foot. So if a man should strike his fist into a ball of putty, he would leave there, not his fist, but the type of it. Though this is not the meaning it generally has in the Bible, yet to remember this original import will be of service in the interpretation of types. (360)

One must never expect the type and antitype to be the same, for that would not be **type and antitype**, but **identity**. One shall find, therefore, that it is utterly impossible to find something in the antitype that is analogous to every feature of the type, or that the type has perfectly prefigured the antitype. A type was selected by the Holy Spirit, generally, for one purpose, and when a term is a representation of a present truth, the term is a symbol and not a type, for a type must have been **intended** to represent the thought or fact when it was given (Dungan 361). Therefore, since Moses said that the Christ would be like him, Moses is a type of Christ (Deut.18:15). As far as possible, the Scriptures should be allowed to interpret themselves. Similarities between the type and antitype or reality will lead, in most cases, to the true meaning (Dungan 361). Dungan adds:

Anything, to be a type, must have been a real person, thing, event, or office.—Not so with the symbols. All the visional symbols were unreal—they were seen by assisted or superhuman sight—they were not present, though they appeared to be. But the type is real. Adam was a type of Christ; so were the sacrifices from the foundation of the world; the kings, priests, and prophets, in that they were anointed; the serpent in the wilderness, Solomon, and Joshua, etc. These were as real as the Savior. The antitype is always superior to the type.—If this were not the case, there would be no reason in the type. The type is always visible



at the time it is given, because it is material; but the antitype contains divine or spiritual thought. However, many times there are two or more of them in one line, and one seems to look to another as its fulfillment; yet they are all looking to the final object for their meaning. (361)

As far as possible, then, the effort here will be to point out the actual type concerning Moses and Christ and to be diligent to express simple similarities where found. And, one must remember that the antitype always outshines the type. The Christ is far superior to Moses.

### **Moses And Christ (Similarities)**

The heading of this section concerning “similarities” suggests that not all the analogies between Moses and Jesus are type and antitype situations. Park and Taylor suggest that a true type is “a symbol of some future event, designed in its nature and the circumstances of its occurrence, to prefigure that future event” (29). Given the foregoing definition of a type, one drawing lessons or similarities between Moses and Christ is not necessarily discussing a type and antitype. The discussion of the following **similarities**, then, means that the decision here was not to label the relationships as types.

Moses was an **Israelite**, of the tribe of Levi. “And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived and bare a son” (Exod. 2:1-2a). Jesus was also an Israelite, but He was of the tribe of Judah. “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, **made under the law**” (emphasis added, K.M.; Gal. 4:4). “For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (Heb. 7:14). [Note from the latter verse that God’s silence is to be respected when ascertaining the authority for some religious practice.] The “nationality” of Moses and Jesus was the same as Moses had quoted God as predicting: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren” (Deut. 18:18a). Moses and Jesus had great compassion for the Israelite peoples.

It is written of Moses: “And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian.” (Acts 7:23-24)

It is written of Jesus that He said in the house of a Jew: “This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:9-10)

The circumstances surrounding the **births** of Moses and Jesus are similar. Moses was born when his nation was under bondage to a hostile power, Egypt (Exod. 1:13ff.). Note Exodus 1:22: “And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.” Moses’ mother was under Egyptian law to “abort” her son, but she hid her infant boy for three months and then set him in a basket of bulrushes where he was discovered by Pharaoh’s daughter and saved (Exod. 2:3-10). The Christ child was also endangered by a hostile power, for the jealous Idumaeen king, Herod, wanted Jesus dead:

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. (Matt. 2:16)

Jesus’ “stepfather,” Joseph, was warned about Herod’s threat and fled to Egypt with the Christ-child and Mary and, as Jochebed (Moses’ mother) before him, Joseph saved his family (Matt. 2:13-

15). God providentially saved Moses from Pharaoh and God saved His Son from the hands of another wicked tyrant. [It is also interesting to note that as the ancient Israelites had been in bondage to Egypt, so the Israelites of Jesus' day were under Roman rule; yet the Jews were arrogant enough to tell Jesus that they had never been "in bondage to any man" (John 8:33). It is amazingly wonderful that God would love so greatly, that He would send His Son to this world through a people and for a people who were so blatantly rebellious!]

The **person** of Moses is actually dissimilar to that of the Christ's. Stephen reported: "In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months" (Acts 7:20). Although Jesus knew about His "Father's house," the Christ's physical appearance is described by Isaiah as "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2b). [Some scholars see a similarity or personification concerning Moses' being "exceeding fair" compared to the mission of the Babe in the manger, for the angels said of him: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Matt. 2:1; Luke 24:21)(Pink 1).]

There is an unusual similarity between Moses and Christ as concerns their **adoption**. Moses was born of Jochebed but was "adopted" by Pharaoh's daughter (Exod. 2:10). Jesus was "adopted" by the wonderful Joseph, who knew that the Christ was not his (Matt. 1:20). God's providence again provided a way for the virgin-born Jesus to have a place to grow as a man (cf. Luke 2:52). It is further interesting to note that as Moses spent his childhood in Egypt, so did Jesus for some of His (Exod. 2; Matt. 2:15). The fact that Jesus was brought out of Egypt later and then dwelt in Nazareth (Matt. 2:23) is a fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy that God's Son was called "out of Egypt" (Hosea 11:1).

There exists a similarity between Moses' **early knowledge** of his mission and Jesus' early knowledge of His. Moses not only knew of his obligation to lead Israel, but he also "supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver

them: but they understood not” (Acts 7:25). Jesus, at age twelve, told His mother: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business” (Luke 2:49). Jesus, in fact, always knew His mission: “And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples” (Matt. 26:18).

Moses and Christ exhibited a **condescending grace**. Though Moses was legally the daughter of Pharaoh, he yet regarded the Hebrew slaves as his brethren: “And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren” (Exod. 2:11). Moses was not ashamed to call the Hebrews his brethren and Jesus was never ashamed to call obedient men the same: “For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11). It is no wonder that the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle John to write: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

Moses and Christ both renounced the “**status of royalty**” in order to serve others. “By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Heb. 11:24-26). In the sense that Moses gave up his royal position with Pharaoh, he foreshadowed what the Second Person of the Godhead did when He left the glories of heaven. “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:6-7). Jesus, in fact, knew quite well what He had renounced in His coming to earth, for in His high priestly prayer on the night of His betrayal He asked the Father: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5).

Moses and Christ both suffered **rejection** by their own brethren. “And the next day he (Moses, K.M.) showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and judge over us?” (Acts 7:26-27). The fact of Moses’ rejection is very sad, but sadder indeed is it to read of Christ: “He came unto his own and his own received him not” (John 1:11). Moses was refused as to his mission, because of his own brethren’s desire not to be lead by him. In the same sense, the Jews would not follow the Christ: “But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him saying: We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). Some of God’s people, for example Joseph the son of Jacob, were personally hated. But Moses and Christ were also hated for their God-given missions to lead.

An event in Moses’ life that parallels an event in Jesus’ life is a **sojourn among the Gentiles**. “But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian” (Exod. 2:15). Christ, too, had a mission among the Gentiles. “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). Many Bible students are not cognizant of the fact that the ancient Israeli prophets foretold that Messiah’s mission included a new covenant and a bringing in of the Gentiles (e.g., Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 56:5-6; Isa. 62:2). And, Jesus knew that His coming to save the lost was a mission for the world, not just for the Jews. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Moses, before Christ came, had a more **intimate relationship** with God than any other who ever lived. Enoch “walked with God” (Gen. 5:22) and Abraham was the “friend” of God (Jas. 2:23), but Moses was informed “face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Exod. 33:11). Because God spoke to Moses in such a fashion as just mentioned, Moses requested that God show the prophet His glory, but God replied: “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man

see me, and live” (Exod. 33:20). However, God did grant Moses the privilege of seeing God’s “back” (Exod. 33:23). Moses also spent forty days and nights in the presence of the glory of the angels of God (Exod. 34:28; Heb. 2:2) and so the testimony about Moses is: “And there arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deut. 34:10).

That is, there was no one as great as Moses until Jesus came for: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The term **Word** in the foregoing verse suggests the most intimate relationship possible between the Christ and God. Campbell wrote:

No relationship among human beings can perfectly exhibit the relation which the Saviour held to God and the Father of All anterior to his (Jesus, KM) birth.... The Holy Spirit selected the name Word, and therefore we may safely assert that this is the best, if not the only term, in the whole vocabulary of human speech at all adapted to express that relationship which existed “in the beginning” or before time, between our Saviour and his God.... A word is a sign or representative of a thought or an idea, and is the idea in an audible or visible form. It is an exact image of that invisible thought which is a perfect secret to all the world until it is expressed.... Hence it follows that the word, and the idea which it represents, are co-etaneous, or of the same age or antiquity.... The idea and the word are nevertheless distinct from each other, though the relation between them is the nearest known on earth. An idea cannot exist without a word, nor a word without an idea. He that is acquainted with the word, is acquainted with the idea, for the idea is wholly in the word.... As a word is

an exact image of an idea, so is “The Word” an exact image of the invisible God. As a word cannot exist without an idea, nor an idea without a word, so God never was without “The Word,” nor “The Word” without God; or as a word is of equal age, or co-etaneous with its idea, so “The Word” and God are co-eternal. And as an idea does not create its word, nor a word its idea; so God did not create “The Word,” nor the “Word” God. (Christian Baptist 334)

As in all other similarities between Moses and Christ, Jesus is a greater manifestation of intimacy with God than Moses could ever be.

Some interesting **sidelights** concerning similar events in the lives of Jesus and Moses occurred. The only time that the Biblical record speaks of Moses’ sitting, he was outside the borders of his own land: “and he sat down by a well” (Exod. 2:15). And Jesus was in Samaria when He did the same as Moses (John 4:6). Moses worked as a shepherd for a time: “Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law” (Exod. 3:1). Jesus is, of course, the true Shepherd (John 10:16). Moses spent years in obscurity in “the backside of the desert” (Exod. 3:1) and little is known of Jesus’ boyhood, teen years, and young adulthood to age thirty.

One very important similarity between Moses and Christ is their **commission** from God. Moses was called to emancipate his people from Egyptian bondage. “Come now therefore, and I will send thee to Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt” (Exod. 3:10). Jesus was sent by God to “save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Christ and Moses were both sent by God, which means they were, by definition, **apostolic** in their works. Moses was told, “Now therefore go” (Exod. 4:12). Jesus is the “Apostle and High Priest of our profession” (Heb. 3:1).

There is a similarity between Moses and Christ concerning **miracles**. God worked several miracles through Moses and the first

one showed power over a serpent. After Moses threw his rod on the ground per God's instructions, the staff became a viper and God then said: "Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand" (Exod. 4:4). [Moses' rod would yield supernatural power. "And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt" (Exod. 9:23). Compare Exodus 10:13 and Exodus 14:16.] In the next moment, after ordering the serpent to become a rod, God said to Moses: "Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: And when he took it out, behold his hand was leprous as snow" (Exod. 4:6). Then God added: "Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh" (Exod. 4:7). The first **miracle** by Jesus was to turn water into wine (John 2:11). But, when beginning His personal ministry, one reads of Jesus' power over that serpent, Satan (Matt. 4:11), and then reads of Christ's ability to cure leprosy (Matt. 8:3). Jesus' "rod," however, is much more powerful than the one Moses had. The Christ has a "rod" that rules the nations (Psa. 2:9).

Concerning **baptism** there is an analogy between what the ancient Israelites did and what a penitent believer today must do. The Israelites were: "under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;" (1 Cor. 10:1). While passing through that aforementioned sea, the Israelites were "all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:2). The idea is that the "baptism" of the Israelites was **toward** Moses. Believers under the new covenant of Christ are baptized looking **toward** remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Obedient sinners are baptized **into** Christ (Rom. 6:3).

During the time that Moses led Israel, his **authority** was constantly challenged. One such incident is recorded in Numbers 16:3 in which text one reads about the rebellion of Korah: "And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among



them: wherefore, then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?” (Num. 16:3). Moses never had made himself the leader and God put to death Korah and his compatriots for challenging Moses (Num. 16:32). Jesus’ **authority** was also constantly challenged by the religious leaders of His day (cf. Matt. 21:23). In fact, the very person of Jesus was denigrated (John 6:41; Luke 15:2). Too, so fiercely did the Israelites oppose Moses, that on one occasion Moses thought that they sought to stone him (Exod. 17:4). Jesus’ life, too, was threatened. “Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by” (John 8:59; cf. John 10:31). People of all ages find the true authority of God’s leaders to be unwanted!

The **prayer lives** of Moses and Christ are similar. Moses was a man of prayer. “And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me” (Exod. 5:22)? “And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the Lord because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh” (Exod. 8:12). [Compare Exodus 9:33; Exodus 14:15; Exodus 15:25; and Exodus 17:4.] Jesus was preeminently a Man of prayer. In fact, in Luke’s account of the gospel, Jesus is said to be in prayer concerning important events at least eleven or more times (Luke 3:21; Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12; Luke 9:18; Luke 9:28; Luke 9:29; Luke 11:1; Luke 22:40; Luke 22:41; Luke 22:42; Luke 22:45).

Moses was a **mediator** and Christ is still one. Moses said, “(I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount)” (Deut. 5:5). (See Galatians 3:19.) Christ is the Mediator between sinful man and a holy God. “There is... one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

There exists a literary connection between Moses and Christ concerning **covenant**. Moses gave the ancient people of God the words of the old covenant: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a

covenant with thee and with Israel” (Exod. 34:27). God, through Moses, informed that if those Jews kept God’s law, He would consider them His kingdom and protect and bless them (Exod. 19:6). Christ, however, is the enactor of a better covenant than the old one delivered by Moses. “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb. 8:6). Moses could not promise remission of sins under the old covenant (Heb. 10:4). But Christ’s shed blood brought a new covenant wherein is remission. “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28).

One might consider a myriad of other relational applications between Moses’ work, life, and mission and the Christ’s such as their wisdom (Acts 7:22; Col. 2:3); their might (Acts 7:22; Matt. 13:54); their intercessions (Num. 27:5; Heb. 7:25); their appointing of seventy (Num. 11:24; Luke 10:1); their being chosen vessels (Psa. 106:23; Isa. 42:1); and a host of other comparisons. What, however, is the true type?

### **The True Type: Moses And Christ Were Prophets Of God**

Moses stated the true type: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken” (Deut. 18:15). The “replacement” for Moses would be a Jew and would be the One to Whom all should listen.

Moses was the greatest prophet in the history of Israel, until the Christ came. “And the Lord said unto Moses, See I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet” (Exod. 7:1). “(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth)” (Num. 12:3). The record is, in fact: “And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deut. 34:10). Moses was the great law-giver in Israel.

The Prophet whom Moses predicted, however, is God’s Son. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past

unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1-2). Moses predicted that the great Prophet to come would be sent by God (Deut. 18:15). And John, the apostle, wrote: “Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me” (John 8:42). Moses further explained that the great Prophet would be a Jew (Deut. 18:18a). And both Matthew and Luke list the genealogy of Jesus’ Jewish history (Matt. 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38).

Moses knew, further, that the great Prophet would speak the words that God gave Him (Deut. 18:18b). And the apostle John recorded: “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him” (John 3:34). (Note also John 17:8.) And last, Moses prophesied that the great Prophet would be the One whom all must obey. “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him” (Deut. 18:19). Disobedience to Christ’s message would result in one’s not being saved. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9).

### **Conclusion**

The apostle Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has made certain that all interested could know that when Moses prophesied concerning the coming of a great Prophet, the One about Whom Moses was writing was Jesus:

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed

from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. (Acts 3:22-26)

The Jewish mediator, lawgiver, and prophet of God, Moses, was a shadow of a greater One to come. The great Prophet is Jesus.

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## CHAPTER 19

# When A Meek Man Gets Angry

*Patrick Morrison*

I count it a tremendous joy and a great honor to be a part of the Power Lectures at the Southaven Church of Christ. This congregation has been a blessing to the brotherhood for many years and continues to shine forth as a great light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. The faithful shepherds of the Southaven church are to be commended for their willingness to provide such a spiritual feast by which the lives of many will be enriched for years to come.

I am humbled to have a part in the Power Lectures, and I pray that our study of this portion of the life of Moses will benefit any and all who may read and/or hear. Moses is truly a character worthy of our consideration, imitation, and admiration. With the exception of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Moses is the most prominent character about whom we read and study in the Word of God. A life that seemed destined to end as soon as it had begun due to the murderous decree of a heartless tyrant (King James Version, Exod. 1:16; Exod. 1:22) was spared through the courage of godly parents (Heb. 11:23) and God's providence. The very one who would ultimately lead God's people out from under the iron hand of Pharaoh was raised up right under Pharaoh's nose, in his own house as the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Exod. 2:10)! God's commendation of Moses is certainly befitting of this great man of God:

By faith Moses, when he was come to years,  
refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;  
Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the

people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. (Heb. 11:24-27)

Having been raised in opulence and luxury in the court of Pharaoh and then being raised up by God to be the great leader, lawgiver, and prophet of Israel, Moses would be one of the last we would expect to be characterized by meekness. Here was one who was probably denied nothing he desired while in Pharaoh's house. His positions of prominence in both Egypt and Israel would justify boasting and arrogance, at least from a purely human perspective. We are not left to speculate regarding whether or not Moses was a meek man, for the Scriptures emphatically declare such to be the case: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). The root of the Hebrew word translated *meek* implies humility, lowliness of mind. It is interesting to note that this praise is pronounced upon Moses in the midst of his own brother and sister questioning his authority as God's messenger. Moses did not cry out or castigate Aaron and Miriam; God spoke in behalf of him who had spoken so often for God. Truly, the life of this great man of God exemplified meekness, humility, courage, obedience, and faithfulness.

In spite of the exemplary character of Moses, the Scriptures also show his faults and shortcomings (yet another proof of Divine inspiration). There are several instances in the life of Moses where he became angry. In some cases, his anger overruled better judgment and led him to disobey God. In others, his anger was necessary and altogether justified. We must not equate anger with sin, for the Scriptures make clear that it is possible to be angry and not sin: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. 4:26). However, anger left unresolved often festers and leads

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to sinful words and actions carried out in haste. Let us take note of these occurrences of anger in the life of this meek man of God.

### **Religious Identification**

The first instance wherein we see the anger of Moses is found in Exodus 2:11-12: “And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.” While the text does not explicitly state that Moses was angry or wroth, such can certainly be implied from his actions. The Hebrew word translated *smiting* can indicate that the Egyptian was inflicting wounds to the point of death. As Moses witnessed this injustice, he was determined to take action. Twice in the text we are told that the Hebrews were “his brethren.” In his heart Moses had already cast his lot with the people of God. But his actions on this occasion were a monumental declaration of Moses’ intention to “suffer affliction with the people of God, [rather] than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25). We have no way of knowing with any degree of certainty, but it seems very likely that Moses had witnessed the mistreatment of his Hebrew brethren on numerous occasions. What caused Moses to react in such a violent way at this time against an injustice he had probably seen many times before? It is when Moses “was grown” or “had come to years” that he made such a life-altering decision. He had matured not only in years, but also in wisdom and understanding. The influence of his mother, Jochebed, in the formative years of his life had remained with Moses throughout his time in Pharaoh’s house. This occasion provided Moses the opportunity for which he had been waiting. This act of violence was his declaration of independence from the idolatrous upbringing he had endured as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. Moses had thrown down the gauntlet, and from this time forward, would not look back on what he was leaving behind. He was identifying himself as a follower of the only true and living God and would now be numbered among God’s

chosen people, Israel. He had counted the cost (Luke 14:28) and had put his hand to the plow (Luke 9:62).

We, too, will stand at the same crossroads as did Moses. There must come a time in our own lives when we will have to decide whether to continue in the ways of the world or be numbered with the people of God. Mind you, this decision will not come easily. The comforts, luxuries, and pleasures afforded to us in the world are often hard to leave behind, but we must come to the realization that these trinkets perish with using and the pleasures that are brought through them are fleeting. The treasures of heaven are beyond comparison, inestimable in value, vouchsafed by God so that they are free from decay and destruction. As the Hebrews writer reminds us, “[K]nowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance” (Heb. 10:34). While it may not be anger at witnessing injustice that leads us to the decision to follow the way of God, the decision must be made nonetheless. We have the assurance of God that whatever we leave behind in order to follow Him will certainly be worth it all: “And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30). Those who choose to suffer affliction with the people of God can march on determinedly toward the land of promise, knowing that we are but strangers and pilgrims in the earth (Heb. 11:13), resisting fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11).

### **Righteous Indignation**

We also find a number of instances in the life of Moses wherein his anger was kindled against those who did not follow the way of God. This anger came about because of his fervor to comply wholeheartedly with God’s divine will. We are told that, “And he [Moses] went out from Pharaoh in a great anger” (Exod. 11:8). Time and time again Moses had gone before the king of Egypt with the Divine decree,



“Let my people go.” Even after all of the miracles performed through the hands of Moses, after all of the devastating plagues brought upon the land of Egypt, Pharaoh continued to harden his heart, to offer excuses, and ultimately and obstinately to refuse to give freedom to Israel. With each show of God’s power, Pharaoh attempted to have Moses compromise his demands. Pharaoh could have chosen to be an instrument of good in accomplishing the will of God, but he was determined instead to be an obstacle to the carrying out of God’s intended purpose. Moses was righteously indignant at the calloused, rebellious heart of Pharaoh, knowing the destruction that would befall the nation of Egypt as a result of one man’s wickedness. The anger we read about in this context was likely mixed with frustration and sadness. How could these mighty workings of God not convince Pharaoh? How could he continue to refuse God’s will when it would mean his doom and the destruction of so many innocent lives among his own people?

We read of another occasion in the life of Moses that warranted similar righteous indignation: “And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount” (Exod. 32:19). You likely recall the events surrounding this account. Moses had been at the summit of Sinai for some time now, and the people were beginning to wonder if he would ever return. As their fears and doubts grew, Israel began to long for the land of Egypt. In order to pacify the hearts of the people, Aaron fashioned a golden calf, an image of idolatry borrowed from their time in the land of bondage. It is not long before fornication and all sorts of wickedness are being carried out in homage to their newly created idol. God tells Moses to get down from the mountain, explaining what was transpiring in the camp below. God’s anger with His own people becomes so great that He is prepared to destroy them (Exod. 32:10), but He changes His mind due to the intercession of Moses on behalf of Israel (Exod. 32:11-14). This great man of God breaks the tablets of stone in his anger, proceeds into the camp where he then burns the golden calf and grinds it to powder, and makes

Israel drink of the water strewn with the ashes of their precious idol. After inquiring of Aaron as to what had transpired, Moses then issues a call: “Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord’s side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him” (Exod. 32:26). By the command of Moses, the sons of Levi went throughout the camp of Israel and put to death those who had taken part in the idolatrous revelry, and on that day about three thousand men were slain (Exod. 32:28). Moses was truly jealous for the way of Jehovah, and he greatly desired that God’s people remain faithful to Him. There can be no doubt that this event that stirred Moses to anger also broke his heart. How could those who had been witnesses of God’s power, protection, and benevolence so quickly forget Him who had blessed them above all the nations of the earth? Why did the hearts of this people long for a return to a life of bondage and misery when the Almighty had delivered them in such a mighty fashion? Moses understood that the creation of the golden calf was not just an innocent reminder of supposed better times. It was an affront to the God of heaven, an incredible display of the grossest ingratitude imaginable, and a revelation that the hearts of the Israelites were not longing for the Promised Land. Is it any wonder that this mighty, yet meek, leader was provoked to such great anger?

We find yet another occasion in the life of Moses wherein we see his righteous indignation and jealousy for Jehovah: “And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron which were left alive” (Lev. 10:16). It was only moments earlier that Nadab and Abihu had made the fateful mistake of offering incense by means of unauthorized fire which the Lord had not commanded (Lev. 10:1), and for their foolish decision they were destroyed by fire sent out from Jehovah (Lev. 10:2). Their bodies had just been carried out of the tabernacle (Lev. 10:5) when Moses turned his attention to Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar. He instructed them not to publicly mourn the death of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:6), lest their mourning seem to indicate disagreement with the judgment of God, nor were

they to leave the confines of the tabernacle until such time as was considered sufficient by Jehovah (Lev. 10:7). In the midst of their sorrow (perhaps mixed with confusion and misunderstanding), Moses gives instructions regarding Aaron and his sons partaking of various portions of the offerings that were brought to the tabernacle (Lev. 10:12-15). When Moses enquires as to the whereabouts of the goat of the sin offering, he discovers that Aaron and his sons had not partaken of their portion of the sacrifice but had instead offered the entirety of it as a burnt offering. Moses' anger was again kindled for the failure of the priests to keep the word of the Lord. Having just witnessed the severity of Divine judgment poured out upon his sons, Aaron offers an explanation concerning their failure to follow fully God's law for the sin offering (Lev. 10:19). Moses exhibits compassion and great understanding as he accepts Aaron's reasoning, considering that pointing out his sin in the midst of such circumstances was appropriate and warranted nothing more (Lev. 10:20). His actions, or lack thereof as the case may be, are in no way to be construed as condoning or excusing the disobedience of Aaron and his sons, but rather should be seen as an example of the mercy and compassion of a gracious and loving God who truly understands His children. Jehovah exacted no further Divine judgment upon Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar, evidently esteeming the righteous warning of Moses sufficient in the current situation.

It seems we could learn a valuable lesson from this great leader of God's people. To be sure, there are times when we could, and should, be angry for the sake of righteousness as God and all things holy are profaned and mocked, or even when God's own people are rebellious and disobedient. We are many times upset over trivial matters, yet far too often we are aloof and unconcerned when the way of God is disregarded. It is high time that we express some righteous indignation over the treatment of the Lord's precious bride by those within and without! Our perfect example, Jesus Christ, displayed such anger toward those who were seeking to take advantage of their brethren, and who were turning the temple into a house of merchandise (John 2:14-17). We know that even in his anger, our Lord did not sin

(Heb. 4:15). Oh, that we could have enough zeal and fervor for the house of God that we would be incited to such righteous indignation as this! Should not our “blood boil” when the God of the Universe is attacked by atheists and infidels? Should not our nostrils flare when our own brethren seek to compromise and sell out the church to the latest religious fad? Let us see to it that we get “worked up” over things that are truly, and eternally, important.

### **Repeated Irritations**

There are a number of occurrences in the life of Moses where continued frustrations ultimately angered him to the point of lashing out either in word or deed. From the beginning of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the Hebrews repeatedly murmured and complained as God through Moses was leading them toward Canaan. We soon find them grumbling about the provisions, longing for the dainties they were accustomed to in Egypt (Exod. 16:2-3). God heard their cries, and because He is longsuffering and benevolent, He gave them a substance that the Hebrews simply called *mannna* (literally, What is it?), for they were at a loss for words to describe this heavenly bread (Exod. 16:12-15). Jehovah stipulated that they were to gather enough to eat every morning, with the exception of the Sabbath day when they were to gather a two-day supply on the sixth day to last them through the Sabbath (Exod. 16:22; Exod. 16:26). His commandment was a test of their trust in His promise to provide for them daily, as they were instructed to leave nothing over until the next day (Exod. 16:19). The inspired text states, “Notwithstanding they harkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them” (Exod. 16:20). The word translated *wroth* literally means “to crack off,” figuratively meaning to burst out in rage. Already in their brief sojourn the Israelites had murmured at the Red Sea (Exod. 14), at Marah (Exod. 15), and now here in the wilderness of Sin. No doubt the frustration and irritation was growing within Moses, and this occasion caused his anger to burst forth. Sadly, this would not be an isolated incident in the life of this great leader of God’s people.

The Israelites were a discontented people. Even with the blessing of a substance that tasted to them as honey and fresh oil and was provided on a daily basis, they still murmured and complained. Eventually, even the manna was not good enough for them. The grumbings began yet again, as they cried out for flesh to eat (Num. 11:4-6) calling to mind again the more “palatable” provisions they had grown accustomed to eating in Egypt. As the people wept in their tents, the sacred text reveals, “Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; and Moses also was displeased” (Num. 11:10). The word translated *displeased* seems to indicate that his anger was visible in his countenance, perhaps to the point of a furrowed brow, squinted eyes, and clenched teeth. The frustrations of leading such an ungrateful multitude were almost more than Moses could bear, even to the extent that he asked that God end his life (Exod. 16:15).

We can sense the thermometer rising within Moses as Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On challenge his authority as God’s chosen leader (Num. 16:1-3). Because of his meekness, Moses did not seek to defend himself initially, for he knew that God would give answer to the challenge of these power-hungry malcontents. He called upon Korah and his followers to appear with incense before the Lord on the morrow, wherein God would give answer as to whom He had chosen to lead His people (Num.16:5-11). When he called upon Dathan and Abiram to appear before him in order to issue the same decree to them, they refused to come (Num.16:12). These went on to accuse Moses of crowning himself as the prince of Israel, and also failing to deliver on what he had promised (Num.16:13-14). We then read, “And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them” (Num. 16:15). According to the Hebrew, his anger was blazing up greater and greater. He could no longer hold his peace, and he spoke out vehemently against their unfounded charges. The constant irritations of leading God’s people were wearing upon him. It was about to reach the ultimate breaking point.

In the desert of Zin Israel was again lacking water (Num. 20:1-2). As we might expect, they raise up their voices and begin to murmur and cry out (Num. 20:3-5). Moses and Aaron go before the Lord that they might know what to do. God directs Moses to take Aaron's rod, assemble the congregation together, and speak to the rock, and He would cause it to bring forth water for the people and their livestock (Num. 20:6-8). We then read, "And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts" (Num. 20:10-11). In a similar situation earlier in their wilderness wandering, God commanded Moses to strike the rock in Horeb in order to bring forth water (Exod. 17:6). The mounting frustrations brought about by the continual murmuring and disobedience of the Israelites caused Moses' anger to reach a fevered pitch. Perhaps thinking God would bring water as He had before, yet knowing full well what God had commanded on this occasion, Moses allowed his anger to overrule his better judgment. His failure to glorify Jehovah in this instance forever barred Moses from leading the congregation of Israel into the Promised Land (Num. 20:12). Though it seems from the present account that Moses offered no objection, it does appear that he did plead with God to allow him to see the land of promise as he recounts this event near the end of his life (Deut. 3:25-26). Oh, how Moses must have wished time and again that he could take back what was done at Kadesh! A moment's reckless folly brought much heartache and misery to this meek man of God.

One final event that incited the anger of Moses is recorded for us in Numbers 31:1-18. As Moses was nearing the end of his earthly sojourn, God gave commandment to Israel to avenge themselves upon the Midianites. This would be the last time that Moses would preside over God's people as they went into battle (Num. 31:2). Israel triumphed over their enemies with the help of Jehovah and slew all of the males, including the kings, of Midian (Num. 31:7-8). However,

the army of Israel took captive the women and children, bringing them into their camp (Num. 31:9). As Moses goes forth to meet the triumphant war party, he notices the spoils of war that have been brought back, including the Midianite women. This stirs the anger of Moses: “And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle” (Num. 31:14). Israel had already tasted the bitter fruit of their associations with the women of Midian when Balaam taught them to commit fornication and practice idolatry (Num. 31:16). Evidently, God’s people had failed to learn from the painful lesson Jehovah had attempted to teach them at Peor. Israel’s refusal to learn, to remember, and to heed the commands of God were an ongoing source of aggravation and disappointment to Moses. After all he had done in faithfully leading this people toward the Promised Land, he likely had to wonder if they would ever make it after he was gone. His frustration again comes to the fore. Would Israel ever learn?

How many of us have not been bombarded by repeated frustrations that threaten to exhaust our longsuffering and arouse our anger to the breaking point? While there is no sin in being angry, there is danger in allowing unresolved anger to crowd out sober thinking. The Scriptures encourage us to deal with our anger: “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph. 4:26). We must deal with those irritations before we allow them to fester and burst forth in sinful words or actions. How many homes have suffered, how many friendships have been strained, how many congregations have been divided all because of a word or deed carried out in hasty anger? Sadly, there will be even those among God’s own people who will be forbidden to enter the land of eternal rest because of uncontrolled anger. May God grant us wisdom, understanding, and longsuffering to deal with life’s frustrations, and the courage to face those irritations before they destroy us.

### **Conclusion**

A study of the life of Moses reveals a man who epitomized meekness in every way. But we also see a man who faced temptations

and struggles just as we do. The meekest man the world has ever known, with the exception of our Lord Jesus Christ, was not immune to anger and wrath. His anger over the mistreatment of his brethren led Moses to cast his lot with the people of God and sever his ties with his adopted homeland of Egypt. On numerous occasions we see him incited to anger because of those who did not have respect for the way of Jehovah. And then there are the instances where continuous frustrations caused Moses' anger to boil over, ultimately costing him the opportunity to enter into the Promised Land. May we take from this great man of God the courage and boldness to be provoked to jealousy for the cause of our Lord, to be stirred with righteous indignation against those who would dishonor and rebel against our God, and to declare boldly that we shall be counted among the faithful followers of the Savior. May we also take from Moses a warning about the dangers of unresolved anger, lest we find ourselves having all eternity to regret words or deeds uttered or done hastily in anger.

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## CHAPTER 20

# By Faith Moses: The Highlights Of A Great Career

*Eric Owens*

**I**t is always a joy to be a participant on the Power Lectureship. The Southaven congregation is a wonderful example of faithfulness. You are dear to me and hold a special place in my heart. Thank you very much for the invitation.

When we note great Bible characters, Moses must be very near the top of our list. From our introduction to him in Exodus until his departure from this earthly life in Deuteronomy, his life was filled with change, challenge, and contrast. His life was threatened at his birth, but he lived 120 years. In his death, he had not lost his strength. He was a Hebrew living as an Egyptian. His family and nation were slaves, but he lived free. He was schooled in the ways of the Egyptians. But he was brought up by his mother as a Hebrew. He murdered a man but freed his nation.

He saw the plagues God sent upon Egypt. He parted the Red Sea. He defeated a Pharaoh. He delivered God's people. He spent 40 days and nights with God and still did not know Him. He received the law from God and delivered it to man. He saw the manna and quail that fed Israel. He watched water brought out of a rock. He was the greatest man of his time, but he was also the meekest man on the earth. He did not enter the Promised Land, but he did see it with his eyes (King James Version, Deut. 34:1-4). He appeared in glory to Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration and spoke to Christ about his passion (Matt. 17:1-5; Luke 9:28-31).

Moses was also a great leader. He was humble and trustworthy. He cared deeply for those he led. He endured criticism from

his nation. But he prayed for them and pled to God on their behalf. He could receive instruction as well as give it. When the great lawgiver was told by Jethro that the way he judged the people was not good, he took his father-in-law's advice, changed his strategy and helped himself and the nation (Exod. 18:13-27). Moses knew that in order to be an effective leader one must first be able to follow.

There is one word that describes how Moses accomplished all that he did. That one word is faith! If one has Biblical faith, there is no difference in quality. Moses faith was no "greater" than any other faithful person's. Faith is faith. However, there is a great amount of difference in the challenges to people's faith. Anyone in Hebrews 11 would serve as a good example of faith approved of by God. But few, if any, endured as many challenges over as long a period of time as Moses. For these reasons Moses is a wonderful example of Bible faith and a worthy study for God's people!

His challenges were many and from a wide range of sources. He was challenged by kings, foreign nations, his own nation, priests, and even his own brother and sister. Through it all he remained faithful to God. The greatest statement made of any man is that he pleased God. There is no greater source to hear this from than from God. When Moses was attacked by Miriam and Aaron, God spoke up in his defense. The issue was jealousy. Like others, they believed Moses' place in the nation was too large and theirs too small.

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the

tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? (Num. 12:1-8)

God made it clear to Miriam and Aaron that Moses was His faithful servant. Prophets were given dreams and visions. But God spoke to Moses mouth to mouth (Num. 12:8). God declared that in His entire house, Moses was His faithful servant (Num. 12:7). What a wonderful testimony of faith. What an enduring endorsement from God. Because of his place in God's plan, and his faith in God's person, everyone should have feared to even speak against God's faithful servant Moses. Miriam, Aaron, and many others learned this lesson the hard way.

My subject, "By Faith Moses: The Highlights of a Great Career" is certainly applicable for this great man. The word *highlight* is appropriate, because the faithful life of Moses is filled with so many examples of faith that time and space will only allow us to highlight some of them. To appreciate some highlights of Moses' faithful career, we must address some preliminary things. We must understand the context in which the words highlighting his career are found. We must understand what faith is and how we come to have it. We can then appreciate Moses' great example of faith. Then draw some lessons for ourselves.

### The Context Of Hebrews 11

The best way to understand any verse in the Bible is to understand the context in which the verse is found. This is certainly applicable as it relates to the all-important topic of faith. Our study is about verses found in Hebrews 11. The verses are about faith. Inspiration teaches that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). This makes faith among the most important of all things in our relationship with God. Hebrews 11 may be the greatest chapter in the Bible on faith. It is a list of faithful men and women,

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Heb. 11:33-40)

The Hebrew's writer urged his audience to remain faithful to God. To exhort them, he used the faithful example of those from

their past. The saints were in need of such exhortation because they were suffering for their faith much the same way those in the past had suffered for theirs. His audience had suffered the spoiling of their goods joyfully (Heb. 10:34). But they had not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Heb. 12:4).

Concerning the purpose of the epistle, Robert Milligan wrote, “The primary object of our author in writing this Epistle, was manifestly to persuade his Hebrew brethren in Christ to persevere to the end in their begun Christian course; and not to fall back again to Judaism” (32). This purpose is reflected in the exhortation that ends chapter 10.

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. (Heb. 10:35-39)

It is this exhortation that leads into chapter 11. This great chapter on faith is actually a mild rebuke to the Christians against the notion of turning back to Judaism. Putting the thoughts together it would paraphrase thusly. You have joyfully suffered the stealing of your possessions. But do not cast Christ away by turning back to the Law. Maintain your faith because things will get worse. You have not yet given your blood in the cause of Christ but it may come to that. For strength, learn from the examples of past faithful servants of God and be faithful like them.

This is the progression of chapters 10-12. At stake is their salvation. The saints would win or lose their souls by what they decided in the days ahead. The deciding factor in their

decision was their faith. The list of faithful followers of God in Hebrews 11 would be among the last efforts made to hold the saints to Christ. The long list of faithful examples covered their nation's history.

The example begins at Abel and includes Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, Samson, David, and the prophets. The Jewish Christians would have recognized all of these names. They knew all of the accounts. They championed all of their causes and their great example. These luminary individuals would have inspired them to faithfulness. This great cloud of witnesses would have testified to the power and benefit of faith. The saints would have wanted to be numbered among them.

The Hebrew's writer knew the seriousness of the situation the saints faced. Not everyone in Israel's history remained faithful. In the past, some had turned back. The warning was "take heed brethren lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (Heb. 3:12). They could not avoid the options. They had to live for God and remain faithful. Or they would give up and turn away from God.

He wanted them to stay faithful, so he lighted the career of God's faithful servant, Moses. Moses is given more space in Hebrews 11 than any other person mentioned. His example is both powerful and encouraging. His faith was lived over 80 years. Moses was faithful longer than most people will be alive.

There are 7 verses and 152 words dedicated to Moses' great example of faith. No one outside of the garden shared a more intimate relationship with God than Moses. As Moses had encouraged God's people so often in his life, he would do once again in his death. His faithfulness would have had a profound impact on the lives of those who received this letter. But to appreciate Moses' faith, we must learn what faith is.

