

REFUSING AND CHOOSING

"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."
Hebrews 11:24-26.

Moses is one of the towering figures of history who stand out like mountain peaks against the prairie level of ordinary life. He became one of the greatest leaders of all time. As a statesman, lawgiver, poet, prophet, priest and general, Moses had no superior and few equals. In a marked degree he had the three essential qualities for success: talent, ambition and energy.

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 into 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 this remarkable venture of faith. 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.

He 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 the cause of righteousness and mercy, or continue with their oppressors, with whom in upbringing and position he was already associated. Position, power, prestige, pleasure and treasures -- 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 treasures 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 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 surveyed the two alternatives and weighed 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 begin. 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.

Inasmuch as Moses was not a timeserver, but a servant of all time, he did not follow the road of least resistance because he knew that course caused men to be crooked. He did not strive for popularity, but he chose the course of principle. Pleasure was not his objective, but high purpose was his destined goal. Ease did not appeal to him, but the emancipation of his people passionately possessed him. Treasures on earth did not interest him, but the laying up of treasures in heaven gladdened his heart. Therefore, he did not hesitate to sacrifice himself on the cross of service.

For what was Moses distinguished?

I. His Refusal.

Moses had 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 what 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 cling to his rights. He also realized that it would be sinful for him to choose the second best. Moses had a clear and keen eye for the things of supreme value.

1. Moses refused position.

Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." This decision and refusal meant the giving up of the highest social position in all the land of Egypt. Actually it was the passing in one step from this exalted position to the lowest rank imaginable. And, mark you, social position is not something that people despise. Some are willing to pay almost any price to obtain and retain a high social standing.

Perhaps you would say that Moses was very foolish for refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. But I would remind you that this choice was made when he was a full-grown man of trained and disciplined intellect. His natural and intellectual powers had been developed to the utmost. He was a man of vast learning. When this mighty man of massive intellect, who even on the natural plane stood above all his contemporaries, reached maturity and surveyed the possibilities of life, he readily "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

It was his faith in God that caused Moses to refuse to be called something he was not. His faith in God implanted within him a passion for reality and a strong love for the truth. It led Moses to a rejection or repudiation of the seeming, the unreal and the artificial. Because he believed God, he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." He wanted to live his life openly and to walk in the light of the truth. He confessed a love for the realities of life. He wanted to be called what he was,

and he wanted to be what he was called. Moses hated the sham, the mere trappings and externals of life, and wanted to live circumspectly before God by Whom all things are seen perfectly. Oh, what some people will do in order to be called something which they are not! What people discover you to be will determine your place of service and usefulness in life.

2. Moses refused pleasures.

Egypt was the devil's headquarters in the days of Moses. The Egyptian civilization was built upon fleshly desires and sensual excitements. Moses had the opportunity of indulging 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 tinctured with the slightest "Yes". To the road of pleasure Moses 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, namely, that the pleasures of any life that is divorced from God are evanescent and fleeting. The pleasures of sin are for a season only, and a very short one at that. To a man of faith the ignoble and fleeting pleasures of the present pale into utter insignificance beside the glories of the great and divine reward of the future.

3. Moses refused treasures.

Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of 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 choice which Moses made. He esteemed the eternal as of more importance than the temporal. A man may give his time and energies, or invest his whole life, in the amassing of a fortune. Then, after he has done so, crepe suddenly appears at his door because a higher voice has said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

The three things that most people pursue, the primary things of popular estimate and regard, the things for which people long and spend busy days and thoughtful nights -- position, pleasures and treasures -- Moses refused, and thereby distinguished himself forever.

II. His Choice.

What caused Moses to make the choice which he made? It was his faith in God. What did Moses' faith lead him to choose? It caused Moses to forsake royalty for the privilege of fellowship with a nation of broken-hearted, cowering slaves. He forsook wealth and cast his lot with a poverty-stricken people. Moses left the ease of Pharaoh's court and the society of the wise and the great in order that he might cast his lot with the despised, the ignorant and the outcast. 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 sacrifice himself upon the altar of service for their liberation and salvation.

The idolatrous Egyptians laughed at Moses' incredulous dreams, and scoffed at his visionary undertaking. To the Egyptians, gold was power; to Moses, it was trash. To them, life consisted of having something to live on; with Moses, life was having something for which to live. Despising ease and glorying in a difficult task, Moses made the right choice and thereby projected himself into immortal remembrance. His personality looms larger and his life greater as the centuries move away from him. Well has it been said,

"There are opportunity breakers. There are opportunity takers. There are opportunity makers." Moses was in the last category -- he was an opportunity maker. His morals and his message have undergirded all subsequent history. The civil governments of the nations, as well as our systems of jurisprudence, are built upon the teachings of Moses. His influence is deathless.

Moses was not satisfied just to exist, but he sought to live gloriously. The lives of so many do not maintain any glowing radiance. Calling causes do not challenge them. Worthy ambitions do not possess them. A worthy life's purpose does not possess them. They merely exist, and that is all. But, mere existence is not enough. These unusual days call for glorious living. Here are two blind men. Our hearts go out to them because of their handicap. The one is seen daily on a certain street corner eking out a mere living by begging. He is content just to exist. The name of the other is William Braille. He did not sit down on a street corner and mourn his fate. Instead, he arose and emancipated the blind of the generations from handicapping disadvantages by working out an alphabet for them.

The choice of Moses 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. He did not lament the fact that if it were not for his enslaved people he could live a life of ease. He did not evade the issue by blaming the Israelites for their pitiable plight. He might have shut his people out of his life and gone on his way in selfish ease and pleasure had it not been for the fact that he was Moses. He realized that he had an investment to make -- one that would bear dividends throughout eternity, and he made it.

In his choice Moses was guided by faith, and not by fear. "By faith Moses" are words which reveal the secret of his life of service. Moses' day was a dark one indeed, but he lighted it with the torch of faith in God, and this drove out its blackness and made the day luminous with the glow of God's fires. Faith bore Moses onward, inspired him upward and exalted him gloriously. Whereas doubt discourages, depresses and dooms, faith works, builds and enables one to smile at the threats of the world and laugh at the tides of time. Faith glorifies God, crowns Christ, honors humanity, produces manhood and womanhood and secures success.

Moses made an indelible impression upon the people of his day, and transmitted multitudinous blessings to generations unborn. His life had the stamp of divine approval upon it, which is what counts most after all. 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. He had made his refusal and his choice. He had not lost anything of real value, but had gained everything worthwhile. Moses was not only honored 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.