

INTRODUCTION

Moses has been preserved by God and has been taken into the household of Pharaoh where he received a first class education. But although he was very much part of the Egyptian culture he did not forget God's people the Israelites. So one day when he was forty years old (Acts 7:23) he went out to where his own people were and observed them at their hard labour. What happened next would change his life forever and would also change the lives of the Israelites.

1. THE LIFE CHANGING EVENT

As Moses was observing the people of God he witnessed an incident in which an Egyptian was beating a Hebrew, one of Moses own people. It may well be that the Egyptian was beating the Hebrew to death for the word can mean that but it can also simply mean to hit someone. But when Moses sees this he feels it necessary to act. The idea behind the word 'saw' can mean 'to see with compassion and pity.' Moses takes pity on the poor Hebrew who is being beaten and he acts by killing the Egyptian.

He clearly didn't want his deed to be known for he looked both ways and then tried to hide the body in the sand.

The very next day Moses went out again to look at the plight of his people when he sees two Hebrews fighting. Once again he intervenes but in a different way. He confronts the one in the wrong (literally the guilty one). Moses is shocked by the response of the man for he questions Moses authority something that will happen plenty of times throughout the book of Exodus. In Acts 7:25 we discover that at this point the people did not recognise that God had appointed Moses to be the leader and deliverer of the people.

But the real comment that would change Moses life for good was the fact that the man knew about the killing of the Egyptian the previous day by Moses. Moses thought his deed went unnoticed but presumably the man rescued by Moses had spread the word. As a result when Pharaoh heard about what had happened he tried to kill Moses, so Moses had to flee for his life to Midian. Now let me pause there in the narrative in order to make three applications.

A) God uses wicked acts to bring about his own good purposes – Moses act of murder was wicked, and there is no excuse for it. Yet the bible demonstrates time and again that God uses even the most shameful events in the history of mankind to bring about his good purposes for his own people. The Lord in his sovereignty and wisdom employs man's sin to execute his purpose in this world. He is never the author of sin, nor is he guilty of sin but God is sovereign and nothing happens in heaven or earth apart from God's will. However we must be careful here for Scripture nowhere shows God directly doing anything evil but he uses evil deeds done by the willing actions of moral creatures for his own purposes.

God should never be blamed for evil and God never takes pleasure in evil yet it is true that God includes the evil actions of people in his purposes for this world and for individuals and churches (persecution).

That's why Joseph can say to his brothers that you meant it for evil but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20). Moses acted wickedly and sinfully, so too did Pharaoh in attempting to kill Moses, all these people were responsible for their actions and will be judged for them yet in the secret counsel of God each one of these wicked acts was part of God's will for the ultimate good of his people. If you don't understand this, don't worry, neither do I but the bible teaches it and we must believe it.

If we fail to believe it then we are saying that God is not in control of some areas, that God has to react every time an evil action is carried out in order to get his plan back on course. In short such an idea would mean that in some areas of life God is not sovereign.

What this truth means in practice is that the events of September 11 although the most wicked act I have witnessed in my lifetime did not catch God by surprise but such an event was used and is still being used by God for the good of his people and to fulfil his purposes for this world. Because we do not know what his purposes are does not take away from this point for clearly Moses or the Israelites did not know the purpose behind Moses' escape to Midian but in God's purposes God was using it to train Moses and prepare him for the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. Let's not lose sight of this great and glorious truth.

B) Sin cannot be hidden forever. There is a verse in the Old Testament that says "and you may be sure that your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23) What this means is that sooner or later sin will find the sinner out. Sin has its consequences, and without doubt sin if not repented of will sooner or later leave its mark on us and will be exposed. That is clear here in the story of Moses, although Moses tried to hide his sin against the Egyptian he failed to do so and as a result he paid the consequence, which was an attempt on his life by Pharaoh and his flight to Midian.

Here is a very clear lesson for us all. Sin always carries a price we cannot hide it ultimately. We might be successful at hiding our sin from our family and friends. We might easily hide it from the church but we can be sure that we cannot hide it from God. Often we can only hide it from others for a period of time before it is exposed. Unless we confess our sin and repent of it then we will pay a price, it disturbs our peace with God and others, it robs us of our joy and often we pay the physical consequences of sin here on earth.

Therefore deal with sin immediately and seek God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of others if it involves someone else and be reconciled to God. Moses paid a high price, so will we, therefore repent of it and turn to God for mercy. But my friend if you are not yet saved then the price that you will pay is much more than being robbed of joy here on earth or facing some physical consequences the price you pay is the loss of your soul. Hell is the ultimate price of unforgiven sin.

Therefore let me point you to Jesus Christ. He died to pay that price for you, all you have to do is to cry out to God for mercy, accept Jesus death as full payment for your sins and know the joy of sins forgiven and a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

C) God still uses those who fall into sin. Although Moses sin was serious God did not wipe his hands of him. The rest of the book of Exodus will tell us how God uses Moses to lead God's people to deliverance from the hands of the Egyptians. In fact Moses would meet God on Mount Sinai and receive from Him the Ten Commandments. There is hope for all of us. Have you sinned against the Lord? Have you let him down and the church down? Have you failed the Lord so often that you now feel that God would never use you again. You are wrong if that is what you are thinking, there is cleansing through the blood of Christ (1 John 1:9), there is hope for if God used Moses then He can use us.

That of course does not give any of us a license to sin, nor does it excuse our sin, but our God is gracious and forgives, he uses weak and frail people to proclaim his gospel of grace to this world. In spite of our feebleness, weakness and transgressions God uses redeemed sinner for his own glory and to fulfil his own purposes. There is a way back to God from the dark paths of sin, that way is through the cross of Jesus Christ and be assured that in spite of all our sins and failures God is ready to use us again to accomplish his purposes in this world.

So perhaps you have fallen into sin, perhaps no one knows about it but as a result you feel that God is finished with you, that he cannot use you again. Turn to him once again, let Moses be your example and be available to God and watch how he will use you for his own glory and for your ultimate good. Let's get back now to the story.

2. MOSES IN MIDIAN.

Moses fled to Midian and sat down at a well. Now in the providence of God seven daughters of a Midian priest came to the well to get water for their flock. But some shepherds drove the women away from the well, but Moses stood up for them and rescued them from the hands of the shepherds. This is a little cameo in the life of Moses that will be lived out in this book, just as he rescues these women from the shepherds so he will rescue Israel from the hand of the Egyptians.

Moses character is being underscored here; he is brave, loves justice and takes the side of the weak and oppressed. These characteristics will all be needed as he leads God's people to be delivered from the Egyptians. God is training and preparing Moses all the time for his task as deliverer. As a result of this incident the women report back to their Father Reuel (called Jethro elsewhere throughout this book). When Jethro hears of Moses' act he invites him to his house to stay with him.

Moses agrees to this invite and is given a wife (Zipporah) by Jethro. By the way Zipporah means 'bird' so we can say that Moses married a bird. This marriage was fruitful a son was born and Moses named him Gershom. Moses now had to learn a completely different lifestyle; he had been brought up in the home of Pharaoh now he had to learn to live among a Nomadic and rural people. Moses had no idea that he was going to be in the land of the Midian for 40 years but it seems that he settles down in the knowledge that this is God's place for him. This was God's training programme for Moses. If he was going to lead God's people then he would need to learn the lessons that living in Midian brought. Now although Exodus tells us how Moses left Egypt what it does not tell us is what is going on in Moses mind.

How does he feel now that he has left the privileges of living in Pharaoh's household in Egypt? We are told what Moses was thinking in Hebrews 11:23-27. Moses had reached a crucial point in his life, he had to decide whether he was going to stay in Egypt and probably one day become Pharaoh or whether he was going to associate himself with God's oppressed people. In faith he rejected Egypt, it was this thinking that led Moses to go out to look at the oppression of his people in Egypt.

All the 40 years that Moses was in Egypt he never lost his love for God or his faith that his Mother had taught him. He willingly gave up all the privileges of Egypt for what? For the privilege of identifying himself with God's oppressed people. By doing so Moses was choosing oppression rather than the pleasures of sin in Egypt. Moses knew that by choosing what God wanted he would be immeasurably better off in the end. He considered disgrace for the sake of Christ better than all the treasures of Egypt. In his whole thinking he was not thinking of the present situation, Egypt or slavery for he was looking ahead to his reward (Hebrews 11:26).

He was looking forward to the blessing that follows obedience to God, he knew that whatever Egypt gave him it was nothing compared to the reward that he would receive through following God. He had his eye of faith on God not Pharaoh, he feared God rather than Pharaoh, therefore made his decision to leave give up his privileges of Egypt for the disgrace of identifying with God's people. Yes he was not in control of the circumstances that led him to flee Egypt, but he was in control of his thinking.

He decided that following God rather than enjoying the pleasures of this world was better by far. Now here is our application. We may not always be in control of our circumstances but we can be

in control of our mindset. Once we are in control of our mindset then we will consider whatever circumstances we face much better than living without God. Worldliness is a problem for Christians, but worldliness is a mindset, it is deciding that what this world has to offer is more appealing than what God offers.

There is great pleasure in sin that's why people do it, but we who are Christians need to have a fixed mindset towards Christ, so that we will reject the pleasures of sin and this world for the pleasure of knowing God. Doing so might bring hardship and even poverty in this world but it offers eternal life in heaven to all who turn from the world and sin and to Christ.

Are we, as Christian people prepared to turn our backs of the pleasures of this world in our pursuit of following God and his will for our lives? If we are not then we are worldly and temptation will easily overtake us. We need to develop a godly mindset that can only happen through the reading of his word, prayer and use of the other means of grace.

3. GOD REMEMBERS HIS PEOPLE (vs. 23-25)

The chapter closes with a reminder that God has not forgotten his people. Now Moses was in Midian for forty years (Acts 7:23) and during that period the king of Egypt who had tried to kill Moses died. But under the new Pharaoh the Israelites remained under severe oppression. The people respond by crying out to their God. We are told that God heard their groaning and remembered his covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When God remembers something it does not mean that he forgot and suddenly recalls it. No to remember means that God is going to act because of the covenant he made. God made promises and now he is going to act in order to fulfil those promises (Genesis 15:13-14). The exodus event is the fulfilment of God's covenant promise of salvation made to Abraham many centuries before.

God was concerned about his people, He was not distant from his people while they were in Egypt, he knows their labour, and their sighs he was with them in their sufferings.

It is very comforting to know that God does not forget us in our sufferings or his promises made to us. He is near us, he sees our plight he is concerned for us, he knows our trials, sufferings and temptations. In the book of Hebrews we are told that Jesus is able to come to our aid when we are tempted, that he can sympathise with us in our weaknesses and therefore we should draw near to him in order to find grace and mercy in our time of need (Hebrews 2:17-18 & 4:15-16).

No matter what we face in this world, if we set our mindset on God through Christ, we might have to suffer much, we will be tempted and our weaknesses will be exposed, but rest assured that God hears our prayers and he will act towards us because of his covenant relationship with us.

He will come alongside us and help us, he knows all about our situation, so be assured, He has not forgotten about us he looks upon us and is concerned and will act to fulfil covenant promises.

Amen