### **What Is Faith?**

Faith is not guessing. Faith is not wishing. It is not based on a lack of information. We do not go as far as we can with what we know

then leap out on faith when our knowledge ends. This is patently wrong. Thankfully, we do not have to search hard to find out the meaning of faith. As the Hebrews writer begins his exhortation to faith, he starts with an explanation of the faith he encourages his audience to have.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). There are three pertinent words to our discussion in the verse. They are **faith**, **substance**, and **evidence**. The word *faith* is defined as “conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the NT of a conviction or belief respecting man’s relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervour born of faith and joined with it” (Thayer 849). Of substance, Thayer wrote, “(1) a setting or placing under; (1a) thing put under, substructure, foundation” (Thayer 1237). And of the word *evidence* in Hebrews 11:1, he wrote, “(1) a proof, that by which a thing is proved or tested; (2) conviction” (Thayer 221).

From these definitions it is clear that what is being described is not guess work. Faith as we will develop later is trust coupled with action. It is real. It is substantive. It is the substructure or foundation for our belief. It is based on evidence, proof. It can be tested or verified. This is the reason God could test Abraham’s faith (Gen. 22:1). It is also the reason James was sure he could show his faith. “Yea a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (Jas. 2:18). The faith those individuals had in Hebrews 11 was real. It was based on assurance; it was founded upon evidence. Faith is not guess work. It is based on evidence. It is rooted in God. The reason we know this is because of the way faith comes.

### **How Does Faith Come?**

The point is easy to understand once we realize that unless God speaks to man, it is impossible for man to know Him. No one can read God’s mind. So the only way for us to know God is if He reveals Himself to us (1 Cor. 2:9-13).

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

This is foundational to understanding how faith comes. No one can have faith in God, until he has a message from God. Men who invent messages from God do not have faith in God because God is not the author of their message. Failure to understand how faith comes explains why so many fail at faith. No one is allowed to demand that God keep promises He has never made. Such is the folly of trying to have faith in God based on the words of men. However, we can trust implicitly any promise God has made.

Here is the basis of faith. Listen to Paul explain this to those in Rome.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet



of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. (Rom. 10:13-18)

In order to have faith, one must hear God's Word. "For faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Note all the words and phrases in these verses that involve communicating a message. They could not **call** on one in which they had not **believed**. They could not believe on one they had not **heard**. They could not **hear** without a **preacher**. They could not **preach** unless they were **sent**. The prophet inquired who had believed his **report**. "Faith comes by **hearing**, and hearing by the **word of God**." Had they **heard**? Yes their **message** went "into all the earth and their **words** to the end of the world."

When God speaks, He is not simply communicating a message. He is stamping that message with His perfect character and infinite power. Since God is perfect in every way, when He gives His word, it is worthy of being trusted, because God never says anything that is not true.

Our hope of eternity rests upon it. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Tit. 1:2). God's power is unlimited. One might ask, is anything too hard for the Lord? The answer today is the same as when it was first asked. No! God has all power.

These are the things that demand our faith. These are the reasons He is worthy of being trusted. He is perfect in character and limitless in power, therefore we can have faith in Him. He knows everything that can be known. He is eternal. Therefore time cannot affect His ability to keep His promises. He has all power. Therefore what He says He will do, He is able to do.

In light of these things, one can easily understand how egregious it is to God when men refuse to trust Him. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). When men doubt God, they doubt His character thereby suggesting He has said something, but He will not do it. Or they doubt His ability—He has said that which He cannot do. From God’s perspective, this is a chasm that will not be bridged until men repent and submit in trust to Him. One’s relationship with God will end before it begins if he does not have faith. Moses had it and he lived a life worth emulating.

### **By Faith Moses**

Faith is ultimately a choice. God gives His word. Men decide if they believe what God said. If they believe Him, they do what He said. If they do not believe Him, they do not obey His word. The sequence of events that describes Moses’ life declares boldly that Moses believed and obeyed God.

Moses was blessed to have faithful parents. “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” (Heb. 11:23). Amram and Jochebed disregarded the king’s commands and hid and saved their baby. God’s providence allowed Moses’ mother to nurse her son in the king’s palace (Exod. 2:5-10). No doubt she taught him many things about His God, himself, and his people.

### ***Moses Chose Temporary Pain Over Temporary Pleasure.***

The two worlds Moses lived in had to collide. He would not always be a child with others making decisions for him. At some point he would be a man and have to choose which world he would live in. The teaching of his mother had to influence him. The comfort of his life compared to the plight of his people had to burden him. The verses teach us that when Moses was grown up he made his decision. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer

affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" (Heb. 11:24-25). Moses refused "(1) to deny, (2) to deny someone, (2a) to deny one's self, (2a1) to disregard his own interests or to prove false to himself, (2a2) act entirely unlike himself" (Thayer 79).

He made a conscience decision. The Egyptians ruled, while the Hebrews were slaves. By refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he chose to be a Hebrew. It is one thing to talk, but it is another to do. Faith will not allow us to just say what they will do. Faith demands that we put our actions where our profession is. In one hand, Moses had all the pleasure and privilege of the palace. In the other, he had suffering, pain, and affliction as a slave. Few people will ever have so much to lose and so little to gain physically as did Moses. But by faith Moses chose temporary pain with God's people over temporary pleasure with Pharaoh and his people.

### *Moses Chose True Riches Over Temporal Riches*

More insight into the mind of Moses is given in the next verse. Moses was rich in Egypt. But his decision to suffer with his nation was based on the true riches. Moses counted up the cost. "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Heb. 11:26). He traded comfort for cruelty. And he traded the riches of Egypt for the poverty of slaves.

The reproach of Christ is more valuable than any physical thing on the earth. Moses chose God; thus, he chose the eternal over the temporal. God is the ruler of the world. Egypt would fall one day to an invading army. Moses chose his soul. He suffered a little while on earth, but he will live with God eternally. These few verses about Moses would have really resonated with the saints who received this letter. They were being pressed from their nation. The Jews would have used their physical condition to try to influence the Christians. Under such persecution the example of Moses would be strong motivation to stay faithful. He chose to suffer with God's people and give up the palace of Egypt. He gave up physical wealth to gain eternal treasure. The Christians needed to make the same choice.

### *Moses Chose Spiritual Sight Over Physical Sight*

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27). We know Moses forsook Egypt in the Exodus (Exod. 14). But Moses made up his mind to leave Egypt long before the Exodus. He forsook Egypt when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. His decision was made when he chose to suffer affliction with God’s people. He forsook Egypt when he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the riches in Egypt. This decision was never more evident than his willingness to kill an Egyptian for a slave.

Stephen’s account of these events is helpful.

And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one *of them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. (Acts 7:23-29)

You remember Lot’s wife longed to stay in Sodom (Luke 17:32). Moses had no such desire for Egypt. He did not fear the wrath of the king. He was rejected by his brethren. He thought he should deliver them. He was the right man; it was just the wrong time.

Moses could see the splendor of Egypt. All of the wealth and glory of the nation was proudly on display. Great buildings, statues, and monuments constantly declared the grandeur of Egypt. Pharaoh's power was also constantly before all; he wielded the power of life and death. But Moses endured as seeing him who is invisible.

We walk by faith, not by sight is not a statement that dismisses vision. We do not walk by the appearance of things. We do not walk by physical sight. But we do walk by something we see. We see that which is unseen. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:4). "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:18). Moses saw God! His vision of God was clearer and stronger than what he saw in Egypt. If Egypt was glorious, how much more was God? If Pharaoh was powerful, how much more was God?

Moses forsook Egypt because his spiritual sight was stronger than his physical sight. It was another great example for the suffering saints who received the Hebrew epistle. They needed to remain steadfast by seeing Him who is invisible. While they could see Jerusalem in all of her splendor, they were not to walk by appearance. The saints appeared to be worse off. But soon Jerusalem would be destroyed and they would be vindicated. The only way for them to persevere was to endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

### ***Moses Chose Preparation Over Procrastination***

"Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them" (Heb. 11:28). The events of the Passover are recorded in Exodus 12. It is the prelude to the final plague after which God assured Moses that Pharaoh would let Israel go (Exod. 11:1).

Preparation is the word that best describes the events surrounding the Passover. God gave Israel specific instructions about the observance of the Passover. They included taking a lamb for each household. The lamb could have no blemish. The animal could come from the sheep or the goats. It had to be a male a year old. It was to be kept until the 14<sup>th</sup> day. It was to be killed in the evening. The

blood was to be put on the side posts and on the upper door posts. All leaven was to be removed from their houses.

The reason for all of this preparation was that God was sending his angel. The angel needed to see the blood. And when he saw the blood he would pass over the houses of Israel. Additionally, this preparation was about when the angel would come. The angel would come at midnight. When the angel came, he killed all the firstborn in Egypt of man and beast.

God knew there would be no time to get ready. For when Pharaoh realized his child was dead, He drove Israel out of his country. They did not have time to get ready; they had to be ready! The faithful preparation of Moses made Israel ready when they were driven out of Egypt. They did not need to pack; they already were packed. They did not need to see what they needed to take. God had already told them to spoil their neighbors.

Because they were prepared, they were ready. The saints in Hebrew's needed this message. Jesus had told them a day was coming. The destruction of Jerusalem loomed in their near future. They needed to be ready so that they could escape the city. Matthew 24 and 25 are about preparation. The constant refrain of our Lord is, be ready. The ten virgins remind us how important preparation is (Matt. 25:1-13). They that were ready went in with the bridegroom. Those who were not ready were locked out. Israel was ready.

### ***Moses Chose Salvation Over Damnation***

“By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry *land*: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned” (Heb. 11:29). His options—if we can call them that—did not appear very good. The Egyptians were fiercely approaching from behind and the Red Sea roared in front of him. Israel cried to Moses and Moses cried unto God. The events of this courageous crossing are recorded in Exodus 14.

God would fight for them. And they would see the Egyptians no more. Before this could be realized, Moses had to lead his nation by faith. The words of God to Moses were simple. “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward” (Exod. 14:15). Attention

should be paid to the fact that the sea had not yet been parted. They were to go forward in faith, trusting that God would divide the sea.

They went forward, Moses raised his staff and God parted the sea. The Hebrew nation crossed on dry land. The Egyptians tried to do the same and were destroyed. The victory wrought by God through Moses would be the hallmark of the nation's history. Whenever God wanted to exhort His people to faithfulness, He would remind them that it was He who brought them out of Egypt. They should have continued to trust the One who saved them. The end of Exodus 14 well describes God's great deliverance and Israel's salvation.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses. (Exod. 14:30-31)

The first-century saints needed to follow the example of Moses. They needed to trust God despite the apparent impossible situation they were in. Moses was delivered by faith, and so would they be if they endured their persecution.

### **Lessons We Can Learn**

Moses' faithful life is filled with great lessons for the first-century and twenty-first-century saint.

#### ***Faith Demands Action***

Moses did not talk about loving God or living for God. He did it! He put his faith into action. Everyone who professes to have faith in God must live that faith or it is not faith at all. Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Everyone in Hebrews 11 did something. We cannot just say we love. We must act out that love. We cannot simply say we have faith. We must live that faith. Our faith must be shown by our works (Jas. 2:14-26; 1 John 3:18).

### ***Faith Demands Choosing***

The saints stood at a crucial crossroad in their Christian lives. They had to decide if they would trust God or turn back. The Hebrew writer urged. We are not of those who turn back (Heb. 10:38-39). If they gave in and turned back to Judaism, they would be lost. They would forfeit God, Christ, and the faith. They would lose their lives and their eternal souls. Moses chose God and His people. He chose to suffer temporarily, so he could live with God eternally. The saints needed to make this same choice and so do we. We must choose God above everything else. We must live in view of eternity. Make your stand for God and refuse to move.

### ***Faith Costs***

From a fleshly viewpoint, Moses lost everything. He gave up riches. He gave up family. His adoptive family must have meant a great deal to him. He gave up prestige and privilege. He gave up pleasure. He gave it all up because of his faith. His faith in God and things eternal excelled all things physical. He forsook Egypt. Every child of God must be willing to make this same decision. The first-century saints were troubled by their families. A man's enemies became those of his own house. Christian friend, we must be willing to pay any price for our faith as well. We must commit to Jesus and love father, mother, sister, brother, and our own lives less than we do the Lord (Luke 14:26). Jesus paid the price for us; we can do no less for Him (John 10:15-17).

### ***Faith Provides A Powerful Example***

History reveals the choices and decisions others have made. There are only two options. One can choose to live faithfully for God. Or one can choose to draw back and live for self. Moses and the others listed in Hebrews 11 are those who chose faith. They endured so much for God's cause. Some paid the ultimate price by giving their life. They serve as powerful examples to everyone of us. Abel and the rest of the faithful being dead continue to speak. We must appreciate that we are also leaving an example. Now is our journey across the stage of life. We will leave an example for or against God. Each Christian should remember the powerful example of his



faith as he lives his life. We, too, will continue to speak after our life here ends. Let us all live lives of faith! Let us trust God and do what He says!

### Conclusion

Moses is a fantastic example of faith. But Moses is not super human. His faith, like all others in Hebrews 11, is a common faith. We can all have it and we must all have the same kind of faith. Faith is the foundation of our relationship with God. Without it we cannot please Him. Peter said we must add all other things to it. The just shall live by it. Faith is not trite or trivial, it is absolute essential. We like Moses must refuse the world's offer of seasonal sinful pleasure. We must choose to suffer if need be now so we can live with God eternally. We must esteem Christ spiritual riches greater than any physical thing on earth. We must forsake all others and cleave only to God and Christ. And when we do, we will please God, help others, and save our souls.

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## CHAPTER 21

# Then Sang Moses

*Tom Wacaster*

Sandwiched between the amazing story of Israel's crossing of the Red Sea and the incident at Marah is the *Song of Moses*. Of all the chapters in Exod., had I been given a choice for my lesson assignment, the Song of Moses would have been at or near the top of the list. As with any other passage in the Bible, there are rich nuggets of spiritual truth to be mined from the first nineteen verses of Exod. 15. One reason why some get "so little" out of passages such as that assigned for our study this hour is that they simply do not take the time, or put forth the efforts to properly understand and appreciate what is before them. The late Roy Deaver was fond of telling us preacher students, "Get a handle on a passage and you can grasp its message with far greater appreciation." There are a lot of passages that it has taken years, yea decades, for this struggling student to "get a handle on"; there are some that I have yet to determine where the "handle" is located.

In order to "get a handle" on the Song of Moses it is essential that we understand at least something about the "stylistic traits" of Hebrew poetry. The nineteen verses for our consideration are pure poetry, with perhaps the exception of the first few words of verse 1. One major trait of Hebrew poetry is *parallelism*, sometimes referred to as *thought rhyme*. Hebrew poetry contains little, if any, word rhyme. It is not like our poetry in the Western world. Parallelism may come in various forms such as *synonymous parallelism* in which the thought of the first line is repeated in the second, expressed in different words. The exact truth the poet wished to express was repeated for emphasis. Next, there is *antithetic parallelism* wherein the truth presented

in one line is strengthened by a contrasting statement. Third, there is *progressive parallelism*, composed of several lines, each providing a complete element of the aggregate thought. Fourth, there is *inverted parallelism* in which the first line is closely related in thought to the fourth, and the second to the third. The careful student will pick up on this trait of Hebrew poetry as he studies this Song of Moses.

A second characteristic of Hebrew poetry is rhythm, or accentuation, which, like parallelism, has exegetical values. It often aids in capturing the exact thought and feeling of the poet. Different kinds of rhythm are found in Hebrew poetry, but it is not likely that the Hebrew poets had standard measures, worked out and defined, as modern poets have. Apparently the art of poetic rhythm was a secondary consideration, if, indeed any conscious effort was made at all to conform to patterns of rhythm.

A third characteristic of Hebrew poetry, equally as important as parallelism and rhythm, is figurative expression. As in the poetry of all languages and cultures, that of the Hebrews abounds in figures. There are two important considerations in dealing with these figurative expressions. (1) The figure must be accepted and dealt with as a figure and not as a literal statement. (2) The figure must be interpreted in the light of the meaning of the figures in the day and in the setting in which it was used. In other words, “figurative” language is used to describe a “real” event.

We cannot recall the source of this remarkable quote regarding Hebrew poetry as it relates to the book of Psalms, but we are confident that what the author says about the songs and devotions of David are applicable to other passages containing Hebrew poetry:”The Psalms do not present a system of biblical theology, but they reflect the theology and religious experiences of the writers. They contain much theology, and some of the highest expressions of religious truth are found in them. Indeed, the Psalms are ‘Mirrors of the souls’ reflecting the religious experiences common to humanity everywhere and in all ages.” My own personal study of the Psalms has helped me to appreciate the value of other passages containing

Hebrew poetry—passages scattered throughout the Bible, and especially the Old Testament. The passage assigned for this lecture is no different.

Some attention needs to be given as to what makes a song popular. What makes a song endure through the ages, so much so that generations far removed from the date of the original publication will have as great an appreciation for the song as did the generation in which it was written? Bob Leone is National Projects Director for The National Academy of Popular Music/Songwriters' Hall of Fame. When asked what makes a song “stand out,” he answered:

Musically, we look for songs that have memorable choruses; a melody that, once heard, keeps bouncing around your cranium. And I look for dynamic contrast between verse, chorus, and bridge. Lyrically, I want to hear something said in some new or unique way. All of the above make a song stand out.

Through the years I have collected a number of those old long play 33 rpm albums. Among my favorite albums are those melodies that were written decades ago. So, why do songs that predate my generation still appeal to me? There are at least four elements that make a song a truly popular song. First, a song's historical background will enhance its popularity and endurance. Many of the war songs that came out of WWI and WWII remain favorites, even among the youth of our day. Occasionally a song will slip into obscurity, but when studied by some musical student, the background of that song will inspire a song writer to compose a new arrangement for an otherwise ancient song. Second, the lyrics of a song will contribute to the popularity and endurance of a song. There are some musical numbers that were composed for movie or theatrical performance, to which words have never been penned, that have remained popular through the years. But the most enduring songs are those that communicate a message—a message that will pluck the heart strings of the reader

and give him an appreciation for the song, particularly the message contained in the song. In addition, the words of the song must accurately portray the facts of the historical setting. Though poetic license is allowed, the message conveyed by the song itself must be true to the facts. Third, a song will endure if it finds some application to successive generations. In other words, if the song communicates timeless truths, it will be loved and admired by young and old alike. Finally, the melody and/or rhythm of a song will contribute to its enduring nature. There are some songs that have a “catchy melody,” and we are drawn to that song for no other reason than the beat and tempo. Interestingly, the Song of Moses contains, so far as successive generations are concerned, at least three of these elements. As the historical background, Exod. chapter fourteen is an integral part of the “Song of Moses.” Without the historical setting, there would be no way we could completely understand and appreciate the message of the song. Imagine if you will such patriotic songs as “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” without any knowledge of the Civil War. What is the message of “The Star Spangled Banner” separate and apart from the eyewitness account of Francis Scott Key? The same is true with regard to the spiritual songs we sing. As an example, consider the following: Joseph Scriven was a graduate of Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. At the age of 25 he migrated to Canada where he met a delightful and dedicated Christian lady. At the time they were engaged to be married, they knelt together in prayer. As their love continued to deepen, and their wedding day drew near, they resolved that throughout their married life they would take every problem to God in prayer. On the day before they were to be wed, Joseph received a letter informing him that his fiancé had drowned. The groom-to-be was stunned, and turned against God. It was not right! It was not fair! It was cruel of God to take her from him. And then Joseph remembered the promise which they had made: “Take every problem to God in prayer.” The bereaved young man fell to his knees, and after diligently praying to God, he arose from his knees and penned the words to a song that has brought solace and strength to myriads of aching hearts:

What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry,  
Everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,  
Thou wilt find a solace there.

The knowledge of the historical background of this song gives us a much deeper appreciation for the song itself.

Second, the Song of Moses contains lyrics that appeal to the heart of the individual. The spiritual minded man can appreciate the lyrics to the Song of Moses; the worldly minded will miss it altogether. Keep in mind also that songs are generally poetic in nature, and oft times the words and phrases refer to specific elements of the historical event.

Third, in order for a song to endure the passing of time it must be of such a nature as to find application in principle to every generation. Some songs fade into history, their author and lyrics soon forgotten. On the other hand, there are songs that have blessed generation after generation with the message and melody. Those songs that have within them “timeless truths” will motivate and inspire men to action, regardless of what century they might live in.

Finally, rhythm, beat, tempo, measure, and stanzas play an important part in the arrangement of the words. To some degree, such things as rhythm, beat, or tempo as developed in Hebrew poetry, are lost to the mind of modern man; we simply cannot appreciate it as would those whose lives were rooted in Hebrew history and culture. But in spite of our inability to see those finer elements of Hebrew poetry and music, there is still a beauty about the songs, written in Hebrew, and translated into our language.

In my series on the Psalms, I approached each chapter from four different aspects: Introduction, Analysis, Commentary, and Lessons. Our approach to this study of the Song of Moses will be of the same format. Attention will be given to (1) some introductory remarks to the song, (2) the historical background, (3) a verse by verse examination of the passage, and (4) some practical application. With that in mind we turn our attention to a study of the song that “Moses Sang.”

### **Introduction To The Song of Moses**

The author is, without doubt, Moses. The meekness and modesty of Moses (King James Version, Num. 12:3) shines in this passage in that he does not take the time to attribute the song *to* himself, nor does he sing *about* himself. In fact, nowhere in the Psalm does this great servant of God call attention to himself, not in the least. No serious doubt as to the authorship has ever been entertained, but the general belief that Moses wrote the song rests upon the improbability of there having been anyone else capable of such literary genius. That Moses had the ability to write such beautiful poetry is evident from



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a careful study of Psalm 90—a Psalm universally attributed to Moses by scholars, as well as the subtitle of that Psalm itself.

Here in Exod. 15 we have a song filled with gratitude, joy, and happiness. It is as much a song of *national victory* as it is a song of praise. Moses was aware of the inseparable link between the victory and the One Who granted that victory. This is a song of transcendent beauty. So far as the Biblical record is concerned, this song is the first that the nation of Israel sang as a newly formed and independent nation. Here is what one author called “the first outburst of the poetical genius of the nation, and so connected with the very commencement of the national life, it exerted the most important formative influence upon the later Hebrew poetic style, furnishing a pattern to the later lyric poets, from which they but rarely deviated” (Rawlinson). Jewish literature often speaks of Exod. fifteen as *the song* and the Sabbath on which it is read as *the Sabbath of the Song*. There are other passages that contain poetic sections about Israel’s deliverance at the Red Sea (cf. Neh. 9:9ff; Psa. 78:11ff; Psa. 77:16ff; Psa. 105; Psa. 106:7ff; Hab. 3:8ff), but this chapter excels them all.

### **The Historical Background Of The Song of Moses**

Context is important to the study of any passage. In order to appreciate the Song of Moses, it is essential that we revisit Exod. 14:15-31.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD,

when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians. And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters

returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.

The very words thrill our soul and encourage us! What must it have been like for those who were there? What impression did it leave on their hearts and minds? No wonder Moses sang; and it was the words of this song that captured the emotions of the heart of that great man of God “who was faithful to him that appointed him...in all his house” (Heb. 3:2). Let us consider the following points.

#### ***Pharaoh’s Fist (Exod. 14:5-10)***

The hardness of Pharaoh’s heart is once again manifested in this his last attempt to thwart the will of Jehovah God. Having given leave to the children of Israel to leave Egypt, Moses tells us that “the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people” (Exod. 14:5a). When the heart rebels against God, it is not long ere the feet soon follow. So Pharaoh “made ready his chariot, and took his people with him” (Exod. 14:6). In addition he “took six hundred chosen chariots...and captains over every one of them” (Exod. 14:7) and pursued those whom he had previously set free. The magnitude of Pharaoh’s power is seen in the express statement of Moses that “all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army” were mustered to bring Israel into bondage once again. What arrogance of this foolish king of Egypt! Of what power were

his chariots in the face of a God Who could ravage the land of Egypt with such destructive miracles as those recorded in previous chapters? Yet, with a hardened heart and a defiant attitude, Pharaoh marched forward to his own destruction. He may have “shaken his fist in the face of God,” but as the Psalmist declared of unbelievers, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure” (Psa. 2:4-5).

***Israel’s Fear (Exod. 14:11-12)***

There was no doubt that the situation, when viewed from a purely physical standpoint, would produce consternation in the hearts of Israel. Their backs to the sea, these helpless and hapless souls “lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them” (Exod. 14:10). Theirs was a *real fear*, and genuine *regret*. But it was unfounded! Unfortunately, rather than place their trust in God, they *complained*. “Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? *Is not* this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For *it had been* better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness” (Exod. 14:11-12). You see, Pharaoh was not the only one to forget the power of God. Someone has pointed out that courage is acting in the face of fear. Biblically speaking, faith is trusting God in the face of fear (Prov. 3:3-5).

***Moses’ Faith (Exod. 14:13-14)***

The faith of Moses was manifest in a most remarkable way. He demonstrated faith in spite of the situation! “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord” (Exod. 14:13). He also recognized who was on his side: “The Lord shall fight for you” (Exod. 14:14a). The student might be surprised how many times the preachers and prophets of God affirmed this remarkable truth in one form or another. A quick search on my computer found 32 passages where great leaders of God reminded the people “the Lord shall fight for you.” To a new generation, forty years removed from the time of our assigned passage, Moses reminded Israel, “The Lord your God...he

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shall fight for you” (Deut. 1:30). Joshua, Jephthah, David, Elijah, and many others all declared this same eternal truth. Perhaps we need to be reminded of it is as well.

***God’s Fight (Exod. 14:15-25)***

It has been at least four decades since I heard a sermon titled “Boxing with God.” Today I could not give you the details of that sermon, or the date when I heard it. But the title of that sermon made a lasting impression upon me at that time, so much so that I find myself often thinking of the foolishness of men who have found themselves “boxing with God.” Pharaoh had “climbed into the ring” with God, and that arrogant and rebellious king would soon realize that he was “boxing with God.” God would knock Pharaoh out in three swift punches.

First, God opened a way for Israel’s deliverance and the means of Pharaoh’s destruction. “Stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea” (Exod. 14:16). That same open sea and dry ground would tempt Pharaoh to “follow them,” but this to his ultimate destruction.

Second, God stood between Pharaoh and Israel, providing a fire of light to Israel, and a cloud of darkness to their enemies (Exod. 14:19-20). God protected Israel while fighting Pharaoh, “so that the one came not near the other all night” (Exod. 14:20).

Third, God “troubled the host of the Egyptians” (Exod. 14:24). The Hebrew *hamam* means “to put in commotion, to disturb, crush, discomfit, or vex” (Strong). This would be followed by the complete destruction of Pharaoh’s army with the flood waters of the Red Sea as they returned upon these enemies of God. With a one-two-three punch, God rescued Israel and destroyed their enemies so that they would “see them again no more for ever” (Exod. 14:13).

***Israel’s Faith (Exod. 14:22, 29-31)***

Israel’s fear gave way to faith thereby motivating the people to march through the vast chasm of water before them. “And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant

Moses” (Exod. 14:31). One moment Israel feared. But in a moment, with the power of God demonstrated openly and abundantly, their fear turned to faith. We might wonder how a people could vacillate between such faith and fear in so short a time. It would seem, however, that Biblical history has taught us that human nature reacts precisely the same way given the same set of circumstances. Shortly after the attacks on the New York Trade Center in September of 2001, our nation fell to their knees. Even our leaders in Washington prayed openly on the steps of Congress. There was, however, no lasting change. From Hollywood, to the halls of Washington D.C., to the average “Joe” on the Streets of U.S.A., Americans returned to their same old ungodly ways within a very short period of time. Hot and cold are the extremes which characterize that vast array of humanity who travel the highway to eternal condemnation. The history of Israel as recorded in the book of Judges proves the point. One generation might be zealous for the Lord; the next generation, often untaught, abandons the faith of their ancestors.

***Pharaoh’s foolishness (Exod. 14:23-28)***

Pharaoh’s attempt to pursue Israel after witnessing ten punitive miracles against the King and the people of Egypt is enough to demonstrate his utter contempt for God and disregard for the power of the Lord. His arrogance drove to him to sheer madness, and his attempt to fight God demonstrated his utter foolishness. When first approached by Moses and Aaron to “let my people go,” Pharaoh demonstrated an arrogance that would eventually lead to his complete destruction: “And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go” (Exod. 5:2) Like the atheist who brands himself a fool because he says there is no God (Psa. 14:1), so this king of Egypt played the fool for his refusal to believe in God in spite of the powers the Lord demonstrated in the punitive miracles that plagued Egypt. With ten miracles that bore witness of the might of God, Pharaoh hardened his heart one last time: “And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen” (Exod. 14:23).

## **The Song of Moses: An Analysis And Commentary**

We came across a number of helpful outlines which we share here with our readers. G. Campbell Morgan summarized the Song of Moses thus:

The reason for the song is God Himself (verses 1-2). The victory against the proud foe is wholly Jehovah's (verses 3 to 10). The leading of His people is His alone (verses 11-13). The sense of dread that falls on the other men of other nations who witnessed the passage is the issue of Jehovah's victory (verses 14-16). Their confidence, now high and hopeful, of finally coming into possession of their inheritance is centered wholly in Him (verses 7, 18). Now begins the more direct story of Jehovah's guidance of the people. Marah and its bitterness afforded opportunity to discover the resources of Jehovah. Elim was evidence of His tender care for them. To those who have eyes to see and hearts to understand, the divine tenderness is manifest along the whole pilgrim pathway. (40)

Our sources varied with regard to an outline of the chapter. Some interpreters divide it up into stanzas (strophes) on the basis of the repeated phrases in Exodus 15:6 and Exodus 15:11. We found the following outlines (Fields 135) helpful in our study of the chapter:

“From Triumph To Testing”—consisting of (a) Song of triumph, 15:1-21, and (b) Situations of testing, 15:22-26.

“From Song to Bitterness”—consisting of (a) Songs by the Red Sea, 15:1-21, and (b) Bitterness at Marah, 15:22-26.

As to the purpose of the song: It is to declare the majesty and power of the Lord in the deliverance of Israel and their crossing of the Red Sea. Interestingly, there is nothing in this song of praise or honor to Moses; such is rendered to the Lord alone. In pagan songs, glory is often given to the conquering kings, but not so with this beautiful song.

For this study we will focus on the Song of Moses as contained in verses 1-18. We have also borrowed the outline we will use for our study from Fields (137): “The Song of Moses”—consisting of (a) Triumph of the Lord, 15:1-3; (b) Tragedy of Egypt, 15:4-12; (c) Terror of the Canaanites, 15:13-16; (d) Transition (and transfer) of the Israelites, 15:17-18. Let us take a closer look.

***Triumph of the Lord, Exod. 15:1-3***

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

Immediately Moses puts God at the forefront of his song. The Hebrew *yahh* appears five times, *eloheem* once, and *el* once, all within three short verses. Likely Moses employed the various names and terms for God in an effort to provide rhythm to the song. Moses says nothing of his being the composer, nor does he sing praises to his own leadership or prowess thus demonstrating the meekness of this great man of God while exalting the Lord. The song is sung “unto the Lord” and “about the Lord.” Such honor belongs to God because “he hath triumphed gloriously” (Exod. 15:1). Fields suggests that the Hebrew literally reads, “I shall sing unto Jehovah, because triumphing he has triumphed.” Our English word *triumph* translates



the Hebrew *gaw-aw* and means “to mount up; to rise; be majestic” (Strong). More specifically, God had triumphed by overthrowing the mighty army of Egypt with “the horse and his rider” by “throw[ing]” them “into the sea.”

Notice that within these three verses Moses speaks of his adoration for God: “The Lord is my strength,” “He is become my salvation,” “He is my God,” “my father’s God,” “a man of war,” and “I will exalt him.” God is a strength to those who submit; He is a “man of war” to those who would seek to oppose Him. The reference to God’s being a “man of war” is anthropomorphic language—strong language, but such that could scarcely be misunderstood. Here is a God who is “mighty in battle” (cf. *Psa.* 24:8), a “warrior” if you will. God’s might had just been demonstrated by the discomfiture and destruction of the mighty host of Pharaoh.

***Tragedy of Egypt, Exod. 15:4-12***

Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is

like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises,  
doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out thy right  
hand, the earth swallowed them.

Exod. 15:4—The divine hand of judgment had just descended upon Egypt, Pharaoh and his host being “cast into the sea.” Even the mightiest of Pharaoh’s army, “his chosen captains” were no match for God. God had drawn Pharaoh into the sea because of the king’s own pride and hatred for the Israelites. One interesting observation from this verse deserves comment here. Reliable sources have noted that the words “are drowned” describes “the act of drowning, not the state of lying drowned in the depths of the sea” (Rawlinson). Moses sought to draw a mental image of the event itself in the minds of those who might find occasion to sing this song.

Exod. 15:5—For those who would attempt a purely “natural” explanation of Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea, this verse stands as an obstacle to all such nonsense. Moses clearly states “the depths have covered them,” suggesting *deep* sea waters, not a swampy marsh or reedy area. With the words “they sank into the bottom as a stone,” another vivid picture emerges. The warriors who fought in chariots commonly wore coats of mail, composed of bronze plates overlapping one another. Such must have been exceedingly heavy, and these soldiers would have sunk at once like a stone or heavy metal object.

Exod. 15:6—This verse appears to begin the second strophe or stanza of the song. It appears to be an “expansion” of the first stanza, going into greater detail and drawing a contrast between the pride and arrogance of the Egyptians and their subsequent fall. The “right hand” of God bespeaks His glorious power with which He dashes the enemy in pieces (cf. Exod. 14:31; Exod. 3:20). The phrase *right hand* appears in the book of Psalms more than twenty times. Seeing that God is a spirit (John 4:24), we can only conclude that this is anthropomorphic language designed to “paint an image” of the power and might of God. Before leaving the verse please note the words “is become glorious in power.” This denotes the omnipotence

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and justice of God in His rendering judgment upon Pharaoh and his army. This was not some “fit of anger” on the part of God but divine judgment meted out upon a rebellious and ungodly Egypt.

Exod. 15:7—Moses continues to extol the excellence of God. Words are mounted up so as to draw a clear image of the majesty of our God. The double superlative, “the greatness of thine excellency,” was common in Hebrew poetry. Though two different Hebrew words are utilized by Moses, together these words could be rendered, “the excellence of thy excellency.” The first Hebrew word (*robe*) means “abundance, excellent, huge, more in number” (Strong). The second Hebrew word (*gaw-ohn*) has the idea of majesty, pomp, or excellence (Strong). Hence, the abundance of God’s excellence is extolled by Moses. Another interesting feature of this verse appears in the words “thou hast overthrown.” The verbs are future, and if properly translated would be rendered, “thou wilt overthrow them that rise up against thee.” This incident as recorded by Moses is a clear warning to anyone and everyone who might seek to oppose God and His purposes. Yet another interesting observation from this verse is the metaphor that Moses uses to describe the complete destruction of Egypt. “Thou sendest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.” As Pharaoh had commanded Israel to grind the straw into stubble for the making of bricks, so God would grind rebellious Egypt into stubble, a metaphor well known to the Egyptians. Oh yes! It is a horrible thing to fall into the hands of an angry God!

Exod. 15:8—Once again Moses uses anthropomorphic language: “with the blast of thy nostrils.” Poetically, Moses describes the east wind which God set in motion as a “blast” or the “breath of his nostrils.” The result was the mighty affect it had on the sea as the “waters were gathered together...stood upright as an heap... and congealed in the heart of the sea.” The force of this miracle is quite impressive. Take a bowl of water, and try to gather it up as you might a pile of dirt, or mold it as you might a piece of clay; such is something quite impossible to mortal man. A question arises as to whether or not we should take such strong poetical language in a literal sense; in other words, was Moses describing a “natural event”

with “unnatural language”? Keep in mind that a song, particularly a song that reflects some historical event, must be true to the facts. Exod. chapter 14 contains the facts, all of which describe an event most “unnatural.” Fact #1: when Moses stretched out his hand, the “Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind” (Exod. 14:21). Fact #2: “The waters were divided” (Exod. 14:16; Exod. 14:21b). This author has had the opportunity to “ride out” a typhoon at sea, and even with the strongest of winds imaginable, it is inconceivable that a wind could so “divide” a body of water by purely natural means as to allow clear passage from one land bank to another. A second point to consider is the use of figurative language. Figurative language is used to convey a real concept in *principle*. When Jesus said, “I am the door of the sheepfold,” He was not saying He was a literal door, but that does not lessen the truth that He is the “way” into the presence of the Father. By the same token, when Moses said the “waters were gathered together...stood up...and congealed” he was using language to describe the real miracle of the “dividing” of the waters. There simply is no other way to take the words of Moses and all the wrangling in an attempt to deny the miraculous is nothing more than sophisticated silliness.

Exod. 15:9—The arrogance and pride of Pharaoh is the focus of this verse. It is notable that Moses (by inspiration, i.e., the Holy Spirit) describes Pharaoh as “the enemy.” This earthly king, like so many of his counterparts, was not a just “misguided misfit,” or “socially maladjusted tyrant”—he was **God’s enemy**. Our Lord emphasized this same eternal truth: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12:30). Though motivated by rage and hate, Pharaoh had the same problem that the foolish rich man of Luke 12 had—a problem of selfish pride. “I will pursue...I will overtake...I will divide...my lust...I will draw my sword...my hand” all focus upon Pharaoh’s self confidence and selfish arrogance. Six times in one verse the focus of this foolish “barn builder” was himself! Whether Moses here depicts the inner thoughts of Pharaoh or his army as a whole is irrelevant; the lesson is the same.

Exod. 15:10—This verse is a description of what God did to Egypt. “Thou didst blow with thy wind” provides another fact not mentioned in the direct narrative, but entirely harmonizing with it. The immediate cause of the return of the waters, as of their retirement, was here described as a wind. If a literal wind, then it must have come from a new quarter, or its effects would not have been to bring the water back. Behind it all, however, was the hand of God, something to which Pharaoh had become blinded. As the verse closes, Moses focuses once again on the destruction of the enemy: “They sank as lead in the mighty waters.”

Exod. 15:11-12—These two verses contain the third stanza of the ode. It is short compared to the previous two, containing a fresh ascription of praise to God, though cast in a slightly new form. Moses never loses sight, however, of the fact which the song commemorates, namely the Egyptian overthrow. “Who is like unto thee, O Lord?” Twice in one verse the question is presented. It is what we call a rhetorical question containing only one correct logical answer. Three things are ascribed here to that which makes God stand far above “the gods”—(1) His “glorious holiness,” (2) He is worthy of reverence, “fearful in praises,” and (3) He is constantly “doing wonders.” The series of miracles performed against Egypt was designed to prove the majesty and power of God, as well as His superiority over the various “gods” of Egypt. “And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them” (Exod. 7:5). “For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD” (Exod. 12:12). “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so” (Exod. 14:4). “And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen” (Exod. 14:18).

***Terror of the Canaanites, Exod. 15:13-16***

Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.

There are actually two movements in this section: the first focuses upon God's providential care for His people (Exod. 15:13); this is followed by the effect these events had upon the nations round about (Exod. 15:14-16). While God's wrath was poured out upon Egypt (and by implication would be poured out upon other nations as well), the grace and providential care of God was extended to Israel.

Exod. 15:13—"Thou in thy mercy"—The difference between *mercy* and *grace* is this: while *grace* is God giving us what we *do not* deserve, *mercy* is *not* giving us what we do deserve. The guilty man who stands before a judge pleads for mercy; he does not seek justice. God in His divine mercy, rather than give Israel punishment for their murmuring prior to the crossing of the Red Sea (14:10-11), chose instead to lead "forth the people" whom He had "redeemed." Because of His great love for Israel, His promise to Abraham, and His eternal purpose in Christ, God demonstrated mercy throughout Israel's illustrious history in spite of repeated rebellion and disobedience on their part. Some have understood "thy holy habitation" to mean Mt. Sinai, others Canaan, or perhaps even Mt. Moriah. That Sinai is *not* intended seems clear from the fact that those nations mentioned

in verses 14 and 15 were untouched by the occupation of that mountain by Israel. And while the land of Canaan might meet the requirements of verses 14 and 15, there remains the question of verse 17, which we will discuss later. By inspiration (we are convinced) Moses prophesied of a place where God would establish His “holy habitation.” There is one “key” word in this verse that leads us to conclude that physical Israel may never have fully realized of what that “holy habitation” consisted. Our English word *unto* translates a Hebrew word that Strong says is here “used only in the shortened constructive form (the second form); a primitive particle, properly denoting **motion towards** (emphasis mine, TW), but occasionally used of a quiescent position.”

