

CHAPTER 2:11-25 GOD'S TRAINING FOR HIS SERVANT - THE BREAKING AND REMAKING OF MOSES

Chapter Structure

- vv. 11 - 15 The Breaking of Moses
vv. 16 – 25 The Remaking of Moses

Spiritual Principles:

- P1 God's breaking is to prepare you for future tasks.
P2 God's work must be done according to God's timetable

Last Week...

God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ge 15:7, 26:3-25, 28:13-15) contains two basic elements: Increase in population and a great nation in the Promised Land. The Israelites had increased greatly in number after living in Egypt for nearly four centuries. Now God is working on bringing them to the land.

A. The Breaking of Moses vv.11-15

1. The Best training the World offered

Forty years has passed from v. 10 to v.11. According to the Stephen, the first apologist martyr after Jesus, "*Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.*" (Acts 7:22) Historians believed that Moses, like all children from noble families in his time, received the best education and physical training in the Egyptian palace. Besides Egyptian, Hebrew and Aramaic languages, he could speak other languages and was proficient in literature, mathematics, geography, architecture, medicine, music, warfare tactics, laws...etc. Moses was a politician, a jurist, a linguist, a writer, a militarist, and an architect. These knowledge and skills had proven to be useful in carrying out the task of leading the Israelites out of Egypt into the land of Canaan.

If you are disappointed that you are not putting to use what you've learned in school, don't be. God prepares us before He calls us. The knowledge and skills we acquired are part of God's preparation to achieve His purpose for us, now or at a later time.

2. The Best inheritance from the parents

Nonetheless, the knowledge that gives Moses the greatest strength to overcome the problems in life was not those he acquired in the palace of Egypt. It was the knowledge of faith (of the LORD) that his parents passed on to him during the first three years (roughly) of his life. The power of that knowledge was so great that Hebrews 11:24 said, "*By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.*"

There was a question in the worksheet for the last lesson: if you were Moses' parents what would you tell Moses so that when he grew up he would not forget God and his identity as the chosen people of God? I'm sure you have inspired one another with your thoughts. Besides how Moses was miraculously saved by the Egyptian princess, you would probably speak of the Creation, the Eden, Satan, the Fall, the Covenant of God with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Israel, and how Joseph and Israel ended in Egypt and the relentless persecution of Pharaoh. Have you also told your children or grandchildren about these? Little children love to listen to the same story repeatedly. Let Christian parents and grandparents seize the opportunity to repeat the great story of Jesus Christ and his cross to our next generation.

3. A Transitional Decision

“One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people.” v. 11

The passage vv.11-15 is the turning point of Moses' life. Here, Moses killed an Egyptian in saving a Hebrew slave. From the passages in Acts 7:23-29 and in Hebrews 11:24-26, we know that he did not kill on an impulse. Rather, he made a conscious decision. Let us take a closer look at Acts 7:23.

“When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel” Acts 7:23

Firstly, forty years old implied that Moses was a matured and well-groomed young adult, not a young man who was easily provoked. Neither was he a desponded politician that was lobbying support from alternative group of people. He was a well-groomed prince.

Secondly, *his brothers, the children of Israel* tells us that Moses did not forget his Hebrew identity.

Then, the term *visit* is used in divine visitation in the NT, such as Luke 1:68,1:78, 7:16) it is also used in visits paid to the sick or the weak, such “... *I was in prison and you visited Me.*”(Mat 25:36). So, it was not out of curiosity that Moses visited his brethren. He went to look for them, to relate to them and to care for them. In other words, he was prepared to identify with them and to help them out of their oppression, probably with his political power and influence.

The phrase *it came into his heart* is found both in OT and NT to indicate that it was a well thought and conscious decision (Refer Isa 65:17; Jer 3:16). Moses has hitherto been aloof from the Hebrew people, in the higher circles of Egyptian society and culture. We would agree that Moses was fully aware of the highest possible cost of his choice. He could plummet from the highest strata to the lowest, palace to slum, prince to slave, from a ruler to an oppressed. (In typology Moses is a type of Christ in this sense). The Hebrews passage tells us that Moses was prepared to pay the highest price. Why?

