

THE LIFE OF OBEDIENCE

Hebrews 11:23-27

The Bible portrays the characters of many persons -- the righteous in order that we may pattern our lives after them, and the wicked that we may shun their sinful ways. The New Testament biography of Moses, which is recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, portrays one of the greatest men and leaders of all time. In original endowments, in the grandeur of his mission, and in the permanence of his influence, no other man has been more highly honored of God. Moses is one of the towering figures of history who stand out like mountain peaks against the prairie level of ordinary life.

This biography begins with the family background on a note of parental courage: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Hebrews 11:23). Their not fearing the king's commandment paid off for weread in verse twenty-seven that when Moses grew up he did not fear the wrath of the king. Like parents, like child!

Moses was highly favored in being born into a home in which God was known, honored, loved and obeyed. Because of Pharaoh's decree that all the male children should be put to death his parents sought to conceal Moses. Due to divine providence, the faith of his parents, and through the love and shrewdness of his mother, Moses was consigned to an ark, which was placed among the bulrushes on the Nile River, and committed unto the keeping of the eternal God. Even though his parents may have been poor, they were rich in faith.

Moses' sister, Miriam, watched to see the outcome of his remarkable venture of faith. God opened the way whereby the boy of destiny might have the supreme advantage of a mother's loving care and discipline. Presently Moses was discovered by the daughter of Pharaoh, whose pagan heart was drawn to the babe to such an extent that he was adopted into the family, of the royal house. Miriam arranged for their mother to become his nurse, and it seems that Moses remained in her care long enough to be led to place his trust in God.

Egypt is a type of this world and its Pharaoh is a type of Satan. Any godly parent who tries to bring up children in this world-order today knows what it is to buck the edicts of Pharaoh in style, popularity, and earthly success. How to rear children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord nowadays calls for all the wisdom dedicated parents can pray down from heaven. It takes a double-dose of Christian courage not to fear "the commandments of the king." Amidst all the handwringing over juvenile delinquency we forget that too many church-member parents would rather have their children to be popular and to succeed in Egypt than have them "bound for the Promised Land."

Moses was reared as a prince and received the best training that was available. He apparently stood upon the threshold of all the things that men most desire in this world. There was nothing that wealth could give that he could not have had for the asking. There was nothing in pleasure that was not available to him. There was nothing in position, honor and government that was not open to him.

After forty years of living in luxury and enjoying the best advantages that Egypt could provide, Moses stood at the crossroads where he had to make a choice. He had to decide whether he would identify himself with the suffering race, whose cause was that of righteousness and mercy, or continue with their oppressors, with whom in upbringing and position he was already associated. Position, power, prestige, pleasure and possession-- those things for which people constantly give their lives -- were all within his grasp.

Because of his faith in God Moses, deliberately turned his back on high position, prestige, power, pleasures and possessions in the greatest nation of his time in order to identify himself with a nation of slaves whose portion was ill treatment and reproach.

Moses learned and proved the truth that James Russell Lowell wrote centuries later:

"Once to every man and nation
comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood,
for the good or evil side."

Doubtless it hurt Moses to make a decision that involved those who had shown him the utmost personal kindness, but, having weighed the two alternatives and surveyed the momentous issues at stake, he made his choice and then stated it very frankly and clearly. Moses' choice revealed that he was a stalwart giant, and not a puny pigmy; a man of vision, and not of short-sightedness; and a man of creative ingenuity, and not a slave of circumstance. Regarding life as an entrustment, and not as an evasion, Moses lighted a night of pessimism with a torch of genuine optimism, and lifted the dread of his day by the dream of a better tomorrow.

The real explanation of the wonderful career of Moses, of his place in history, and of his unending influence upon the world is that he believed God. No doubt his faith in God was implanted in him first by his mother nurse during his early life. This is where, when and how most noble manhood and heroic living begins. Some great men have had a skalawag for a father, but very few, if any, ever became great who did not have a great mother. When Moses arrived at the crossroads of his early career, the thing that influenced his thinking, determined his actions and shaped his life was his profound personal faith in God. Moses did not decide on the spur of the moment, but, after he had seen clearly the two alternatives, he weighed carefully both the objective and the outcome and then made his calculated choice.

One reason for the pathetic condition of evangelical life and witness today is that we have neglected to concentrate on and build spiritual character; what we are. Too often we focus our attention and interest upon what we do, our service. E. M. Bounds said, "While the church looks for better methods, God is looking for better men." The work that God does in man is always primary to the work that God does through him. In talking to His prophet, God said, "Elijah, hide thyself," and then He said, "Elijah, show thyself." The Holy Spirit arrested Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and he was saved. He was sent to Arabia for a few years, and there the foundations were laid for the mighty life of service and power for God during the remainder of his career. In a very real sense the hiding determines the nature of the showing. The secret work God does in a person determines the public work that God does through him. What were the evidences and distinguishing marks of the work God did in Moses?

