

AT THE FORKS OF THE ROAD

"By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharoah'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" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

The expression "the forks of the road" does not refer to a crossroads, or to the cloverleaf in a highway, but to a place in the lonely countryside where the road forks, angling in two directions. One forks goes to the right and the other to the left.

Moses had come to such a place in life. When he did, he knew who he was, a son of Hebrew parents. He had come to realize more clearly what he ought to be. He stood at this strategically determining point in his life, and he made a decision, one which meant a whole new way of life for him.

Various things were involved in the decision which Moses made. Among them were:

I. A New Direction.

At the forks of the road Moses chose a new direction. When he stood between Egypt and Israel, between the pleasures of sin and the people of God, he made a choice. When he made his decision, it meant Midian and Horeb, conflicts with Pharoah, crossing the Red Sea, and wanderings in the wilderness. By virtue of the decision which he made, a whole new direction of life opened before him.

Suppose he had taken the other fork of the road. Suppose he had decided to stay in Egypt. Do you suppose that a decision to stay in Egypt would have meant that he would have continued in the same old direction? It could never have been. This was one of those strategic spots in a man's life that, when he chooses, he changes the direction of his life. Had Moses said "no" to the call of the new life, the old life would never have been the same again. There would have been a haunting sense of the fact that he had rejected the will of God. There would have been a haunting sense of the fact that he had forsaken his people. His conscience never would have permitted him to forget them. He never would have been the same man in Egypt thereafter.

Sometimes a decision does not alter greatly the direction. It may be just a very slight angle from the old direction, but it is always different. And although only slight, it means that the ultimate goal is far different. Some years ago when one of our military planes took off from an airfield in the West, the navigating instruments were injured. With a slightly damaged instrument the navigator charted the course. When the plane dropped down out of the clouds over the Pacific, those on board found only a vast expanse of the ocean. Out of gas, the plane plunged into the water. Several days later, Rickenbacker and his party were picked up out of the ocean. It was only a slight miscalculation, at the point of origin, by the navigator, because his instrument was damaged, but the slight miscalculation at the beginning of the journey meant that every moment they traveled from that point they moved farther off course.

Too many people today are tempted to think of themselves as machines without the power of choice. They see themselves as puppets controlled by force and events beyond their control. To be sure, they go through the motions of freedom, but they have the feeling of being driven instead of directing themselves.

II. A Choice Of Values.

At the forks of the road there is a choice of values. The choice of values is involved in one's decision--whether he takes the right fork or the left fork. Here was Moses. On one side was Egypt--"called the son of Pharoah's daughter" and "the pleasures of sin for a season." This meant position, wealth, recognition, and an unlimited future. A young man could easily be dazzled by these things. On the other side was Israel, the people of God. There was affliction with the people of God. There was the unknown. There was not any wealth. There would be position, but position with awful responsibilities involved in it. There would be times when the people would grumble and complain. There would be the weariness of the wilderness wanderings. There would be a lonely death.

Here a man stood with the conflicting values on each side of him. When he chose, his choice was one of values. For Moses it was a choice of the people and a future in the will of God.

Like Moses, you stood at a fork of the road. You had a choice of values to make. You had to decide which way you wanted to go. You had to decide, under God, what you wanted in life. You had to decide what down in your deepest soul you knew God wanted you to be and to do. You stood in the presence of values and made a decision, and, with the decision made, you have committed yourself to a new way of life. Any person who comes to the place where the road goes right or left makes a choice of values.

III. A New Dedication.

At the forks of the road there was a new dedication. The new dedication began with a great renunciation. There were some things to which Moses said "no." The word "refused" indicates that it was a deliberate decision of renunciation. Moses said "no" to seemingly attractive and appealing possessions and possibilities. In the decision made there was a decisive "no" to the attractions of the past. Most great dedications begin in great refusals, with the ability of the individual to say "no."

"By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter." Moses had developed a keen eye for distinguishing between right and wrong. He did not permit his personal inclinations and interests to blind him. He knew that it would be sinful to choose the second best.