Exod. 15:14-16a—“The people” is a reference to the inhabitants of Palestina (Philistia), Edom, Moab, and Canaan. The amazing miracles performed against Egypt were not done in a corner, and it is inconceivable to even think that neighboring nations would not have heard of the cycles of miracles against Pharaoh. The word of what God did to the Egyptians rapidly spread to the neighboring nations thereby producing fear and sorrow (Exod. 15:14), amazement and trembling (Exod. 15:15) so much so that the inhabitants of Canaan “shall melt away.” The interesting thing about these verses is the fact that these nations trembled well in advance of any actual contact with Israel. In Texas we say, “They saw the handwriting on the wall.” Before leaving this section a word should be said about the prophecy that “all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.” This prophecy received a remarkable accomplishment when “it came to pass when... all the kings of the Canaanites...heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, that their heart melted, neither was their spirit in them any more” (Josh. 5:1).

“Till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased” has reference to the crossing of the Jordan, not the Red Sea. There is a note of confidence in these words of the song, indicating the faith that Moses had in the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of God to bring Israel into the Promised Land. The middle of this verse speaks of the providence of God in caring for His people. Some see in this

no more than the crossing of the wilderness, but either position implies faith on the part of Moses in Israel's eventual inheritance of the Promised Land. One more note before leaving this verse. By bringing His people out of Egypt, the ownership of Israel had passed from the Egyptians to God, just as if he had *bought* them. (See Exod. 6:6-7; Exod. 19:5.)

***Transition of the Israelites, Exod. 15:17-18***

Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

After having studied this amazing Song of Moses, it is my conviction that there is much more here than a simple reference to the land of Canaan, or even Solomon's temple in the city of Jerusalem. The more reasonable explanation is that Moses closes this song with a reference to the church, and perhaps the church in its eternal state of the redeemed of all ages. Let us take a closer look.

First, it is said that God "shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of **thine inheritance**" (Emphasis mine, TW). While it is true that the word *mountain* can, and often does, refer to a physical place, it is not beyond the writers of the Bible to use the words (by inspiration) to refer to a spiritual place. "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains" (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1). Second, it is also referred to as "the Sanctuary which thy hands have made." Moses, by divine prophecy, did not envision the temple which was built by Solomon, but a "sanctuary" that was built *by God*. The only "sanctuary" built by God is the church. Third, Moses looks across the vast ocean of time and sees the perpetual reign of Lord and states, "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Exod. 15:18). Daniel prophesied of the kingdom of the Lord (the church) as a kingdom that "shall



never be destroyed” and which shall “stand for ever” (Dan. 2:44). In light of such language our conclusion is that the “mountain of thine inheritance...the Sanctuary...which thy hands have established” are speaking of the church. Though the Pulpit commentary author may have had in mind some earthly premillennial reign, we think the idea is right on target:

In terms most simple yet most grand, often imitated (Psalm 10:16; 29:10; 146:10, etc.), but never surpassed, the poet gives the final result of all God’s providential and temporary arrangements, to wit, the eternal establishment of his most glorious kingdom. And here reaching the final consummation of all things (1 Corinthians 15:28), he will not weaken the impression made by adding another word, but ends his ode. (Rawlinson)

### ***The Conclusion, Exod. 15:19***

For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

There are at least three points that beg consideration in this beautiful conclusion: (1) Israel’s safe transit across the sea-bed; (2) the pursuit attempted by the Egyptian army; and (3) the return of the waters upon the pursuers by God’s action. The divine line of divine separation comes into view in this verse. On one side we find the enemies of God, on the other, the children of Israel. This great gulf is referred to in the New Testament in such passages as Matthew 7:13-14. We also see in this “great divide” the blessings granted to God’s people and the punishment meted out upon the unrighteous.

The first movement in this verse has to do with Pharaoh's utter stupidity. Had he not witnessed the incredible power of Jehovah God in nine successive miracles, many of which cursed Egypt while blessing Israel? Was he so ignorant as to think for one moment that God would now spare Egypt in their mad pursuit? The important thing to learn from this first point is that sin often hardens a man's heart so much so that he will pursue his selfish ends to his own destruction. Pharaoh was so consumed with his anger and hatred for Israel that he was now willing to risk his very life to appease that anger.

The second movement in this verse focuses upon God's final punishment of Pharaoh and his armies. Pharaoh was not destroyed by natural forces; it was the hand of God "that brought again the waters of the sea upon them." We find it somewhat interesting that God used water to save the godly and destroy the wicked. He did the same thing in the flood of Noah's time; He does the same thing in the waters of baptism.

The final movement has to do with Israel's salvation, a salvation so astonishing that it could only be attributed to the power of the God Who sent the flies, the frogs, and lice and the death of the first born. In the last part of this verse we see the *people* ("the children of Israel"), the *provision* ("dry ground"), and the *protection* ("the midst of the sea"). Egypt was destroyed, *but* on that same day, in that same place, and with the same element (the divided sea), God saved Israel.

### **Timeless Truths From The Song of Moses**

Every passage of Scripture contains timeless truths. The challenge is to discover those truths and then make proper application to our lives. We suggest the following lessons from Exod. chapter fifteen.

First, singing is a natural response to the joy that exists within the heart of the child of God. "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise" (American Standard Version, Jas. 5:13). It has always been a mystery to this scribe exactly why some Christians are not singing Christians. Could it be they have

not found the joy that comes with the hope we have in Christ? There is no doubt that Moses and every Israelite who stood on the far side of the Red Sea had great joy in their hearts. For more than 15 years I had the opportunity to conduct a summer camp for 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> graders. One of their favorite songs had a stanza with the following words: “Joy is the flag that flies over the castle of a man’s heart when the king is in residence there.” When joy fills the heart, singing comes forth naturally as does water from the fountain head of a stream. But in addition, there is great power in songs. One author has noted: “Although often ascribed to others, it was Andrew Fletcher (1655-1766), a Scottish politician, who said, ‘Give me the making of the songs of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws’” (Jeffcoat 345). There is no doubt that Moses sang because of the joy in his heart, and because he knew that a song at the precise moment would encourage the newly founded nation.

Second, we learn much about our God from the Song of Moses. Notice the terms that Moses uses to describe God: “He hath triumphed”; “The Lord is my strength and song”; “He is become my salvation”; “The Lord is a man of war”; “Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power”; “The greatness of thine excellency.” These are but a few of the accolades with which Moses extols the glory of God. In this chapter we see the *power* of God, the *patience* of God, and the *punishment* of the wicked. God is seen as deliverer, protector, and provider. Entire lectureships have been devoted to a discussion and study of the God of the Bible. One author, in describing the greatness of God, wrote:

Genesis 1 and 2 constitutes a portrait of the world prior to the entrance of sin. The theme of Genesis 1 is not the physical universe. It is not the profusion of light that drove darkness from hovering over the face of the deep. It is not the cleaving of the waters of the earth with the firmament. It is not the emergence of dry land from the womb of the sea. It is not the earth

being wrapped in a blanket of green. It is not the orbs deposited in the heavens to rule over the day and the night. It is not innumerable chandeliers of light being strewn across the universe in galaxies far removed from earth and human sight. It is not the moving of waters giving birth to creatures of the sea, nor the symphonic song of birds in flight. It is not convulsions of the earth producing companions of living things. It is not man coming forth from dust, nor woman from a rib in his side. The theme of Genesis 1 is “God.” God is mentioned by name thirty-two times in thirty-one verses. The fourth word of the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of Divine Revelation, introduces the greatest Being in all of Heaven, in all of the universe, and in all that ever has been or ever will be. If the universe could rest on the mind of man, its weight would be feathery in contrast to the single thought of God. It would be easier to compress the world into a thimble than to compress God into the human mind. The God of Genesis 1 is absolutely independent and totally self-reliant. He has never consulted with anyone outside Himself as to what He should do. Not one time has God ever summoned an audience or convened an assembly in order to seek advice. God is subject to no one, and God answers to no one. God is sovereign over all that is. If all the angels in Heaven and all the inhabitants of the earth were to join in revolt against God, it would cause Him no alarm or uneasiness. The atheist may blaspheme Him; the infidel may deride Him; the carnal may seek to dethrone Him; and the lukewarm and indifferent may forsake Him, but the sovereignty

of God remains intact. It would take less effort for time to consume eternity than for man's puny exertions of revolt to rob God of His sovereignty. The God of Genesis 1 is perfect and immutable in all of His attributes. God was powerful when He spoke the world out of the womb of non-existence, when He piled the mountains on high and scooped out the hollow places for the rolling deep. God was powerful when He bathed the earth in a global flood and buried Sodom and Gomorrah in fire and brimstone. God was powerful when he humbled mighty Egypt with the rod of Moses and split the Red Sea with a strong east wind. "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." (Chesser 383)

Third, Pharaoh is an example of the masses of humanity who have, in their persistent rebellion against God, passed the point of no return in their rebellion and opposition to the Almighty. A plane, flying across the ocean, will eventually reach the "point of no return." It is a real and definite point, beyond which it is better, in case of mechanical problems, to proceed than to attempt a return to the origination point. In the mind of the pilot, it is "impossible" to turn back. There are a number of passages which seem to indicate that it is possible for someone to reach a point in his plunge into apostasy and/or sin, so that it is impossible to be brought to repentance. Consider the following sobering words: "But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing; men that count it pleasure to revel in the day-time, spots and blemishes, revelling in their deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; enticing unstedfast souls; having a heart exercised in covetousness; children of cursing"

(ASV, 2 Pet. 2:12-14). “For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (ASV, Heb. 6:4-6). How do we reconcile such passages with those that express God’s wonderful longsuffering and patience? For example, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (ASV, 2 Pet. 3:9). “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (ASV, 1 John 1:9). Let me make three observations, which I hope will clear up the difficulty, while at the same time, serve as a serious warning to each and every one of us with regard to living faithfully in our service to God. First, there is along the pathway that leads away from God, a point, which once passed, that spells final doom for the hardened and impenitent heart. It is a real point. Once this point is reached, it is virtually “impossible” to reverse the direction one is traveling spiritually. Is this because God will not forgive? No. It is because the heart becomes so hardened that it can no longer be touched with the Gospel. The problem lies not in the power or willingness of God to forgive, but in the inability of the heart to turn away from sin. Second, realization of such a point ought to motivate us to turn away from sin while it is still within our power to do so. I have had occasion over the last two or three decades to attempt to persuade individuals to turn away from sin and obey God, to become a Christian or to be restored to their first love. Some have obeyed. But a far greater number have convinced themselves that there is plenty of time, and that “someday” they would come to God. I have also witnessed a number of souls delay their return so long that eventually they simply no longer have the desire to give the least bit of consideration to their spiritual plight. They have, spiritually speaking, passed the point of no return. Third, if you are outside the safe fold of God’s gracious love and salvation,

and if you, at this very moment, are giving consideration to a return to your Lord, I would strongly encourage you to act on that desire, even while it is called today. Your delay moves you ever closer to the point of no return. I cannot think of anything more tragic, or that will bring more remorse to the lost when, having entered into eternity, they remember the numerous opportunities that were theirs to come home to the Lord, but neglected that open door provided by their gracious God. If you would be saved, delay not till the morrow, for tomorrow may be too late!

Fourth, there is a day coming when every child of God shall sing the Song of Moses:

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that come off victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the Song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages. (Rev. 15:1-3)

There is a day coming, when all of the enemies of God shall be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). The atheists and agnostics, the greedy and the godless, the enemies and enraged antagonists of God Almighty shall know their Maker as did Pharaoh of old. In that day the abortionist will know that life began at conception. In that day every evolutionist (theistic evolutionists included) will know that the Biblical account is precisely how it all began. In that day every Senator and Representative in Washington will know you cannot govern a nation without the aid and blessing of Jehovah God. In

that day, when we, as God's people, are received into heaven and the arrogant and antagonistic enemies of God are overwhelmed in the fiery flood that shall come upon them, we will realize that our struggles have been worth it all. When time gives way to eternity, and this world and all therein is burned up (2 Pet. 3:10-12), you and I will sit at the feet of the God who has redeemed us, and we will not only sing the Song of Moses—we will sing the Song of Moses and the Lamb for all eternity! Won't that be a grand day?

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## CHAPTER 22

# Nephews And New Fire

*Caleb Campbell*

It is a joy and a privilege to be a part of this series of lessons devoted to Moses, truly one of the greatest men in all of holy writ. The passage from his life which has been assigned for this particular study is brief but rich, disturbing, and enlightening. In Leviticus 10:1-2, the inspired prophet wrote these words:

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.  
(King James Version)

As we turn our attention to this ancient yet living text, there are many points worthy of our consideration. We will focus upon these: **A Special Privilege, A Sacred Place, A Specific Pattern, A Strange Presentation, A Severe Punishment,** and some **Sacrifice Principles.**

### **A Special Privilege**

No sooner has the passage begun than Bible readers are informed that the central characters of this narrative, Nadab and Abihu, were no common men. They were, rather, “the sons of Aaron” (Lev. 10:1); and, by default, the nephews of Moses. Interestingly, this is not the only passage that emphasizes the family to which the men

belonged. In Exodus 6:23, the Bible introduces them to us by stating, “And Aaron took him Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Na-ash-on to wife; and she bare him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar” (this and all emphasis mine, CCC). From that point forward, virtually anytime Nadab and Abihu are mentioned, it is in association with their father, Aaron (cf. Exod. 24:1; Exod. 24:9; Exod. 28:1; Lev. 10:1; Num. 3:2; Num. 26:60; 1 Chron. 6:3; 1 Chron. 24:1). Why? What was so significant about Aaron? And why did it matter that they were his sons? The Lord Himself answered that question when He spoke to Moses in the book of Exodus:

And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, **that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons...** And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, **that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office...** **And the priest’s office shall be theirs** for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons. (Exod. 28:1; Exod. 28:41; Exod. 29:9)

As the immediate offspring of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu were privileged to serve as two of the original priests of Israel. In fact, there is strong indication that besides their high priestly father, Aaron, they were initially the **only** two practicing priests of Israel. While their younger brothers Eleazar and Ithamar were also consecrated to the office, both Exodus 24:1-9 and 1 Chronicles 24:2 suggest those two men did not actually serve until Nadab and Abihu were no longer available to do so.

Serving in the office of a priest was the highest privilege in all of ancient Israel. As the original meaning of the word suggests, it

was a position of religious leadership and spiritual mediation. The priests under the Mosaic system were both the teachers (Deut. 33:8-10; 2 Chron. 15:3; Neh. 8:1-2) and judges (Num. 27:21; Deut. 21:5) of God's people. Even more significantly, they were the select men God permitted to bring Him offerings on behalf of His people. As the early chapters of Leviticus show repeatedly, an Israelite who wanted to offer a sacrifice to Jehovah could only do so by bringing the offering to "Aaron's sons the priests" (Lev. 2:2). Likewise, anytime the congregation as a whole sought to worship the Lord, it could only do so through the avenue of Aaron and his priestly sons (2 Chron. 13:10-11). Anyone else was deemed unworthy by God and would be sentenced to death for presuming the right to approach the Almighty (Num. 3:10).

Having noted those things, let us recognize as we commence our study that when Leviticus 10:1 says, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon," it was no small thing! At that moment in history, there were at most five human beings alive who enjoyed the opportunity of directly approaching God in worship! So exclusive was that access to Jehovah that several other men of Nadab and Abihu's generation would sacrifice their very lives trying to obtain it (Num. 16:1-33). So grand was the blessing that future kings would lose loved ones and health in search of it (1 Kings 13:33-34; 1 Kings 14:10-12; 2 Chron. 26:16-21). God Himself referred to it as "a gift" to be cherished (Num. 18:7). It was, indeed, a special privilege.

### **A Sacred Place**

As Nadab and Abihu prepared to worship on this occasion, the context indicates that they not only enjoyed a special privilege, but that they did so in a truly sacred place. In Leviticus 8, having already outlined His plan for Israel's priesthood, God informed Moses that the time had come to set that plan in motion (Lev. 8:1). Moses relayed the message to Aaron and his sons and concluded with these words:

And ye shall not go out of the door of the **tabernacle of the congregation** in seven days, until the days of your consecration be at an end: for seven days shall He consecrate you. As he that done this day, so the Lord hath commanded to do, to make an atonement for you. Therefore shall ye abide at the door of the **tabernacle of the congregation** day and night seven days, and keep the charge of the Lord, that ye die not: for so I am commanded. (Lev. 8:33-35)

After seven days of dutifully remaining in the tabernacle, Aaron and his sons came to the climax of their consecration on the eighth day. It was on that day that Aaron, still in the tabernacle, offered atonement on behalf of himself and the entire nation (Lev. 9:5-7). It should be noted that Nadab and Abihu remained by his side throughout his sacrificial work on that eighth day (Lev. 9:9-18) and that it was in that same tabernacle that the brothers were given their opportunity to conduct worship later that day (Lev. 10:1).

The tabernacle of Israel was an extraordinary place. That was true, first, with regard to its physical beauty. When God initially informed Moses of His plan to build the great tent in the wilderness, He said:

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, And blue, and purple, and scarlet , and fine linen, and goats' hair, And rams' skins dyed red , and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate. (Exod. 25:1-7)

That plan was fulfilled in Exodus 35:22-28, when the people brought the most prized and precious of their possessions for the building of the tabernacle. Those materials, along with the voluntary services of the gifted seamstresses (Exod. 35:25-26), goldsmiths (Exod. 35:32), carpenters (Exod. 35:33), engravers (Exod. 35:35), and embroiderers (Exod. 35:35), came together to form one of the most magnificent sights in all of antiquity.

The physical splendor of the tabernacle was surpassed only by its glorious purpose. In providing the blueprint for it, God said, “And let them make me a sanctuary; **that I may dwell among them**” (Exod. 25:8). He later said,

This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of **the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you**, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and **the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory...** And **I will dwell among the children of Israel**, and will be their God. (Exod. 29:42-45)

When Nadab and Abihu entered into the tabernacle to worship, they were entering into a truly sacred place, for it was the place where God resided among His people! It was a tent, yes, but a tent which was hallowed because it was filled with the glory of God Almighty (Exod. 40:34-35). Much like Moses’ and Joshua’s “holy ground” (Exod. 3:5; Josh. 5:15), and much like Isaiah’s and John’s heavenly temples (Isa. 6:1-4; Rev. 7:15), this was a place where the created could commune with the Creator!

It should be noted further that in Leviticus 10:1-2, Nadab and Abihu were not only in the sacred tabernacle, but were actually in that part of the tabernacle specifically designated as **the holy place**. The holy place, that portion of the tabernacle behind the first veil (Heb. 9:2), was the place wherein the priests were to perform many of their tasks (Exod. 28:43; Exod. 29:30; Exod. 35:19). One of those

tasks specifically named was that undertaken by the brothers in our text—the burning of incense in worship to God (Exod. 40:26-27). It is interesting that not only was the altar of incense located in the holy place, but it was directly adjacent to the veil leading to the Holy of holies (Exod. 30:6). Since the ark of the covenant and mercy seat within the Holy of holies constituted the very dwelling place of God (Exod. 25:21-22), when Nadab and Abihu approached the altar of burnt incense, they were literally as close as they could ever get to the glory and presence of God on this earth—truly, a most sacred place.

### A Specific Pattern

When God first revealed His plans for the tabernacle, He emphasized that all things were to be done “according to the pattern” (Exod. 25:9; Heb. 8:5). As He revealed the blueprint that would guide the design of the physical structure, forty-seven verses in Exodus 25-27 began with the phrase “Thou shalt!” Why the repetition? Because God did not want Israel to miss the point that things were to be organized His way rather than their way. The message rang out loud and clear, for, “According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded” (Exod. 39:42-43). It is noteworthy that God did not descend upon the tabernacle, and thus demonstrate His approval and extend His fellowship, until Moses “finished the work” (Exod. 40:33), wherein each piece of the puzzle was set in place “as the Lord commanded Moses” (Exod. 40:19-32).

Of particular interest to our study is the fact that God not only provided a pattern for the physical construction and layout of the tabernacle, but also for the priesthood which served within it. Such was true of their attire (Exod. 28:1-43), the process whereby they were consecrated (Exod. 29:1-46), and especially their sacrificial duties (Lev. 1:1-7:38). An in-depth investigation of the early chapters of Leviticus in particular will show that the Lord’s pattern for His priests’ offerings was thorough, clear, and **specific**. Depending on the person involved and the circumstances of the offering, there

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were specific items that had to be present (cf. Lev. 4:3; Lev. 4:14; Lev. 4:23; Lev. 4:28), specific ingredients that had to be included (cf. Lev. 2:1-6), specific sequences that had to be followed (cf. Lev. 1:1-9), and specific places that had to be used (cf. Lev. 1:11).

One of the regular features of the divine pattern for worship was the presence and usage of **fire** in offerings to God. Holland wrote:

In the five different sacrifices ordained of God and revealed in Leviticus, fire was used. The burnt offering required that the fire on the altar would burn all night. Indeed, the fire upon the altar would “ever be burning” (Lev. 6:13).

The meat, or meal offering, involved the use of flour, oil, and frankincense which the priest would burn for a memorial upon the altar “to be **an offering made by fire**” (Lev. 2:2).

The same was true of the peace offering. It, too, was “an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord” (Lev. 3:5).

The sin offering required the use of fire. The priest was to dip his finger in the blood of the slain animal and sprinkle the blood seven times “before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary” (Lev. 4:6). Then part of the animal was to be burned on the altar and the other part of the animal was to be burned outside the camp “in a clear place” (Lev. 4:10-12).

Likewise the fifth kind of sacrifice, the trespass offering, involved the use of fire. Indeed, the law of the trespass offering stated that “the priest shall burn them upon the altar **for an offering made by fire unto the Lord**” (Lev. 7:5).

So when one reads Leviticus he is certainly impressed with the constant use of fire in worship to God. (118-119)

It should be noted that even within the usage of fire, Aaron and his sons had a specific pattern to observe. Concerning the burning of incense in worship to God, God said, “Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon” (Exod. 30:9). He would later add:

And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil; And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not. (Lev. 16:12-13)

When Aaron and his sons began to fulfill their roles as priests of God’s people, they did not do so without any idea of what God expected. The reality was quite the opposite. God had a specific pattern, He had revealed it to them, and He expected it to be followed.

### **A Strange Presentation**

As Aaron and his sons undertook their duties in the week leading up to our text, the Bible indicates they were faithful to the pattern God had given, doing “all things which the Lord commanded” (Lev. 8:36). When the seven days of consecration came to a close and the eighth day began, it was no different. As Aaron offered atonement for his own transgressions and those of the people, he did so exactly “as the Lord commanded Moses” (Lev. 9:10). With Nadab and Abihu by his side (Lev. 9:9-18), he carried out all of his services “according to the manner” God had prescribed (Lev. 9:16). After Aaron led his family and all of Israel in carefully obeying the Lord’s will, the chapter ends with these heart-warming words:

And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from the



offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces. (Lev. 9:22-24)

What a glorious day in ancient Israel! God had consecrated His priesthood, they had fulfilled His every command, and He in turn announced His approval with a miraculous demonstration of His unparalleled power. It was a day to be remembered!

What happened next was literally unfathomable: “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer...and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not” (Lev. 10:1). What was offered? **Strange fire!** Fire, that is, that was foreign to the pattern of God. Who offered it? **Nadab and Abihu!** The two men who had been chosen to fulfill a work others only dreamed of; the two men who were granted access to a place others could not so much as draw near; the two men who just hours or even minutes earlier had observed their father carefully adhere to the pattern of the Lord; the two men who now had the opportunity to show that they themselves were ready for the awesome responsibility set before them; **they, Nadab and Abihu, offered unauthorized fire before the Lord!**

Well over three thousand years later, we still cry, “How could they do so? What were they possibly thinking?” Perhaps it was **intoxication**. Immediately after their profane offering, God told Aaron, “Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die” (Lev. 10:9). Perhaps it was **indifference**. Just after warning against mixing alcohol with service to the Lord, God said, “And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and

clean” (Lev. 10:10). It might have been flat out **insolence**. The fact that God emphasized “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified” (Lev. 10:3) suggests that the brothers possibly sought to shift the attention away from God and to themselves. Whatever the reason for their decision, it was surely a decision they would reverse if they could, for their **strange** presentation became their **final** presentation.

### A Severe Punishment

If the only words concerning this incident were those found in Leviticus 10:1, many might assume nothing else happened. After all, as sons of Aaron these were the right people worshipping. Not only that, but as they worshipped, they did so in the right place, the tabernacle. Further still, they were engaged in an act of worship that had been commanded by God, namely, that of using fire to burn incense before him. Surely, some might think, the fact that the specific type of fire employed did not meet the exact blueprint of God would not mean anything. Surely, many might suppose, some freedom of expression and interpretation would be appropriate. Surely, some would presume, one deviation from the pattern would not negate all of the good that had already been accomplished.

In thinking of those lines of reasoning, one cannot help but remember the words of the wise man: “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 16:25). The fact of the matter is, the first verse in the chapter is not all that has been revealed concerning this incident. Rather, the text continues: “And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord” (Lev. 10:2). Any supposition that the brothers’ actions were harmless or acceptable was forever and emphatically answered by God when He destroyed them by fire.

It is interesting that the exact phrase “fire from the Lord” is found three times in the English Bible. One instance was God’s answer to the **immorality** of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24). Another instance was His judgment against the **insurrection** of two hundred

and fifty men who infringed upon the authority of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:35). Finally, this instance was the Lord's response to Nadab and Abihu's **insubordination** in worship. While some would never put the brothers' worship innovations in the same category as the aforementioned moral abominations or divisive uprisings, it should be noted that God tolerated none of them. Indeed, the divine response to Nadab and Abihu's profane offering was just as sudden and violent as the divine retribution found in Genesis 19 and Numbers 16. It was, as they were, a "burning which the Lord hath kindled" (Lev. 10:6).

### Sacrifice Principles

There are a number of noteworthy parallels between the sons of Aaron and those of us who are children of the Father in Jesus Christ. Just as Nadab and Abihu approached God as chosen priests, we have the privilege of being His priesthood today (1 Pet. 2:9). Just as they served God in a sanctified place, we honor God in a holy place today—the church (Eph. 3:21). Just as they had the Mosaic pattern to guide them then, we have the standard of Christ to govern us today (Col. 3:17). And finally, just as they presented physical sacrifices then, we offer up spiritual sacrifices today (1 Pet. 2:5). Sometimes the Christian sacrifices spoken of in the New Testament have to do with our general lives of devotion, consecration, and service to our Lord (Rom. 12:1). Other times, however, they have reference more specifically to our offerings of worship before the God of Heaven and earth (Heb. 13:15). Seeing the obvious parallels, and knowing that Moses recorded Nadab and Abihu's fall for a reason, let us turn our attention now to some principles we might glean from their failed worship.

#### *The Aim Of Our Worship*

As we noted earlier, the first words that were uttered after the divine assault on the brothers came from Moses: "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3). Why were Nadab and Abihu destroyed? That statement suggests it was due at

least in part to their failure to fulfill the fundamental purpose of worship—that of honoring and glorifying God. Worship under the Mosaic covenant was repeatedly pictured as an opportunity to “be thankful unto **Him**, and bless **His** name” (Psa. 100:4). It was designed to “praise the **Lord**” (Psa. 146:1) and to “give unto the **Lord** the glory due unto **His** name” (1 Chron. 16:29). Nadab and Abihu failed in that purpose, as they made worship about themselves rather than about God.

Worship under the New Testament of Jesus Christ is also to center upon the great God whom we serve (Matt. 4:10; John 4:24). As an angel so plainly put it, when we assemble together it is to “worship **God**” (Rev. 22:9). While that may seem to be an obvious and even unnecessary point, a quick glance at what is happening in many congregations of the Lord’s people suggests it is one that needs to be emphasized anew. For sadly, many seem far more interested in appealing to those on the pew than they are in pleasing the One on His throne. Is there any other explanation for the shift to entertainment and performance-based assemblies? Why are praise teams, drama troupes, worship painters, and praise dancers so popular? Is it because those things make the assembly more meaningful to **God**?! Perhaps those involved in such need to be reminded that if assembling with the simple purpose of paying homage to God seems boring now, they need not worry about having to endure the “boredom” of that same worship in eternity. They will be far removed from it.

### *The Auditor Of Our Worship*

When Moses by inspiration described the offering of Nadab and Abihu, he said they presented it “before the Lord” (Lev. 10:1). The phrase in the original text suggests they did it **in the face of the Lord**. In other words, God was present and was aware of how they were worshipping! Of course the profane priests should have known that. Just days earlier, they had seen God’s presence descend upon the very same place wherein they were now worshipping (Exod. 40:34-38). Further, just moments earlier they had seen God respond with approval to their father’s faithful worship (Lev. 9:21-24), suggesting He was watching the proceedings even as they occurred!

The Bible is filled with references to the fact that God takes an interest in the worship of His people. It was God Who smelled the sweet aroma of Noah's burnt offering (Gen. 8:21), Who later watched Abraham prepare to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen. 22:11-12), and Who also witnessed the tragic calf-worship of Israel at the base of Sinai (Exod. 32:7-9). It is God Who still later told the Jews of Jeremiah's day that He was an audience to all that happened in His house (Jer. 7:11).

When we assemble as the Lord's new priesthood, we need to remember that God is observing and even auditing our worship. In Revelation 11:1, John wrote: "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." Keeping in mind the fact that in the New Testament the "temple of God" is a reference to the church (1 Cor. 3:17; Eph. 2:19-22), that is a sobering passage! The next time we are tempted to use the assembly as a time to balance the checkbook, check email on our BlackBerry, or even catch up on a little sleep, we would do well to remember that the One Who in the past created us and will in the future judge us is presently watching us!

### *The Authority Of Our Worship*

It is interesting that after the book of Leviticus when Bible writers would look back on the fall of Nadab and Abihu, they specifically mentioned the fact that they died "when they offered strange fire before the Lord" (Num. 3:4; Num. 26:61). Given God's prior emphasis on doing things according to His pattern, that should come as no surprise. The fact of the matter is, the lasting message of this smoking memorial is that authority in worship matters! Just as the examples of Cain (Gen. 4:1-5), Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:26-33), and Ahaz (2 Kings 16:1-20) warn against unlawful innovations in worship, so does our text. Any person who thinks specifics in worship do not matter would do well to read and reread Leviticus 10, with these words of Romans 15:4 in view: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning."

The law of Moses was not the only system wherein authority in worship mattered. In providing teachings that would become a part

of His blood-sealed testament, Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). He would later warn that following man’s traditions rather than God’s commands would lead to vain worship (Matt. 15:8-9). Paul called that abandonment of God’s authority “will worship” (Col. 2:23). Of course, to hear many of our brethren today, Paul and even Jesus had it wrong. The danger, some say, is not in **ignoring** the specifics of God’s Word, but in carefully **following** those specifics. Consider one mouthpiece for the movement to change the worship of our Lord:

What is the purpose of our meetings? Their purpose is not to fulfill arbitrary commands... Have we not portrayed our Father as having a colossal ego problem which would cause Him to demand our flattery to satisfy His vanity, to require our gifts to feed His pride, and to bind arbitrary whims to build up His sense of power? It is more of a picture of a child abuser than of a child lover. It puts praise, adoration, and devotion on a demand basis. This is one of the cruelest aspects of legalism. (Hook 86-87)

To follow that line of reasoning, **Nadab and Abihu** were not the ones mistaken. **God was!** Dear brethren, was this type of insult to God’s character and challenge to His authority not what caused the tragedy we are considering in the first place? We cannot help but remember Paul’s words: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:11-12).

### *The Attitude Of Our Worship*

After Moses spoke to Aaron in the wake of his sons’ demise, it was the Lord’s turn to speak: “Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the

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congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statue for ever throughout your generations. And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (Lev. 10:9-10). It is amazing that of all people, Nadab and Abihu would approach God with the casual and indifferent attitude clearly alluded to in those two verses. In speaking of their unique background, Frank Chesser wrote:

They were eyewitnesses to the exhibition of God’s wrath upon Egypt, one of the greatest and most extraordinary acts of divine judgment ever to befall humanity... These two brothers observed God’s continual presence in a cloudy pillar by day and a fiery pillar by night (Exod. 13:21). They watched as God partitioned the waters of the Red Sea, felt the miracle of the dry land under their feet as they crossed to safety, and gazed intently as the waters returned to its abode and destroyed the powerful army of Egypt in its depth (Exod. 14). They saw God use a tree to sweeten the bitter waters of Marah (Exod. 15:25) and beheld the earth blanketed with manna and quail (Exod. 16) and marveled as water gushed from a rock (Exod. 17:6). No doubt they echoed Moses’ “fear and quaking” sentiments as they viewed the majesty of God on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19). Then God extended to them a blessing enjoyed by only a select few in the whole of humanity. They joined Aaron their father, and Moses their uncle, and seventy elders of Israel in ascending Sinai in order to behold a special manifestation of God that words could not describe...Following the sad spectacle of their father’s carving an image of gold in violation of the commandment just recently thundered from Sinai, these two brothers witnessed a mighty

display of divine wrath. Surely, they must have looked with horror as fellow Levites unsheathed their swords and stained them with the blood of some three thousand men of Israel (Exod. 32:26-28). (18-19)

What a tragedy, that those who had personally witnessed so much would enter into the presence of God in a flippant, careless manner. Yet it continues to happen today. The mighty works which they beheld with physical eyes we see by faith (Rom. 10:17). In fact, we have hundreds of years worth of history and examples to which they did not have access! Still, though, many who should know better treat worship as if it is just another item on a weekly to-do list which needs checking off. It is truly heart-wrenching when brothers who would never be late for work are always late for worship, or when sisters who would never miss a social event rarely make it to Bible study. It is disturbing when a young man who wears a shirt and tie in the workplace wears an untucked t-shirt and flip flops in the assembly of the Lord, or when a mother who would never let you talk to her during her son's ballgame will talk throughout God's Son's memorial. Surely when the Lord spoke of worshipping "in spirit" He had greater things in mind than those such as these.

### *The Attendants Of Our Worship*

Before closing let us notice a few verses one final time, with emphasis: "Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified **in them that come nigh me**, and **before all the people** I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace" (Lev. 10:3). Also, "And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean: And **that ye may teach the children of Israel** all the statues which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses" (Lev. 10:10-11). God seemed particularly disappointed that the **leaders** of His people, the attendants of worship, were those who betrayed Him. It would be one thing for the congregation in general to do so, but these were the priests! Nadab and Abihu knew the most, had seen the most,



and could offer the most. They were the some of the most respected men in all the land, the public figures who presided over worship. No doubt one of the reasons their punishment was so severe was that they had transgressed openly and in such a manner that might even lead others to do the same.

While every person present in our assemblies is personally responsible for his worship (1 Cor. 14:15), there is an especially weighty responsibility that lies with the leaders of those assemblies even today. Paul emphasized that in 1 Timothy 2:8, speaking of men who would lead worship with hands that were holy. Later in the epistle, he warned Timothy, a public preacher of the Word, to watch both his manner of life and his message, as it carried tremendous influence with his fellow worshippers (1 Tim. 4:16). Every brother who steps into the shoes that Nadab and Abihu failed to fill would do well to heed that counsel today. The fact of the matter is, souls might be lost or souls might be saved based upon the decisions that are made by those who lead the assemblies of the Lord's people.

### **Conclusion**

The story of Nadab and Abihu is one which began with great promise, but ended in greater tragedy. Moses' concise description of their worship and subsequent judgment is so direct and vivid that we can still see the lifeless bodies, still smell the smoke, and still feel the heat from the smoldering ashes that remained. Let us remember that all of those things have meaning. We are blessed to serve the one true God of Heaven and earth, but with that privilege comes responsibility. May we ever bring glory and honor to the Lord of hosts by being an obedient and worshipful priesthood today.

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## CHAPTER 23

# Korah, Dathan, And Abiram: Swallowing Up The Competition

*Todd Clippard*

**T**he account of the events of Numbers 16 is not unlike many in the Old Testament. By this I mean that most who attended Sunday School as children are at least familiar with the event's basic facts, but the context and details are known by few. This is most unfortunate for many and rich are the lessons to be mined from these classic texts. Moreover, in missing these great lessons, we fail to appreciate and benefit from those things which "were written for our learning" (New King James Version, Rom. 15:4).

As with any epic story, understanding the context and characters involved is crucial. To this end we consider the man Moses, identified in inspiration as a man whose great humility exceeded that of "all men who were on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). Moses' life was marked by consistent leadership and love for the children of Israel as evidenced by his numerous and effectual intercessions on behalf of God's people.

On the other hand is seen Korah, a descendant of Kohath, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab. As a son of Kohath, Korah was a Levite called to a special purpose in service to the Lord. Unto the sons of Kohath was committed "the service of the holy things" (Num. 7:9). Specifically, this included bearing on their shoulders all the furnishings of the sanctuary, including the ark of the Testimony, the table of showbread, the lampstand, the golden altar, and all the utensils associated with the service of the priests (Num. 4:4-16). Given Korah's special calling and duties, one would think such a man would be a great ally to Moses and an encourager of the people in the

ways of righteousness. Tragically, this was not the case. Unsatisfied with his God-given calling and responsibilities, Korah conspired with Dathan, Abiram, and On the son of Peleth to challenge Moses' authority and position among God's people.

With these thoughts in mind, our examination of this chapter in the life of Moses will focus on four lessons to be learned and applied by God's children today.

### **The Devices Of The Rebellious**

By *devices* we refer to schemes used by the wicked to deceive the simple and create undue influence in their own favor. Paul described the attitude of unforgiveness as a device of Satan utilized to gain an advantage over God's people (2 Cor. 2:10-11). Many are the devices of the Devil and of those in rebellion to the authority of God, but here we shall examine three.

#### ***Heaping Delegates (Num. 16:1-2)***

Watch any social or political rally and you will see the mindlessness of our society. How inane must one be that he could be influenced by a parade of movie stars and musicians supporting said cause or candidate? Any thinking individual is surely insulted by such attempts to sway public thinking and policy. Unfortunately, today's citizenry is not prone to deep thought or deliberation.

Such was also the case among God's people in Numbers 16 where Korah and his devilish devotees "rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, **men of renown**" (Num. 16:2). Korah believed, in this case rightfully so, that he could sway the hearts of the people in his favor by gathering a large delegation of influential men.

#### ***Hubristic Declarations (Num. 16:3)***

Hubris is "exaggerated pride of self-confidence often resulting in retribution" ("Hubris," Webster's). It is further described as "extreme haughtiness or arrogance. Hubris often indicates a loss of touch with reality and overestimating one's own competence or capabilities, especially for people in positions of power" ("Hubris," Wikipedia).

Note Korah's arrogance toward Moses and Aaron in verse 3 as he accuses them, saying, "You take too much upon yourselves." This had been a difficulty in the early days of Moses' leadership, for his own father-in-law expressed that same sentiment as Moses attempted to judge among the people (Exod. 18:13-27). But Moses' well-being was not Korah's concern. Rather, he succumbed to the entrapments of envy, being jealous of Moses and Aaron. But note how shrewdly he flavored his accusation with false flattery on behalf of the people, "for **all the congregation is holy, every one of them**, and the Lord is among them." Oh! How the people must have been enthralled with their new champion! Surely they thought within themselves, "This man appreciates us! Unlike that Moses who has dragged us out of Egypt to waste away in the wilderness!" The truth was, Korah was only concerned with his own standing among the people, and his gross overestimation of his own ability would soon be his undoing.