Firstly, through faith of Moses has gained a spiritual sight. *"He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward."* (Hebrews 11:26) Moses was already enjoying power, wealth, latest and advance lifestyle. What was the reward he saw that drew him to forsake the treasures of Egypt and identify with a group of slaves? The answer lies in Hebrews 11:16 & 35:

"But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city." v. 16

and *"...so that they might rise again to a better life."* v.35

What Moses was looking forward to cannot be found in the Egyptian palace, the fallen world. It is the restoration that God promised to bring about through the Messiah in Genesis 3:15 – irreversible victory over Sin, eternal reconciliation to God, complete eradication of evil and God living with man forever. Moses believed that the LORD God is the promised Deliverer. Israel was special because they were chosen by God to accomplish this great salvation for mankind. How could the fleeting pleasures that the fallen world offer be compared with the eternal rest and joy that God provides? When Moses penned these chapters under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he did not mention the glamour of his life, nor a word on his extraordinary trainings in the Egyptian palace. This shows that Moses, like Paul, has considered *"... them rubbish, that I may gain Christ"* (Phi 3:8).

Dear brothers and sisters, let Moses' spiritual sight and spiritual appetite be our admiration. With them you will realize that the greatest meaning in life is to be used by God, to have a share on the salvation of other souls, and to labour in the kingdom of God, for such purpose produces matchless joy for us and God. And you will be willing to *"choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin."* (Heb 11:25)

Moses expected appreciation and hailing from his Hebrew brethren for what he did; but they did not. Instead, they rejected him and betrayed him. Now he could not return to the Egyptian palace and was hunted by the Egyptians as a traitor. From a prince he turned into a fugitive overnight, and from having everything to possessing nothing. He lost both his Egyptian as well as Hebrew family and friends and for the next forty years he lived as a shepherd in the Midian wilderness. How devastating it must be to be betrayed by families and abandoned by God (again, in this sense Moses is a type of Christ in typology). What a fiery trial this was! God was breaking Moses. Moses was not ready. God must break him and remake him.

P1: God's breaking is to prepare you for future tasks

Dear brothers and sisters, as Ephesians 2:10 says, *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."* At certain point in our life, God may use severe setbacks and fiery trials to break us so as to remake us into useful vessels for the Kingdom. Do not let the breaking paralyse you. Do not doubt God's love for you. Trust in God's faithfulness and keep yourself

in the covenant of the blood of Jesus. God will remake you after you are broken, as He did with Moses.

B. The Remaking of Moses vv. 16-25

"He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand." (Acts 7:25)

1. Step One of Rebuilding – Removing the Pride of Life

When we work for God, more often than not the greatest challenge comes not from without but from within. Therefore, Moses must first remove his pride, trust God and serve people with a servant's heart, a heart filled with humility.

The education and training of the Egyptian palace did provide Moses the knowledge and ability required for the exodus. But they had also become *the pride of life* (1John 2:16) that Moses relied on. Has it not happened to us that we often bring the pride of life to the work field of God? Therefore God's first step was to remove these prides from Moses because Jesus said that *"apart from me you can do nothing"* (Jn 15:5) A person who earned plenty of applauses in the world must first reckon that to be used by God he needs to learn to rely on God completely, for God said that *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit"* (Zech 4:6) Only when we have full submission to God that our knowledge and skills can be of use.

2. Step Two of Rebuilding – Await God's Time

After removing Moses' prides, God's next lesson for Moses was also for all Christians: await God's time to act. We know that this seemingly simple lesson is not easy at all. Nonetheless we thank God for a precious promise that makes it possible for us, *"but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."* (Isa 40:31)

The fatal mistake that Moses made was that he thought he was ready and thus it was time for him to act, which in fact he acted forty years sooner than God! A worker must work according to the deadline of the superior. If we are working for God, we must work according to God's timetable. God is all wise, powerful and He is the counsel of His will. Very often we prefer to do things without seeking His will, or we proceed despite knowing that God wants us to hold back a little longer.

God gave Moses forty years to learn this lesson, this shows that it is really not an easy lesson, and that it is of great importance. Do you have long-awaited prayers? Are you losing patience in waiting for God to open a way for you? Do not give up waiting. Await God's time is prerequisite for God's workers.

P2 God's work must be done according to God's timetable

3. A Man of Spiritual Resilience

"The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock." v.17

In his breaking Moses did not fall into spiritual depression. Instead when he saw that the daughters of the Midianite priest were bullied, he intervened and defended them, as he did in that fatal incident in Egypt. He even went an extra mile to water their flock. He did not let the past experience paralyse him in doing what was right. His spiritual resilience enabled him to continue to be a blessing to others even when he was in his lowest point. Remember that how our Lord Jesus arranged for the care of his mother and interceded for us when he was hanging on the cross?