I. Moses' Refusing.

Moses had developed a keen eye for distinguishing right from wrong. How easy it is for us to persuade ourselves that the thing we want to do is the thing we ought to do! Moses did not permit his personal inclinations and interests to blind him. He realized that it would be sinful for him to choose the second best.

1. Position.

Moses "Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." From his earliest days, Moses was clearly destined for fame and fortune; for eminence and authority

in the land. He was the "son of Pharaoh's daughter," and from the worldly point of view his prospects were very bright. Upon hearing the call of God, Moses knew that he must either listen to God and turn his back upon the allurements of Egypt, or refuse to heed the call of God. The challenge which Moses faced is one which we face today. We are living in a generation which may be characterized by the title "the cult of softness," and we must recognize that there are some refusals that we have to make. One must say "No" to some things if he is to live for God. Worldliness is ruining the lives of so many Christians. By worldliness we mean that spirit which enters a man's life and seduces him away from the prior claim which Christ holds upon him.

It was his faith in God that causes Moses to refuse to be called something he was not. It led him to a rejection of the unreal and the artificial. He wanted to be called what he was, and he wanted to be what he was called. Oh, what some people will do in order to be called something they are not! What people discover you to be will determine your place in of service and usefulness in life.

2. Pleasure.

Egypt was the headquarters of Satan in the days of Moses. The Egyptian civilization was built upon fleshly desires and sensual excitements. Moses had ample opportunity to indulge in every type of sinful pleasure known to man — sensual, social, and intellectual. But, it can be said to his credit that he refused to contaminate himself with the then existing debaucheries. Moses' "no" was a full-fledged negative. It was not tinged with the slightest "Yes." To the road of pleasure he spoke a vigorous, out-and-out, "No," "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." We need to learn what Moses knew so well, that the pleasures of sin are for a season only, and a very short one at that.

3. Possessions.

Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." To Egypt came the ships and caravans of many nations, carrying away her grain and leaving behind their money. Many of these treasures went into the coffers of Pharaoh. When Moses said "No" to the treasures of Egypt, he refused much that might have been his for the taking. It took a man deeply schooled in permanent values to make the refusal which Moses made. He considered the eternal of more importance than the temporal.

A brilliant young doctor with great promise of a distinguished career was saved. Not long after that he heard the call of God to go to the mission field and he decided to go. Some of his fellow students tried to persuade him not to go. Among other things they said, "You'll never get on in the world out there." He turned to them and said, "Which world?" And that's it, isn't it? For which world are you living? Are you going to live for the things that are passing and perishing, or the things that are permanent and eternal?

II. Moses' Choosing.

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Moses' faith in God caused him to forsake royalty for the privilege of fellowship with a nation of broken-hearted, cowering slaves. No doubt many called him a fool for leaving what they considered the best and going to what they called the worst. Moses chose to live the life of obedience, even though it was costly. His choice indicated that he considered life as an investment and not an evasion. He did not whine and complain that his lot in life was hard.

III. Moses' Esteeming.

We read that Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Moses weighed in the balance the results, the treasures, and the rewards of giving himself to the claims of Egypt over against the results and rewards of acceding to the claims of the Lord upon his life. Repeatedly we are told that Moses "did according to the word of the Lord."

It is not popular to be a genuine Christian. People will laugh at you. They will ridicule you. If you don't believe it, just go out and try to be a real sure-enough Christian. Sometimes you will hear people say, "This old world is hungry for the gospel." That is not true. Forget it if you think this world loves Christ. The world crucified Christ when He was in it. It ran Paul out of nearly every town in which he preached. The world hates Christ and the gospel.

How in the world did Moses stand up under the strain? "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." The Lord gave him the strength to go through all of the experiences of life. He will do the same for you if you will live obediently.

Moses made an indelible impression upon the people of his day, and transmitted numerous blessing to generations unborn. His life had the stamp of divine approval upon it, which is what counts most after all is said and done. When at last he went to his resting place on Mount Nebo, a spot known only to God, his faith in God was most impressive indeed. He had kept his eye upon the reward, and God had been with him all the way. Moses was not only blessed and honored of God during his lifetime, but some fifteen hundred years later he was chosen by God to be one of the two who appeared on the mount of transfiguration and talked with our Lord Jesus Christ. What a reward!