#### **Historical Dishonesty (Num. 16:12-14)**

After contending with Korah, (which is later discussed in detail), Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16:12). In their refusal to meet with Moses, these two begin a rant of revisionist history that would have made them the envy of today's social, political, and religious radicals. The depth of Dathan and Abiram's dishonesty had no bottom. They begin in verse 13, "You have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness." A land flowing with milk and honey? Egypt? Not for the Israelites! Exodus 1:14 says the Egyptian taskmasters "made their lives bitter with hard bondage." Prior to that in verse 13, the text says the Egyptians "made the children of Israel serve with rigor." The English Standard Version renders verse 13 as follows: "So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves." Moreover in chapter 5 we see how Pharaoh's fear of Israel caused him to increase their burden greatly, and to beat the officers over the children of Israel. Some land of milk and honey!

Yet these two were not finished distorting history. They continued by blaming Moses for their present predicament in the

wilderness, saying, “Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards” (Num. 16:14). This charge must have been especially difficult for Moses to hear. It was his fault that Israel had not received her inheritance? His fault? One need only to turn back three chapters to be reminded why Israel remained in the wilderness. Israel was languishing in the desert due to her own stubborn refusal to answer Caleb’s call to go and possess Canaan (Num. 13:30-33; Num. 14:26-38).

Finally, Dathan and Abiram broke the camel’s back with this last straw, “Will you put out the eyes of these men?” There are two prevailing thoughts on the meaning of this statement. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown make reference to the Eastern practice of punishing those guilty of treason and rebellion (e.g. Nebuchadnezzar and Zedekiah, 2 Kings 24:20-25:7) (“Numbers 16:12-14”). However, the context leads me to agree with Albert Barnes, who says the statement was intended to imply that all of Israel was aware that Moses did not keep his promises, and that even by blinding those in rebellion he could not hide his deception of the people (“Numbers 16:14”). Keil and Delitzsch also attach a similar meaning (“Numbers 16:6-14”).

### **The Demeanor Of The Righteous**

How should God’s people respond in the face of such overt rebellion and unbelievable falsehoods? Our man Moses provides for us a remarkable example of the meekness that marked his character and leadership. Moses’ response also provides us a picture of the Prophet like whom God would raise up from among his brethren—Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world (Acts 3:19-23). *Humility Displayed (Num. 16:4)*

When confronted and accused by Korah and his men of renown, verse 4 says Moses “fell on his face.” Rather than hastily respond to these seditionists in what surely was a most emotional situation, Moses chose to restrain himself and plead his case before God. Such prostration had become commonplace in his life and leadership

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(cf. Num. 14:5; Num. 16:22; Num. 20:6), and the exercise thereof served as an example for Joshua who followed after him (Josh. 5:14; Josh. 7:6). In stretching out himself before the people, Moses manifested his humility and vulnerability. Moreover, he was pleading for Divine presence and intervention, which plea the Lord God always answered.

*Honest Discussion (Num. 16:9-11)*

Upon receiving a word from the Lord, Moses cut to the chase with Korah in verse 11. Moses began with an impassioned reminder of the great honor that had been bestowed upon Korah, how that God had personally separated Korah from among all the congregations of Israel “to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to serve them” (Num. 16:9). Korah counted God’s special calling and commendation as a “small thing,” that is, something insignificant or despicable. In like fashion, Christians are God’s priests (cf 1 Pet. 2:5), called to draw near unto Him in worship and service. What a shame it is how many Christians count the privilege of worship as a small thing!

Moses continued his discussion by pointing out that Korah’s insurrection, though aimed at Moses, was actually being made against God, saying, “Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord” (Num. 16:11). May we never forget that when we oppose the men and message of God, we stand in opposition to God Himself! God said as much to Samuel (1 Sam. 8:7). Jesus said the same concerning His relationship to the Father (John 5:23; John 15:23). The relationship between God and His messenger should never be disregarded or underestimated.

Moses also condemned Korah for dragging Aaron into the fray. How often do we see the disgruntled and malcontent attempt to drag and dredge up every thing and every one in the presentation of their case? Such are rarely content to discuss the specifics of the matter at hand, instead choosing to tarnish the good name of others against whom they have no real cause.

Finally, it should not go unnoticed that Moses’ denunciation of Korah was done in public and in full view of all those who

had gathered themselves together with him. It seems as if Moses was pleading before Korah and his co-conspirators that they might come to their senses and repent of their wickedness before God brought severe judgment upon them. Honest discussion should always have as its goal the restoration of the offender. Unfortunately, these men were blinded by their lust for power and not willing to consider the facts.

*Harm Denied (Num. 16:15)*

Following Dathan and Abiram's refusal to meet and their gross distortion of the truth, Moses again pleads his case before the Lord, denying that he had done any harm to these men. In times of controversy, it is not unusual for the "offended" party to claim some personal loss due to the "attack" by the spiritual, no matter how calm the approach. The apostle Paul denied doing any harm to the Galatian Christians through his pursuit of their well-being (cf. Gal. 4:16). Neither do we do harm to those in error among us when we sincerely and Biblically seek their spiritual well-being.

### **The Difficulty Resolved**

Moses sought the counsel and command of God to produce a resolution to the controversy. As with any conflict wherein God's will is sought and pursued, the sedition of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram was resolved quickly and decisively.

*God's Recognition Of The Righteous (Num. 16:23-31)*

It should have been obvious to the entire congregation that Moses was God's chosen representative, if for no other reason than the remembrance of a recent, similar conflict involving Aaron and Miriam (Num. 12:1-15). Each time Moses fell upon his face before the people, the Lord spoke directly to him with instructions on how to resolve the present distress. In this case, Moses issued a challenge for Korah and his 250 associates to take every man a censer and present himself before the Lord. Korah and his company obliged, going even a step further as he also gathered the entire congregation of Israel to appear against Moses at the door of the tabernacle (Num. 16:19).



So incensed was the Lord at this detestable display that He intended to destroyed the entire assembly. Moses again proved himself a most worthy advocate for the people as he pleaded on their behalf as he had done so many times in the past (cf. Exod. 32:9-14; Num. 11:1-2; Num. 14:11-20) and as he would do again in the near future (Num. 16:45-50).

***God's Retribution Upon The Rebellious (Num. 16:31-35)***

As Moses made intercession for the people, a word from the Lord came to him, commanding that all the congregation should get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16:23-24). Moses immediately arose and gave warning to the people, declaring,

By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD. (Num. 16:28-30)

So as not to leave any doubt concerning His approval of Moses and Aaron, God responded immediately and severely. As Moses finished speaking all these words, “the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods” (Num. 16:31). Furthermore, fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men who were offering incense at the tabernacle. God utterly destroyed every one who had rejected Moses and Aaron, His appointed lawgiver and intercessor.

***God's Reminder To The Remainder (Num. 16:38-40)***

Because the censers of Korah and his company had been presented before the Lord, God considered them holy.

Therefore, He commanded Eleazer to remove the censers from the fire, cleanse them of their contents, and then to hammer them into a covering for the altar as a sign and reminder to the people. This covering was made to remind the people of God that no person except the descendants of Aaron should come near to the Lord to offer incense. Three times in The Revelation to John, the prayers of the saints are joined to the presence and offering of incense (cf. Rev. 5:8; Rev. 8:3-4). May this sign to them of old also serve to remind us of the great and exclusive privilege of prayer given only to God's children!

### **A Disgusting Response**

One might think that after such an awesome and terrifying display that the children of Israel would have repented of their wickedness, but such was not the case. For, on the very next day, all the congregation gathered against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord" (Num. 16:41). It is inconceivable that they could attribute to Moses the miraculous scenes of the previous day. Moreover, even if they did believe Moses possessed such power, did they not fear their rebellion would bring to them a similar fate as to Korah and his company?

Once again the fierce anger of the Lord was kindled against His people. Once again He commanded Moses to stand aside as He destroyed the children of Israel. And once again Moses and Aaron fell on their faces to intercede on behalf of a stubborn and stiff-necked people. One cannot help but be reminded of Paul's lament of love to the Corinthian brethren, "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; thought the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved" (2 Cor. 12:15).

### **Present Application**

The children of Korah live today among the precious bride of Christ. With these same devices, they deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:18). Let us close by making application from the lessons learned in our text.

### **The Devices Of The Rebellious**

So-called unity meetings are one means by which these modern-day troublers of Israel heap delegates to support their perverse causes. Well-known preachers from large, left-leaning congregations join hands with those associated with the division of the church from a century ago. With thousands of adoring, cheering fans, they weep publicly, swap their grandmothers' Bibles, and apologize for the actions of faithful brethren who respected the authority of Scripture and "thus saith the Lord." Many (dare I say, most) of our largest congregations have abandoned, yea jettisoned, God's plan for the church and faithful Christian living in favor of gathering large crowds and the accolades of men.

The hubris of those who would reshape the Lord's church into the likeness of ecumenical community churches knows no limits. For example, the Purpose Statement in the very first issue of Wineskins magazine says, "Our background and commitment is to the Church of Christ that was born of the American Restoration Movement. Our goal is to move that group closer to the church of Christ revealed in Scripture." As our beloved brother William Woodson so astutely observed, "Who designated these men as the church movers? And how far do we have to be moved to be the church revealed in Scripture?" (Sermon). Brother Woodson and many other faithful brethren are still waiting for the answer to that question.

Finally in this regard, historical dishonesty is rampant among those who rebel against the Divine pattern for the church. It should be noted that, in many cases, historical dishonesty and hubris are near kinsmen. When change agents in the church declared that they had recently discovered grace, and that no one among churches of Christ had preached about grace until the 1970s or 1980s, that is hubris giving birth to historical dishonesty (Woodson 188-89).

In recent months, one who is quite dear to me made reference that she had attended a congregation that I thought to be "left of center." Because of my desire to speak honestly and intelligently about the situation regarding the church in question, I called the church

office and asked to speak with one of the ministers. After several vain attempts to get straight answers to simple questions regarding the nature and worship of the New Testament church, I asked if the minister believed there are faithful Christians in denominational bodies. He responded, “Absolutely. What we know as the Church of Christ so far as worship and practice is a new development in history. I don’t believe everyone was lost for 1500 years until some men in America figured it out in the 1800s.” That, my friends, is historical dishonesty. I don’t know any one, (though this does not mean such a one does not exist), who believes the Lord’s church disappeared from the face of the earth between the time of the Rome’s Great Apostasy and the birth of the American restoration movement. I have never believed that, neither have I ever read such a position among our people or heard it preached. Moreover, the young man’s statement implies that the church we know today bears little or no resemblance to the church revealed in the Bible. As one who believes in the verbal, plenary inspiration and all-sufficiency of the Bible, I reject that position out of hand.

### **The Demeanor Of The Righteous**

Maintaining the mind of Christ is a difficult but necessary task in times of controversy. Humility and meekness must always be on display, regardless of how emotional a situation may become. Like Moses, we must show our vulnerability and trust in God to make His Will known. We should invite His presence and welcome His wisdom in times of difficulty. Lest there be any misunderstanding, I am not saying God will reveal Himself in our situations as He did for Moses. But in matters requiring wisdom and understanding, we should pray as James instructed, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jas. 1:5).

### **Difficulties Resolved**

Additionally, we invite the presence of God when we follow His precepts for conflict resolution. Too many Christians fail

miserably to resolve conflicts among themselves because they reject God's plan for conflict resolution as seen in Matthew 18:15-20 and Luke 17:3-4. First and foremost, private matters and offenses should be handled privately and in a manner consistent with the character of Christ. There is no problem that cannot be resolved between two people who love God and one another. Jesus Himself promised to be present when His disciples work through their problems (Matt. 18:19-20). When we conduct God's business God's way, it may not always be easy, but we know we will always have His blessing!

### **A Disgusting Response?**

Members of churches of Christ claim to be the church revealed in the New Testament, yet the number of congregations that practice church discipline are as rare as hen's teeth. Like those in Numbers 16 who rejected the discipline of God, no doubt many in the church would rise up and rebel against an eldership that announced the implementation of a plan to introduce and practice church discipline. Surely such a reaction is no less disgusting to our Lord than that revealed in our text.

There is also the possibility that some might pay lip service to the practice of church discipline, so long as they are not directly affected. The cry might be heard, "Why start with my son?" If church discipline were implemented, some of the family members may threaten to leave the congregation or leave the church altogether. Such should be reminded of the discipline God exercised on Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron (Lev. 10:1-3). These two priests left the authority of Scripture and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord. Because of their transgression, fire fell from the Lord and consumed them. Lest Aaron become bitter or resentful against the Lord, God gave Moses a message for Aaron, "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified." The text goes on to say, "So Aaron held his peace" (Lev. 10:4). What a great example Aaron set for us to accept the discipline of the Lord at all times without partiality.

### Conclusion

Many and rich are the lessons to be learned from these great Old Testament texts. Through studies such as these, we gain a greater appreciation for Paul's statement to the church at Rome, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). May we ever learn and love these great lessons of hope!

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## CHAPTER 24

# Loving The People You Lead

*Allen Webster*

Are there some prayers you refuse to pray? Would you pray this one: “My Father, if my congregation is lost, you can send me to hell with them”? Moses prayed it, saying, “Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written” (King James Version, Exod. 32:32).

What would prompt one to make such a rash, dangerous statement? Was it a flash of hot anger? Was it youthful exuberance? Was it frustrated weariness? No, Moses’ love for those he led was so great that he was willing to put himself in harm’s way for them. Paul had a similar love for those he led. He once said, “I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:2-3).

Love is the be all/end all of the Christian life. Love is what makes us like God. The Bible’s simplest description of God—and therefore God’s own description of Himself—is “God is love” (1 John 4:16). God the Father taught us to love by sending His Son (1 John 4:19), and God the Son taught us to love by giving His life and by commanding us to love each other (John 13:34-35). The Holy Spirit teaches us to love one another by pouring out God’s love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).

Love is the most important theme in the 31,102 verses in the Bible. If one were writing a dust-cover synopsis for the Book of books, he could do no better than to chose, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these

two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:36-40). The most important word in the Bible is a four-letter word. That word is l-o-v-e. “Love God and your neighbor” is a summary of every command to be found therein. It is the foundation of Christianity.

We are told to “follow after love” (1 Cor. 14:1), “put on love” (Col. 3:14), “increase and abound in love” (1 Thess. 3:12; Phil. 1:9), “be sincere in love” (2 Cor. 8:8), “be unified in love” (Phil. 2:2), “be fervent in love” (1 Pet. 4:8), and “provoke one another to love” (Heb. 10:24). Everything a Christian does should be done in love (1 Cor. 16:14). The more mature we become as Christians, the more loving we become. Since leaders are to have the most developed faith, they should exemplify the greatest love in any congregation.

How does a loving leader lead? He loves. He always does what is in the eternal interest of the souls under his care or influence.

### **A Loving Leader Is Studious**

Elders, deacons, and preachers must be men of the book. Paul wrote, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:13). “Doctrine” in these passages means “teaching.” Shepherds do much of their teaching one on one in meetings around a conference table. They are often presented with the most prickly problems since Solomon had two prostitutes visit his office (1 Kings 3:16-28). If they do not know the Bible, they will give bad advice and critical times in their member’s lives.

Preachers have an unparalleled opportunity. Scores of people assemble to give him two-and-a-half hours of undivided attention every week. Shallow, ill-thought-out sermons have little influence. Like a dull sword, they hardly prick the skin of the heart. Like a bland, low-calorie diet, they give little nourishment and less taste. To teach, one must learn. To learn, one must study. To study, one must dedicate the mental energy and the clock time to deliver four carefully researched thirty- to forty-minute gospel presentations. The average sermon contains about 5,000 words. Most preachers deliver about 100 sermons a year (not to mention another 100 Bible classes). This totals 500,000 words a year. An average full-length novel contains



50,000 words, so a preacher is producing the equivalent of ten full-length novels every year. Even Louis L'Amour did not do that! (He tried to write five pages a day and was considered a prolific writer). Most popular novelists turn out one or two novels per year. Needless to say, a few minutes on Saturday night with a sermon outline book or on SermonCentral.com is insufficient.

Teaching is an ongoing process (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 5:11–12). Hearing the truth is not a one-time vaccination against sin—it is a lifetime prescription dispensed in small doses. One church leader posted this Frederick Danker quote on the inside of his study door: “The Gospel is a fuel required constantly to produce and promote the life of the Spirit within the Christian. The fruits of the Spirit grow only where the Gospel is sown tirelessly and unremittingly.”

The purpose of learning is to turn the hearts of the people toward God. Preaching is to bring about repentance (Matt. 3:1–2; Acts 2:38; Acts 11:18; Acts 17:30; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20), which is turning from sin to the Savior (Acts 3:19; Acts 26:20; 2 Cor. 7:10). The last verse of the Old Testament described the purpose of John's work: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Mal. 4:5–6; cf. Luke 1:17). Paul described his successful evangelism among the Macedonians: “For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9).

### **A Loving Leader Proclaims**

Across the front of many communion tables are the words, “This Do in Remembrance of Me.” In the early days of the Restoration Movement, it was not uncommon to see inscribed across pulpits the exhortation, “Preach the Word.” One definition of the New Testament word for *preach* is to “proclaim openly.” Elders and preachers team up to see that God's words is proclaimed and followed (Mark 16:15; Gal. 1:8–9). More and more churches are receiving less and less of the gospel with each passing year. In some places, it has become

unpopular to give a “thus saith the Lord.” Some believe that citing the Biblical reference in sermons hinders the presentation of the preacher. We wonder about a sermon that Biblical references hinder! Paul faced the problem at Corinth of men preaching themselves rather than the Word (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1–5; 2 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 16:18–19). Such preachers are like Elymas who tried to withhold the truth from Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:8).

### A Loving Leader Is Urgent

The gospel message is **urgent** (“be instant,” 2 Tim. 4:2; cf. Luke 7:4; Rom. 12:12). Accepting the message is literally a matter of life and death (Ezek. 33:11). That is why we often hear earnestness in the preacher’s voice and occasionally see a tear in an elder’s eye (Psa. 119:136; Jer. 9:1; Jer. 13:17; Luke 19:41; Acts 20:19; Acts 20:30–31; Rom. 9:2; 2 Cor. 2:4; Phil. 1:4; Phil. 3:18).

The purpose of this urgency is to reach the lost on time’s side of eternity. God’s leader is not out to look good, to save face, to impress, to gain influence, to earn a paycheck, to advance a political view, or to entertain. He wants to **save souls** (Matt. 16:26; Luke 19:10).

E. Stanley Jones tells of a missionary lost in the jungle. He finally found a small village and asked a native if he could lead him out of the jungle.

The native said he could. “All right,” the missionary said, “Show me the way.”

For hours, they hacked their way through dense brush in an unmarked jungle. Beginning to worry, the missionary said, “Are you quite sure this is the way? Where is the path?”

The native said. “In this place there is no path. I am the path” (Blair).

We are the path to salvation because we show the way to the only One who can save—Jesus (John 14:6). One man asked a humble

gentleman outside a hotel in a small town, “Is this the best hotel in town?” His answer was to the point. He said, “It is the onliest one.” Every servant can say to himself, “The one chance these people have of hearing the soul-saving gospel today is through me. For someone, it may be the first time; for another, it may be the last time. Do your best job.”

### **A Loving Leader Inspires**

We joke about sleeping during worship. One lady named Gladys visited church one Sunday. The sermon seemed to go on forever, and some fell asleep. After the service, she walked up to a sleepy looking gentleman, extended her hand, and said, “Hello, I’m Gladys Dunn.” He replied, “You’re not the only one, ma’am. I’m glad it’s done too!” A Sunday school teacher asked her children why was it necessary to be quiet in church. One bright little girl replied, “Because people are sleeping in there?” A short poem reads: *I never see my preacher’s eyes Tho’ they with light may shine—For when he prays he closes his, And when he preaches, I close mine!* (cf. Acts 20:9).

Some would rather have a root canal than attend a church service. Boring. Long. Tedious. Dull. Unimportant. Dreary. Irrelevant. Tiresome. The truth is, though, worship has the opposite effect on spiritually minded people. It awakens! It inspires! It fires! It stimulates, motivates, and invigorates. It “provokes unto love and good works” (Heb. 10:24). It encourages listeners to follow Christ and to use their talents, opportunities, and time adding to His kingdom.

Consider the power of the gospel as recorded in the New Testament.

- When John preached in the Judean wilderness, multitudes were “baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matt. 3:1-6).
- When he preached to Herod, the king “did many things, and heard him gladly” (Mark 6:20).
- When Jesus preached, listeners were moved to action (Matt. 14:13; Matt. 19:2; John 10:31). The woman at the well left her

water pot (John 4:28); Simon and Andrew forsook their nets and followed Him (Mark 1:17–18).

- When Peter and the apostles preached on Pentecost, about three thousand repented and were baptized (Acts 2:38–41).
- When Stephen preached, they reacted with violence (Acts 7).
- When Paul preached on Mars’ Hill, some mocked, some wanted to hear him again later, and some “clave unto him, and believed” (Acts 17:32–34).
- When he preached to the Ephesians, “many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them” (Acts 19:19).
- When he preached to the governor, Felix trembled (Acts 24:25).
- John recorded Jesus’ inspiring preaching from heaven to the Laodiceans: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev. 3:19).

Loving leaders inspire today. Much of the encouragement is given one on one by elders who take a personal interest in the sheep and lambs under their care. Preaching inspires today. In many churches, there is public response for prayer or baptism every week. But responses to the efforts of church leaders are not limited to public confessions of faith or sin. Which of us sitting in the pews under the direction of sound elders while a capable preacher delivers the message is not inspired to do better, be better, and live better? Each time we put ourselves in that situation, we gain strength to help us face the tempter for another few days.

### **A Loving Leader Assists and Resists**

It is a part of the Christian’s job description to assist those in need. Paul collected money to be used to help the poor saints in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26). Stephen was among those who assisted the neglected widows (Acts 6). Pure religion keeps its eyes and heart opened to the fatherless and widows in their affliction (Jas. 1:27).

Preachers, and all Christians, should resist those who compromise or change God's truth. Jude insisted that we "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3; cf. Gal. 1:6–10; Phil. 1:17). God's Word has been given as a treasure to us (2 Cor. 4:7); it must be faithfully handled and passed down to the next generation (2 Tim. 2:2; Rev. 22:18–19).

### **A Loving Leader Reclaims**

Sheep wander away, so they must be searched out and brought back to the safety of the flock (Luke 15:1–7). Not all conversions end in baptisms. Some end in restorations. James wrote, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:19–20). In some ways, the latter is more fulfilling than the former. For one reason, it is more challenging. Solomon explained, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle" (Prov. 18:19; cf. Acts 15:39). But it can be done, and when it is, it is rewarding. Consider two patriarchal examples: Esau and Jacob (Gen. 27:41; Gen. 33:4) and Joseph and his brethren (Gen. 37; Gen. 45:15). In the New Testament, Simon the sorcerer fell, but he requested prayer after Peter's rebuke (Acts 8:22–24).

In many communities, there are more inactive church members than active ones. The assembly would be overflowing if every living person who had ever been on the rolls were still in the pews. Elders know the value of these precious people and take time to influence them. They try to build rapport when they see them in town. They graciously offer their services if there is a death in the family. They take time to visit them when they are hospitalized. They make sure they have personal invitations to homecomings, meetings, and special church events.

### **A Loving Leader Aims**

God's men have definite goals. They have vision. There is a difference in sight and vision, of course. Helen Keller said, "The

greatest tragedy in life is people who have sight but no vision.” Marcus Aurelius Antoninus said, “The true worth of a man is to be measured by the objects he pursues.” Norman Vincent Peale believed, “All successful people have a goal. No one can get anywhere unless he knows where he wants to go and what he wants to be or do.” William Barclay wrote, “There are two great days in a person’s life—the day we are born and the day we discover why” (Poole et al.).

Acting on goals is important. Elders do not just aim, they fire! The Wright brothers were not the inventors of the plane. Another man had a plane ready a year before them but did not believe it would fly. We must take, or in some cases make, our opportunities (John 4:6–10; Acts 16:13; Acts 16:31–33; Acts 20:7; Acts 20:18–21; Acts 28:16; Acts 28:30–31).

What are worthy aims for church leaders right now?

***God’s leaders aim to speak in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2).***

They watch for a good opportunity to speak a good word for the Good Shepherd (Gal. 6:10; Prov. 12:25; John 10:11). They do not want to be too shy in speaking to others about Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 1:6–7). The phrase *be instant* is used of persons coming upon one suddenly. It can be used of a rain shower coming up quickly or of the advent of angels.

***God’s leaders aim to be patient (2 Tim. 4:2).***

*Patience* means “endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs.” It describes the spirit that never grows irritated, never desponds, and never regards any man as beyond salvation (cf. Matt. 5:22). We like for needed changes to be made immediately in the lives of those we encourage to obey the Lord; we are zealous to see the congregation grow in zeal and faithfulness; but at the same time, we realize that the situation likely did not develop overnight, and probably will not change overnight. Like turning a large ship around, it takes a while even to tell it is moving, and longer for the bow and the stern to switch positions; but if enough pressure is applied, it eventually happens.

***God's leaders aim to reprove (2 Tim. 4:2).***

They know they must make the sinner aware of his sin before he will repent. As politically incorrect as it may at first sound, at times, elders at times seek to “shame” those they see in sin. *Reprove* carries with it a “suggestion of shame of the person convicted.” It means “to bring to the light, expose; find fault with, correct” (Col. 1:28–29; 1 Thess. 2:11–12; 5:14). At times, Paul spoke to shame others. He said candidly, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame” (1 Cor. 15:34; Heb. 5:11–12). Some behaviors are shameful (1 Cor. 14:35; Eph. 5:12; Phil. 3:19); those who do them should be ashamed of themselves. That feeling of shame is powerfully motivational to change (Luke 16:3; Rom. 6:21; 2 Thess. 3:14).

In another sense, the elder's work is to tame others. The word *tame* is found four times in Scripture. Like the possessed man in the Gadarenes, no one but Jesus can tame the rebellious spirit of sinful people (Mark 5:4). Speech patterns are especially difficult to control (Jas. 3:7–8). We gradually help hearers to bring their lives into complete submission to King Jesus.

*Reprove* means “to convict, refute; reprehend severely; call to account, demand an explanation; chasten, to punish.” This takes courage, conviction, and discipline. “This does not fit the stereotypical ineffectual parson who takes five sugars in his tea, always says positive things, never rocks the boat, and finds his members consulting psychics and astrologers when they are in distress” (Author unknown). Someone observed that in modern churches the “priest” threatens to push the “prophet” out of his place. To be a priest requires less study and less courage since it is easier to **do** something for God than to **be** something for Him.

***God's leaders aim to rebuke (2 Tim. 4:2).***

This word means “to raise the price of; to tax with fault, rate, chide, censure severely; to admonish or charge sharply” (cf. Rev. 3:19). Epictetus contrasted the false philosopher, who is out for popularity, and the real philosopher, whose aim is the good of his hearers. The false philosopher dealt in flattery; he pandered to self-

esteem. The real philosopher says: “Come and be told that you are in a bad way.” “The philosopher’s lecture,” he said, “is a surgery; when you go away you ought to have felt not pleasure, but pain” (Epictetus, Sec. 2 CXXI).

Alcibiades, the brilliant but spoiled darling of Athens, is a case in point. He said to Socrates, “Socrates, I hate you, because every time I meet you, you make me see what I am.” The first essential to change is to bring a person to see himself as he is.

Elders and preachers must be both loving and plain (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1; John 10:24). A doctor or therapist who always avoided causing pain could not treat disease and injury. Neither can a church leader. Ideally, truth is dispensed in small doses over a long period of time—like a prescription. But sometimes doctors must give a large dose immediately—like a shot. Preaching is the prescription; an elder’s rebuke is getting a spiritual shot. It is painful for a moment, but speeds the process of recovery. John T. Lewis said: “I would rather have thousands to say to me at the judgment, ‘We heard you preach and you hurt our feelings,’ than to have just one lost soul to say, ‘I heard you preach, but you did not tell me the truth.’”

In personal relationships a word of warning spoken early and often would sometimes save a brother from spiritual shipwreck (Prov. 27:5). It must be spoken with a consciousness of our common guilt (cf. Gal. 6:1–2). God’s Word judges us; we do not have the right to sit in judgment on another based on our preferences (John 7:1; John 7:24).

### **A Loving Leader Cheers and Steers**

Good leaders learn the art of *exhorting*. This word literally means “to call to one’s side for a word of encouragement.” Not only must men be rebuked, they must also be encouraged. The world is a daunting enough place as it is without coming to church and getting even more discouraged. Robert Louis Stevenson purportedly wrote in his journal, “Wonders of wonders! I have been to church today and am not depressed” (Exum). No rebuke should ever be such that it takes the heart and hope out of a person. We should not send



hearers away on flat tires. Discouraged members are not assets to any church. To adapt Shakespeare to this subject:

Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;  
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;  
But he who filches from me my courage,  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,  
And makes me poor indeed.

So, church work requires both tact and contact. A man entered a hardware store and requested half of a stovepipe. The clerk went to the back to find out if he was permitted to cut one in half. He said, "Some nut wants half a stovepipe," and then noticing that the man had followed him to the back, reacted quickly and said, "and this fellow wants the other half." That's tact!

They called him "Encouragement" (cf. Acts 4:36). How lovely! You can hardly picture Barnabas without seeing a smile on his face. What would it have been like to hear Barnabas preach? Perhaps he could have made you forget "Tempted and tried, we're oft made to wonder" in view of "O, Victory in Jesus!"

Good elders steer the work of the church in fruitful evangelism. God is glorified when we "bear much fruit" (John 15:8). God is serious about gathering fruit (read carefully John 15:1-16). Churches can get bogged down in all kinds of busy activities that do not really accomplish any long-term spiritual good. Every event and activity should be judged in how likely it is to bring a soul to Christ. Did we baptize anyone when we did this last year? Did we get any Bible studies or visitors to services? Preachers and elders can often steer the church's work in the right direction by a well-placed suggestion in a foyer conversation or a planning session, or a timely sermon keeping the focus on saving souls (2 Cor. 4:3).

### **Loving Leaders Enrich and Enliven**

We get to be in the heavenly banking business. You could say we are financial advisors for long-term investments. Jesus said that

people can “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:20). The rich young ruler was advised to liquidate all his assets and put his wealth in absolutely secure stock (Matt. 19:21). Jesus told those of Laodicea, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed” (Rev. 3:18). Paul was happy to be able to “preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8).

Church leaders also get to put life back into people. Like an old photo left in the sun, the life of sin sooner or later loses its color. Like an iced drink left out too long, it goes flat. Like week-old bread, it gets stale. Like a game played too often, it loses its appeal. We get to tell those on the backside of sin how to invigorate, freshen, revive, and renew their lives. When the long-missed prodigal returned, his father urged his older brother to accept him, reasoning, “It was meet [appropriate] that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:32). Paul said, “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Eph. 2:5).

### **Loving Leaders Insure and Assure, Brighten and Lighten**

To quote William Clark upon finally seeing the Pacific Ocean, “Oh the joy” of church work! An evangelist is the “bringer of good news” (1 Cor. 15:1-4). We get to repeat the sweetest message ever written again and over.

- To tired people we get to say, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).
- To those burdened by sin and life’s hardships, we get to tell Jesus’ promise: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:29-30).
- To those who are troubled, we have a good word: “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels...When he

shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

- To those who feel lost, we get to point the way to “the way” (John 14:6).
- To those who feel guilty, we get to say, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1; cf. John 5:24).
- To those who fear death, we can assure: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality... then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:52-57).
- To those who fear that God has abandoned them, we can say, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful...For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever” (Psa. 37:25-28). And we can add for good measure: “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).
- To those who feel that God is angry with them, we have a comforting word, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).
- To those who feel God is inaccessible, we can say, “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2).

### Conclusion

Of all the world's shortages, the shortage of love must be the greatest. Of all the needs of churches, perhaps love—properly understood and practice—is our greatest need. What the church needs now is a big spoonful of charity. As church leaders, let us do our part to solve this problem.

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## CHAPTER 25

# Eldad & Medad: The Spirit In Us That Lusteth To Envy

*Robert Jeffries*

### Introduction

Oftentimes it seems as if individuals have the idea that the problems and the attitudes the people in the Scriptures had are foreign to those of the Twenty-First Century. Some have the idea that the Word of God is a book that is out of date and has absolutely no relevance or cannot benefit my life. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Hebrews writer declares, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (King James Version, Heb. 4:12). The Apostle Paul complements this passage while writing to Timothy when he penned the words, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). With these Scriptures in mind, may we understand that many of the attitudes that plague society today are the same ones that individuals in the Scriptures faced.

For our study in this chapter, we are going to deal with an attitude that was very prominent then as well as now. The attitudes of our text—“Enviest thou for my sake?” (Num. 11:29)—involve two of the greatest leaders in Israel’s history: Moses and Joshua.

One of the leading problems that seem to plague the church today is envy. Envy is defined as “painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the

same advantage.” Some have described it as an accelerated form of jealousy. Sometimes preachers, elders, and various members of the church in general have problems in these areas. Listed below are some ways to promote this attitude:

“I have to be in charge of everything!”

“It’s wrong because it didn’t come from me!”

“It’s wrong because it came from you!”

“Brother Jones is getting all the praise while I don’t receive any!”

“Well nobody said anything about what I did!”

These attitudes as well as many others can begin to fester in individuals, often spiraling out of control and many times destroying the church. This is an area in which each member needs to work diligently. We should each be happy for other members and realize that we do not have to be in charge of everything.

With these thoughts in mind, let us consider the topic “Eldad and Medad: The Spirit Within Us That Lusteth To Envy.”

### **What Is The Situation? Complaints, Despair, And Assistance**

The people had begun to complain. “And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp” (Num. 11:1). What was the cause of this complaining? The Word of God does not let us know for sure; however, some have speculated they complained because of the “length of the way.” The Bible tells us that this “displeased the Lord.” Evidently, the children of Israel had forgotten everything God had done for them. He brought them out of Egyptian bondage. He had been there at the parting of the Red Sea. He had been there when He gave them the Law. God had been with them every step of the way, and His continual goodness and kindness had been outpoured on them. These people had become rebellious and ungrateful. As a result of their murmuring, God sent a

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consuming fire upon them. They quickly cried to Moses, and Moses prayed to God and the fire ceased (Num. 11:2-3).

Their cessation in complaining was only short lived. The people began to complain about what they had to eat. They recalled the diet they had in Egypt. They remembered eating as much fish as their hearts desired as well as feasting upon cucumbers, melons (watermelons), leeks (a seasoning ingredient), onions, and garlic. All of these pleasures came quickly to their minds. However, there does not seem to be any recollection of the taskmasters, the oppressors, the beating from Egyptian whips, or the various services a slave would provide. Nor did they mention the homicides of babies that took place with their precious infant sons at birth. Conveniently, these terrible things were all blocked out of their minds. The manna that God had been providing for them on a daily basis had become repulsive to their eyes of discontent and displeasure. No doubt this would be very displeasing to God (Taylor 306-307).

For Moses, this brought on despair and discouragement.

And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness. (Num. 11:11-15)

Moses was extremely overwhelmed with the workload. From his point of view, the situation was just about unbearable (Coffman 359). This also brings to mind the time when God first appointed Moses as the leader of the children of Israel, and Moses offered numerous excuses (Exod. 3). Moses says, “It is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee” (Num. 11:14-15). The burden of leading such a rebellious group of whiners was just too much to bear and he asks for God to let him die. This means Moses wanted to quit. As children of God we need to remember that regardless of the circumstances, it is always wrong for us to quit if God has not terminated the assignment. As long as we have air in our lungs, we are to be faithful to God (Rev. 2:10). This also goes to show us that even the best of God’s people have trouble with the quitting business. In the Scriptures, we read about others who wanted to quit: (1) Elijah, “But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers” (1 Kings 19:4); (2) Jonah, “And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death” (Jon. 4:8-9) (Barnes 206); and (3) Job (Job 3).

Does God answer Moses’ prayer? He answers it but does so by not honoring Moses’ request. Instead, God instructs him to appoint seventy elders (aged, seasoned men) of the people and bring them to the tabernacle of the congregation, and have them stand there with him (Num. 11:16). What is the purpose for this?

And I will come down and talk with thee there:  
and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee,  
and will put it upon them; and they shall bear  
the burden of the people with thee, that thou  
bear it not thyself alone. And say thou unto the



people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?" (Num. 11:17-20)

God was going to supply enough help for Moses, so that he would not have to do it alone. Upon hearing this Moses begins to reason, probably like any other person would reason, "And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?" (Num. 11:21-22). Evidently Moses had a similar memory lapse like those who were murmuring. Moses seems to have forgotten how God had supplied Israel's needs in the last year: (1) The dividing of the Red Sea; (2) The sweetening of the bitter waters at Marah; (3) The manna that was still being provided six days a week; (4) The water from the rock at Rephidim; and (5) The defeating of the Amalekites. The Psalmist says, "They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel" (Psa. 106:13). This definitely characterized Israel and Moses here in the wilderness.

God responds by rebuking him. He asks, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not" (Num. 11:23). God indirectly states to him that His power is never diminished nor does He ever run out of power. He is as powerful as He ever was. God is able to supply meat just as sufficiently as manna.

Moses responds by doing exactly what God tells him to do.

And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. (Num. 11:24-25)

However, two of these appointed ones did not come (Eldad and Medad), and the Spirit rested upon them. “But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp” (Num. 11:26).

### **What Is The Sin? Envy, A Party Spirit, And Arrogance**

Joshua and the young man represent the sin (the wrong attitude) that is at hand: envy. “And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them” (Num. 11:27-28). This envy is brought about by (1) a party spirit (a political attitude); these two individuals had the attitude that only certain people should be allowed to serve God; “Forbid them” (Num. 11:28); and (2) arrogance. Joshua and this young man were arrogant enough to think that Eldad and Medad were not good enough to receive the Spirit and prophesy. Moses asks him, “Enviest thou for my sake?” He was asking him are you concerned for my sake? Was Joshua concerned that Moses was not going to be in authority? Joshua was a little bit selfish. He wanted the Spirit to remain on Moses. He wanted the Spirit to remain on him when he became the next leader. He was envious for Moses’ power

and authority. In the New Testament, there is a very similar situation that reflects the same attitudes. “And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part” (Mark 9:38-40).

On the other hand, Moses is going to represent the right attitude. “And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them” (Num. 11:29). Moses is a man of humility. Moses never thought of himself as greater than the others. Never did he think about himself as “the man” and everyone else needed to bow down to him. In fact, when Moses was offering excuses to God for not leading his people out of Egypt what he was really telling God was, “I do not think enough of myself.” Talk about being lowly. Another attitude that characterizes Moses is involvement. Moses was a man who wanted to get the community involved. He said, “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets” (Num. 11:29, cf. Exod. 18, Num. 13). He wanted everyone to be involved in the work of the Lord.

Eldad and Medad also represent humility. The only times we read about these men in all the Bible is right here. Many scholars believe they stayed behind because they did not think they were good enough or worthy enough for the job.

### **What Is The Solution?**

“Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets” (Num. 11:29). Moses recognizes there is more than enough work to be done. This is something that Christians need to understand today as well.

There is enough work to do in the kingdom. We can learn several lessons from this account: (1) We do not have to be a part of every single good work, but we can still be happy when others do the Lord’s work. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep (Rom. 12:15). (2) There is enough work that we can all

do something and there will still be work to do. “And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it” (Mark 9:30). (3) A party spirit has no place in the kingdom. “For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:11-13). “Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:20-21). All are rooted in envy.