We need to be resilient spiritually as trials will come to us one after another. When you are disheartened – perhaps you are having a setback in your career, or your studies did not yield expected results, or you are in the midst of a rocky relationship, remember the examples of Moses and the Lord Jesus, do not allow any setback to stop you from caring for others and doing what is right.

4. A Sojourner in Midian

If I were Moses, I would have buried my dreams, let go of my relationships with Egypt and Israel, and started a new life in Midian. But Moses would not do that. In his loneliest and most hurting hours, the Midianite family embraced him with true friendship, offered him a home – a father, a wife and two children. He could well be contented. Yet he named his son *Gershom* which means *a sojourner in a foreign land* v.22 Neither the glamour of Egypt nor the warmth of a family was able to win Moses' heart. Who has his heart? The LORD God. God filled his heart completely that the pleasures of the world could not seep in. It is no wonder that God spoke of a special relationship He had with Moses, *"...If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. 7 Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. 8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord..."* (Num 12:6-8) Moses' heart remained in the house of God even after he is in paradise. Remember he and Elijah was talking to Jesus about the death in Jerusalem?

Let us reflect: What is the proportion that my Lord Jesus, his Gospel, his Kingdom, his church and his people occupy in my mind and my heart? O Lord, have mercy and fill our heart with yourself!

5. God Prepared Israel for the Exodus

While Moses was living a quiet life in Midian, the Israelites' suffering increased in Egypt. In despair and sorrow they cried out for help.

Why did God let Israel suffer for another forty years? We know that people resist changes unless there is a sufficiently strong pulling or pushing force. In the time of Exodus Egypt was a strong and rich empire. Even her slaves such as the Israelites could sit *"by the meat pots and ate bread to the full"* (v.16:3) the subsequent account in Exodus proved that

the pulling forces of the Promised Land was not sufficient for them to leave Egypt. It was likely that when the Pharaoh died, they were hoping that the new king arose would grant them some relief. However, verse 23 tells us that the new king maintained the same policy and system of oppression. The hopelessness apparently produced a strong pushing force for the Israelites to leave Egypt and head for the Promised Land.

The Israelites' sentiment resonates in our heart. Even though we groan in the seemingly endless toil and weary, the pleasures of "sitting by the meat pots of the world and ate bread to the full" lingers in our mind constantly and binds our hearts to it. So much so that we are reluctant to let go of the pleasures of the world and enjoy the fulfilling rest in Christ. We are busy at storing up corruptible wealth instead of incorruptible wealth. Such life is futile and pitiful.

"...and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God." v.23

The Israelites came to a point when they cried out for help. Some of them cried out to the LORD, some to other Egyptian idols. Nonetheless, God "*And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.*" v.24,25

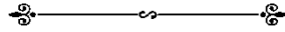
Dear brothers and sisters, sometimes we may forget to call out to our Saviour in our misery, or we may forget the public confession we have made before the heavenly host at our baptism. But regardless of how little faith we have in God, He is faithful. He will hear the groaning of your heart, will see all that have happened to you, will remember the covenant He made with you with the blood of His Son, and He knows what to do for you. And the choice is yours: will you trust Him? Will you follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

C. Closing

For most of us there are two plans for our life. One is made by us; the other by God before we are born (Ps 139:16). We will labour to achieve our plan. But we should labour to achieve God's plan for us because God's plan is the best for us. Therefore, let us be mindful to wait when God says wait, to move forth boldly when He says go. When we live according to God's plan not a day will we live in vain. Let us echo the response of Mary "*Let it be to me according to your word*" and the prayer of the Son of God "*Not my will but yours be done*", and the teaching of Christ our Lord, "*Thy will be done on me(earth) as it is in heaven*"

From the world's perspective, Moses has wasted one third of his life 'doing nothing' in Midian. But we have just seen those were formative years. At the end of the forty years, Moses would be ready for the mighty task of exodus – a testimony to God and His mighty power over the idols of the world. He would be the humblest leader of Israel. That would be the time when he applied all the knowledge and skills he learned in Egypt – the setting up of the legal and juridical system, the writing of the Pentateuch, the building of the tabernacle and the

commanding of numerous battles! Let us learn and equip ourselves well wherever God places us in all stages of life. When you are ready, God will use them for His glory. Amen.



The Renewing of the mind:
