

Chapter Fifteen

MOSES

Hebrews 11:23 *"By FAITH, Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By FAITH, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse suffered for Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward. By FAITH he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. By FAITH he kept the passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the destroyer of the first-born might not touch them. By FAITH the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned."*

Here begins a summary of the life of Moses, the friend of God. The full story covered by the brief above is found in Exodus 2 - 14. After his birth in Egypt, the Pharaoh reigning over that land issued an edict that all male infants must be put to death, being afraid that the Jews might one day become too numerous and would rise up in power against Egypt. The midwives, however, feared God so they did not do as Pharaoh commanded. God blessed them for this action and the Jewish people grew very strong. One Hebrew family, having a young son, hid him in the bulrushes, *by faith*, until the time when God revealed the hidden child to a daughter of Pharaoh. (Ex 1 and 2). It was God who led this Levite and his wife to hide their child in the place where God would ordain he would be found by the princess. Their faith is revealed in that they obeyed this inner compulsion..

v27 When Moses had grown up he was led by God to become a shepherd in the land of Midian. There he remained until the age of eighty, tending sheep for his father in law, Jethro. This is recorded in Exodus 2:11 - 3:1. The natural account of events tells us that Moses fled in fear from Pharaoh for he had killed a man! Though brought up in Pharaoh's home, he had been taught by Hebrew servants, his own mother among them, and knew himself to be a child of the Hebrew people. He felt an inner drawing to the people of his birth, even though he was surrounded by the trappings and riches of Egypt. Such longing erupted into the violence of murder and the loneliness of flight. I do not believe the Scriptures to be contradictory so we must read the account in Hebrews 11 as expressing God's leading in Moses' life so that he would not experience the wrath of Pharaoh, 'being afraid' being the experiencing of that wrath. The writer to the Hebrews is looking at the events in retrospect and he can see, in all the events of Moses' life, the clear hand of God leading. **He is preparing a man for a mission.** Subsequent history shows why God took him from Pharaoh's household, though the causative act was one of Moses' own violence.

"What a waste of a life!" we might say as we watch this man, trained in the household of Pharaoh, skilled to hold his own in any company of the elite. Instead, we find him working as a shepherd, tending sheep. This he did for forty wasted years! But nothing is waste when God is

in control. What better training could there be for the mission God was arranging. He wanted a man, who knew the ways of the courts of Pharaoh and who could lead millions of bleating, two-legged sheep for forty years in the wilderness! Every change of direction in Moses' life had been ordained by God. He was preparing a special man for a special purpose, and He had chosen the right man, for He knew this man's heart and that he could be trusted to follow God's leading, *by faith*.

First, however, there had to be the burning bush (Exodus 3:2), where God had great difficulty in persuading His servant to have more confidence in His ability and leading. (Ex.3:11; 4:1, 10, 13 and more). Note 4:14 - God was angry because of Moses' lack of 'belief'!

v28 Moses obeyed when told to celebrate the Passover by sprinkling blood on the doorposts of each Hebrew home in Egypt (Ex 12). He could have questioned God on this *ridiculous* command but did not do so. This is faith.

v29 Now he begins to show more confidence and trust in God (ex.14:13) but the emphasis of the verse is that God opened the sera and God caused the Egyptians to drown, not because Moses had 'believed' it into being. He just obeyed when told what to do, after crying to God in his despair. He put his rod into the waters of the Red Sea so that the waters parted and the Hebrews could cross on dry land. (Ex 14) He could have questioned God on this *ridiculous* command but did not do so. This is faith.

No wonder Moses was called 'the friend of God'. His whole life is an example of the walk of faith, "*without which it is impossible to please God*".

What principle can we learn from the example of Moses ? Surely, that the Lord is walking before His people when they are walking in faith. He directs them so that He might use them for the praise of His glory. He will bring them to the place of destiny He has planned for them. Sometimes He leads through valley experiences, sometimes His ways are uncomfortable and apparently without reason, but "*He knows the way that we take*".

When God wants to drill a man
and thrill a man
and skill a man;
When God wants to mold a man to play the noblest part;
When He yearns with all His heart to create so great and
bold a man that all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods! Watch His ways!
How He ruthlessly perfects - those He royally elects;
How He hammers him and hurts him
and with mighty blows converts him into trial lumps
of clay which only God can understand!
While his tortured heart is crying and he lifts beseeching hands!
How He bends, but never breaks those whose good He undertakes;
How He uses those He chooses and with loving purpose fuses,
by burdened soul induces him to try God's riches out.
God knows what He's about!

(Author unknown)

The two rocks

The one act recorded in the life of Moses where he was not obedient to the Divine command is found in Numbers 20, and this cost him his greatest desire - to enter the Promised Land. It is worth considering this in more detail as, at first glance it seems to be a very petty act by a God who calls Himself, Moses' friend!

In **Exodus 17**, shortly after the Children of Israel had left Egypt, they began to complain that they did not have sufficient water to drink. God said to him, "*Behold I stand before you there on the rock. Take your rod and smite the rock and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink.*"

Moses obeyed and the people were able to drink.

Nearly forty years later at the entrance to Canaan, a similar event occurs with embarrassing and painful results for Moses. In **Numbers 20** the people are complaining again that they have no water. God's instructions to Moses this time are that he *take Aaron's rod (the rod that had been placed in the tabernacle) and speak to the rock*. Instead, Moses first chastised the people for their grumbling and then, turning to the rock, smote it with the rod. No water came out! In his embarrassment, he smote it again and God showed grace in allowing the water to flow. However, this act of disobedience caused Him to declare, "*Because you did not believe Me, to sanctify Me in the presence of the people, you shall not bring this assembly into the land I have promised them!*" Though Moses would plead with God that he might be forgiven and have the thrill of entering Canaan, it was not to be. (Deuteronomy 3:23-26)

Some would say that Moses was judged because he lost his temper with the people. I do not believe so. God is far bigger than to judge his friend for that! It is only as we study a little deeper that we discover the wonderful truth the Lord wanted Moses to portray to us - a picture he marred by his disobedience.

We need to consider the **two rocks** and the **two rods** in the references above. In the Exodus reference, the Hebrew word for rock is *tsoor*, a sharp or cutting stone. It was as a rock of flint, a small piece of which could be sharpened to be a knife. Such a stone would be used to kill and divide the sacrificial animals. When God made His covenant with Abraham, it was by cutting animals in two, setting them apart so that a divine flaming torch passed between them (Gen.15). Even today, when some African tribes make a tribal agreement, they use the expression of '*cutting a covenant*'. The picture of Exodus 17 is of God standing at the place of the sharp stone bearing in His body the beating of the rod of Moses, the Lawgiver. What a **type** foreshadowing the day when our Saviour God cut an eternal covenant for us by bearing the beating of the Law in His own body on Calvary's tree! The water of life flowed from that broken body; water that causes those who drink *to never thirst again*.

In the Numbers reference, the Hebrew word for rock is *selah* which is a fortress, a high cliff, a stronghold. The rod is to be Aaron's rod, the rod of the High Priest. The **type** this time is of a Saviour, high and lifted up, to whom we come with the authority of priests. We speak to the rock in prayer and intercession, thanksgiving and worship, and water flows. It was this picture that Moses failed to present by his disobedience.

Peter the apostle wrote “*For Christ died for our sins **once for all**, the just for the unjust...*” and now He is “*at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and all authorities being subject to Him.*” (1 Peter 3:18,22)

Praise God, the work is the cross is a complete work. Jesus does not need to be put to death again. Now He reigns on high and we come to Him with uplifted eyes, to worship as kings and priests before our God - and He continues to pour out His living water.

We should note in passing that Moses did enter the Promised Land, not in the life of flesh but in the glorified life of God’s friend. See Mark 9. The end of the journey for all who walk in faith, is that they shall be with their Saviour, glorified in His presence. Though the Lord might chastise us, it is only for a season, in order that He might mold us to be His image. The future glory is sure for all condemnation and judgment has been passed from us to the Saviour!

Summary: It is in the life of Moses that I see the clearest example of a life of faith. Throughout his life God had directed the circumstances that would mold a man after His own heart and for His own purposes. This truly is a man who would be *to the praise of His glory* (Eph 1:12)

- 1. All things work together for good to them that are walking by faith.**
- 2. Friends of God are those who walk by faith.**
- 3. God is looking for men and women He can mold into vessels of His glory.**
- 4. The process of molding is the work of faith.**
- 5. Faith does not deliver us from the chisel or hammer of the Divine sculptor.**