Also, we should recognize that no one is greater than another in the work of the kingdom.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. (1 Cor. 3:1-8)

Other lessons we can learn from this account include: (1) Just because one is not an elder, preacher, or deacon, does not mean he can not do good for the kingdom; and (2) There is no place for arrogance in our pulpits, elderships, or congregations. “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matt. 23:11).

If we truly want the church to be successful, may we remember: (1) There is enough work to go around; (2) Regardless of who does the job, there is no place for envy; and (3) We are all equal in the kingdom of God.

### Conclusion

Moses, Eldad, and Medad paint for us a wonderful message in the right attitude needed in the kingdom of God: humility. Jesus opened the Sermon on the Mount with this very thought, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3). Jesus also taught it by the way He lived (John 13).

However, Joshua and the young man had the wrong attitude, and it has no place in the kingdom of God. Their attitude has done more harm than maybe any other.

May we remember the words of James, “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (Jas. 4:5). May we fight the urge that causes us to envy and be critical when others are successful.

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## CHAPTER 26

# My Servant Moses Is Not So, Who Is Faithful In All My House

*Robert Taylor*

### Introduction

Minus any and all exceptions it is an annual, summer delight to attend and speak at the Power Lectures in late July as I have done for all the previous ones. This lectureship is a premier one among solid and sound brethren. My deepest thanks are extended to Wade, Larry, Con, and the entire Southaven congregation for the treasured invitation to speak and pen a chapter for the book which will be a scholarly classic as previous ones have been. Special thanks are extended to Tommy and Peggy Shull where Irene and I stay each year. They are a warmly hospitable couple. Peggy is a par excellent cook.

Meek Moses, what a preciously prudent choice for the 2010 Lectures he is. He, Abraham, and David have often been called the greatest men in the Old Testament. He walked among the mountains while men before, with, and after him treaded the valleys below.

Miriam and Aaron occupy low ground in Numbers 12. Jealousy and envy toward Moses and his wife got the better of them toward their younger brother. They longed for the position in which Jehovah had placed the meek Moses. They aspired to positions God had not opened for them. They were censured by the Lord. He let it be known to both of them that He (God) would choose His spokesman on earth—not allowing them to do so. Envy moved them; meekness moved Moses. Concerned Jehovah came to Moses' defense in a plain and powerful way. He assessed Moses to be free of these character defects and viewed him as one who “is faithful in all mine house” (King James Version, Num. 12:7). No such compliment was given

to Aaron and Miriam. They should have been afraid of speaking against God's faithful servant—Moses (Num. 12:8). This inexcusable attitude and action against meek Moses angered the Lord and He departed their midst but not before inflicting Miriam with loathsome leprosy—a most dreaded disease in that era. Aaron **knew** they had acted foolishly, sinning grievously (Num. 12:11). Moses does not retaliate in the least but presents an intercessory prayer for her instant healing. This shows his greatness of character and personal goodness. Some would have said, “She brought it upon herself; let her suffer; she is reaping what she sowed.” Jehovah's ear was opened to Moses' entreaty and He healed her promptly. Nevertheless, she had to remain aloof from the camp for a full week (Num. 12:14-15).

This Old Testament incident was not restricted to Old Testament coverage alone in Numbers 12. The writer of Hebrews, very likely Paul, recalled it by Spirit guidance in Hebrews 3. In verses 2 and 5 the Spirit guided the inspired penman to depict Mosaic faithfulness in all his house. Moses is lifted high being in the comparison with Jesus and yet inferior to the Lord Jesus (cf. Matt. 17:lff). Moses was faithful as a servant; Jesus, the far greater than Moses, was faithful as Son “over his own house” (Heb. 3:6). Christ's house is His church which is far, Far, FAR greater than the Mosaic house.

### **Faithful In All Three Periods Of His Life**

According to Deuteronomy 34, he died at the age of 120. He lived ten years longer than Joseph before him and Joshua after him. His life easily divides into three forty-year periods. The first forty years were spent in Egypt. The next forty were spent in Midian as shepherd. The final forty were spent at the helm of God's people leading them from the Land of the Nile to the eastern banks of Jordan's famous river where he died being buried in an unmarked grave.

Trained early by his godly mother Jochebed he next lived as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. In Acts 7:22 Stephen, great defender of the faith, affirmed he “was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.” He learned about justice at age forty and defended a mistreated Israelite slave. He slew



the Egyptian taskmaster for his inexcusable abuse (Exod. 2:12). We see his faithful character when he acted as peacemaker between two feuding Hebrew brethren. They rejected him as peacemaker (cf. Matt. 5:9). A further exhibition of his faithful character is seen as soon as he arrived in Midian. He came to the quick defense of Jethro's seven daughters at the watering well by helping them against interfering shepherds who sought to drive them away (Exod. 2:17).

During the forty years in Midian, he became husband to one of Jethro's daughters, entered fatherhood to two sons born to them, and was a reliable shepherd to Jethro's flocks.

During these eighty years he was building a deep depth of character and reputation.

His third forty-year period found him as deliverer, lawgiver, and appointed leader to an unruly nation of men and women en masse. In this eventful period he flowers forth faith to an admirable degree. His portrait of faithfulness properly belongs by the side of his faithful ancestor, Abraham, during his 175 year pilgrimage on planet Earth.

### **Faithful In Making And Keeping Choices**

Hebrews 11 is Inspiration's Hall of Faith and Fame. More is said in that chapter about Abraham and Moses than any of the others mentioned. All portrayed in that chapter were Worthies of Faith, but this duet stands out with precious preeminence. It is in that chapter that we read of a choice of conviction and courage made by Moses while still a resident in Egypt. We read,

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. (Heb. 11:24-25)

Unfolded here is a choice with both a negative and a positive. He turned his back on sonship to Pharaoh's daughter, Egyptian

royalty, and all riches of Nile's famed land. He cast his lot with a slave nation with morale as low as we can visualize. For the next eighty years he would suffer and sacrifice much due to the making and keeping of this choice. This choice reached fullness of culmination in five spheres—as appointed leader, deliverer, and lawgiver. Fourth, he came into his well-deserved place by making an appearance with Elijah and Jesus Christ on the high mountain in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9. Fifth will be his eternal reward in heaven. The redeemed will sing the song of Moses and the Lamb in the heavenly world as per Revelation 15:3. His was a choice made and a choice honored with a life of faithfulness.

From him let us learn to be like-minded with our choices.

### **Faithful In Facing Foes**

He faced a foe from an Egyptian taskmaster who was abusing an Israelite very severely. Moses defended his abused Israelite brother. He slew the abuser (Exod. 2:11-12). This led to his fleeing the land and going to Midian where he will remain for forty years. He befriended the daughters of Jethro or Reuel at the well. They drew water for their flock. Insensitive shepherds drove them away. Valiantly, “Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock” (Exod. 2:17). Later, the daughters told their father that the helpful “Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds” (Exod. 2:19). He was one against a plurality but became a faithful helper. This will be the tone and tenor of his future life—helping others. Soon, he married one of Reuel's daughters, Zipporah, becoming his esteemed son-in-law.

Moses became a shepherd. Shepherds often faced dangers from predators and even thieves. He was faithful in this role for four decades. This was a period of preparation for the greatest role of his life—leading Israel from Egypt to Eastern Palestine.

In the early chapters of Exodus he faced a powerful and relentless foe—stubborn Pharaoh. When told that he must release his large nation of slaves, he resisted with pomp and defiance. Moses was not intimidated in the least. Plague after plague came upon obstinate

Pharaoh. Plagues came at Moses' command and left at his charge. The tenth one was deadly with mass deaths of Egypt's firstborn. The throne was not exempt from this devastating plague with Pharaoh's son being smitten.

Granting them leave, Pharaoh later retracted this permission and sought to retrieve the fleeing slave nation. Moses was not intimidated in the least commanding the people to cross the now parted Red Sea. Watery graves claimed the Egyptians en masse.

In the wilderness Moses faced a stubborn and defiant nation. They rejected God and him countless times. He stayed faithful save the lone exception at Meribah's waters in Numbers 20. This cost him an entrance into coveted Canaan. In Numbers 16 he faced Korah, Dathan, and Abiram who sought to create mutiny against Moses. He faced them in fearless fashion. Peer pressure had no ally in Moses regardless of foes faced, in enemies confronted.

### **He Was Faithful As Deliverer**

This was the tremendous task God laid upon his Herculean shoulders in Exodus 3 and 4. The Lord said, "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Exod. 3:10). Moses offered various objections. Each one was rejected by the Sovereign of the Universe. When fully committed to the daunting task at hand, he went forth with a determination that defies what most human beings would have attempted. By the time we reach Exodus 15, Moses and redeemed Israel sang the grateful song of deliverance on Freedom's side of that imposing Red Sea that had just become the watery cemetery for rebellious Egyptians who thought they could defy and outsmart Jehovah and His mighty deliverer—Moses.

His work as deliverer was far from being over. Sins of very great magnitude overtook them again and again in the wilderness. When God's patience grew thin with them and He threatened to wipe them out as a nation and raise up successors of Mosaic descendants, Moses went to bat for them. Moses loved these recalcitrant people and by the power of prayer delivered them from the threatened wrath of God.

Even when they threatened him and spoke of electing another leader to take them back into Egypt, his loyalty to them knew no bounds. Great leaders love their subjects and this Moses surely did.

In a very marvelous and remarkable way his delivering loyalty to them never faded or failed. Little did they realize how much meek Moses sacrificed for them as their faithful deliverer. What a monumental man we have in the meek Moses.

### **Faithful As A Lawgiver**

Very often Moses has been called a type of Christ. Being a deliverer, discussed in the previous segment, and a lawgiver are among the most conspicuous realms in which likenesses appear. Moses delivered people from physical bondage. Jesus delivers people from bondage in sin. Moses was a lawgiver of the Sinaitic Covenant; Christ is the one lawgiver for the gospel age (cf. Jas. 4:12). Jehovah's message at the Transfiguration scene in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9 states succinctly that Christ is the lawgiver for the gospel age—not Moses—not Elijah. Incidentally, human creeds are not lawgivers. The Pope is not lawgiver. Church synods are not lawgivers. So-called pastors are not lawgivers. Those who loose where God has bound and bind where God has loosed are not lawgivers. Elders and preachers are not lawgivers. This is strictly the prerogative of the Divine Jesus—not humans on earth.

Moses did not give his version of what Hammurabi, a Babylonian king, had given earlier as skeptics have contended. He did not take Egyptian law and carve out the Decalogue and the remnant of the laws he gave Jacob's descendants. The Sinaitic Covenant was a divinely-derived system of rules, regulations, and commandments. Moses never said, "Rules, regulations, and commandments are not obligatory on the children of God." He was not an antinomian (one opposed to law, any law, and every law except those of his own making).

In the reverent reception of this divine law, he did not add, subtract, alter, modify, or substitute. He was not an ancient Change Agent. It was God's pure law when he received it; it was God's pure law when he delivered it to Israel in the wilderness. He did what Paul

later would say he did in 1 Corinthians 11:23 and 15:3. He received what he delivered; he delivered what he received. Had he done differently, he would not have been faithful in God's house.

### **Faithful As A Writer Of Scripture**

There was a time when skeptics denied writing was known in Moses' era. Now we know that the art of writing predated Moses by hundreds of years. The Bible settled this thousands of years ago. Moses said he "wrote this law" (Deut. 31:9). In John 5:45-47, Jesus said Moses wrote of Him. Moses was in far better position to know whether he wrote than modern skeptics who live 3500 years after the Sage of Sinai lived.

Moses wrote more of the Bible than any other person. He penned Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These amount to 187 chapters. Another hand probably wrote Deuteronomy 34. He also wrote Psalm 90. This makes him the penman of some 187 chapters. In actual material he wrote about 25% of the Old Testament and nearly 20% of the entire Bible.

He wrote about origination in Genesis, blood in Exodus and Leviticus, Israelite travels in Numbers, and farewell matters in the book of Deuteronomy.

He is quoted frequently and favorably in the New Testament by Jesus and the apostles. Among all these there is never any disrespect exhibited. They knew him to have been a prophet who expressed truth and truth only. They knew of his fervent faithfulness.

Moses wrote of past events. He wrote of present concerns. He spoke of predictive prophecies. He knew what was going to happen to Israel in the future. Deuteronomy 28 attests to that. He knew Jesus was coming. He would be the seed of woman, the seed of Abraham, the seed of Isaac, and the seed of Jacob (Gen. 3:15; Gen. 12:3; Gen. 26:4; Gen. 28:14). He would be Shiloh to whom the gathering of the people would be (Gen. 49:10). He would be the Star that would rise out of Jacob (Num. 24:17). Moses knew he was a type of the coming Messiah and wrote of such in Deuteronomy 18:15-19. There is Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament regardless of

what the *The Transforming Word* from ACU propagates. I have that book and have read much in it. It is shocking and NEVER should have been written.

Jesus knew of Old Testament prophecies in the Old Testament and stated in one of His post-resurrection appearances, “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself!” (Luke 24:27). This was stated to the two forlorn travelers on the Emmaus road the very day of His resurrection. In a later, post-resurrection appearance, the Risen Redeemer proclaimed,

These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. (Luke 24:44)

These are the three major sections of the Old Testament and they all testify of the coming Christ. Relative to Mosaic references to the Messiah Jesus said,

Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believed not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? (John 5:45-47)

Imagine the unmitigated gall of modern misfits who will take the wonderful writings of faithful Moses and reduce them to the work of editors or redactors who pieced the Pentateuch together with scissors and paste. Such men are a signal disgrace to religious writers and religious writings. Yet sadly, some among us are in this motley group. They ought to be ashamed of such membership.

Moses was faithful as a writer of Sacred Scripture.

### **Faithful As A Family Man**

Moses had deep respect for marriage and the home. He wrote about initial marriage in Genesis 1-2. In Genesis, he portrayed the homes of Adam and Eve, Cain, Lamech of Cain's lineage, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Laban, Potiphar, and Joseph. Some of these homes were functional being well-adjusted and deeply spiritual. Some were dysfunctional being poorly adjusted and lacking almost totally in spirituality. The former ones encourage us; the latter ones warn us solemnly not to emulate them in attitude and action.

Moses was a product of a godly home. He was born to Amram and Jochebed. In the earliest part of his life, he was trained well by the devout Jochebed. He grew up as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. At age forty, he formed his own home with Zipporah. To this union two sons were born—Gershom and Eliezer (1 Chron. 23:15). Jethro or Reuel was his father-in-law. The two of them had deep respect for each other.

There has been some controversy centering on Numbers 12:1 relative to “the Ethiopian woman whom he (Moses) had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.” Did Moses marry a second time? In my judgment he did not. Noted commentators like Adam Clarke; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown; Matthew Henry; and our own beloved, late, and lamented Guy N. Woods are of the same judgment. Brother Woods, in his Question and Answer Volume, presents a strong case for Zipporah being the woman Aaron and Miriam opposed. Why the opposition we are not informed. She was a Cushite (ASV) and he maintained that this is the family background of Jethro and his family. He also presents a case based upon typology. Moses was a type of Christ. He argued from the standpoint of Christ having just one wife (His church) and true to typology Moses had but one wife. I think his case is convincing.

In Numbers 12 Aaron and Miriam did Moses wrong. Miriam, seemingly, was the main leader in this since she is the one punished later in the chapter. Even when she was stricken with loathsome leprosy, Moses prayed for her healing which the Lord provided.

Incidentally, it is in this very chapter that God pronounced Moses as being “faithful in all mine house” (Num. 12:7).

No finer counsel for rearing children can be found in the Old Testament than Deuteronomy 6:1ff.

Moses was a faithful family man as son, husband, father, and in-law relationships.

### **Faithful In Prayer**

He knew God commanded prayer. He knew God heard and heeded prayers. Very frequently, he communicated with God during the bringing, execution, and removing of various plagues. More than once he moved the Hand that moves the Universe in general and Egyptian matters in particular. Subsequent to the Golden Calf incident, Moses prayed fervently for these idol worshippers who had turned to immorality as well (Deut. 32:30ff). In Deuteronomy 9:20, Moses prayed for Aaron when the Lord was angry with him and ready to destroy Moses' older brother.

Mosaic prayers permeate much of the Pentateuch. He was faithful and fervent in his prayers to Jehovah God.

### **Faithful As A Worthy Example**

Later in Hebrew history we read of Ezra who prepared his heart to seek God's law, to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments (Ezra 7:10). He did and taught in that order. Jesus did and taught as per Luke's opening declaration in Acts 1:1.

Moses was a doer and teacher in that admirable order. His philosophy was never, “Do as I say, not as I do.” He loved God and taught Israel to do the same. He loved the law of God and taught Israel to do the same. He loved the unfolding of the Abrahamic promises and the developing scheme of human redemption and taught Israel to do the same. He loved the land of Canaan and longed to set foot on its coveted soil but was not permitted to do so due to his disobedience at the waters of Meribah in Numbers 20. Nevertheless he taught his younger peers about loving and appreciating the land that flowed with milk and honey which they soon would inherit.



Moses did not live and love one way and teach and practice a diverse way. He is one of the most consistent men along this line in the whole Bible.

### **Faithful As A Prophet**

A prophet was a spokesman for God. He was God's mouthpiece. Moses had been to God numerous times and was always on his way to the people to deliver what he had received much like Paul did in 1 Corinthians 11:23 and 1 Corinthians 15:3. Moses respected what he received from God and taught Israel to do the same (Deut. 4:2; Deut. 12:32). Those who add, subtract, alter, modify, or substitute relative to God's Word have NO affinity at all with Moses. Moses was no Change Agent. Were he here today he would not have written a contributing chapter of approval for *The Transforming Word* put out by ACU in Abilene, Texas. Moses knew there was predictive prophecy in the Old Testament about the coming Messiah and he penned some of the clearest and most potent material along this very line. People have gone far into destructive liberalism and modernism which deny predictive elements in the Old Testament toward the coming of Christ and Christianity.

Moses did not tamper with the Word that came from Deity.

### **Faithful In Adversity**

As per Hebrews 11:25, he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

During the final forty years of his illustrious life, he suffered adversity from Pharaoh, the Egyptians, his own brethren and even from Miriam and Aaron in Numbers 12. These were his own siblings. Adversity never weaned him away from the Lord. It always deepened his character and resoluteness to remain faithful. Job is a great book to aid us when adversity strikes. So is Revelation in the New Testament. "If you will **overcome**, then you may come over and live with Me" is one short summary of Revelation (Johnny Ramsey).

### **Faithful Till The End**

Unlike his fickle brethren, he never succumbed to the blandishments of Golden Calf worship. Unlike Korah, Abiram, and Dathan, he never gave in to mutiny in opposition to divinely-derived authority. Unlike his two older siblings, he never allowed jealousy and envy to consume him into doing something foolish (cf. Num. 12:11). Unlike the majority of faithless Israelites, he did not line up with the ten spies saying, "We cannot take the land." His was a lifetime of faith and trust.

This admirable assessment is made of him in Deuteronomy 34:10-12,

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.

### **Conclusion**

Abraham was a great man of faith as we see in Genesis 12-25 and Hebrews 11:8-19. In the realm of faith, Moses was not a whit behind Abraham. Both of them provide a dynamic dimension of faithfulness. Both of them enhanced such in their illustrious lives.

Lives of great men remind us that we can make our lives productive of piety and examples of earnestness.

### **Works Cited**

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# **The Pinnacle of Nebo (and Beyond)**



## CHAPTER 27

# Passing The Mantle: Making Sure The Work Doesn't Die With You

*Bob Prichard*

I appreciate so much this opportunity to participate in the annual Power Lectures. I sincerely appreciate brother Wade Webster and the elders of the Southaven church for inviting me to be a part of this great spiritual feast.

### **No One Like Him**

There will never be another like him. He had a unique way of connecting with the American people. “Hello Americans, It’s Friday.” “Page 2.” And who will ever forget, “You know what the news is; in a minute, you’re going to hear...the rest of the story”? He was a master of the pause in his delivery. Several years ago he was talking about a celebrity who had died of lung cancer. After giving this fact, he paused and then said, “Yes, he did.” He always ended, “Paul Harvey...Good day.” No, there will never be another Paul Harvey.

*Paul Harvey News and Comment* was more than just a good show to me. For six years I had a one-minute radio spot right before Paul Harvey’s noon report. Although my one-minute spot came on at other times of the day, and I also had a thirty-minute Sunday program, just about everyone who ever commented on hearing my program mentioned that it was the spot just before Paul Harvey that they had heard.

In the year before his death on February 28, 2009, there were frequent guest hosts on the Paul Harvey news program including Gill Gross, Mitt Romney, Doug Limerick, Tony Snow, and Mike Huckabee. When Paul Harvey died, ABC Radio Network made Gill Gross and Doug Limerick the speakers for three weeks, and then the program was abandoned. It was replaced in some markets by the “Huckabee Report,” which is shorter, with less news. ABC Radio must have decided there will never be another Paul Harvey. Paul Aurandt, also known as Paul Harvey, Jr., wrote many of the “Rest of the Story” programs, and sometimes substituted for his father, but apparently did not want the job or was not offered the job. There will always be only one Paul Harvey (“Paul Harvey”).

But what about the copy writers, producers, fact checkers, and others who worked with the program? Was there any enduring value for their work after Paul Harvey died? Did all of his work die with him? Apparently so. All that is left are the books that Harvey and his son wrote.

There was no one like him. He led his people out of Egyptian bondage and brought them to the very brink of the Promised Land. Moses promised, “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (King James Version, Deut. 18:15), referring to the coming Christ. But other than the Greater Lawgiver Jesus Christ, there was no one like Moses to take his place. “And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face” (Deut. 34:10). Joshua, who received the mantle of Moses, was not like him. He was not a law giver in the same way Moses was. He was a different kind of leader. But he was God’s man just like Moses, and he was God’s man to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. The work did not die with Moses, but it continued with vigor.

As great a man as Moses had been, because of his disobedience to God in striking the rock at Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, God told him, “Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou

hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered” (Num. 27:12-13). Israel would have to have a new leader, and we see a glimpse of the greatness of Moses in his request to the Lord for his people.

And Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd. (Num. 27:15-17)

Moses’ forty years as a shepherd during the middle third of his life served as a great metaphor for the leadership of God’s people. He knew that without him they were going to be like sheep with no shepherd. They had only known him, and his days were numbered. It was time to appoint a successor. Moses wanted good leadership qualities in his successor, one who could go before them and lead them as a good shepherd.

The next leader for the children of Israel would have to be a great leader, a great shepherd, but foremost in God’s requirements is that he would have to be a spiritual man.

Our assigned text is Numbers 27:18-23.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom *is* the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put *some* of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask *counsel* for him

after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, *both* he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

### **Moses' Successor**

From our perspective, it seems obvious that Joshua should have been the successor of Moses. He was eminently qualified to lead Israel. He had served as a personal minister to Moses when he was at Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments (Exod. 24:13). As they returned to camp, "when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, *There is a noise of war in the camp*" (Exod. 32:17). He was with Moses as the Lord spoke at the tabernacle. "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle" (Exod. 33:11).

Joshua learned humility from Moses. A young man ran to Moses and told him that Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp.

And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, *one* of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them! And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel. (Num. 11:28-30)



Joshua's service as one of the twelve spies allowed him to have firsthand knowledge of the topography of Canaan, helpful in the coming conquest, and also allowed him to demonstrate leadership in adversity. He and Caleb stood up against the majority of the spies and the whining people (Num. 13-14).

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not. (Num. 14:6-9)

As one of the two fighting men who survived the wilderness wandering, he seemed the natural choice.

John Rea suggests five outstanding leadership qualities that Joshua possessed:

First, he was humble enough to recognize that he was *not* the gifted and educated man that Moses was.... Second, he was a man of strong faith and faithful to his calling.... Third, he saturated his mind and heart with the word of God, meditating therein day and night.... Fourth, he displayed sound military strategy.... Fifth, Joshua was an able administrator in peace as well as war.

Yes, Joshua was the man for the job, but he was not another Moses. He was not a Levite like Moses. He was an Ephraimite. He

did not have the same background and preparation that Moses had. He was to be Moses' successor, but his authority was different than Moses, in that he relied on the High Priest Eleazar consulting the Urim for direction.

When Thomas Jefferson arrived in France in 1785 to represent the American colonies, he paid his respects to the French minister for foreign affairs. "You replace Monsieur [Benjamin] Franklin?" the minister asked. Jefferson's reply was "I succeed him. No one can replace him" (Fadiman 306). A humble Joshua could make the same observation concerning Moses. He could succeed Moses, but not replace him.

### **A Leader And His Successors**

When I was in the Boy Scouts, I was told that the scouting philosophy of camping was always to leave your campsite better than you found it. When you left your campsite, it was supposed to be cleaner than when you arrived. You buried your fire and got rid of all your garbage. Surely every leader will want to leave things better than he found them—and it would not hurt to put out his fires and get rid of his garbage. But somehow man does not always remember that.

What kind of man was Diotrephes? We assume that he was an elder or leader, or at least thought himself to be a leader. John warns,

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church. (3 John 9-10)

If Diotrephes really loved the church, as he probably *thought* he did, how could he treat the church in such a selfish way?

Seneca (?4 B.C-65 A.D.) was an adviser to the Roman Emperor Nero but saw his influence wane as time passed. Trying to curb Nero's cruelty, Seneca told him, "However many you put to death, you will never kill your successor" (Fadiman 497).

Unless the work dies, every leader will have a successor. The leader who loves the church will make plans to train those who will succeed him in leading the church. The Lord's church needs an unbroken chain of faithful men to continue the teaching of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul's words to the evangelist Timothy set forth principles that should be followed by God's leaders everywhere: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:1-2). Certainly our faithful preaching schools and Bible departments can help with this, but every leader should take this as a personal responsibility. Those who are "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2) need to be teaching and preparing other good men, especially those who can succeed them in their work. Unfortunately, I am aware of very few formal efforts to train men to serve as elders.

Years ago I sat in a class with Dr. Rex Turner, Sr. and was having a conversation with another student during a break. He mentioned that he had just bought a set of the *Pulpit Commentary* because brother Turner had recommended it. When I asked him if he was preaching anywhere, he said that he was not interested in preaching. "I'm going to school so that I will be a better elder some day," he said. We need more men like my friend Warren! Over about a dozen years of adjunct teaching at East Tennessee School of Preaching, I remember several men who had served as elders and wanted to study to preach, but very few men came to school to be better elders. That should change!

Notice that Moses *trained* his successor, but it was God, not Moses, who *named* the successor. God could have selected Caleb or someone else to lead. When a problem arose in the Jerusalem church over the care of the Grecian widows, the apostles told the people, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of

honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3). The apostles were overseeing the appointment, and they insured that the men appointed were qualified for the task, but the apostles did not do the selecting.

The key is for God’s leaders to *prepare and train their successors*, and appoint God’s spiritual leaders, not just their own hand-picked successors. Moses could have tried to advance one of his sons, or another successor from his own tribe of Levi, but he accepted God’s choice. Contrast what Moses did with the mistakes of the great judge Samuel:

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beer-sheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. (1 Sam. 8:1-5)

What tragic consequences for Israel because of Samuel’s choice for succession!

### **Love For The Lord’s Work**

The Lord’s work the world over has been blessed by the humble service of so many great men and women of God. It has been especially blessed by those who take Paul’s commission to Timothy to heart.

I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the

dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (2 Tim. 4:1-5)

Many are the faithful men who have labored for years under trying circumstances, often poorly supported financially or otherwise. But they labor on because they serve the Lord, and certainly He will bless them for their faithful service.

But what does the preacher, who has literally given his all to the work of the local church, do when problems come, or when he is treated poorly by the brethren? When he has worked faithfully to build up the church for years, and he is cast away like an old pair of shoes, what does he do? Unfortunately, some men will divide the church and destroy its influence for years to come. If the truth be told, most every preacher who preaches for a congregation for any length of time could divide the congregation if he wanted to. And too many have. But the true man of God who wants to make sure the work does not die will do everything he can to preserve the church.

In condemning the church at Corinth for taking their disputes into the pagan courts, Paul gave principles that certainly apply to the preacher, elder, or other member of the church who is hurt or mistreated. "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren" (1 Cor. 6:7-8). No matter how deep the disappointment and pain, why in the world would a man do anything to kill the good work he has labored to build? It

would be so much better to take wrong or be defrauded than to destroy the Lord's work.

One preacher met with the elders his second Sunday with the congregation and handed them his letter of resignation. He told the surprised elders just to hold the letter. "If you were smart enough to know to invite me to work with you, I assume you will be smart enough to know if I should have to leave. You have my letter of resignation already if that time comes." This was a servant who was not interested in dividing the church.

Several years ago at a preacher's meeting in Enterprise, Alabama, brother Bill Watkins was talking to us about the privilege of preaching the gospel and told what it was like to grow up in the home of his father, James Watkins. Bill said that it never occurred to him that he would ever want to do anything but preach when he grew up, because his dad always talked about preaching as being the greatest, most rewarding job anyone could ever have. This should be the atmosphere in every preacher's home and every elder's home! Sadly, too many leaders have not only discouraged their children from becoming preachers, elders, etc., but many have lost their children altogether because they let "church problems" make them forget that they were involved in the most important work on earth, a work greater than themselves and their problems.

Every Christian should be encouraging young men everywhere to do the work of an evangelist, to aspire to the eldership, and to want to be a servant in God's kingdom.

### **Blessings of Passing the Mantle**

God's instructions to Moses included the command to "lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put *some* of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient" (Num. 27:18-20). Moses obeyed, and Eleazar the high priest also "laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses" (Num. 27:23).

What a glorious day that must have been! Moses knew that his time of leadership was coming to an end, but he could see that the work would continue. Not only would it continue, but it would flourish, and his successor would do things he had not been able to do.

Moses brought the children of Israel to the very brink of Canaan but could not take them in. Now Joshua would lead them in the conquest of the land and the fulfillment of their dreams. Surely God's leaders will want men to succeed them who will do more than they ever could. Successful businesses usually are the result of management getting the best people available. God's leaders will search out the men who will surpass them in every way. Moses could look back on a job well done and anticipate the blessings for his people because he had prepared Joshua to lead.

As Moses stood before Israel to give them his valedictory address, he had confidence in God's people, in God's leader Joshua, and most importantly in the Lord.

And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. And he said unto them, I *am* an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan. The LORD thy God, he will go over before thee, *and* he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: *and* Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said.  
(Deut. 31:1-3)

And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed  
(Deut. 31:7-8).

Deuteronomy 34 describes the death of Moses:

And Moses *was* an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses were ended. And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses. And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel (Deut. 34:7-12).

Francis Schaeffer (25) comments on this closing scene of Moses' life, and the beginning of Joshua's leadership.

Joshua, I think, learned his final lesson in preparation: No man is indispensable. I do not like that statement if it is left alone, simply because I think the Bible says more than that. We must say, "No man is indispensable," but we must not forget Deuteronomy 34:10: "And there arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses whom the LORD knew face to face." Here Moses' uniqueness is emphasized. So we can say at the same time, without being contradictory: No man is indispensable, but every man is unique. Men are dispensable; but this does not mean that one



man fills another man's place in the same way as a person would remove one concrete block and put another concrete block in its place. In the final analysis, nobody takes the place of anybody else. This is the wonder of personality and the wonder of God using personality in leadership.

I especially like Schaeffer's comment that "No man is indispensable, but every man is unique."

When Joshua, the successor to Moses came to the end of his life, he challenged Israel to follow the same path that he and Moses had followed. The mantle was being passed to the next generation. "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15).

### **Our Most Important Task**

Jesus knew that His time for ministry was limited, so He trained the twelve to do what He would not be able to do. In His public ministry Jesus covered only a very small geographic area, but the impact of His ministry has been felt throughout the world because of those he trained.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it (John 14:12-14).

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:18-20).

The great commission was given because the world is lost. Just before His ascension, Jesus told the disciples of their task and laid out the expected progress of the gospel. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost 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” (Acts 1:8). This pattern was followed to the letter, as the church began in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2).

The church grew rapidly in Jerusalem and Judaea but upon the persecution that came on the church after the murder of Stephen, “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:4-5). Philip’s powerful preaching challenged the false teacher Simon, “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

From Samaria the church began to extend to the uttermost part of the earth. “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). Who could have imagined when Jesus was hanging on the cross that in a few years Paul would be able to write, “All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household” (Phil. 4:22), or “*be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister” (Col. 1:23)?

How were these things accomplished? It was because God’s leaders took to heart Paul’s admonition, “the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (1 Tim. 2:2).

How were these things accomplished? Faithful men of God passed the mantle to other faithful men who would not let the Lord's work die.

Standing before the U. S. Congress on January 1, 1984, President Ronald Reagan said, "America is too great for small dreams" (Donadio 125). Surely the work of the Lord is too great for small dreams and small men. The Lord needs faithful leaders who will pass the mantle to other faithful men.

We are Christians because others have taught us. We stand on the shoulders of giants. We dare not shirk our duty to pass on what has been shared with us.

The fact that *Paul Harvey News and Comment* is a thing of the past is sad—and it certainly has not helped my radio program—but that is just the way things go in the world. There are too many good works of the Lord's people that are at risk, however, that may fail if we do not carefully pass the mantle to the future.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. (John 4:35-38)

Preach the word!

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## CHAPTER 28

# Refusing To Compromise: There Shall Not An Hoof Be Left Behind

*Greg Dismuke*

### Thanks

I am once again thankful for the invitation and privilege to be one of the speakers for the Power Lectures. Special thanks to brother Webster for allowing me this opportunity to contribute to this wonderful effort. I also would like to take a moment to show appreciation for the fine elders who oversee this great congregation and the work put forth in this part of the Lord's vineyard.

### Introduction

And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. And Pharaoh said unto

him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die. And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more. (King James Version, Exod. 10:24-29)

Once again Moses is before Pharaoh trying to persuade him to free the people of God. This scene is a very familiar one that is played out during Moses' second stint in Egypt. Moses was charged by God to deliver a message to Pharaoh. The record states: "And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness" (Exod. 5:1). However, this appeal would constantly fall on a deaf ear. This is evident by Pharaoh's first response: "And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (Exod. 5:2). Pharaoh stands as a type of the devil who as a hard taskmaster keeps people in bondage. The Devil is a great compromiser who will allow one to do all that the Lord requires provided he can get him to compromise in one thing. He is keenly aware that God requires total obedience, a lesson king Saul had to learn the hard way (1 Sam. 15).

Moses sets a great example for the people of God for all time of one who faced adversity and defied a king by refusing to compromise. By studying the attempted compromises proposed by Pharaoh and the manner in which Moses met them, I believe the child of God can learn how we must face the challenges before us today with an unwavering faith refusing to compromise (Rom. 15:4).

In this lesson we will examine the four attempted compromises of Pharaoh which would have resulted in compromises in the province (Exod. 8:25), the parting (Exod. 8:28), the progeny (Exod. 10:8-11), and the property (Exod. 10:24).

### **A Compromise In The Province**

Firstly, Pharaoh was willing to allow them to go and worship provided they did so in Egypt, "And Pharaoh called for Moses

and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land” (Exod. 8:25). The reason is they would still be in his jurisdiction. Like Pharaoh the devil is still attempting the same compromise today through denominationalism. He is willing for one to worship as long as it is done in the place where he rules. Denominationalism is a compromise with the god of this world. The scriptures record for us:

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2 Cor. 4:2-4)

Christ built one church (Matt. 16:18), and he placed those being saved in it (Acts 2:47). Any unauthorized worship will not be tolerated in the place where God rules. The devil would have many to believe that it does not matter how you worship as long as you are sincere. However, the Bible declares that the true worshipper must do it with the right heart and the right doctrine (John 4:23-24). Jesus in his dealings with the scribes and the Pharisees not only condemned their hearts but their doctrine as well when he said:

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand: Not that which goeth into the

mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. (Matt. 15:7-14)

Again Jesus makes it clear that many will be disappointed in that day because they were not approved of God in their religious practices. We have these alarming words of Jesus' great Sermon on the Mount, which serve as a severe warning for all who view His word lightly. Jesus said:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matt. 7:21-23)

The Lord's church today must not compromise with denominationalism. We must be like Moses and exclaim that not a hoof shall be left behind. We will not compromise by adding mechanical instruments to our worship before God. The Word of God has not changed; it still says to sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). God still authorizes by what He says (Lev. 10:1-3). We must not compromise with our observance of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Acts 20:7). We must not compromise with the doctrine of the oneness of the church. The devil's and the denominational



plea is that one church is as good as another. But God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the apostles, and the Bible all agree that there is but one church (Eph. 4:4). Paul clearly shows that the one body is the one church (Eph. 1:22-23). This body was not made up of denominational organizations, but it was comprised of individuals who heard, believed, and were baptized as did many of the Corinthians which we read: “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). Later, when Paul wrote the epistle to the Corinthians, he had this to say: “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27). One might ask what the Corinthians heard. They heard the gospel, the only message with the power to save (Rom. 1:16-17). This gospel did not make a denomination; it was the cure to it (Eph. 2:16). Again Paul said:

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ). Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel. (Eph. 3:2-6)

There can be no compromise; not one hoof shall be left behind. Worship must be where and how God commands (Exod. 8:27).

### **A Compromise In The Proximity**

Secondly, Pharaoh was willing to allow the children of Israel to part from him provided they did not go very far. The scriptures reveal what he said on this occasion: “And Pharaoh said, I will let you

go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me” (Exod. 8:28).

***Satan, Like Pharaoh, Does Not Want You To Go Very Far.***

Satan has been successful in getting many to give in to this compromise. Many have come out of the world into the kingdom of God’s dear Son but have to their own hurt kept one foot in the world. Jesus spoke of the complete dedication it would take for one to follow him when he spoke of counting the cost of discipleship. He said:

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he that laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him. Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is a yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:25-33)

Many have come into the church but have not gone far enough away from the world. As long as the Israelites were near Egypt, it would have been easier to keep their hearts and affections there and

to succumb to the influence of their idolatrous practices. As long as the child of God today remains close to the world, it will be easier to fall prey to the evil influences and ultimately to return.

***We Must Remove Our Minds Far From The World.***

There are certain mindsets which characterize some Christians today proving one has not moved far enough. The first is a **double mind**. James records: "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:8). Double-minded is the Greek word *dipsuchos*. It means "two souled" *dis*, twice, *psuche*, a soul (Vine). Brother Guy N. Woods wrote: "A doubter is a doubleminded person and is in the position of attempting to pay homage to two masters. He is, therefore, 'unstable,' (*akatastatos*, unsteady, wavering, in dispositions and attitude)" (44). This is a condition that characterizes a person in doubt religiously.

The second is a **defiled mind**. Paul writes: "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Tit. 1:15). When the heart and mind is defiled, there is nothing a man can do that will approve him before God. A defiled man is able to suck poison out of that from which others draw sweetness (Henry).

The third is a **carnal mind**. When one lives a life devoted to the flesh, it is the same as living a worldly life. It cannot be subject to the law of God because the life is in direct violation of His will. Christians are not in the flesh; therefore, they must not live a life devoted to it. As long as one remains close to the world in his mind, it will be easier to keep his heart and affections there. The Apostle Paul warned of this when he said, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). If one will remove himself far from the world, he must first remove his mind. Paul said this occurs with a renewing of the mind.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the

renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:1-2)

*Two Problems We Must Be Ready To Face.*

First, the world, like Pharaoh, will try to reclaim what it believes rightfully belongs to it. Pharaoh pursued Israel after the exodus in an attempt to enslave them once again (Exod. 14:5-12).

Second, one must not be under any allusion that having obeyed the gospel all of his troubles are past. It appeared that the Israelites did not anticipate having any problems once they left Egypt. Sadly, many members of the Lord's church have found themselves ill-prepared to deal with these same two problems. How many with their hearts and affections are fascinated with the affairs of this world, enabling it to reclaim them. How many have come into the church only to find that their troubles were not over, and during times of adversity among the saints, go back to the world from which they came. Israel was facing trouble, but that would not stop God from being God. It would be better to have God in the wilderness than to return to Egypt without Him. We are better off in the church amidst all of her troubles and problems than to return to the world amidst all of its troubles and problems without Him. We must heed the warning of Holy Scripture regarding the world. James says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). Again he warns, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4). John also writes:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but

is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (1 John 2:15-17)

### **A Compromise In The Progeny**

Third, the matter under dispute is who should go. Moses is insisting on taking everyone but Pharaoh attempts another compromise.

And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go serve the Lord your God: but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord. And he said unto them, Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so; go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire, And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence. (Exod. 10:8-11)

Pharaoh will let the children of Israel go and hold their feast if they compromise in leaving the children behind. He realized if they took everyone they would not return and considered them to be plotting evil against him. He desired to hold their children hostage.

This is a similar ploy of Satan. If one must go and serve the Lord, and refuse to be turned from it, at least leave me your children. This is accomplished because of the unfaithfulness of Christians who seemingly cannot make up their minds regarding being restored unto the Lord. It seems to be lost on many parents that while they are taking their time in making a decision to return to the Lord, the clock is ticking on their children. The longer you stay in the world the better chance you have of leaving your children there. What a compromise! Satan says: If you must go, go, but leave your children behind.

### ***How Does One Leave His Children Behind?***

First of all, a failure to train them will surely leave them behind. Moses expressed the importance of parents training their children when he said:

And these words, which I shall command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deut. 6:6-9).

Second of all, a failure to restrain them will leave them behind. Paul said that fathers should bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). Solomon said, “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Prov. 29:15). Again he wrote, “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul” (Prov. 29:17). Eli’s sons eventually were fatally chastised by God because he failed to restrain them. Consider the words spoken to Samuel by God: “For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (1 Sam. 3:13).

Moses simply would not compromise in leaving the children behind. Every parent should take this example to heart today and tell Satan and the world that our children cannot stay; not an hoof shall be left behind.

### **A Compromise In The Property**

Fourth, Pharaoh attempts to compromise regarding their flocks and herds. “And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve

the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you” (Exod. 10:24). Israel, however, had a purpose for taking their things with them. “And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God” (Exod. 10:25).

God desires for His children today to possess a spiritual mindset when it comes to our property. Like Moses and the children of Israel before us, we must not compromise with our things. Every thing we have must be laid at the Master’s feet. The early church understood this: “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32). God is not interested in getting our things to heaven, but rather getting us there. But it may very well be our attitude toward our things which may determine our final destination. The rich ruler was told: “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:21-23). Consider the case of the rich farmer:

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall

those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:16-21).

God has a purpose for our property. He desires for us to see to the needs of others. Paul writes, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). John says, “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God In him?” (1 John 3:17). James records, “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food. And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (Jas. 2:15-16). Paul in his epistle to the Galatians penned these words, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:9-10).

### **Conclusion**

Compromise is not an option for the child of God. Moses’ statement, not an hoof shall be left behind, sets the standard for the faithfulness for all who will follow Christ. Consider the fact that millions of Israelites left Egypt with all of their belongings as well as their livestock. Moses essentially said to Pharaoh that he was unwilling to leave a claw behind. We must be as committed today; let us not leave an hoof behind concerning denominationalism because Christ built only one church. Let us not leave an hoof behind concerning the world from which we came, because we have been translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Let us not leave an hoof behind concerning our children, because it is in their best interest to return them to the Lord. Let us not leave an hoof behind concerning our property because all good gifts come from God.



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## CHAPTER 29

# May It Be Said Of Me: The Man Of God

*Chris Butler*

### Introduction

The word *God* is found 3893 times in Scripture. *Jesus* is found 942 times in the New Testament alone. The name *David* is found 968 times in both testaments. *Moses* is found 784 times. His name is mentioned in the Bible drastically more than any other character with the exception of David. By way of comparison, Abraham's name is found 230 times and Solomon's name is found 274 times. The terms *Moses* and *Lord* appear together in 464 verses of scripture. Moreover, his name is found in the same verse as the word *God* 81 times. If we learn nothing else from this, we learn that Moses had a close relationship with the Lord.

The *man of God* is a statement found in seventy-three verses of Scripture. It has been said of men with whose names we are familiar, such as Moses, Shemaiah, Elijah, Elisha, and David (Deut. 33:1; Josh. 14:6; 1 Kings 12:22; 1 Kings 17:24; 2 Kings 5:8; 2 Chron. 8:14). It has been ascribed as well to those whose names are not recorded. Consider for example the unnamed prophet of 1 Kings 13. He is called a man of God thirteen times in this chapter, more so than any other character. Whether he is named or unnamed is not what is important. What is important is that his character is godly and his life is given to the service of God. Thus, God is proud to call him *The Man of God*. His life reflects the good qualities of Moses, Elijah, and others. Thus, we study those who have gone before, whose lives exhibit faith and service to God (Heb. 11:1-12:2; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:10-13).

The phrase *the man of God* appears only twice in the New Testament. The first is found in 1 Timothy 6:11, “But thou, O **man of God**, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Tim. 6:11, *emph. mine throughout CB*). The second is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That **the man of God** may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

What an honor to be called the man of God. In the Old Testament this phrase is used primarily to describe the prophets, many of which we have already named. Under the New Covenant, however, this phrase is descriptive of all who are Christians, whose lives demonstrate that they are committed to the Lord who has redeemed them. The scriptures provide all that is necessary for a man so to live that it may be said of him he is the man of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Nothing greater could be said! Moses is called the man of God not once, not twice, but six times in Scripture (Deut. 33:1; Josh. 14:6; 1 Chron. 23:14; 2 Chron. 30:16; Ezra 3:2; Psa. 90:1). What about the life of Moses brought such a wonderful description from God?

### **The Man of God Flees From Worldliness**

#### *The Son of Pharaoh's Daughter*

**The fair child.** We are first introduced to Moses by way of his parents. Jochebed and Amram were their names (Exod. 6:20). They were godly parents and like many other Bible characters, they “being dead yet speaketh” (Heb. 11:4; Heb. 11:23; Acts 7:20). The Exodus account simply tells us that Moses was deemed a “goodly child” and was “hid three months” (Exod. 2:2). Not much else is gained from Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7, but that Moses was “exceeding fair and nourished up in his father’s house three months” (Acts 7:20). There was something special about Moses. The events that occur next are a remarkable example of the providence of God. Moses was a special child and was saved from death for a special purpose.

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**The Faithful Parents.** The account in Hebrews 11 reveals another factor to consider. The text states, “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” (Heb. 11:23). Their faith is seen further in the actions that followed the time that they could no longer hide Moses. An ark was prepared, a location was selected, an overseer placed into position, and then at the appropriate time Jochebed placed her fair child into the river. As a parent that is most difficult to imagine. This must be the kind of faith that moved Abraham to place his son on the altar of sacrifice (Gen. 22:9). Parents play a vital role in the development of their children’s faith. Timothy’s mother and grandmother had a tremendous influence on him (2 Tim. 1:5). From an early age, they worked to develop his faith, instructing him in the scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15).

**The Foolish Egyptian.** Just as they hoped, the ark kept the child safe and dry. The location was just right, and the timing was perfect. Pharaoh’s daughter came to the river to wash and saw the ark among the flags. She sent her maid to fetch it and found inside a babe that wept. The Bible states “she had compassion” on the child and knew that he was one of the Hebrews (Exod. 2:5-6). Remember the big sister who watched from “afar off”? Seeing Moses lifted from the water, she comes to offer her service and goes to fetch the mother of Moses. How else can you describe the parents of Moses than by the words that are found in Hebrews 11:23, “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.” How foolish the Egyptians look. God used the Egyptians to multiply the children of Israel. Then he used them to rear a Hebrew child who would be used to deliverer them from Egypt.

As a child of royalty, Moses had the very best. Stephen preached, “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds” (Acts 7:22). Clarke quotes Philo and states that “Moses was taught arithmetic, geometry, poetry, music, medicine, and the knowledge of hieroglyphics” (730). Gill

stated, “Which was reckoned very considerable: 1Ki 4:30 Philo the Jew says (e) that he learned arithmetic, geometry, and every branch of music, the hieroglyphics, the Assyrian language, and the Chaldean knowledge of the heavens, and the mathematics” (E-Sword). Barnes states,

Their knowledge is equally celebrated in the pagan world. It is known that science was carried from Egypt to Phoenicia, and thence to Greece; and not a few of the Grecian philosophers traveled to Egypt in pursuit of knowledge. Herodotus himself frankly concedes that the Greeks derived very much of their knowledge from Egypt (See Rawlinson’s Herodotus, vol. 2, pp. 80, 81; Herodotus, bk. 2, pp. 50, 51.). (“Acts 7:22”)

Moses would have had the best education money could buy. Add to this the wonderful treasures of the land and you have a life of luxury for the Hebrew slave. This kind of life no doubt would have won over many to their own destruction, but not Moses. It seems that the life of luxury ate him up inside.

### *The Suffering People*

**The Smitten Man.** As Moses lived in the lap of luxury, his own parents, brother, and sister lived the lives of slaves. They served with affliction, rigour, bitterness, and hard bondage according to Exodus 2:11-14. What was that like for Moses? We are not told much in Exodus 2, but that when he was grown “he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren” (Exod. 2:11). What Moses does next reveals to us something about where his loyalties were cast. He killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. Why kill the Egyptian, unless there was extreme anger concerning the treatment of his brethren? What would you have done after having killed a man? Would you go back to the same place the next day? I find

it interesting that the Bible is specific to tell us that Moses went to his brethren twice, especially after he murdered the Egyptian the day before. Stephen gives us some insight into these verses in Acts 7:23-25. He states:

And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

**The Supposition of Moses.** We are not told the means through which this idea came into his heart, but that he was committed to the deliverance of the people is evident by his murder of the Egyptian. Why else commit the murder, and why at that time. Moses, no doubt, was aware of the conditions the Hebrews suffered. His own mother was one of the slaves in Egypt. How many times had he visited her, or she him? How many times had Moses seen the mistreatment of his brethren?

Perhaps it was the influence of his faithful mother, who taught him of God and His promise to make a great nation through the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-2). Perhaps it was the fact that he knew he was a Hebrew and the story of his salvation from death led him to believe he was spared for a special purpose. The only other text to give us information about the life of Moses in this regard is Hebrews 11:23-29 which is a panorama of his work as the emancipator of Israel. We read:

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin

for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry *land*: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

It seems to me the words of Hebrews 11:24-26 apply to the life of Moses at this point. He had cast his lot with his people. There are three texts that relate this account and they seem to indicate this point. Exodus 2:11 tells us that he went to visit his brethren when he was grown. From Stephen's sermon in Acts 7:23 we learn that he was "full forty years old" at the time "it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel." In Hebrews 11:24 we find the statement "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." It seems that all of these verses describe the time Moses went to visit and deliver his brethren. This would help us to understand Moses' visit to his brethren, not once, but twice. It helps us to understand his murder of the Egyptian as wrong as it was for him to do so. Stephen tells us Moses thought the avenging of his Hebrew brother would be sufficient evidence to show him as the emancipator (Acts 7:22-29). Why commit the murder, hide the body, and go back the next day unless Moses had "chosen to suffer affliction with the people of God"?

### *The Sacrifice of Prosperity*

**Moses Refusal.** Hebrews 11 tells of the great sacrifice Moses made. He refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter. In so doing he gave up everything Egypt had to offer. He gave up power, prestige, pleasure, and being a prince. Moses had none of these things in Midian as a shepherd. He was not the Son of Pharaoh's daughter,



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but the son-in-law to Jethro. He was not in a lofty position as a prince, but in a lowly position as a shepherd. He had no great riches or treasures; he did not even have his own flock, but he watched the flock of his father-in-law. I do not think our minds can grasp what Moses gave up.

Paul told Timothy, “But thou, O man of God, **flee** these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1Tim. 6:11). Timothy was told to flee and keep on fleeing.

Paul’s instruction was to “withdraw” from the false way (1 Tim. 6:1-5). Moses not only left behind the great treasures of Egypt, but he forsook the false ways of the Egyptians as well. Nelson’s *Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts* list thirty-five pagan gods of Egypt (26). Moses would have been familiar with most if not all of these. It is imperative that to be called the Man of God, one must hate every false way (Psa. 119:104). The idols of Egypt like all others were the creation of their own hands (Acts 7:41). They are of no profit at all. They are dumb and there is no breath in the midst of them (Hab. 2:18-19). Where were the idols of Egypt when the Lord reigned down plagues upon the land? The man of God is the man that withdraws himself from the false way and steadfastly stands in opposition to it. Paul instructed Timothy to withdraw himself from those that are proud, knowing nothing, whose questions and strifes of words cause envy and strife. The perverse, the corrupt, and those destitute of truth are to be withdrawn from.

Second, Paul instructed Timothy to withstand the desire to be rich (1 Tim. 6:6-10). Preachers, this was spoken to a preacher by preacher!! Moses was content with what the slaves had. Moses was content with a shepherd’s life in Midian. Paul speaks of contentment in this chapter, and this is the key for the man of God. Weust has stated, “Expositors says that ‘love of money in ministers of religion does more to discredit religion in the eyes of ordinary people than would indulgence in many grosser vices” (“1 Tim. 6:11”). I think it is a shame that there are Gospel preachers who will allow congregations of the Lord’s church to “bid” on their “employment.” I wonder what God thinks of those actions? I know full well that a preacher needs

to provide for his family. I know firsthand the difficulties of living on a preacher's "support." It is one thing to be supported in preaching the Gospel, but it is another thing altogether to preach for a salary (Mal. 3:11). The pursuit of pleasures, the will to be rich, is too great a temptation for most. It is a "snare" of "foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9). Beware, lest a covetous heart cause us to err from the faith (Col. 3:5). Let us be warned, lest a covetous heart cause us to go away sorrowful (Matt. 19:22). Let us beware, lest the treasures of this earth rob us of our eternal treasure (Matt. 19:23). Let us beware, lest the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word of God from us and we become unfruitful (Matt. 13:22). Let us beware, lest the treasures of this life replace the treasures we are to lay up in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). Let us "take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Moses' heart was with God, and as a result he gave up greater treasures than most will ever know.

**Moses' Reproach.** The course which Moses took, in choosing God and his people over Egypt, no doubt brought upon him reproach. Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Peter wrote,

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye. (1 Pet. 4:12-13)

In the first book of the New Testament and in the first discourse of Jesus, He taught that persecution would come to those who are His followers (Matt. 5:10-12). He taught that "the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute

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you” (John 15:20). Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). Those who follow God and His ways will suffer the reproach of Christ, and it is our joy to suffer for His name. Peter said we are to glorify God when we suffer persecution (1 Pet. 4:16). The Christian can suffer reproach for the sake of Christ because he has committed his soul to God as a faithful creator (1 Pet. 4:19). Do we rejoice in suffering because we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (Acts 5:41)? Moses’ decision to suffer affliction with the people of God underscores his decision to give up Egypt and take his place with the people of God. Christians who endure persecution for the name of Christ show that they too are committed to the one who saved them and that not even death can cause them to abandon their Lord (Rev. 2:10).

**Moses’ Respect.** Here is the reason why Moses forsook Egypt! The word *respect* here is interesting. According to Thayer, it means “to turn the eyes away from other things and fix them on some one thing, to look at attentively, to look with steadfast mental gaze” (“Misthapodasia”). Moses looked beyond what Egypt had to offer, and he looked to what God had to offer. He, like Abraham, sought the city whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). His affections were “set on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1-2). His treasures were in heaven (Matt. 6:20). He understood that the Lord must come first, and that the Lord will see to our needs in this life (Matt. 6:33).

**Moses’ Reward.** The treasures of Egypt did not compare with the treasures of heaven. The marvelous cities of Egypt did not compare with the city of God. The gold of Egypt did not compare with the streets of gold. The gods of Egypt did not compare with the God of heaven. God has promised a reward to those who serve him faithfully. “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: **be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life**” (Rev. 2:10). Jesus said our reward would be according to our works (Matt. 16:27). Moses was not fooled by the temporary pleasures of Egypt. The lure of wealth,

the luxuries of life, and the lust for things did not persuade Moses to abide in Egypt. Moses understood the words of John,

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. **And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.** (1 John 2:15-17)

Paul wrote, “Let no man beguile you of your reward” (Col. 2:18). May we each strive to walk by faith, seeing the unseen (2 Cor. 4:18-5:7). Let us take heed to the admonition of Hebrews 12:1-2, namely, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Can we say like Moses, our eyes are turned away from the world and are fixed on the world to come (2 Pet. 3:8-15)?

## The Man of God Follows

### *The Lord's Appearance*

**The Wandering Shepherd.** For forty years Moses was a shepherd for Jethro his father-in-law (Acts 7:23; Acts 7:30). He was far removed from the palace as a shepherd in the plains. If it were up to us, who would we have chosen to deliver Israel? Would we choose the man with money and wealth or the man with meekness and wisdom? God knows the heart (1 Sam. 16:7)! His choices are, in many cases, the exact opposite of what we might choose. God chose David who was a shepherd and the youngest in his house, but the Lord chose him because of his heart (1 Sam. 16). Remember it was David who defeated Goliath when cowardice reigned among the soldiers of Israel, including King Saul. God chose Gideon, who was from a poor family, and the least of his father's house. Remember it

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was Gideon and three hundred men who defeated the Midianites (Judg. 6-8). God chose Moses, the shepherd of Midian and not Moses the prince of Egypt. As John G. Butler stated, “Earthly position is not a qualification for God’s service. But faith and character are. If you want to serve God, be more concerned about your faith and character than anything else” (85). Truly forty years leading a flock of sheep trained Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt.

**The Wondering Shepherd.** The miracle of the burning bush accomplished its purpose. Imagine being Moses. You are going through your daily routines and there is a bush on fire, but the bush is not consumed. Would you go and check it out? Moses said, “I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt” (Exod. 3:3). Of course, like with any other miracle in the pages of Holy Scripture, God had a purpose behind manifesting himself to Moses in this manner. John wrote at the end of his Gospel account, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: **But these are written, that ye might believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31). Another purpose of the miraculous was to confirm the spoken word of God (Heb. 2:1-4). Moses was introduced to the first of many mighty miracles the Lord would perform to deliver his people. The burning bush, the rod, and the hand of Moses further convinced him to go to Egypt as God commanded. The miracles in Egypt would serve to convince the people to follow Moses. The plagues God reigned down on Egypt served to answer Pharaoh’s question, “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?” (Exod. 5:2).

As awesome as it would have been to witness, the miracle of the burning bush was just the beginning (Exod. 3:20). Moses would witness many miracles that demonstrated the power of God over all the creation (Exod. 4-12). The miraculous, however, was not as important as the message God revealed to Moses. The message God spoke looked back to the promise made to Abraham that, “I will make of thee a great nation” (Gen. 12:1-2). God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob (Exod. 2:24).

It signaled the end of some four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. Sure, the burning bush got Moses attention, but the message God spoke carried with it even more weight. God identified Himself to Moses as the “God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exod. 3:6). The burning bush caused Moses to investigate. He went over to check out what was going on. This statement, however, caused Moses to hide his face. I wonder if he remembered the stories about God his mother told him as a child. What caused him to turn his face away, being “afraid to look upon God” (Exod. 3:6)?

### *Moses’ Apprehension*

Moses’ hesitation to go back to Egypt and deliver the people is demonstrated by the excuses he used. The first was “who am I” and God’s response was “certainly I will be with thee” (Exod. 3:11-12). The second excuse was “but, behold they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice” and God’s response was, “what is that in thine hand?” (Exod. 4:1-2). His third excuse was “I am not eloquent...but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue” and the Lord responded, “Who hath made man’s mouth?” (Exod. 4:10-11). In each case Moses’ excuse was answered by God and reduced to nothing. There is no excuse for anyone not to do the will of the Lord. He knows our abilities, and as weak as we are, we are useful to the Lord, because we are not alone in our work (1 Cor. 3:6-9). The Lord said to Moses, “Certainly I will be with thee.” This promise (I will be with thee) is found in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges to name a few. Moses’ apprehension was turned to assurance. The Lord’s promise is the same to you and me. Let us heed the admonition of Hebrews 13:5, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Look at the difference between Moses at forty years of age and at eighty years of age. At forty he sought to deliver them by the sword. He supposed his killing the Egyptian would be evidence that he was their deliverer. After forty years of serving as a shepherd, Moses was

a changed man. When God commissioned him to go, he did not want to go. I wonder if his previous experience of being refused by his brethren caused his excuses (Acts 7:25; Acts 7:35)? Perhaps he thought, “Why are you sending me, I have tried to deliver them once and they refused me.” This time, however, would be different. He was charged by Jehovah to return and was assured by Him that he would not go alone (Exod. 3:12).

### *The Lord’s Authority*

**His Submission to Authority.** Moses, the man of God, recognized the authority of Jehovah. It took a little convincing, but Moses submitted to the will of God and returned to Egypt. Once the Lord took away the excuses, we find the command to go (Exod. 4:12). I love the way it reads, “Now therefore **go**.” “**And he returned** to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand” (Exod. 4:20). Moses submitted to the authority of God. James wrote, “**Submit** yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7). Would you not submit after seeing a bush on fire but not consumed? Would you not submit after seeing the rod become a serpent, and your hand becoming leprous? Jesus said, “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross daily, and **follow me**” (Luke 9:23). Those who submit today are one in the same as Moses, in that they recognize the awesome power of the Lord, and appreciate what that power has done through the centuries to secure our soul’s salvation.

**His Service under Authority.** The fact that Moses followed the commands of God is seen especially through the plagues that God sent against Egypt. A summary of the work of Moses and Aaron is given in Exodus 11:10 which states, “And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh.” But to impress their service upon our minds, note the following:

- “Thou shalt speak all that I command thee...And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they” (Exod. 7:2; Exod. 7:6).

- “Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt...And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded” (Exod. 7:19-20).
- “And the Lord spake...Stretch for thine hand with thy rod... And Aaron stretched out his hand” (Exod. 8:5-6).
- “And the Lord said...Stretch out thy rod and smite the dust...And they did so” (Exod. 8:16-17).
- “And the Lord said unto Moses...and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven” (Exod. 9:8-10).
- “And the Lord said unto Moses...And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven” (Exod. 9:22-23).
- “And the Lord said unto Moses...And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh” (Exod. 10:1-3).
- “And the Lord said unto Moses...And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land” (Exod. 10:12-13).
- “And the Lord said unto Moses...And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven” (Exod. 10:22-23).
- “And the Lord said unto Moses...Speak now...and Moses said, Thus saith the Lord” (Exod. 11:1-4).

The man of God is a servant. He is submissive to the will of God. He hears the command of God and obeys. He is wise like the man of Matthew 7:24-27 or James 1:21-25. Christians of the first century thought of themselves as servants. In their prayer to God, on behalf of Peter and John, they prayed, “And grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word” (Acts 4:29). John wrote, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1).

Servants yield themselves to their master whether it is “sin unto death or...obedience unto righteousness” (Rom. 6:16-18). Servants obey their masters (Rom. 6:16). Servants obey from the heart (Rom. 6:17). Obedience to God without the heart is meaningless. The Jews served this way. Jesus said “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matt. 15:8). Servants are, in the truest sense, those who



serve righteousness (Rom. 6:18). They do not serve their own belly (Rom. 16:18). They do not serve their pocket books (1 Tim. 6:5; Mic. 3:11). They do not serve their own interests, but their desire is to please the One to whom they belong, their Master, Jesus the Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20). They understand that they are nothing more than servants, and as such, they are accountable to their Master (Matt. 18:23; Luke 16:2; Rom. 14:12).

It is no surprise when we examine the life of Moses that he is called “Moses the servant of the Lord” and “Moses the servant of God” twenty-one times in scripture. He is called “Moses my servant” seven times in scripture. May we each learn from Moses how to be a servant in the kingdom of our Lord!

**His Speaking under the Authority.** Moses’ third excuse was “O my Lord I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou has spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue” (Exod. 4:10). A servant of the Lord speaks only that which the Lord Himself has spoken (Exod. 4:12-17). Despite the excuse Moses gave, his responsibility did not change (Jon. 1:2; Jon. 3:2). What makes a man a faithful preacher is not his ability to alliterate a sermon, to tell captivating stories, or to hold the attention of the audience, but what makes a man a faithful preacher is that he echoes the attitude of Micaiah, “As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak” (1 Kings 22:14). Moses said, “For since I came to Pharaoh **to speak in thy name**, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all” (Exod. 5:23). Moses was faithful in proclaiming the message of God to deliver his people. Time and time again in the book we find Moses as God’s preacher (Exod. 19:7; Exod. 24:7). Deliverance was on God’s terms then, and it is on God’s terms now. It is therefore imperative that in order for one to be a man of God, he must speak the truth of God’s Word (2 Tim. 4:2). False teaching has the power to deliver no one. False plans for salvation offer nothing but false hope. The only power to save is the Gospel of Christ.

**He is Separate, Abiding in the Presence of God.** What made the Hebrews different was the fact that God chose them as the nation

through whom the Messiah was to come (Gen. 12:1-2; Gal. 3). Those who follow the ways of the Lord are a separated people “from all the people that are upon the face of the earth” (Exod. 33:16; 2 Sam. 7:23; 1 Kings 8:53). His presence was with them, as is He, with us (Exod. 33:13; Heb. 13:5). The Hebrews found grace in the eyes of the Lord in that they followed the commands of Moses (Exod. 33:13). Christians are saved by grace through obedient faith (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 5:1-2). In so doing we become the children of God (1 John 3:1). We are born again through the new birth and become children of God (John 3:3-5; John 3:14-17). We then belong to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In our obedience to the Gospel, we become the chosen nation of God. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

The man of God follows the ways of the Lord. Paul encouraged Timothy to “follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Tim. 6:11). When we examine these words we find that each of them applies to the life of Moses. Moses wanted to do the right thing in delivering his brethren the first time but went about it the wrong way. Moses did the right thing at the well in Midian when he helped the daughters of Jethro water their flocks. Moses did the right thing in obeying God to return to Egypt. Moses did the right thing in bringing the plagues upon the land of Egypt.

Moses was godly because of his attitude toward sin. He was angered at the sin of the people when he saw their wickedness at the mount (Exod. 32:19). He was godly in that he destroyed the golden calf they made (Exod. 32:20). He was godly in that he stood with God and called for the people to come to the Lord’s side (Exod. 32:26).

The faith of Moses goes without saying. The record of his great faith is recorded in Faith’s Hall of Fame. Truly, the man of God walks by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

His love for God is seen in his obedience to God. Faith coupled with love produces obedience (Gal. 5:6). Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). His love for his people is

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seen in his great work of delivering them. It is also seen in that he interceded on behalf of the people (Ex. 32:11-ff). His love is seen as well in that he sought to make atonement for the sins of the people (Ex. 32:30-33).

His patience is seen in the journey as he led the people. They complained from the time they left Egypt until the time they spied out the land of Canaan (Exod. 14:12; Num. 14:1-2). Imagine the steadfastness, the constancy needed to lead a murmuring, complaining group of people. Thayer states about this word, “the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings” (“Hupomone”). This trait characterized Moses for the majority of his work, but even the best of men can be overcome. Finally, their constant complaining got the best of Moses, and he struck the rock rather than speaking to it as he was commanded (Num. 20:1-13).

Finally, Moses is one of two people whom the Bible refers to as meek. In Numbers we find, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). This description of Moses places him, literally, in godly company. This term is used of Jesus as well (Matt. 11:28-30; Matt. 21:5). Truly, Moses was a man of God because he wholly followed the ways of the Lord.

### **The Man of God Fights a Good Warfare**

After their passing through the Red Sea, Moses and the people sang a song of deliverance. What they sing is very interesting to read and study. I would like to focus on verse three of chapter fifteen. Notice, “The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name” (Exod. 15:3). Listen to Isaiah, “The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies” (Isa. 42:13). The Lord, as a man of war, fights against all who are in opposition to Him and His cause. Moses sought to deliver the people by his own strength and had to flee for his life. Deliverance by their power would certainly not glorify God. So, according to God’s timetable, He sent Moses back to deliver His

chosen people (Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2). As one examines the Exodus, it is abundantly clear that God is the power behind their deliverance. He provided the miraculous to create belief in the people. It did not originate with Moses. All of the plagues are evidence of the power of God.

- God turned the water to blood (Exod. 7:14-25).
- God sent the plague of frogs (Exod. 8:1-15).
- God provided the lice (Exod. 8:16-19).
- God sent the swarm of flies (Exod. 8:20-32).
- God caused the murrain on the livestock (Exod. 9:1-7).
- God caused the boils on the Egyptians (Exod. 9:8-12).
- God sent the grievous hail (Exod. 9:13-35).
- God sent the locusts (Exod. 10:1-20).
- God caused the darkness (Exod. 10:21-29).
- God sent the death angel to kill the firstborn (Exod. 11:1-12:30).

Who could say they were responsible for such a marvelous victory? It certainly was not Israel; they were hesitant up through the time they crossed the Red Sea and then complained the rest of the journey. Moses certainly could not claim that he was the reason for their deliverance. God had to convince him with miraculous signs. God was the source of their deliverance, and thus they sang, “The Lord is my strength and my song; and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him” (Exod. 15:2). God was the power behind every battle they fought. He caused the walls of Jericho to fall. He was the power behind Gideon and his army. The man of God is simply a useful tool in the hands of the Almighty. Moses played his part, just like so many others: Noah, Abraham, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, David, Josiah, Esther, Daniel, the prophets, and John the Baptizer to name a few. All God needs is a faithful man or woman who is willing to fight for the Lord. Paul said, “We are laborers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9). God through all these and others worked toward His purpose

of redeeming man through Christ (Eph. 1:1-11; Eph. 3:10-11).

Without question the greatest soldier of God was Jesus the Christ. He took on Satan all alone. God the Father could not help Him in His agony. He could not remove the cup, the suffering, and pain (Matt. 26:36-45). Jesus refused the temptation to call twelve legions of angels. He suffered the punishment for my sin, your sin, and the sin of all humanity. He fought for us and won our salvation. When Jesus said, "It is finished," the purchase price was paid. Will we like Paul, and Timothy "Fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life" because of the One who gave himself for us (1 Tim. 6:12)? Will we equip ourselves for this fight against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph. 6:10ff)? Will we fight for the souls of lost men through preaching and teaching the Gospel? Will we, like Paul, be able to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

### **Conclusion**

The man of God flees from worldliness, follows the ways of the Lord, and fights a good warfare. Let us, like Moses, fix our eyes on the reward that God offers (Col. 3:24; Heb. 11:6). Let us heed the admonition of Hebrews 12:1-2:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

God has provided, through his Word, all that is necessary that it may be said of me "The Man of God" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Moses was

truly a man of God, but we, too, may wear that wonderful title if we will but submit in faithful obedience to the God of our salvation.

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## CHAPTER 30

# May It Be Said Of Me: The Servant Of The Lord

*Dwayne Butler*

**I**t is indeed a great honor to be part of the Eighteenth Power Lectureship. Brother Webster has done an excellent work with the previous two lectureships. I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the previous books dedicated to David and Peter, and I am also very much looking forward to reading this volume dedicated to Moses. These books are a great treasure to have in any Christian's library. I would like to thank the many brethren who have worked so diligently from year to year to make this lectureship possible. I would also like to thank Larry Everson and Con Lambert for their oversight of the Southaven congregation. They have long been friends and supporters of me. Finally, I would like to thank the Southaven congregation. Although I was reared at the Nesbit congregation, I have always thought of Southaven as my second home. I have always felt that when I come to visit I am among friends and family. Thank you for your great example and for your friendship throughout the years.

### **Introduction**

As one reads through the Bible, he can easily understand that the Lord is looking for people who are willing to be servants (King James Version, Matt. 4:10). The word *servant* can be found 502 times throughout the King James Version of the Bible. It is used 417 times in the Old Testament and is also used 85 times throughout the New Testament. The word *serve* is used 209 times. The word *served* is used 74 times. The word *service* is used 132 times. Also, the word *servicing* is found another seven times. `

Even a casual Bible reader can understand service is something the Lord has always required. The word *servant* is associated with many of our favorite Biblical character's names: Isaac (Gen. 24:14), Abraham (Gen. 26:24), Jacob (Gen. 32:4), Joshua (Exod. 33:11), Caleb (Num. 14:24), David (2 Sam. 3:18), Elijah (2 Kings 10:10), Jonah (2 Kings 14:25), Job (Job 1:8), Isaiah (Isa. 20:3), Daniel (Dan. 9:17), Paul (Rom. 1:1), James (Jas. 1:1), Peter (2 Pet. 1:1), Jude (Jude 1:1), and John (Rev. 1:1). This does not even take into consideration all of the examples of service seen throughout God's Word. Of course, we know our Lord and Savior was a servant above all servants (John 13:1-17).

The word *servant* is defined as "a person who has undertaken to carry out the orders of an individual or corporate employer, especially a person employed in a house on domestic duties" (Kindersley). It is defined in the Hebrew as "someone subject to the will and command of his master" (Vine). In the Greek language, it is defined as "one who is in permanent relation of servitude to another, his will altogether consumed in the will of the other" (Zodhiates 907). This is the kind of servants the world should have today. A person should be a slave for Christ because he wants to be a slave for Christ.

Our subject today is "May It Be Said of Me, The Servant of the Lord." This year's character under consideration is "Moses, the meekest man in all the land." If there is one character throughout God's Word who teaches the very definition of service, it would have to be Moses. By my count, Moses is mentioned in scripture thirty-seven times as being a servant (Exod. 14:31; Num. 12:7-8; Duet. 34:5; Josh. 1:1-2; Josh. 1:7; Josh. 1:13; Josh. 1:15; Josh. 8:31; Josh. 8:33; Josh. 9:24; Josh. 11:12; Josh 11:15, Josh. 12:6; Josh. 13:8; Josh. 14:7; Josh. 22:2; Josh. 22:4-5; 1 Kings 8:53; 1 Kings 8:56; 2 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 21:8; 1 Chron. 6:49; 2 Chron. 1:3; 2 Chron. 24:6; 2 Chron. 24:9; Neh. 1:7-8; Neh. 9:14; Neh. 10:29; Psa. 105:26; Dan. 9:11; Mal. 4:4; Heb. 3:5; Rev. 15:3). Again, this does not count the number of times Moses is shown in scripture as being a servant. Why is Moses mentioned so many times as being a servant? What can one learn today from the example of service in Moses' life? These are the questions to be answered today.



### **Moses Served Despite A Lack Of Confidence In Himself**

First, it must be understood that Moses was someone who always wanted to serve God. Before Moses met with God at the burning bush, Moses already had a strong desire to go and deliver his brethren from Egyptian bondage. This can be learned from Stephen's sermon, recorded in Acts 7. Stephen said the following:

And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons. (Acts 7:22-29)

When the angel appeared to Moses at the burning bush, things had somewhat changed (Exod. 3:1-10). Why was Moses no longer willing to go and deliver the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage? Maybe it was because of his previous actions (Exod. 2:12). Maybe it was because of his previous failure to deliver the Israelites (Acts 7:26-28). Maybe Moses feared for his own life (Exod. 4:19). It may have even been because of his humility. Brother Hardeman Nichols once said, "Humility is no excuse for not serving God. That is a false

humility” (44). Whatever the case may have been, Moses let out a line of excuses that would make any teenager proud. These excuses have already been treated by previous lecturers, but bear mentioning again. Moses said first, “Who Am I?” (Exod. 3:11); second, “What shall I say unto them?” (Exod. 3:13); third, “Suppose they will not believe me” (Exod. 4:1); and fourth, and finally, “I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue” (Exod. 4:10). It is not up to anyone to decide whether or not Moses was sincere in what he was saying. It could be very true that he lost his confidence along the way. One thing to be known for sure, many great lessons can be learned from these excuses of Moses.

How many today do not serve because they believe they are insufficient for the task? Many people, just like Moses, do not serve because they think they may not have the talent or capacity to be able to serve the Lord well. They may think, “Who am I?” First, it must be understood that no person is sufficient without the help of God. Paul knew this extremely well. “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3:5). Look at what God did with the apostles! Most of the apostles were uneducated and untrained men (Acts 4:13), but they were turned into great men of God. Others may say, “What shall I say unto them?” God revealed unto Moses what he needed to say (Exod. 3:14-15). He will do the same for the Christian today who is willing to serve. Though it may not be the same nature as He did with Moses, God has still provided the things for us to say in His service. The only way for us to know what to say is by studying His Word (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Cor. 2:9-13). What about “Suppose they will not believe me”? Any person who is willing to try and bring a soul to Christ will have this problem. Think of how long Noah preached and the little response he had (Gen. 7:7). Especially, think about Christ. Jesus was the greatest preacher the world has ever known. However, He did not have as many converts as He should have had. The servant today should expect most people to reject the Gospel. This should not keep a servant from serving! How many people today say, “I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue”? Most people do not teach Bible class

or preach because they feel they cannot. They feel like they may not say everything perfectly, or that they even may say the wrong thing. You can picture people just like Moses saying, “I would like to go, and I would go, but I am just not a good speaker!” I was privileged to go to school with a young man who had a problem with stuttering. When he came to school, he did not want to stay because he felt like stuttering would be a big hindrance to him. He decided to stay and he turned out to be one of the best preachers in our class! One cannot allow any of his insufficiencies or lack of confidence keep him from serving. Moses is a great example of this!

### **Moses Was A Servant Who Heeded To Counsel**

Moses was a unique and remarkable person in many different ways. His meekness, as a servant of God, is shown over and over again. One such example is when his father-in-law Jethro came to visit him (Exod. 18:1-27). When Jethro came to visit Moses, he found that Moses was working himself much too hard trying to judge all the people:

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? Why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws. (Exod. 18:13-16)

Naturally this caused great concern for Jethro. Immediately, Jethro understood that Moses was not using the best of judgment

in the way he was trying to settle the affairs. Sometimes those on the outside can see things that need to be improved. If one can offer advice to better a situation, why not listen? A good servant will always listen! When Moses took the children of Israel into the wilderness, there was a large number of people that went in with him (Exod. 12:37). With so many people involved, especially being in the wilderness, there would most likely be a large number of problems generated on a daily basis. Not only would Moses wear himself out by trying to handle all these problems by himself, but also the children of Israel would only grow discouraged by the lengthy delays. Jethro gave Moses good counsel, and Moses heeded the counsel. Jethro told Moses to stand between the people and God and teach them the things they needed to know (Exod. 18:19-20). Jethro even told Moses what kinds of people to choose: able men, men who feared God, men of truth, and men that hated covetousness (Exod. 18:21). According to Jethro's plan, the lesser judges were to handle the lesser problems, and Moses was to handle the greater problems (Exod. 18:22-27). What great advice Jethro gave Moses! What a fine student Moses was for listening to the counsel! Something else to keep in mind is "Moses did not get angry at the advice of his father-in-law when he offered advice. He did not resist Jethro's wisdom. He listened!" (Justice 169).

Servants today must be willing to take good advice, especially if that advice comes from those much older and much wiser. Solomon wrote, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Prov. 12:15). Solomon also wrote, "Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end" (Prov. 19:20). Once more, Solomon wrote, "Be more ready to hear" (Eccl. 5:1). Good counsel can lead you in the right direction. Servants today must be just as willing as Moses to take good counsel. Justice also adds:

As a servant of the Lord, do I seek to know and  
to listen to the people that I serve? Do I seek to  
know the people and their problems with sin,

frustration, fear, hate, sorrows, discouragement, disappointment, and anxiety? Do I listen and know about their hopes, joys, loves, and victories? If we will ever be effective servants of the lord and servants of his people, we need to listen! (170)

Moses was indeed a great servant, very worthy of our imitation. All should be willing to take advice from James, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19).