1. Moses refused position.

As "the son of Pharoah's daughter," Moses' prospects were very bright. It was his faith in God that caused Moses to refused to be called something he was not. It led him to reject the unreal. He wanted to be called what he was, and to be what he was called.

2. Moses refused pleasures.

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 debauchery.

3. Moses refused possessions.

He esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Moses considered the eternal of more importance and of greater value than the temporal. Are you living for the things that are perishing and passing, or the things that are permanent and eternal? Moses was convinced that reproach of and for Christ was better than riches in Egypt.

I challenge you to make your decisions in the light of long-range goals instead of short-term desires. His early announcement of his life's purpose, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?", set the direction of the other decisions of our Lord Jesus. We, too, must make some over-all, long-range commitment of life to the will of God. Then our choices along the way will be made in the light of this primary choice. Many of us have trouble with our decisions because we make them on a day-to-day basis. In the life of every great person there is some dominate goal which directs his energies. We need a great purpose in life, some daring and lofty ideal. We must have some consuming dedication, some objective big enough to command all our efforts. If a man will settle the big issues of life as God would have him, the little issues will take care of themselves.

I challenge you to make your decisions on the basis of moral principle instead of personal popularity. Too often we are looking for the easy way out. We like to take our ideas of right and wrong from those with whom we associate. We are afraid we are going to be unpopular if we make our choices according to our convictions. We talk ourselves into believing that we can evade the moral laws of God. We ask ourselves, "What's in it for me?" instead of, "Is it right or wrong?"

I challenge you to make your decisions at the level of your response instead of your desires. Some years ago the steamer "Fairfax" and the tanker "Pinthis" collided off the coast of Massachusetts. The Fairfax caught fire. The crew deserted their posts. Some of those on board leaped into the sea. A "wiper" by the name of Lester Kober saved the ship. He went to the deserted engine room to locate the trouble. He worked in a dangerous, smoke-filled room until the fire was extinguished. During the investigation that followed he was asked why he had decided to do as he did. He replied, "I saw that someone was needed there."

This kind of quiet heroism should mark the Christian always. He forgets his own safety in the service of others. He sees his duty and does it. He makes many a decision not simply on the basis of personal desire, but because he wanted to fulfill an obligation. We are all enmeshed in a set of responsibilities. No man is free to live according to his own whims. We have duties to ourselves, our families, our church, our communities, our nation, and our God. We can't do as we please. We can't ignore these claims upon us. We need to look up from our selfish pursuits and say, "I saw that someone was needed there." It is this sort of thing that gives character to life.

The Christian today faces decisions that call for sacrifice rather than safety. God grant that we may match the need of the hour with the decisions of devotion to the cause of Christ. During World War II, Heinrich Niemoller, the father of Martin Niemoller, said to Paul Harris, the found of Rotary, "Yes, it is a terrible thing to have a son in a concentration camp ...But there would be something more terrible for us: if God had needed a faithful martyr and our Martin had been unwilling." God's cause needs faithful witnesses these days. It will be a terrible thing for us and for history if He finds us unwilling to choose for Him.

At the forks of the road there is a new significance. When Moses chose to cast his lot with the people of God, he determined the significance of his life. The choice meant a growing, maturing, enriching life, under God. It resulted in a life honored and respected

by the judgments of world history. If men were to name those who across the centuries affected the course of human history, Moses' name would stand high on every list. He won respect, admiration, and honor because he made a decision that placed him where God wanted him. His life developed, unfolded, and became enriched as he became what God wanted him to be.

When a man stands at the forks of the road and makes the right decision, what enables him to do so? The secret in Moses' case was faith. The Scripture says, "By faith Moses..." Moses believed God and trusted Him as a man of faith. He was a man of vision. "He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." His faith gave him capacity to see God. At the forks of the road, a man of faith and of vision can make the right decisions. What you need is the capacity to choose wisely, the courage to make the right choice, and the faith, vision, and strength to live faithfully by the choice.