

"LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY."

Acts 7:17-36

This familiar expression needs little, if any, explanation. It simply means that men or women must reach the age of forty before they really begin to live life at its best--- it requiring two score years to prepare us to live and labor at top performance. This is true of the man Moses, about whom we are to study. "And when he was full forty years old, it came in his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel." Concerning Moses let us note several things:--

I. His Deliverance.

As for the Israelites in Egypt, they grew and multiplied greatly. With a lapse of time, the friendly king died and there arose one who was anything but friendly to the Jewish nation. "The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live." It was at that time that Moses was born. It is said of him that as a babe he was exceedingly fair. But because of the emperor's edict, he was cast out of his home when but three months old. You are quite familiar with his rescue by Pharaoh's daughter.

In spite of the emperor's edict, Moses was kept by his parents as long as they felt they could safely do so, namely: three months after birth. "He was 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." What providential leading of the Lord! God had great plans for that little fellow, and to see that he got the best of care, He chose the noble and wealthy daughter of the emperor to look after him. God does things on a grand scale. Then, the mother of Moses was the one chosen by Pharaoh's daughter to be his nurse. Imagine Moses' mother being paid to look after and care for her offspring! Only God could ever have worked out a plan like that. "Man proposes, but God disposes." What a mighty deliverance God wrought for Moses and his parents!

II. His Development.

"Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds" (v. 22). At that time Egypt was the greatest nation in the world. Its scholars were world-famed. They excelled in such things as science and magic. The pyramids of Egypt demonstrate their engineering ability.

Moses was not only trained intellectually, he was also trained physically. He must have had a remarkable physique. He was a strong man all through his life, and at the advanced age of 120 years, he was still in the pink of condition. He was trained socially, being a member of the emperor's household. Moses had fame, fortune, and rare physical development, making him one of the wonders of his day.

III. His Decision.

"And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel" (V. 23). Moses had given Egypt the first forty years of his life, namely, to cast his lot with his own people, the Jews. "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;" (v. 24-25, Hebrews). That was the turning point in his life. He was forty years of age at this time, and it was true of him--"Life begins at forty." Spiritually speaking, he began to live when he made this stupendous decision.

Charlotte Elliott, the author of the song "Just As I Am," was present at a great social affair one night in England, when she entertained all present, and did it well. A preacher of the old school simply remarked to her that she could be such a power for God if she only would. She left him in a fit of anger; but that night she couldn't sleep due to those words ringing in her ears---"You could be such a power for God if you only would." In the morning, after a night of misery, she slipped out of bed, got down on her knees, and there accepted Christ and surrendered her life to Him. Upon rising, she sat down and wrote the hymn that has been instrumental in bringing more people to the place of decision for Christ than perhaps all other invitation songs combined.

IV. His Defense.

At the age of forty, Moses felt that the time had come for him to do something for his ill-treated people. Moses desired to do something grand and noble for his people who at that time were being persecuted and oppressed. He suddenly became overwhelmed with love for and devotion to his brethren.

One day as he was out walking, Moses saw an Egyptian mistreat a Hebrew. He rushed to the rescue of the Israelite, and in the ensuing struggle killed the Egyptian. "And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:" (v. 24). Probably that was farther than Moses had intended to go in the matter. Overcome with anger, he simply killed the man before he realized what was happening. The Egyptian was the offender; Moses the would-be deliverer. For years, his feelings had been growing against the cruel Egyptians, and for his own people according to the flesh. So now what had been stored up in his sub-conscious mind suddenly erupted with volcanic force, and resulted in the death of one of the emperor's servants. Moses knew what that meant, if word reached the ears of the emperor.

All the Jews in the land knew that Moses was a fellow Jew. Naturally, they expected him to come to their aid at such a time. When he did come to the rescue of that mistreated Jew, Moses supposed that that would be the signal to them that his choice had been made, and that he planned to deliver them as a race from the cruelty of the emperor's edicts. "But they understood not" (v. 25). Moses was ready, but alas! his people were not. Formerly, they condemned him for his inaction; now, they condemn him for his action. The result was that Moses was stunned and nonplussed.

V. His Disappearance.

Leaving the scene that day, Moses was baffled and confused. On the following day he returned to the scene. He was grieved by what he saw and heard--two Israelites in the midst of a bitter quarrel. He offered to help them straighten out their difficulties, but like advice unsolicited, his interference was resented, especially by the person in the wrong. The one at fault in the matter pushed him away, and angrily said, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didest the Egyptian yesterday?" Upon hearing those words, Moses was overcome with fear and fled the country in order to protect his life.

VI. His Discovery.

At the expiration of forty years in the wilderness, an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire in a bush. As he drew near to behold this strange sight, God spoke to him saying, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Jacob." "Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground." Holy ground is a place where:--

1. God reveals His presence.

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5).

The presence of God will make any place holy. Places where men meet God will always be regarded as sacred. Nothing can be commonplace where God is. It was a holy place because it was a place of dedication. It was there that Moses was transformed from an aimless shepherd to a fearless leader, lawgiver, and liberator. Such a radical change could not come into any man's life without making the place of such an experience stand out unforgettably in their memory. It was also the place of the realization of God. God told Moses that as He had been with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so He would be with him. God would supply the unfailing strength for the journey ahead. Whatever Moses might need, God would provide. He was all that Moses needed.

2. God refines His people.

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." (Isaiah 6:1, 5-7.)

3. God ratifies His promises.

"I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about." (Psalms 3:4-6.)

4. God releases His power.

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49.)

5. God restates His program.

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." (Acts 13:1-2.)

Let us observe a little more closely what God said in verse 32, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This statement indicates the elements that make up our religion.

1. The individual element.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob stood out as individual worshippers. God must be worshiped by individuals; there is no other way of worship. The relationship with God must be a personal and an individual matter.

With God the individual is never lost in the multitude. We may think of the thousands of slaves who toiled in building the pyramids. They do not mean anything to us except a mass of humanity, but to God each stood out as an individual.

In Proverbs we read, "My Son, give Me thine heart." Christ said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," and "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Paul said, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Peter said, "He careth for you." These are individual appeals.

2. The continuous element.

He was the God of succeeding generations. The world that David knew was not the same world that Moses knew. The hundreds of years had wrought many changes,

yet He was the God of Moses and of David. Almost all things have undergone radical changes with the passing of the centuries; but three things remain constant: human nature is the same; sin is the same; God is the same.

No one age or generation can monopolize God. Not even Abraham with his defiant faith, nor Solomon with his matchless wisdom, nor Elijah who could open the fountains of rain with his prayers; no individual nor group can get a corner on faith or monopolize God.

Science does much for us, but it still calls for the help of God. It has made us wise, but not better. It has bound us together as neighbors, but it has not made us neighborly. It has made it possible for us to be heard around the earth, but it has not given us anything to say.

3. The divine element.

He was Abraham's God and Isaac's God and Jacob's God. How these men varied in their personalities and characteristics! And yet He was the God of each.

Any man with such a God can transform a community. A man with such a God is invincible. This explains the greatness of these men--the greatness of their faith, and courage, and loyalty, and their power in prayer. It is no wonder that the nations feared them.

A man can not be mean and worship such a God. He will either be transformed into the likeness of his God or quit worshipping Him.

II. His Duty.

"I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years."

In spite of their opposition and murmurings, God established Moses' rule over them. Just as Joseph's brethren had rejected him, in like manner the Jews had rejected the leadership of Moses, the servant of God. But whether they wanted Moses or not, God had selected him, and him only, to lead the people out of the house of bondage and on toward the Land of Promise.