### **Moses Was A Servant Who Corrected His Brethren**

Another intriguing characteristic about Moses was his boldness. He was someone who would correct his brethren if the situation arose for him to do so. This can be seen many times throughout God’s Word. One such instance can be found in Exodus 32. The context of this chapter deals with Moses being atop Mount Sinai. While Moses was atop the mount, the children of Israel grew restless and impatient. The people called for Aaron to make them a god, and Aaron did just that (Exod. 32:1-6). God made the decision that He would destroy the children because of their disobedience to Him (Exod. 32:10). Moses interceded on behalf of the children of Israel (Exod. 32:11-14). Notice what happened next:

And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for

mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. (Exod. 32:15-19)

At this particular point, Moses had a choice to make. He could allow the people to continue sinning in the sight of the Lord, or Moses could correct the children of Israel because of their disrespect to God. There was no chance that Moses would not discipline his brethren because of their sin! Brother Liddell stated, "What would Moses do? Would he point out that God is a God of love willing to overlook their actions because, after all, they were feasting to the Lord" (Liddell 330)? Not a chance! Notice the great rebuke Moses gave to the people:

And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf. And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked

unto their shame among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. (Exod. 32:20-30)

Moses was a servant in the truest form! Just because Moses was a meek man did not mean he was a weak man! It should also be noted, Moses was not willing to overlook what was happening because of his great love for the children of Israel. He would not allow for his brothers and sisters to sin the way they did without giving them a good rebuke. Moses was a servant who was not afraid to be bold and correct his brethren if it was needed.

What about the Christian servant today? How many times does sin come into the church without any kind of rebuke at all? Moses would have never allowed it, and neither should the servants of the church today! When a brother or sister has sinned against the Lord, the Christian servant should be the first to tell that person about his sin. Just as Moses, servants today should not tell people that God loves them no matter how they live their lives! This is the biggest lie

ever to be told! Perhaps this very attitude is the reason that the church has so many man-made innovations coming into it today. Could it be because the servants today have no real backbone? Servants need to learn to have a backbone like Moses (one that will not bend)! We should have this kind of backbone even if we have to stand all alone. As brother Ronnie Hayes once said, “It made no difference if he [Moses] stood alone. By courage he stood! We must do the same” (326). As Christians today, let us all heed to the words of James: “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (Jas. 5:19-20). This takes a person who is interested in saving a soul from spiritual death. No longer should sin come into the church without its being stopped dead in its tracks! If more people were interested in being true servants, the church could grow in a way that has never been seen before. May we all resolve to be servants who are willing to correct our brethren when the situations arise.

### **Moses Was A Servant Who Was Criticized By His Brethren**

All throughout Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, there is a word that is seen time and time again. This word is *murmur*. Almost every time Moses made a leadership decision, there was someone to criticize or complain about it. Obviously, it did not take very long at all for Moses to receive his first criticism from the children of Israel, “And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: And they said unto them, The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us” (Exod. 5:20-21). It would have been nice if the criticism had stopped there, but it did not. It only worsened as time progressed.

As Moses was leading the children away from Egypt, Pharaoh and the Egyptians were in hot pursuit. It would seem that the children of Israel would trust in Moses to continue to be the great leader that he had been thus far. Keep in mind this is the same group



of people who cried out to God to deliver them from the distress they were under (Exod. 2:23-24). God sent them Moses to be their leader (Exod. 3:9-10). They should have had a strong trust in Moses by this point. However, this is not what happened:

And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. (Exod. 14:10-12)

When the children of Israel wanted water, they criticized Moses and Aaron:

So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. **And the people murmured against Moses**, saying, What shall we drink? (Exod. 15:22-24; emph. mine, DB)

Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and

Miriam died there, and was buried there. And there was no water for the congregation: **and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.** And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. (Num. 20:1-5; emph. mine, DB)

When the children of Israel wanted food, they criticized Moses and Aaron:

And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. **And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:** And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. (Exod. 16:1-3; emph. mine, DB)

Would you believe that after God provided food for the children of Israel, they had the audacity to continue the complaints about the

food provided for them? Notice what eventually happened later in the sacred text:

And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes. (Num. 11:4-6)

When the children of Israel had a problem with leadership, they came and criticized Moses and Aaron again:

Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? (Num. 16:1-3).

Amazingly, the people even criticized Moses about which route they were taking through the wilderness. Keep in mind this is the same group of people that Moses had been leading all along the way! Keep in mind this is the same group of people who complained about the water! Keep in mind this is the same group of people who complained

about the manna that God sent down from heaven! Surely, it would seem like there would be no more about which they could complain! They were still not done complaining:

And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah. And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. (Num. 21:1-5)

After everything Moses and Aaron did for these people, it never seemed to be enough to make them happy. Criticism would find Moses and Aaron no matter what they did. Why mention all these complaints? When a person is complaining about a true servant of God, truly, they are complaining against God Himself!! Notice the Words of Moses:

And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: And in the morning, then ye shall see

the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD .(Exod. 16:5-8)

Not only did the criticism come from the children of Israel, it also came from Moses' blood kin. It would seem like if anyone would stand with Moses along the way, it would be his family. From what scripture reveals, Moses had two older siblings, Miriam and Aaron (Exod. 2:1-10; Exod. 6:20; Exod. 15:20). It seems like the sin of Miriam and Aaron would be that of jealousy. They had a real problem with Moses being the only one "in charge." Of course, they tried to disguise the real problem by making a charge against the wife of Moses (Num. 12:1). Truth is, they wanted to have the same power that God had given to Moses (Num. 12:2). Miriam was stricken with leprosy (Num. 12:10) and had to spend seven days outside the camp (Num. 12:14-15).

"Let grumbling rebels take heed. Ungodly murmuring does not successfully conceal the folly of a faltering faith, though often intended to do so" (Liddell 134). A true servant of God is not someone who complains and criticizes with every breath he takes. Truth is, complaining and criticism are tools used by the devil to discourage servants who are doing their absolute best. People do not have the right to complain about godly leadership (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). People do not have the right to complain against godly preaching, even if it does "step all over their toes" (2 Tim. 4:2). How many people have had their feelings hurt because of ungodly complaining? How many people have even fallen away from Christ because of the same reason? How many people have fallen away from Christ because of family members? Notice the words of William Barclay:

“More people have been brought into the church by the kindness of real Christian love than by all the theological arguments in the world, and more people have been driven from the church by the hardness and ugliness of so-called Christianity than by all the doubts in the world” (source unknown).

While attending the Memphis School of Preaching, I would often hear the teachers say, “Boys, get ready to be criticized for every move you make!” Why? Faithful servants live a life of criticism. It should be expected. Jesus was often criticized by His own brethren (Matt: 16:22; John 11:21-22; John 13:1-8). Paul received criticism from his brethren (2 Cor. 10:9-11). Why would servants today not expect a little criticism today? Servants today should always remember if the criticism is not coming, it could be because of a lack of godliness!

### **Moses Was A Servant Who Cowered To Temptation**

Although Moses was one of the greatest servants ever to serve the Lord, he was also a servant who made mistakes along the way. Moses was not a perfect man. To borrow an expression from James, he was a man of “like passions” with us (Jas. 5:17). “This, however, does not serve as a disappointment to the faithful Bible student. Rather, it serves as a great source of comfort. Moses was a ‘Son of Adam’ just like the rest of us. Therefore, we should understand that, despite our own shortcomings, we too, can do great things for the Lord” (Burk 519-20). As mentioned before, Moses endured criticism time and time again from his own brethren. How did he make it as far as he did without losing his patience? Only a true servant would have been able to overcome so much without lashing out several times already! Finally, the criticism overcame Moses. While the children of Israel complained the second time about the water supply, Moses went to the Lord. The Lord gave Moses very specific instructions about what He would have Moses to do:

And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their

faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. (Num. 20:6-8).

Previously, God had told Moses to strike the rock (Exod. 17:1-6), but this time God told Moses to speak to the rock (Num. 20:8). But notice several sins actually took place on this particular occasion,

And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also (Num. 20:9-11).

David also added, “They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips” (Psa. 106:32-33). Not only was Moses wrong for striking the rock, but he was wrong for striking the rock twice. “One word instead of two blows would have satisfied the Divine command” (Gilmore 369). Moses was also wrong for blaspheming against God. Notice his words “Must we fetch you water out of this rock?” Were Moses and Aaron fetching water out of the rock, or was it by the power of God that they did so? A servant of God should never take credit for what God has done. Of course, these sins kept Moses from entering Canaan.

As servants today, we will make mistakes. There was only one Servant who lived a perfect life and He has since left this world (Heb. 4:15; Acts 1:9). The servant has no desire to sin, but that does not mean it will not happen. Scripture makes this very clear.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 5:12).

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

God makes it clear that every servant will have to deal with sin. The question is not will the servant sin? The question is what will the servant do when he does sin? After Moses sinned, he repented and continued to serve his Lord. Servants today should do the same. Just as God was with Moses, He will still be the same way with the servant today (Heb. 8:12). If one has not served to the best of his ability, one should repent and continue to serve, just as Moses.

### **Moses Was A Servant Who Concluded His Work**

As mentioned before, Moses did sin. When Moses sinned, he would ask for forgiveness and continue to serve the Lord. This is what a true servant does! It is very important to understand that Moses served until the day he died. Moses never said, "I am over one hundred years old! I am too old and tired to serve the Lord anymore." Moses also never said, "I have put in my time. I think I will



get some rest from serving the Lord.” He continued to serve until he concluded his work. John Butler observed, “It is most commendable the way Moses finished his life. He finished it by being busy in the Lord’s service. He worked full time right to the very end” (797). It is an absolute privilege to read about how his great life ended.

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. (Deut. 34:1-8)

Servants today must learn from the example of Moses. Servants today must die in the service of the Lord. Too many servants want to retire from Christianity. This cannot happen! A servant should not say, “I have put in my time for the Lord.” Nor should a servant say, “I have been serving all my life. Let someone else do it!” It is very

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understandable that all servants cannot serve until they die. There are sicknesses and other problems that may arise. The Lord knows about these situations. However, as long as a servant has strength in his body, it should be used for the Lord. All servants will get tired and weary, but, fortunately, heaven is called a place of rest (Rev. 14:13). There will be plenty of time for rest when this life is over. Let all servants heed to the Word of the Lord.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. (Matt. 10:22)

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (Rev. 2:10)

Once again, Butler observed:

Too often retirement from a secular job means no more work of any kind for the retiree, not even in God's service. Hence, many folk stop serving God long before they die. This is a great mistake; for as long as God leaves us in this world, we are to be serving Him. We may not be able to

do everything that we used to do when we were younger and stronger. But we must never cease serving God as much as we are able. Let us die in the saddle. Let us not rust or rot away the last years of our lives. (797)

It is also very important to remember that although Moses was not allowed to go into Canaan, Moses indeed went to be with God. His sin kept him from entering Canaan, but it did not keep him out of paradise. “His spirit went to Sheol (Hades in the New Testament), and there it has been in Abraham’s bosom of spiritual comfort since, with the short exception of when he appeared with Christ and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration” (Taylor 302). There should be no surprise that Moses will be found in heaven with all the faithful of the past and present. What a pleasure it will be to meet Moses!

### **Conclusion**

As servants today, there is much to learn from the life of Moses. If all servants would strive to live as Moses lived, their lives would never be the same. Moses was a servant of servants. His life has been recorded and preserved by God and serves as an example for each Christian today. Getz once wrote, “I’ve studied and written about a number of Old Testament personalities, but no other has impacted my life like Moses” (1). If all would be willing to learn from Moses, the world would be a different place. Today, let us conclude with the Word of the Lord. “And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face” (Deut. 34:10).

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## CHAPTER 31

# **But We Are Moses' Disciples: The Foolishness Of Following Moses And His Law After The Coming of Christ And His Law**

*Tim Burroughs*

**W**ords cannot express the deep appreciation I have for the Southaven Church of Christ. You have been such an encouragement to me and my family over the years. I am thankful to Wade Webster for his work in the kingdom of our Lord and for the invitation to have a small part in this noble effort. I appreciate the elders at Southaven for their firm stand for Truth and their foresight to have such an endeavor as this lectureship. The Power Lectureship continues to have a lasting effect on those who attend and read the material that is produced. Thank you to Robert Jefferies who has been an encourager to me with his words and the example of his life as a Christian and a gospel preacher.

### **Introduction**

After Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple, He passed by a man that had been blind from birth (John 8:59-9:1). The disciples of Christ asked the question, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2). The mindset of these disciples seemed to be concentrated on the association of sin and suffering. They thought that if one was afflicted in this way it must have been because of his sin, or the sin of his parents. Jesus responded by saying, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). The

manifestation would confirm that if Jesus could bring physical light to one born blind, He could bring spiritual light to those who are blinded by the world. The Son of God worked this miracle as proof of Who He was and from Whom He was sent.

The healing of the blind man caused a stir. When he was presented to the Pharisees, they immediately began to discredit this miraculous healing by insisting the man was not born blind (John 9:18). After the man's parents confirmed their son had been born blind (John 9:20), the Pharisees responded by saying, "Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner" (John 9:24). The Pharisees were not concerned with the miracle that caused the blind man to see, but that Jesus healed him on the Sabbath day. In their mind Jesus had broken the Law of Moses. They could not believe that a man of God would dare to break one of the Ten Commandments purposely. Because of their faulty reasoning they made the proclamation: "We are Moses' disciples" (John 9:28). They knew God had spoken to Moses, but they were unaware from whence this man came (John 9:29). Were these men truly Moses' disciples? Earlier, the book of John records Jesus addressing the Hebrews concerning their relationship with Moses, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me" (John 5:45-46). If these Pharisees were Moses' disciples, why did they not take heed to the words that Moses had written concerning the Christ?

The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet

from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. (Deut. 18:15-18)

This prophecy of Moses pointed to Jesus, the One standing in the midst of those who were claiming to be followers of Moses and his Law (cf. Acts 3:22-26; Acts 7:37). The Pharisees of Jesus' day did not want to see any connection between God and the Christ. This would have meant they would have to change their lives by following a new authority on religious matters. The book of John clearly points out that the Pharisees were not about to change. John wrote:

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. (John 11:47-50)

If they were truly Moses' disciples they would have accepted what the Lord had done to heal the blind man as evidence of Him being sent from God and fulfilling the prophecy.

The reaction of the Pharisees was that of foolishness. They wanted to be followers of the Law that was delivered by Moses, but they did not want to consider all of what Moses had said to them concerning the coming of Christ and His Law. They considered Moses as their authority in matters concerning the Law of God, but they would not hear him on this matter. The same foolishness is taking place today. There are many in the religious world that want

to make the claim to be followers of Christ and the Bible, but they only want to hear and believe the parts they desire to follow. They will say, "We are disciples of Jesus," but will return to Moses and his Law concerning spiritual matters. They tend to believe that if one keeps the Ten Commandments he is in a good relationship with God. If the question were to be asked, should one follow the Law of Moses today? this writer would venture to say that the majority of the religious world (unfortunately even some in the church) would answer in the affirmative. It is the purpose of this study to show the foolishness of following Moses and his Law after the coming of Christ and His Law.

### **The Law of Moses Was Delivered To The Jews**

Three months after delivering the nation of Israel out of the bondage of the Egyptians and out of the hands of a hardhearted pharaoh, God summoned Moses to Mount Sinai and instructed him to remind the people what He had done in bringing them out of Egypt and bearing them on "eagles wings" (Exod. 19:4). God then charged Moses to give the people the Law. This Law would help govern and guide them as God's chosen people. Moses wrote:

In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and



keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD. (Exod. 19:1-8)

Throughout the rest of Exodus chapter 19 are recorded the actions of Moses in preparing the **people** to receive the Law. Who are these **people**? They are the Hebrew Nation that had just come up out of Egypt by the hand of the Almighty God. Moses was to sanctify these **people**; they were to wash their clothes and be ready for the third day in which God would appear on Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:9-20). God told Moses “Go down, charge the **people** [emp. TB throughout], lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish” (Exod. 19:21). God instructs Moses and Aaron to come up the mount, but not to let the priests and the **people** break through (Exod. 19:24). “So Moses went down unto the **people**, and spake unto them” (Exod. 19:25). Moses clearly addressed the Israelites and no one else. Exodus chapters 20-23 record the Law that was delivered by Moses to this nation of people. This was not the only time Moses would deliver the Law to the Hebrews.

Shortly before his death, Moses ushered in a new generation of Israelites by restating the Law delivered at Mount Sinai. This would serve to remind the people about the Law under which they would live. Notice again that only the nation of Israel is addressed.

And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them,  
Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which

I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire. (Deut. 5:1-4)

Moses spoke clearly and directly to a nation of people, not to people of all nations. This was not a Law that was made with the Patriarchs, but with Israel during the third forty-year period of Moses' life. This Law was a covenant binding two parties, God and the nation of Israel, and was never expressed or charged to any other people.

If the Law of Moses was delivered to the Hebrews, (and it was), the Gentile nations were excluded. Now that Christ and His law have come, it has "broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph. 2:14). The Law of Christ allows both Jew and Gentile to be reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus Christ. The Law of Christ, not the Law of Moses, is the Law which man should follow today. It includes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:14-36). This is the Law which all men are to obey (Acts 2:37-47; cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rom. 6:3-4). This is the Law that has the power to save (Rom. 1:16-17). This is the law by which man will be judged (John 12:48). To follow Moses and his Law after the coming of Christ and His Law would be foolishness because the Law of Moses was delivered to the Hebrews.

### **The Law Of Moses Was Declared To Be Temporary**

The Law of Moses, the Law that was delivered by Moses to the Israelite nation, was declared to be a temporary Law. God never meant for this Law to last forever. God, in His infinite wisdom, purposely intended to establish a new Law and that is exactly what He did. By establishing the Law of Christ, He would make the Law of Moses old. The Israelite nation had broken the first covenant, the

Law of Moses, so God instructed Jeremiah to speak to the nation concerning the future Law under which God's people would worship and serve Him. Jeremiah wrote:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer. 31:31-34)

The new Law, the Law of Christ, replaced the old covenant made with the nation of Israel. This new Law would come into effect when our Lord was sacrificed on the cross of Calvary.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience

of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb. 10:1-10)

When Christ was nailed to the cross, the old law was taken out of the way: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross" (Col. 2:14; cf. Eph. 2:13-15). The Hebrews writer penned, "A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13). This was done so "that he may establish the second." The second is the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul affirmed:

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But

after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. (Gal. 3:22-25)

The faith to which Paul is referring is the system of faith, the gospel, that which has the power to save (Rom. 1:16-17). Jesus was clear when He said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). To fulfill means to make full, to fill, to fill up; to render full, i.e., to complete; universally and absolutely, to fulfill, i.e., to cause God’s will (as made known in the Law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God’s promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment (Thayer 518). This was accomplished with the death of Christ. The Law of Moses was perfect in accomplishing what God wanted it to do, “to bring us unto Christ” (Gal. 3:24). That is exactly what it will do if the student of the Bible will “rightly [divide] the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Why would anyone want to follow the Law that was declared to be temporary? The Law of Moses has been taken out of the way. To follow Moses and his Law after the coming of Christ and His Law would be foolishness because the Law of Moses was declared to be temporary.

### **The Law Of Moses Deletes Jesus As The Lawgiver**

When Moses was summoned to Mount Sinai, God gave him the authority to charge the nation of Israel with the commandments contained in the Law. The Hebrews would look to Moses as their mediator in matters concerning their relationship with the Almighty (Exod. 20:19). With this authority, Moses was their Lawgiver. The question must be asked: If Moses was the Lawgiver of the Law that was delivered to the Hebrews, and that Law was declared to be temporary, what authority does Moses and his Law have now? The answer is simply none whatsoever! The Hebrews’ writer explained,

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken

unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Heb. 1:1-3)

After the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, He appeared to His disciples and said, "All power (authority, ASV) is given unto me" (Matt. 28:18). When these words were spoken, the previous Lawgiver was in the grave (Deut. 34:5-6), and his Law had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Jesus was preparing His followers to follow His authority. To some this may not seem like a big deal, but if one reads Paul's epistles, he will see that returning to Moses and his Law was a constant effort by some in the First Century who wanted to hold fast to the traditions that grew out of the Law of Moses. By doing this they deleted Christ as the authority in matters of the soul; deleted in the sense that they wanted to return to an old Law and Lawgiver thus ignoring the Law that was in effect and the Lawgiver that had authority. Christ sits on the right hand of God. He is alive and stands as the everlasting authority of His Word by which all men will be judged (John 12:48). If one follows Moses today, he is following a dead Lawgiver. If one follows the Law of Moses today, he is following a law that has absolutely no authority. To follow Moses and his Law after the coming of Christ and His Law would be foolishness because the Law of Moses deletes Jesus Christ as the Lawgiver.

### **The Law Of Moses Denies Salvation**

Although the Law of Moses was exactly what God wanted it to be (Gal. 3:24), the Law of Moses was limited in what it could accomplish (Heb. 8:7). The purpose of the Law of Moses was to reveal what sin is and point the way to the redemptive power of Christ's Law. Paul wrote:

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. (Rom. 7:7-11)

Paul had already communicated with the Christians at Rome that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20), and “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Since the Law could not offer forgiveness of sins, Paul reminded the brethren that redemption came through Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24).

The Hebrews were tremendously blessed when they were obedient to the Law of Moses. But under this system, their sins could never be forgiven (Heb. 9:15; cf. Gal. 3:21). The sacrificial system of the Law of Moses centered on animals being sacrificed and the blood of the animals being sprinkled on the altar. Once atonement was made, the sins of the one offering the sacrificial animal were rolled forward one year (Heb. 10:3). God never considered the blood of bulls and goats to be sufficient to remove the stains of sin from the soul of man (Heb. 10:4). The removal of sin could only be accomplished by the shed blood of the One prepared to redeem man (Heb. 9:22; cf. Heb. 10:5; Gal. 3:13). Those obedient souls living under the Law of Moses anxiously looked forward to the coming of the Christ so forgiveness of sins promised by God could be theirs (Heb. 9:15).

Salvation can be man’s today with his obedience to the Law of Christ. The gospel (the Law of Christ) is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The New Testament instructs

man to obey the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Man obeys the gospel when he believes Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24); repents of his sins (Luke 13:3); confesses the name of Christ (Acts 8:37); and is baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4). Once his past sins have been forgiven, he is instructed to continue being “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10). This is accomplished by his steadfastness in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58). By this Law, and only this Law, can all men be saved. It would be foolishness to follow Moses and his Law after the coming of Christ and His law because it denies salvation.

### **Conclusion**

“We are Moses’ disciples” (John 9:28). What a foolish statement considering the presence of the Savior of mankind. This statement of the Pharisees in Jesus’ day rings loud and clear today. The Pharisees would not hear what their authority had to say on the matter of following a Law that was destined to be taken out of the way. Unfortunately, many today demonstrate the same foolishness. The Law of Moses was a beautiful piece of work. It came from God. It accomplished much during its tenure. It accomplished all God wanted it to, and it even came to an end when God wanted it to. To follow Moses and his Law after the coming of Christ and His Law would be foolishness. The Law of Moses was delivered to the Hebrews. The Law of Moses was declared to be temporary. The Law of Moses deletes Jesus as the Lawgiver. The Law of Moses denies salvation. Why would man want to follow a Law that was limited in what it could accomplish? May all the earth that is searching for Truth turn to the One in Whom Truth can be found and enjoy the salvation in which Truth provides.

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# **Ladies' Classes**



## CHAPTER 32

# Helping Your Husband To Be A Leader Of God's People

*Cindy Colley*

**Z**ipporah was Mrs. Moses. She spent her childhood and early adult life as the relatively anonymous daughter of a Midianite shepherd, Reuel, also known as Jethro. She was just one of seven girls growing up in a respected, albeit likely heathen home, where the days' activities revolved around being sure the flock was fed, watered, and protected from the elements. She was probably quite comfortable in the culture and familiarity that had been home to her ancestors for generations.

And then there was a day—just a regular day—when the seven sisters were out tending the flock. It appears that most of the work had been done. They had drawn the water from the well; no small chore, to be sure, but certainly one made easier with an assembly line of seven to lower, fill, raise, pass, and pour the buckets. So their troughs were full when some neighboring shepherds apparently decided to “steal” the water with which the girls had filled the troughs. They began to drive Jethro's flock away from the trough, intending to take advantage of the girls' days' work and water their own sheep.

Enter Moses: the man with the Egyptian name and clothing, but not the prevailing Egyptian spirit of tyranny. In fact, his spirit on this occasion was one of chivalry. Little did the sisters know that Moses was a fugitive, on the run from the Pharaoh, in whose house he had been raised, because he had slain an Egyptian who was found beating a fellow Israelite. Although his sympathies were clearly with the slaves, he had never exactly been one of them either, having enjoyed the amenities of being a part of the king's household. In a

very real sense, at this juncture in life, Moses was a man without a country. He was about to meet his future wife. He did not have a home to which to take her, any available family to which he could introduce her, and, likely, he had no access to his money or goods to share with her. But this poor man was about to become Zipporah's hero.

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to day? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock. (King James Version, Exod. 2:16-19)

May I suggest that if you have a godly husband who bravely steps up to the plate in defense of righteousness you make a hero of him? Moses defended these seven girls against the bullying shepherds when he had nothing to gain personally by doing so. There are lots of men in your world who are the bullies. They are the ones who are climbing the corporate ladder, making money, and seeking power at the expense of whoever gets in their way. There are other men in your world who, though not out to gain for themselves at the expense of others, are not willing to become involved in the rescue of needy people or dying souls as they encounter them. These men would not intentionally harm anyone; they merely remain aloof to the needs around them. Then there are a few men in your world who are leaders. They are the ones who are like Moses.

Do you remember how God characterized Moses? He said that Moses was the meekest man in all the earth (Num. 12:3). My favorite definition of meekness is "having a cause that is larger than self."

Meekness lays aside selfish concerns to do the right thing in any given circumstance. That is what Moses did in this plain of Midian for the daughters of Jethro. When rehearsing the events of the day to their father, these girls said that Moses delivered them. The Hebrew word for *delivered* in verse 19 could also be translated *saved* or *rescued* (Strong). Moses was the man of the hour.

### Respect

Are you married to a man who rescues you and protects you from evil? Does he spend his days thinking about lost souls and how he may rescue them? Is he a man who has his heart set on protecting his children from the devil's lure? Is he a man who does not hesitate to become involved in helping needy people? If your husband is this kind of man, he is a rare hero in today's world of selfish complacency. You should let him know that you recognize these attributes and that you respect him for them.

Showing respect for our husbands is a culturally challenging proposition in our feministic society, but it is not Biblically optional. Ephesians five closes with the injunction that the wife is to "see that she reverence[s] her husband" (Eph. 5:33). In studying this word *reverence*, I am amazed at the clarity of it. Reverence is a good way to translate the Greek word in verse thirty-three of Ephesians five. Other good ways to translate it would include *is in awe of* or *fears* (Strong).

The virtuous woman of Proverbs thirty-one, by implication, had something to do with the fact that her husband was known in the gates and that he sat among the elders of the land (Prov. 23:1). So we today can make our husbands more effective in their work for their Lord. We can add to or diminish from the respect given our husbands by those to whom they preach, those who may come to them for advice, the young souls around our dinner tables, or their coworkers who may look to them as the only models of Christianity that they know. Seen in this light, our daily respect quotas, as wives, can have an eternal impact. We actually are increasing or decreasing our husbands' potentials for influencing people.

So what are the earmarks of respect? What are the tangible ways I can show him honor? How can I be his glory (1 Cor.11: 7)? Let us make a list:

1. I can speak respectfully to and about him. Granted, there are times when husbands and wives may use gentle sarcasm or tenderly tease. But there are far too many scenarios today when wives become frustrated with real or perceived ineptitude on the parts of their husbands and the name-calling criticism flows all too freely. I have been in a few too many women's social circles in which husband bashing was in vogue. We need to remember the meek and quiet spirit of submission enjoined in verses one through six of First Peter three and especially the example of Sarah in verse six.
2. I can and must be subject to my husband in every thing (Eph. 5:24). I have heard scholars argue that submission in marriage is limited in scope to matters that are spiritual; that is, that women are only required to be submissive to their husbands in the spiritual arena. While this idea of limited submission is more palatable in our culture, it is just not Biblical. In First Peter three, the command to be in subjection (1 Pet. 3:1) is directed to women whose husbands were not even obedient to the Word. The submission commanded, in this case, certainly was not just about spiritual concerns, since these men were definitely not spiritual leaders. I can think, then, of only one exception to the submission principle: when I cannot simultaneously obey both God and my husband, I must choose to do the will of God. I contribute, in this submission, to my husband's eligibility to rule the house of God in the capacity of elder (1 Tim. 3:4).
3. I can refrain from manipulation. No wife submits to her husband because she has to. Christian women choose to submit. They show strength of character, unselfishness, and self-control in placing themselves under the authority of another. Every woman has the power to manipulate her

husband. We have, at our disposal, a box of power tools that can persuade our husbands to forfeit their positions of leadership and become our puppets. Jezebel manipulated Ahab (1 Kings 20-21). Delilah manipulated Samson (Judg. 16). Sarah manipulated Abraham (Gen. 16). Potiphar's wife manipulated Potiphar (Gen. 39). The tools include lying, whining, pouting, withholding sex, making sex more fulfilling, and crying. Weak women resort to this toolbox. Strong women know that the real prize is heaven and they are richly blessed in the submissive relationship, remembering that they are actually submitting to the One who has authority over both themselves and their husbands.

4. I can refrain from correcting and interrupting him. I remember going through a phase when I was a child in which I tediously scrutinized every statement my mother made. She would say "Last week we went on a trip." I would correct, "No, Mother, it was really the week before last." She would proceed, "Well, anyway we stopped and got a hamburger." I would interject, "No, Mom, we got hot dogs." I remember, finally in exasperation, my mother getting down on my eye-level, cupping my chin in her hand and saying, "Would you please just let me tell one lie?" Now my mother was not a liar, but I got the point. Correcting and interrupting is not polite for children and it is certainly not polite for wives. If your husband is unintentionally misleading someone in some area of importance, take him aside and show him his mistake respectfully and privately. Proofread his manuscripts or documents if he prefers, but never feel the need to be his public verification.
5. I can be a moral asset to his work. I have known of preacher's wives who have jeopardized their husbands' jobs by dressing immodestly. I have known of elders whose qualifications have been called into question because of wives who could not control their tongues. I have known of young men who had great potential to be leaders at home, but that potential

was wasted because of arrogance on the part of their wives. Accountability for those who might have been led to Christ through these instances of lost potential has to rest, at least partially, on the unyielding will of selfish women.

6. I can stay in the family budget. Money issues are one of the top two sources of frustration in marriages today. When my husband and I talk to married couples contemplating divorce, there is rarely a scenario in which finances are not a part of the problem. All too often, the wife readily vents her frustration at her husband's inability to climb the corporate ladder quickly and, sometimes, she will compare her husband's moneymaking ability unfavorably with that of some other man in the community or congregation. Wives, it is important to understand that your husband's fulfillment as a husband and father and even his self respect as a man is dependent on his perception of his ability to provide for his family. It is just as much a need of his to feel qualified to provide materially for you as it is a need of yours to feel qualified to fill his sexual needs. We can help our husbands be complete and whole as men by being frugal and making the money stretch or we can subtract from their fulfillment by overspending and comparing them with others who may be financially more successful. A prudent wife is from the Lord (Prov. 19:14).

### **Hospitality**

Notice next that Zipporah was reared in a house where hospitality was the norm. The natural question when Jethro had been told about this Egyptian who had rescued his daughters was motivated by hospitality: "And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? Why is it that ye have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread" (Exod. 2:20).

We live in a world in which hospitality is seen as a dying Victorian art form. Biblically, hospitality is not merely an art form. It is a command. When I think of the world Zipporah was one day



going to enter when she and Moses left the land of Midian to go back to Egypt, I know that it was a blessing that Zipporah came from a hospitable home. Think of the thousands of people who would be seeking the advice of Zipporah's husband, so many people that Moses finally would have to set judges over the people so that he might be called upon only for the most difficult cases (Exod. 18:13-27). My husband is not Moses, but he is an elder and a preacher in the Lord's church. There are continual needs that come our way, both for physical accommodations and for counsel. These needs are opportunities to serve the Lord. I am not sure how long it took Zipporah to understand the full import of what Moses was doing in leading the people from Egypt to the promised land. I wonder if, in fact, she ever knew the nation's purpose in bringing the Messiah to the lost world. But I do know about my purpose. I know that bringing the Messiah to the lost world is my purpose. If I keep that purpose firmly cemented in my mind, I will be willing to make sacrifices of time, space, comfort, and money whenever I see that such sacrifices might magnify the Messiah in my sphere of influence. Being "given to hospitality" (1 Tim. 3:2) is one of the elder qualifications that a man would be hard pressed to possess without the help of his wife. If we want our husbands to be effective leaders of God's people, we must love God's people enough to provide places, times, refuge, and material goods to those they are leading. It is important that we do this with a spirit that never makes the recipients feel beholden or uncomfortable, but loved and welcomed.

### **Flexibility**

Even while writing this manuscript today I received a letter from a young preacher's wife. The advice she was seeking had to do with whether or not she should have to sacrifice all things loved and familiar to follow her husband to a new home in a place where, admittedly, his talents could be of more service to the kingdom. It would be difficult to imagine a better text to examine, when facing such a challenge, than the implications of the burning bush in the life of Zipporah.

Zipporah was a shepherdess who married a shepherd. Life must have been fairly comfortable as she and her new husband settled down to married life on the family farm in Midian. Soon giving birth to their first son, Gershom, and raising him there on the familiar plains at the heels of his father and grandfather as they tended the sheep must have been familiar and serene. But a burning bush was about to revolutionize her world!

Just imagine Moses coming in one day with the news that the family would be moving—not to another spot on the farm, but to Egypt. They were not going to move back to the palace where Moses had grown up, either. They were going to join an oppressed people who were fighting for their very existence as slaves to the most powerful dynasty on earth. Moses told Zipporah that he was going to Egypt to take the job as deliverer of Israel.

It was surely a moment of decision in the life of Zipporah. Likely having been reared in an idolatrous home, she was now being challenged to go to Egypt at the behest of Jehovah. She must have come to know Him through the stories and faith of Moses, because somehow this burning bush put Zipporah on a donkey, along with her two sons, and they followed the man who held the rod of God (Exod. 4:20).

Are you willing to follow your man of God wherever His responsibilities may take him? Oh, there is nothing wrong with living in the same town in which you grew up for your entire lifetime. Sometimes that very place is where you and your husband may most effectively serve God. It may be there that you face the most difficult challenges, perhaps with family members who need your persistent example or your gentle prodding or even your not-so-gentle persuasion to stay faithful to the Lord. But sometimes, we are called to leave the familiar, to part with the precious and to chart unknown territory as we follow the leader God has given us. I can recall a time in my life when I was very resistant to change. New challenges were in a faraway place, but I was very tempted to cling to the small-town life I had come to love, the house to which we

brought my children home from the hospital, the people who had become so dear in their little lives, and the easy driving proximity to my parents and my childhood home. I must say that I followed, that time, with some reluctance. Because one of my babies was newborn, I went to this place sight unseen. I moved into a house I had not seen and met a whole congregation of people I did not know at all. There were some things left behind that I missed. But when I think of all the amazing blessings (the most beautiful mountains, the most receptive prospects, some of the most faithful elders, the godly examples of older people, the lessons learned about child-rearing, the way that faith grows when parents are far away), the blessings I would have missed if I had not gone behind the man of God on that occasion, I am so thankful for the adventure.

### **Accountability**

By far the most intriguing passage about Zipporah, to me, is the following:

And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast *it* at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband *art* thou to me. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband *thou art*, because of the circumcision. (Exod. 4:24-26)

Moses had been visited by God himself at the burning bush, called to be the great deliverer of Israel. God was later to call him the meekest man in all the earth and describe him as faithful in the house of God (Num. 12:3-7). But this passage clearly says the Lord was seeking to kill Moses. Why? I believe God was showing his extreme displeasure because of the failure of Moses to comply with His explicit command to circumcise his son, likely Eliezar, his youngest son.

Circumcision, of course, was the fleshly mark of all Hebrew males. While circumcision was practiced by other cultures, it was of paramount significance to Israel because it was the seal of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:14-21). Though performed on the eighth day after birth, as commanded (Lev. 12:3), circumcision was required of adult aliens who chose to enter the commonwealth of Israel. In the rare case in which circumcision had been neglected, as in the case of the young men born during the wilderness wanderings, the entire camp paused for a time of circumcision before entering battle. The Lord was involved in the cleansing that occurred upon the occasion of circumcision for, in this case, He said “This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you” (Josh. 5: 9). God was serious—dead serious—about circumcision. So begs the question: how could Moses be the undisputed deliverer of a circumcised people when he had neglected the command of circumcision within his own family?

So the little family stopped at an inn on their way to Egypt. Having been on a few uncomfortable missions in the Lord's work, I can relate, in small part, to the anxiety they must have been feeling. Moses needed to be rested, clear-headed, and resolute when he faced the monarch. Surely they hoped, on this occasion, for a good night's sleep. They were certainly also aware that they needed to be absolutely sure they were living in the will of Jehovah. They needed the peace and assurance that He was with them in every detail of the mission. But the night was to be anything but peaceful and reassuring. God was about to make it clear that Moses was not yet up to the challenge of the Pharaoh. Complete compliance was necessary to maintain the covenant relationship that Moses so desperately coveted at this critical time in his life.

However puzzling the statement in verse twenty-four, it has to mean that God was nose to nose with Moses in the inn that night and that His anger was kindled to the point of killing Moses. The omniscient, omnipotent One had no trouble finding Moses or revealing his displeasure at the spiritual neglect of this patriarch. Moses was clearly in the path of the wrath of God.

Zipporah, it seems, knew that her husband was in deep trouble and she knew why. She took the matter, at this point, into her own hands, performed the required surgery, and threw the foreskin of the child at the feet of her husband. It was as if she symbolically placed the blame for the distress the family found themselves in on that horrible night at the feet of Moses.

Many commentators believe that Zipporah's behavior on this night of horror was shamefully violent and rebellious. When I look at the limited information given, however, I am more inclined to believe that her response was a reasoned one. For whatever reason, God was on the verge of killing her husband, thus the scene was already a scene of unimaginable terror. The only reason indicated in Scripture for this holy wrath was that Moses had failed to circumcise one of his sons. Zipporah was most likely aware of the seriousness of circumcision to the people of Moses, for she had given birth to two sons, one of which had been circumcised. Somewhere along the way, Moses had surely shared his faith with some of her family in Midian, for Jethro, her father, had come to believe in Jehovah (Exod. 18:1-12). She had already been apprised of the power of the Lord, Jehovah. Her husband was a circumcised Hebrew who surely had her convinced about the voice that came from the burning—but not burning up—bush, for she had climbed on that donkey bound for Egypt (Colley 50-51).

I believe Zipporah knew God and feared God, and, at this particular juncture became frustrated at Moses, the leader of her home, for having neglected his spiritual duty toward their son. I believe she knew that the circumcision was standing between Moses and his God and thus, she ventured to do the service Moses had failed to do. It seems obvious that Zipporah saw a compelling need for full compliance before Moses took on the monumental task of God that was before him. Thus, she took care of that compliance in her family. While I do not presume to know the heart of God fully when he saw the action of Zipporah, I do know that His anger toward Moses was deflected and that His servant, Moses, went on to be the greatest deliverer and lawgiver short of Jesus Christ in all of Scripture.

And all of our earthly leaders are just that. They are short of Jesus Christ. They are men who are capable of spiritual ineptitude, of occasional neglect, and of failure to comply fully. In short, our husbands, though they may be godly leaders, are capable of sin. When our husbands sin, we like Zipporah are called on to respond to their shortcomings (Gal. 6:1). Some wives of faithful men may know things about those men that could effectively destroy the good influences of those men should their wives choose to broadcast their shortcomings. Because of our travels and our many relationships with leaders' families in the kingdom, Glenn and I know of Christian men who have overcome bitterness that could have overcome them. We know of men who have conquered pornography that could have conquered them. We know men who have stopped making compromises in entertainment choices when those choices could have stopped them. We know men who have kicked the alcohol habit before it kicked them. We know men who have awakened to the need to be disciplinarians at home before their progeny was beyond the help of fatherly discipline. We know men who have repented of and made restitution for lies told before the untold damage of their lies was imminent. In each of these cases, these strong and penitent men have done untold good in the kingdom, and, collectively they have brought a throng of believers into the body of Christ. And in each of these cases, there are women—wives—who could have let the whole brotherhood know about these sins of the past, but they did not. Many wives of godly men have some historical shovel handle that they can grab and dig up some past dirt, some sin or neglect, and given the right circumstance, use it to damage the good influence of their husbands. I have seen more than one preacher who has had to step away from good works in the kingdom because of an angry wife's determination to destroy him over some transgression of which he had long ago repented. Ladies, we hurt the body when we fail to be discreet and fail to build fences around the works of our faithful husbands. If your husband is humbly seeking to do the will of God, refusing consciously to live in sin, the blood of Jesus Christ

is cleansing him from all sin (1 John 1:7), just as it is doing for you in all of your imperfections.

Zipporah could possibly have damaged the mission of Moses down in Egypt. What if the rank and file in Israel had known during the days of slavery that the one who stood before Pharaoh had not even circumcised his own son according to the sacred law of God? Inasmuch as we are able to discern, however, when God's anger was deflected and the situation put aright, Zipporah got back on the donkey and proceeded to follow her man of God as he faced the Pharaoh, led the people safely through the terror of the first Passover, parted the sea in the name of Jehovah, and waited on Sinai, as the commandments were written on stone by the finger of God. And you know the rest of the story: the Song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev. 15:3) is an eternal song that we will sing even around the throne of God one day.

Are there some situations in which sin is so pervasive in the life of a man that it cannot be resolved without its disclosure to others? Are there sins that become so large and pervasive that they force revelation by wives to some respected third party or some eldership in the hopes of restoration? Absolutely. The revelation of sin in the life of a husband must occur when it becomes obvious that he is overtaken and will never escape the sin without outside help. In such a scenario, a Christian wife would never be happy to disclose the sin of that man with whom she is one, but hiding the sin is detrimental to his wellbeing. In such a case, if a wife conceals his hardened sin, she becomes his enabler. She is allowing him to continue in the sin without needed accountability from his fellow-Christians and shepherds. She must remember also that the hiding of persistent, impenitent sin on the part of a person who is an influential leader puts other souls at risk, as well. The chances of his followers being disheartened or even losing their faith should the sin later become known is great. The process of restoring the one who is overtaken in a fault in the spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1) certainly applies within the bonds of matrimony. But remember, meekness is having a cause that is bigger than self. It is the spirit of meekness that determines how

a wife approaches the sin and the sinner. Her objective, as the wife of God's leader, is always to enable him in the great amount of good he can do for heaven. She is never about vengeance when wronged, "putting him in his place," or self-exaltation. It is only when driven by her fierce love for the soul of that man and his potential for good in the greatest cause on earth, that she reaches out for counsel from some other meek Christian or eldership that may be able to help him escape the sin by which he is overtaken.

### **Zipporah's Legacy**

Moses, the man with the unselfish heart of meekness, the kind of man we all should want, walked into her world in a field of sheep and instantly became her hero. Zipporah, at the suggestion of her father began immediately to care for his physical needs. That is the minimum requirement of all good wives. If our preachers, elders, and leaders can depend on a hot meal, a strong shoulder, a listening ear, and a warm bed at the end of the difficult meeting, the tough encounter, the abrupt job change, or the unpopular but needed sermon, they have much of what they need.

But Zipporah subtly cues us in to more...so much more that we can pray about and work toward as wives of those who lead God's people. She demonstrated by her submission that she respected Moses. It is not difficult to demonstrate respect in our culture today. In fact, if we are submissive, we are so very different from the vast majority of wives in our society that our nonconformity to cultural norms will be obvious. Am I obviously different from the world in submission as a wife?

Zipporah continued a pattern of selflessness. It was Jethro's hospitality that initially paired Moses with Zipporah. What a blessing to be trained in hospitality! We should be doing this kind of training in our homes for our daughters. It was Zipporah's lot to be at the side of a man who was constantly solving problems and offering counsel to a whole nation of God's people. How quickly she must have seen the need to share her life, her home, and her husband with so many



for so long. Am I willing to open my home and heart and surrender my husband's time and talents for the good of the people of God?

Zipporah was willing to give up the familiar to go where God lead. Much of the greatness of the heroines of faith lies in that willingness. Sarah, Rahab, Ruth, and Esther are all examples of the kind of flexibility needed by faithful women of God. Am I faithfully flexible?

And finally, Zipporah was a mom who wanted to be sure her family was in full compliance with the will of God, even when Moses had neglected His will. Am I determined to seek Him first in my home even when my Moses may be weak or falter for a time?

May our lives be enriched by having come to know Zipporah. I hope I can sit down beside her and Moses in glory one day and sing with them the Song of Moses and the Lamb. Imagine that!

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## CHAPTER 33

# Moving From The Shadows To The Son: From The Imperfect To The Perfect

*Teresa Hampton*

Shadows are elusive, dreamlike, and unsubstantial. A pattern or form may be visible. But, the substance is a mystery. In looking at a shadow silhouette of a child, one might presume it is possibly a small girl. However, certain specifics cannot be observed when looking at a mere shadow. One cannot determine the color of the girl's eyes, the texture of her hair, or the appearance of her skin. There is simply a shadow or form. It remains a mystery, as do all shadows or figures, until its substance is made known.

This was the frustration faced by the prophets. They yearned for knowledge of things that were to be revealed through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter said, "Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you" (New King James Version, 1 Pet. 1:10). It was a mystery to the prophets and even the angels of heaven until Jesus finally accomplished His mission. To believers today, it is no longer a mystery. It is a wondrous revelation, a revealing of things heavenly.

In the course of this lesson, we will uncover some striking similarities or shadows of Moses that have been revealed to us in Christ. In other words, we will move from the shadows to the Son, from the imperfect man to the Perfect One, our Lord and Savior.

### **A Prophet Like You**

Moses told the Israelites, “God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear” (Deut. 18:15). Jesus applied many prophecies in Moses’ written work to himself when He said, “Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me” (John 5:45-46).

When Peter was preaching repentance in Solomon’s porch, he said all of God’s holy prophets had spoken of Jesus since the world began. He said, “For Moses truly said to the Fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you’” (Acts 3:22). He told the assembled crowd that Jesus Christ was the prophet who had been raised up like Moses. Jesus fulfilled the things spoken by the prophets.

Stephen cited Moses’ words about the Prophet during his great defense of Christ (Acts 7:37). The truth of Stephen’s message so inflamed the Jews they stoned him to death.

The apostles, and even the Lord Himself, compel us to look deeply and gain a greater understanding of the shadows of Moses that were illuminated in Christ.

### **Ungodly Rulers**

Long ago, when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, a child was born to a family (Exod. 1-2). The child was Moses. It was during a time when the Pharaoh threatened the lives of all newborn Hebrew males. He became increasingly fearful of the growing number of Hebrews. His first plan was to afflict them with heavy burdens placed on them by their taskmasters. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied. The ruler’s next step was to tell the Hebrew midwives to kill newborn males. But they feared God and did not consent to the horrible command.

Finally, the Pharaoh commanded that every newborn son be cast into the river. Moses’ parents refused to harm their baby boy.

When they could hide him no longer, his mother fashioned a basket. She placed him in the basket and put the basket in the river under the watchful eye of his older sister. The daughter of Pharaoh came to the river and discovered the child. She had compassion on him and decided to care for him as her own.

There are great similarities between Moses' birth and the birth of Christ. Both infants were threatened by ungodly rulers. Baby Jesus was threatened by a ruler named Herod the Great (Matt. 2:13-18). Joseph was warned in a dream and told to take the child and His mother to Egypt. In both cases, separated by many years, male newborns lost their lives. Egypt brought salvation for Moses but death to infant males. Sadly similar, Egypt brought salvation for baby Jesus, but Bethlehem's males under the age of two lost their lives under the brutal massacre of Herod.

### **Adoption**

Moses and Jesus were adopted into two dramatically different families. The Egyptian princess that discovered the baby boy gave him the name Moses and adopted him, "brought him up as her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds" (Exod. 2:5-10; Acts 7:21-22). He enjoyed the privileges of a royal life and education until he was forty years old. In contrast, Jesus was born in a lowly manger and adopted by the carpenter, Joseph (Matt. 1:24-25). In that humble setting, He grew in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and men (Luke 2:52). When He was resurrected, God distinguished Him in a unique way. Paul said,

Therefore, God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

### Shepherd of Sheep

Moses' faith grounded him. It provided the necessary foundation for the challenges that were to come. It came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. The writer of the book of Hebrews says,

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward (Heb. 11:24-26).

Moses set aside royalty to embrace his suffering Hebrew brethren. Coffman says, "When the moment came, he made the right decision, viewing the pleasures of sin in their true character as ephemeral, and at last unsatisfying" (291).

During his visit to the enslaved Hebrews, he saw one of his brethren suffering wrong. He avenged the wrong and struck down the Egyptian. By inspiration, Stephen gave an inspired explanation of Moses rationale, "For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand" (Acts 7:25). Instead the Hebrew threatened to reveal his act of vengeance.

Moses fled Egypt. He went as far as the land of Midian and became a shepherd of sheep. He was in that land for the next forty years. It was his training ground, I believe, for shepherding God's people (Exod. 3:1). Sheep are not intelligent animals. They many times follow the desires of their bellies. This often lands them in a dangerous crevice or in the path of a lion. God's people often followed their fleshly desires, which led them down the treacherous path of sin and death. Despite their sin, Moses continued to lead the people of God. The Psalmist said, "You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Psa. 77:20).

Jesus set aside His divine nature to take the form of man and become a shepherd of men. He described Himself as the Great Shepherd, and us as His sheep (John 10:11). He said the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. That theme continues through the New Testament (Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 7:17). When we follow Jesus' leadership, we are assured spiritual safety on earth and living fountains of waters in the hereafter.

### **Wonders, Signs, Miracles**

Following God's call at the mountain, Moses returned to Egypt and began leading God's people. He stood before Pharaoh pleading for the release of the Hebrews. Pharaoh refused. Moses worked miracles by the power of God (Exod. 4:1-9) and convinced all the people of Egypt that the Hebrews' God was not just another god. He was Almighty God. Moses recorded this event saying, "So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders" (Deut. 26:8). The Psalmist spoke of God their Savior, "who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham" (Psa. 106:21b-22a).

Likewise, Jesus worked at least 33 miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit, beginning with turning water into wine at the wedding feast (John 2:1-12). Each miracle testified of His divine nature and the origin of His message (Mark 3:20-27). He healed the sick, gave hearing to the deaf, cast out demons, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Matt. 11:1-6; Isaiah 29:18-19). His signs and wonders culminated with His own resurrection from the dead and majestic ascension to glory (Luke 24). Peter said, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16).

### **Memorial Supper**

Before the last plague, Moses instituted the Passover meal (Exod. 12). The households that participated according to God's direction were spared the death of the firstborn. God's judgment of death

“passed over” that home. It was a meal that was to be celebrated each year to remember God’s saving power in Egypt. Moses and Jesus instituted memorial feasts or suppers.

Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover. He met with the apostles in an upper room. On that solemn occasion, He instituted the Lord’s Supper before His death (Luke 22:14-20). Each Lord’s Day Jesus is with believers when they assemble for this memorial. In the Supper, we remember His death that was necessary for our salvation. Paul reminds us that as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we “proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).

When Jesus’ blood was applied to us in penitent obedience, spiritual death “passed over” and we were able to experience spiritual freedom. If we are faithful to Him, this freedom lasts not just a lifetime, but stretches into eternity.

### **Power Over Water**

When the Egyptians suffered the ten plagues, the Israelites were finally driven from their land. But Pharaoh had a change of heart and, with his vast army, pursued them. With the power of God, Moses stretched out his staff over the Red Sea and the waters parted.

This great demonstration of God’s power served to strengthen the Israelite’s resolve, at least for a short time, and it made a lasting impression on surrounding nations. Over forty years later the people of Canaan were still talking about this event (Josh. 2:8-11).

Moses and Jesus worked miracles, showing God’s power over great bodies of water. Jesus exhibited power over the Sea of Galilee on numerous occasions, as well as elements within the sea (Matt. 8:23-27, Mark 4:39, 6:45-51, Luke 5:3-7). He stilled raging waters. He walked on water. And now, two thousand years later, we are still talking about Jesus’ miraculous power over all things.

### **Sustaining Bread And Meat**

Not long after the Israelites had been delivered at the parting of the Red Sea, they cried out with complaints that they had no bread. The Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for



you” (Exod. 16:4). So it was that in the morning the dew lay all around, and when the dew lifted, the ground was covered with manna, the bread of heaven. As a result of Moses’ intervening prayers, God fed the multitudes with quail that came up at evening and covered the camp.

God also provided life-giving bread and meat through Jesus. On two occasions He fed bread and fish to hungry multitudes. The people had assembled to hear his words and receive His blessings (Matt. 14:13-21). In other settings, the Lord talked about the spiritual bread of heaven. He said,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” Then they said to him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” (John 6:32-35)

### **Life-Giving Water**

Not much time had elapsed following God’s provision of bread when the Israelites quarreled with Moses about having no water (Exod. 17). The Lord told him to go with the elders to the rock of Horeb and strike it with the staff he used to part the waters of the Red Sea. Moses did so. Water poured forth from the rock and the people drank to their fill.

God provided life-giving water through Moses and through Jesus. The Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, asking, “Give me a drink.” She was puzzled and responded with a question of her own, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” The Lord began to teach her a powerful lesson about **living** water. He said, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever

drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:5-14).

### **Rejection And Betrayal**

Shortly after God’s provision of manna, quail, and water, Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses. Their first criticism was because Moses had taken an Ethiopian wife. But the second was more serious than the first. They questioned his leadership saying, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” (Num. 12:1-2). Moses was a humble man, the most humble man on earth. Fortunately, he did not have to address this problem. God quickly corrected their gross error.

Moses surely must have felt the sting of rejection and betrayal with their words. But this was a mere shadow of what was to come fiercely with the Christ, the Perfect One. Jesus’ brothers rejected His claim to be the Son of God. John says simply, “For even his brothers did not believe in Him” (John 7:5). On many occasions the Jews sought to kill him (John 7:1), and eventually succeeded. Jesus suffered unparalleled betrayal with Judas’ kiss and Peter’s denials.

Paul spoke of Jesus’ sacrifice beginning with this description of His great humility. He “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7-8). Both Moses and Jesus suffered rejection and betrayal by their siblings as well as a vast number of Jewish brethren, while displaying great humility.

### **Forty Days And Nights**

God’s people traveled to the foot of Mt. Sinai and camped. Moses climbed the mountain with Joshua by his side (Exod. 24:12-18). Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on top of the mountain. Moses entered the cloud and went up. He was on the mountain forty days and forty nights before receiving the law.

Likewise, Jesus was in the wilderness forty days and forty nights before combating Satan with the law (Matt. 4:2). He quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3, Deuteronomy 6:16, and Deuteronomy 6:13 to defeat the three temptations presented by the devil on that occasion.

### **Testing And Mediating**

The Lord descended on Mt. Sinai to give the law to the people, but when they saw the thundering, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, they trembled and stood afar off (Exod. 20:18-19). They told Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

Moses ascended the mountain and received the Law. He delayed coming down from the mountain, and presuming the worst, the Israelites asked Aaron to make a golden calf. Moses descended with the Ten Commandments in hand and saw their worship and revelry before the calf. His anger burned. He cast down the tablets and disciplined the idol worshipers. The next day he returned to the Lord and interceded for them, asking God to forgive their sin (Exod. 32:9-32). The Psalmist wrote, “Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them” (Psa. 106:23). This was not the only time Moses interceded for the people. He often asked God to spare the stiff-necked nation. They seemed at every turn to test Moses (Deut. 9; Psa. 106:13-14), and later tested Jesus (Matt. 22:18).

Moses and Jesus were mediators between God and man. Jesus continues in that role. He is now the Perfect One who intercedes for God’s people. Paul says Jesus is at the right hand of God and makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:34). The writer of Hebrews says Jesus always lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25) and stresses the fact that He is the Mediator of a better covenant (Heb. 12:24). A mediator is an advocate—we might use the word *lawyer*, one who pleads a person’s case before higher authority. Jesus pleads our case before the highest authority, God the Father.

### **Shining Faces And Fearful Witnesses**

Moses ascended the mountain a second time to receive the commandments. He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights and neither ate bread nor drank water. And God wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments (Exod. 34:28). We now understand that Moses was a shadow of the perfect lawgiver, Jesus Christ (Jas. 2:8). When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets, the skin of his face shone, such that it brought fear to Aaron and the children of Israel (Exod. 34:29-30).

Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus as he ascended a mountain and they witnessed our Lord's transfiguration. Like Moses long before, His face shone as the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light (Matt. 17:1-2). There was a short exchange that followed. Peter impetuously suggested they make three tabernacles, one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. Peter was interrupted when a bright cloud overshadowed them.

Suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matt. 1:5). The three apostles promptly fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. Keil and Delitch comment on the last two words of the Father's affirmation of His Son. They write, "in the words 'hear ye Him,' which were uttered from the cloud at the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. xvii, 5), the expression in [Deut. 18] ver. 15, 'unto him shall ye hearken,' is used verbatim with reference to Christ" (396). God made it abundantly clear in the Old Testament prophecy and the New Testament fulfillment of that prophecy that Jesus Christ was the preeminent and final spokesman from God. The writer of Hebrews summed it up, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2).

### **Shadow Of The Serpent**

Moses continually dealt with the stubborn nature of the Israelites. Shortly after Aaron's death, the people spoke against

Moses saying, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread” (Num. 21:5). The Lord answered their ingratitude by sending fiery serpents. They bit the people and many died. So the people came to Moses confessing their sin and he prayed for them. God told him to make a fiery serpent, set it on a pole, and those who looked at it would live. Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. If the people had been bitten and looked at the serpent, they lived. This horrific account was a shadow of the most important event in the history of man.

Jesus had a late-night discussion with a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus (John 3:1-21). Our Lord explained to him the simplicity of His mission on earth. He said, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes on Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15). Jesus was lifted up on the cross of Calvary. The serpent that Moses raised was a shadow, a shadow that pointed to the reality of the cross, and Jesus’ power to save.

### **Land Of Rest**

The Israelites complained again about the lack of water. “They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them; because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips” (Psa. 106:32-33). Moses, a man driven to sheer frustration and impatience, struck the rock instead of speaking to it and he took partial credit for the great miracle. This stands as a great warning to any spiritual leader. Satan uses frustration and impatience to do his evil work. Due to this sin, Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. However, God took him atop Mt. Nebo and let him see, from a distance, the long-awaited land of promise (Deut. 34:1-6). We Christians have our own land of promise. Jesus died so we could enter that new land, the land of rest, heaven itself (Heb. 4:1).

### **Striking Similarities**

Though Moses never entered the Promised Land, he was, in fact, seen there. As mentioned earlier, Jesus ascended a mountain with three apostles, His close inner circle. They witnessed His transfiguration. Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and spoke with Him about his exodus, decease, or death, which Jesus was about to accomplish.

During this single awesome event, we see several striking similarities between Moses and Jesus. Moses was seen after his death (Luke 9:30) and Jesus was seen after His death by over five hundred people (1 Cor. 10:4). Moses appeared with Jesus in an amazing New Testament setting (Luke 9:30) and Jesus appeared with Moses in an amazing Old Testament setting (1 Cor. 15:6). And finally, Moses spoke to the Lord about His exodus (Luke 9:30), and in the form of a burning bush, the Lord spoke to Moses about his role in the grand exodus of the Israelites from Egypt (Exod. 3:13).

### **Shadows and Substance**

We began this study taking a look at the nature of shadows. They are elusive and mysterious. A pattern or form may be visible, but the substance is a mystery until it is revealed. Moses was indeed a shadow of the Christ. God's plan of redemption was a mystery to all that lived prior to Jesus. He was the marvelous revelation of God's plan to redeem man. He was the grand fulfillment of the prophecy, "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him." The apostle Philip recognized this Prophet when he had only been with Jesus a short time. He said to Nathanael, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45).

In the course of this brief study, we have been able to see at least twenty-three striking similarities or prophetic shadows in the life of Moses that have been revealed in Christ. The prophets longed to know the great mystery of which they had a part. Peter said they were,

Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:12).

In his second and final letter, Peter said that we have the prophetic word confirmed, and we “do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19).

The mystery that was concealed since the dawn of time has been made known or illuminated. We are not like the prophets of old who lived in the shadows. When Christ came to earth, the substance was gradually made known. The children of God were then able to move from the shadows to the Son of God, from the imperfect man Moses, to the Perfect One, Christ Jesus.

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## CHAPTER 34

# Redeeming The Time Because The Days Are Evil

*April Meacham*

The Bible devotes only 13 verses to it, but the account thrills our hearts. A mother's love protects a baby boy from the king who wants to kill him. The simple act of putting him in a basket in a river begins a sequence of events that ends with him being the agent of God's miracles and the leader of God's people. In fact, this Bible event was so compelling that many cultures have a myth of an infant "hero set adrift in rush baskets" (qtd. in Dyer).<sup>1</sup>

Her name was Jochebed. She was an ordinary Israelite woman; as far as we know no miraculous event was performed on or for her. But she lived in an extraordinary time, a time accurately called evil days. She lived in Egypt in the days of the Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph" (King James Version, Exod. 1:8). This Pharaoh saw that the Israelites were "more and mightier" than the Egyptians and he compelled them to build cities for him, thinking that a people worn down from forced labor would not grow. His plan backfired, for "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel" (Exod. 1:12). Pharaoh's next step was to enslave the Israelites formally. He instructed his overseers to make the Israelites work "with rigour" (Exod. 1:13) and then he dealt the cruelest blow of all. He called the Hebrew midwives and told them to kill all Israelite males as soon as they were born. The midwives feared God and did not obey Pharaoh. As a result, Israel "multiplied and waxed very mighty" (Exod. 1:20). So Pharaoh commanded **all** the people to throw the Hebrew boys into the Nile River as soon as they were born.

That was the situation when Jochebed gave birth to her third child, a boy who was “exceeding fair” (Acts 7:20). Jochebed and her husband Amram hid the child in their home for three months. “But when she could no longer hide him” (Exod. 2:3), she made a waterproof ark, put him in it, and placed the ark on the edge of the Nile River. She put her daughter on watch. Pharaoh’s daughter came to the river and saw the ark. She sent a servant to get the basket. When the princess opened it, the baby cried and she was moved with compassion, recognizing that this exceptionally beautiful child was one of the Hebrew children who should have been murdered. The baby’s sister approached Pharaoh’s daughter with an offer to bring a Hebrew wet-nurse. Pharaoh’s daughter agreed and the girl brought the baby’s own mother. Jochebed took her baby home with the blessings of Pharaoh’s daughter; she was even paid for doing so. But now the baby belonged to Pharaoh’s daughter and he would go to her soon.

Just how long was soon? How long were Jochebed and Amram able to keep their son? The Bible does not tell us. We could speculate about the length of time Moses was allowed to live with his parents, but we have no way to be certain. It may well be the case that Jochebed and Amram used that limited time to teach whatever the growing infant was able to learn about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but Scripture does not tell us that is what happened. We might also consider that they had opportunities to see and influence Moses as he grew, but no record of such was provided. However, we can know with certainty several things about Jochebed.

In choosing to hide her new baby boy, Jochebed acted by faith, “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child” (Heb. 11:23a). The phrase *by faith* indicates that she knew about a law from God that expected her not to kill her son and she obeyed that law. Since “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17), at some point she had heard what God had said on the matter. This was the Patriarchal Age. Did God directly tell Amram not to kill Moses or was she following a law previously given to the patriarchs

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(cf. Gen. 9:6)? We do not know. But we can know for sure that however she learned of it she was willing to do what God expected of her.

We also know that Jochebed acted with her husband, not against his wishes. Although Exodus chapter 2 mentions only Jochebed, “of his parents” (Greek *paterōn*, genitive plural) in Hebrews 11:23 clearly indicates that Amram was part of the decision. They “were not afraid of the king’s commandment” (Heb. 11:23b). The king could have put them to death—along with the baby boy—if their disobedience had been found out. Yet, they chose to hide their “goodly child” (Exod. 2:2).

We do know that Jochebed cared for her son’s needs all the time she had him. She was his source of nourishment. His health and growth were dependent on her. When she could no longer hide him, she did not just expose him in the wild or dump him in the river. She chose a basket made of bulrushes. Barnes says it was made of “a strong rush, like the bamboo, about the thickness of a finger, three cornered” (“Exo. 2:3”). Then she daubed it with slime (“the mud of the Nile, which, when hardened, is very tenacious”; Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, “Exod. 2:3”) and pitch, which made the ark watertight (Barnes). She took care to set the basket “in the flags by the river’s brink” (Exod. 2:3), not directly in the current. She set her daughter to watch what would happen. All these are wonderful indications of her love for her son. Three months is not a long time, but she made the most of it by providing for and protecting him.

Making the most of time is the idea in the phrase *redeeming the time* in Ephesians 5:16. Thayer says *redeeming the time* means “to make wise and sacred use of every opportunity for doing good” (“*exagoradzo*”). In our language, we would simply say “making the most of the time.” This verse is the middle of three verses that make up the immediate context. The passage reads, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:15-17). Paul exhorted the Ephesians to walk circumspectly, literally to look how carefully ye

walk (Vincent, “Eph. 5:15”). The word *circumspectly* means exactly or accurately. They were to stay to the narrow way (Matt. 7:14) and not turn “to the right hand or to the left” (2 Kings 2:22). He then says that wise people will redeem their time by understanding the will of the Lord and living accordingly.

As Christians, we have the will of the Lord given to us in His Word. We have today; we have no promise of tomorrow (Jas. 4:13-15). Like Jochebed, we cannot know how long we will have to influence the people in our lives. We have so many things with which we can fill our time. But since God, the Creator and giver of time, expects us to make the most of our time, we need to make some choices. As we consider the roles we have been given, please keep these questions in mind: (1) Am I merely doing the acceptable or am I making the most of my time? (2) What would God consider the “mosts”?

### **Making The Most Of My Time As A Mother**

Mothers are cooks, housekeepers, teachers, and personal shoppers; timekeepers, decorators, valets, and chauffeurs; babysitters, nurses, listeners, and planners. Salary.com’s MOM salary wizard lists these and other jobs totaling 98.9 hours per week worked for a “typical” stay-at-home mom. With all these ways that mothers can spend their time, how can mothers make the most of their time?

#### ***Love God first***

Americans today have a trend toward deifying our children (McClane). We build the family’s life around them. We believe and teach them through word and example that they are the most special beings in the whole world. We exert every effort to make sure they have the best of everything.

Loving our children is natural; it is even a commandment from God (Tit. 2:4). But when we allow our precious offspring to be the center of our lives, we violate God’s Word for He tells us to put Him first (Matt. 6:33; Matt. 22:35-37). Matthew 10:37 says, “He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” If a mother loves God first, she still has plenty of room to love her children. But if she loves her children first, God has no place—for

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He will not accept less than His rightful place. Someday our children will leave home. When they do, will we have a relationship with our Lord or have we set Him aside for them for so long that we no longer even know our Father?

*Love our children*

Titus 2:4 does command us to love our children. As Christians, we shake our heads in dismay when we hear yet another news story about a mother who neglected, abused, or even killed her child. We cannot fathom such a situation. We would never fail to feed our child if he were hungry; we would never fail to clothe him if he were naked; we would never fail to give him a proper place in which to live. We would never fail to meet those physical needs, but what about their need for love?

Do our children **know** we love them? A few years ago, a bumper sticker became popular. It read, “Have you hugged your child today?” Are we so busy that we need to be reminded to show our children affection by a bumper sticker? A hug costs nothing, does not have to be prepared ahead of time, does not have to be stored, and does not have to be cleaned. It does provide affection, comfort, reassurance, and release from stress. Remember how often Jesus touched those He healed. Hugging her children is definitely a “most” way for a mother to spend her time.

Loving our children also means setting limits and correcting bad behavior. The home is the place to learn the concepts of obedience and disobedience, and consequence and punishment. “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov. 13:24). “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul” (Prov. 29:17). “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Prov. 19:18). “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Prov. 29:15). These verses and others are often used to teach that the appropriate use of corporal punishment (spanking) is commanded by God, but notice one other point. Every one of those verses makes it clear that correcting and any corresponding punishment are to be done by **parents**. Parents

who neglect this aspect of rearing their children do not truly love them (Prov. 13:24) and are not following God's example of love (Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6).

**Teach your children**

Fathers specifically are commanded to "bring them [children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). The word *nurture* comes from the Greek word *paideia* meaning "training, education" (Vincent, "Eph. 6:4"). Moses wrote it this way in Deuteronomy 6:5-8,

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

Remember Timothy? His knowledge of the Word came from the teaching of his mother and grandmother. "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim. 1:5); "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

Also notice that Ephesians 6:4 is quite specific as to the type of training God expects parents to do. It is "in the Lord." How often do we push our children to excel in secular education but allow them to ignore any opportunity to gain Bible knowledge? The church does have a role to play in a child's Bible education, and we need to express our gratitude to good Bible class teachers every chance we get. But it is past time for us to accept the responsibility for teaching our own

children the Bible. The command given and example shown mean teaching our children God and His Word are a God-expected “most” for my time as a mother.

### ***Protect them***

Jochebed carefully protected her son against the possibility of harm. Today’s society attacks our children with evil through the media, school textbooks, and personal influences. Whether it means saying no to the youth group who has chosen a movie or activity of which God would not approve, homeschooling your children, or controlling their circle of friends, mothers have the right and responsibility to protect their children from spiritual harm. Neighbors, family, and even some members of the local congregation may not support those choices and may criticize or ridicule a family who makes them. Even as the heart aches with such treatment, remember the words of the Saviour, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Matt. 5:11; see also 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 1 Pet. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 3:12). Besides the blessing of spiritual protection for her children, a mother who makes these difficult choices provides a beautiful example of standing up for righteousness (Eph. 6:10ff). Protecting her children is a double “most” for a mother’s time.

### ***Let them go***

Jochebed knew when she got Moses back that she would have to give him up at some point. When we have a child, we know that someday that child will grow up and leave us. We know it; but do we let them go? Genesis 2:24 says, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother.” Many marriages suffer because even though the husband and wife tried to leave and cleave, mama would not let go. Do your job as a mother and then let your child go. It is the way to make the most of that time in their lives.

Mothers have so many jobs to do and a limited time in which to do them. Putting God first, loving her children, teaching them about God, protecting them spiritually, and letting them go will be making the most of that limited time.

### **Making The Most Of My Time As A Wife**

Even before we become mothers, we need to make the most of our time as wives. God thought so highly of marriage that He created woman specifically and especially for man (Gen. 2:20-23). In the Old Testament, He said, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing” (Prov. 18:22) and in the New Testament, He used the picture of marriage to explain the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-33). God created it, regulated it, and promoted it. We should understand what His Will is for our time as a wife.

#### ***Play with him***

God created woman so man would have a “help meet” (Gen. 2:18). Barnes describes this person as “one who may not only reciprocate his feelings, but take an intelligent and appropriate part in his active pursuits” (Gen. 2:18). Men do not like to do everything alone; they want their wives to be a part, too. Does your husband like sports? Then become his team’s biggest fan. Does he like motorcycles? Get a helmet and hop on back. It is not necessary or even good to expect to be a part of everything he does, but it is very important to have something to do together. Such an investment in your marriage is a “most” way to spend time as a wife.

#### ***Procreate with him***

In the beginning, God told Adam and Eve to “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28). After all but 8 souls were destroyed in the flood, God said, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen. 9:1). Part of God’s plan for marriage is for the “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24) to produce children. “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed” (Psa. 127:3-5a). Having your husband’s children is a gift no one else can give him.

#### ***Be physical with him***

Another gift that can only come from the wife is the sexual relationship. The Shulamite exclaimed, “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me” (S. of Sol. 7:10). The desire a husband feels for his



wife (and a wife for her husband, too) is right and God provided for its satisfaction, “Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled” (Heb. 13:4a). Paul wrote, “The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife” (1 Cor. 7:5). A wife should not view physical intimacy as a weapon to use to keep a husband “in line.” If a wife is constantly too tired or too busy, she needs to give up something so she will be what God wants her to be for her husband. A proper sexual relationship is a piece of heaven on earth making it a definite “most” for my time as a wife.

### ***Be trustworthy***

It was said of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 that “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil” (Prov. 31:11). A husband should be able to trust his wife with everything he has. He should be able to give her access to their money because he can trust that she would only use it as carefully as he would. But the idea of trust goes farther than with his money. “As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion” (Prov. 11:22). A wife should not tell everything she knows about her husband. She should never participate in one of America’s favorite sports, husband-bashing. If a husband does not share his heart with his wife, maybe it is time for the wife to consider how often she shared his heart with the girls. “A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones” (Prov. 12:4). Broken trust—financial, verbal, or in any other way—can turn marriage mates into roommates.

### ***Keep the home***

According to the United States Department of Labor, in 2008, “Of the 121 million women age 16 years and over in the U.S., 72 million, or 59.5 percent, were labor force participants—working or looking for work.” Assuming a full-time job, a working woman spends 10-12 hours each day preparing for work, going to and from work, and actually performing the job. She sleeps 7 hours on average. Ideally, that would leave 5-7 hours per day to do the job that is supposed to be a primary purpose in her life—but whose life is ideal?

God says that women are to “be keepers at home” (Tit. 2:5) and are to “guide the house” (1 Tim. 5:14). How can she keep it when she is hardly at home? How can she guide when the majority of her time is elsewhere? Some women may have to work; death, divorce, medical catastrophes, or other situations may leave them with no choice in the matter. However, most times it seems that an excuse is offered for not following God’s pattern for the home. One such excuse is that a family just can not make it on one income today. Please note again God’s expectation that the wife be a keeper at home and guide of the house. Would God expect a family to do something that was not possible? Maybe what is considered not possible is having the lifestyle early in marriage that it took the previous generation many years to obtain. Some may feel like they would be wasting their education if they did not work outside the home. Getting the education was a choice; becoming a wife is a choice. When a woman chooses to become a wife, she should accept the role of being a keeper at home. It is God’s plan for her life.

We are not discussing the question of whether a woman working outside the home is acceptable; we want to know what choice makes the most of a woman’s time both as wife and mother. Making the most of my time as a wife—and as a mother—in my home means being in my home.

### **Making The Most Of My Time As A Youth**

Life can be hard for young people. Their time is filled with school responsibilities and activities, expectations of parents, and social interests. They want the time and space to do what they want to do and it seems like everyone else is telling them to do what they should do. They feel every emotion intensely and sometimes feel like life has to be harder for them than it has ever been for anyone else. That is normal, but God directly warned against it. First Corinthians 10 begins with a list of sins that the people of Moses’ day committed and tells us not to do those things. Paul then writes, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man” (1 Cor. 10:13). All the temptations and hard choices to do right you are facing are

“common to man.” Some presentations of evil may be newcomers in the timeline of mankind, but evil has always existed, and mankind has always been tempted by it. Paul finishes the verse by assuring us that God will provide a way out of our temptations. In the next verse, he warns that the thinking that says that my own troubles are worse than anyone else’s is a form of idolatry and tells us to flee from it.

Timothy was told to “flee youthful lusts” (2 Tim. 2:22), and then he was given a list of good things to do in the place of the bad. We have to be careful not to focus exclusively on avoiding the sin of doing wrong things and end up committing the sin of forgetting to do the good things that we know we should do (Jas. 4:17). How can a young person make the most of her time?

### ***Know God***

In the days of Joshua and the elders that outlived him, Israel followed God. But then “there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD” (Judg. 2:10). What a blessing young people have today. They can know God, not because their family “goes to church,” but because God knows them and He wants them to know Him (Heb. 8:11; Exod. 33:17). As His obedient child, she can have all the blessings that come from knowing God (Eph. 1:3). She has someone to talk to any time Who not only listens but also cares what she is feeling (1 Pet. 5:7). She can trust that He will never leave her alone (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5) or change the rules in the middle of things (Mal. 3:6). She can know that no matter what her earthly family does, her Heavenly Father will always be there (Psa. 27:10). Young people can make the most of their time by remembering now thy Creator in the days of their youth (Eccl. 12:1).

### ***Learn the Word***

Lack of knowledge of God’s Word is a source of moral and eventually eternal destruction (Hos. 4:6). But besides the fact that knowing how to handle God’s Word properly makes one approved of God (2 Tim. 2:15), knowing the Scriptures can make a daily difference in our lives.

When the young—and the no-longer-young—are faced with temptations, they need to remember how Jesus fought Satan. Those

three little words, “It is written” (Matt. 4:4), still ring today. We need to understand it in practice, not just in principle. When my date wants more than is right to give, remember what is written of Joseph and flee (Gen. 39:1-12). When the coaches want us to miss services for a sporting event, remember that “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25) was written for us. Knowing God’s word is not just an exercise in memorization; it protects us from separating ourselves from our Father: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11).

### ***Respect your parents***

Young people today can do with ease so many things adults are struggling to figure out. Technology has exploded; the young people have grown up with it, but sometimes it must seem like parents are hopelessly behind. But the bottom line on this matter is this: No matter what they do not know, God still says that parents are in charge (Prov. 1:8; Prov. 23:22; Matt. 15:4). “Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right” (Eph. 6:1). Notice that God does not say to obey your parents when they are right. That would put a young person in a position of getting to decide whether or not to follow parent’s instructions. God simply expects children to obey because it is right. He even gave three reasons to motivate the young to obey: (1) “That it may be well with thee”; (2) That “thou mayest live long upon the earth” (Eph. 6:3); and (3) “This is well-pleasing unto the Lord” (Col. 3:20).

Obedying her parents puts a young person in some great company. As a young man, Jesus was “subject unto them” [his parents] (Luke 2:51). Note that this is said of Him after the account of His being in the temple at age 12. You see, becoming a teenager does not change God’s expectations. Simply obeying her parents will make her own life better and will please the Lord. Now that sounds like a great way for a young person to make the most of her time.

### ***Be an example to others***

God wants His young people to be leaders. First Timothy 4:12 says, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in

purity.” Would the youth in the community ever see Christ if all they ever saw was the local congregation’s youth group? God’s young people should live in such a way that others will want to be like them because that would mean being like Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

Young people will be challenged constantly as they try to live righteously. The dangers of the media and instant online access to all kinds of evil are real. Satan is on the attack, trying to distract our young people with hundreds of things other than God. We are young for only a short time. Let us encourage our youth to go beyond acceptable and make the most of their time.

### **Conclusion**

Jochebed only had Moses for a short time, but she made the most of that time. How many “short times” have you had in your life? Have you merely been marking time? Or have you made the most of your time in every role and age God has given you? If you have failed to make the best use of your time, stop. You can change; you can take control again of your life and your time; you can make the most of every minute knowing that any moment may be your last chance. Making the most of every minute here means we can joyously look forward to time no more.

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