

THE THREE DIMENSIONAL WILL OF GOD

Moses - Part 2

Exodus 2:11-25

Intro: Because of the ice storm we had last Sunday which kept us from meeting, it has been two weeks since we have considered together the life of Moses. And actually on that Sunday two weeks ago I gave the first message in this present series of the life of Moses. We saw that after several hundreds of year after the death of Joseph, the descendants of Joseph were still in Egypt. Of course Joseph had died so long before the book of Exodus begins, that the people, even the new Pharaoh who was on the throne, had forgotten all about Joseph and how the Lord had used him to save the nation of Egypt from hunger, and perhaps even extinction. To the Egyptians they were just slaves. But they had become so numerous and so powerful that the Pharaoh was worried about what they might do if Egypt was involved in war with another nation.

First he tried persecution, making their work harder for them. But the Hebrews only got stronger. So he decided that all of the Hebrew boy babies should die, should be killed, at birth. So this is what Pharaoh told the midwives to do. But they feared the Lord more than they did the Pharaoh, and so that failed too. But Pharaoh continued to have the boy babies killed. It was during this time that Moses was born, and so he was born with the sentence of death was upon Him.

His parents were able to hide him for three months. They seemed to feel that God had some special purpose for their son. Perhaps it was told them by a revelation from God. The Bible doesn't say how they began to think that way, so we can't say for sure. However, at the end of those three months, they made a basket large enough to hold the baby, made it water proof so it would float, and then put the baby in the basket out on the Nile River to see what would happen.

Now as I pointed out to you two weeks ago, here in Exodus 2 we are not told the name of the father, nor the name of the mother, and so far as we know they had not even named the baby. It shows that they were just ordinary people, I called them "nobodies." They are named in Exodus 6, verse 20. His older sister, Miriam, who watched to see what would happen to her baby brother, is not mentioned by name until Exodus 15:20 where she is called a prophetess who led the women of Israel, responding in song to the men, as they sang the praises of the Lord for delivering

them from the Egyptians. And then in Exodus 7:7 we learn that Aaron, Moses' brother, was three years older than Moses.

So this was a family of five: Amram, the father; Jochebed, the mother; Miriam, their daughter, their first child; Aaron, their second child, a son; and Moses.

You all know that the daughter of Pharaoh found the baby Moses in his basket, "among the flags," or "reeds" (NASB), that she paid Jochebed to raise her own son, and that eventually Moses became a member of the royal family of Egypt. And so the Lord not only spared his life, but put him in the royal family.

Let me read to you again, what I believe I read two weeks ago, a verse in Hebrews 11, verse 23, which throws added light on what we have been reading in Exodus 12. This is what we read in Hebrews 11:23:

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

So what Moses' parents did, was done in faith, not in fear, indicating that they were true people of God.

Now the verses following in Hebrews 11 prepare us for the text I have chosen for today. Listen carefully as I continue to read from Hebrews 11:

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward (Heb. 11:24-26).

Verse 10 in Exodus 2 tells us that the Egyptian princess named her adopted son, Moses, and in this verse we are told that he grew from childhood to manhood. And that is confirmed in verse 11 where we read, "when Moses was grown."

At this point I want to take you to another NT passage: Acts 7. The NT often gives us details about the OT that are not recorded in the OT.

Acts 7 gives us the message that Stephen gave before the Jewish council

along with Jewish elders and scribes, which actually ended in his death. But I want you to see what Stephen said about how Moses' life was divided into three periods. I will begin reading with Acts 7:20 and read down through verse 30. **(Read Acts 7:20-30.)**

When we link what Stephen said about Moses to the historical account which Moses wrote himself in the book of Exodus, the two passages put together tell us that:

- 1) In Exodus 2:1-10 we have all that is recorded of the first forty years of Moses' life.
- 2) In the rest of Exodus 2, verses 11 through 25 we have all that is recorded in the book of Exodus about the second forty years of Moses' life.
- 3) Then beginning with the Lord's appearance to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3, and continuing to the end of Deuteronomy, we have what is recorded of the last forty years of Moses' life. We are told in the last chapter of Deuteronomy, chapter 34, and verse 7,
7 And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated (Deut. 34:7).

This is easy to remember, isn't it?

- 1) Moses was learning to be an Egyptian in the first forty years of his life.
- 2) Moses was in exile during the second forty years of his life.
- 3) Moses was the godly leader of the children of Israel during the last forty years of his life.

Sometime in the past I heard how someone described these three periods. I may have heard them first from Dr. S. Lewis Johnson, but I can't say for sure. But this is how the description goes:

In the first forty years of his life Moses was learning to be somebody. In the second forty years of his life he was learning to be a nobody. In the last forty years of his life he was learning that God can use a nobody.

(Repeat.)

We have learned as much as we can know about the first forty years of Moses' life. It is amazing that Moses ever wanted to leave all that he had. But it shows the depth of his faith. Moses had position, power, luxury – all that anyone could ever want. And he turned away from all of that because the call of God was upon him. I will always feel that Moses' parents instilled in his heart a knowledge of the truth of God that he was never able to get away from. But what he did in seeking to do the will of

God showed his spiritual immaturity. Moses' life story is full of important instruction for us. None of us will ever have the positions that Moses had, either in Egypt, nor in the life of the people of God. But what Moses need to learn, is what we need to learn, and it is wonderful if we can learn it from the life of Moses so that we won't have to go through a tough time like Moses did.

I believe that the story of Moses tells us three things about the will of God. I call them three dimensions. And they can be described by three words: what, when, and how. What is the will of God? When should I do it? How is it to be done?

I. WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD?

Regarding our daily lives, it is always decided by the Bible, the Word of God. Regarding special decisions we need to make, such as, what should I do to prepare for my life work? Where should I go to school? Whom should I marry? Where should I live? All of these and many other questions are to be brought to Scripture to find the principles by which we are to be guided. Most of these take time, and we depend upon the Lord to guide us with His hand upon us. We always must start and continue with surrendering ourselves to the Lord, seeking our guidance from Him.

For Moses the answer to the question *what* had been made very clear to him. He was deeply and constantly convicted that he was the man the Lord had called to lead the people out of their slavery and out of Egypt.

II. WHEN SHOULD I DO IT?

If it is a question of obeying the will of God as expressed in the commandments of Scripture, the answer is, *immediately!* But as to the work of delivering the Lord's people, Moses needed to wait God's time. There is always the danger when we feel that we know the will of God, that we will run ahead of the Lord, moving before it is the Lord's time for us to move. So this calls for patience and for prayer. I read a little saying just this past week which made this point: "A handful of patience is worth more than a bushel of brains." Very intelligent people can make big mistakes because they get ahead of the Lord because they are unwilling to wait for the Lord's time.

III. HOW SHALL I DO IT?

When the Lord is leading us, and He always does, He does not leave the when and the how up to us. He will show us when, and we will show us how. And if we are in doubt about any three of these questions, what, when, and how, then we need to wait until the Lord makes the way clear.

Now let's take these questions back and apply them to the life of Moses when he was in his forties, or approaching his forties. We know from the book of Hebrews that Moses was deeply convinced that he was to help his people. Hebrews 11 indicates that it was this knowledge of the will of God that made him leave Pharaoh's family to identify himself more closely with his people, the people of God. This was a major decision in his life. Many expositors feel that Moses was actually in line to become the next Pharaoh. And so he had to face the question as to how best he could do what the Lord wanted him to do. If he stayed with the royal family, he would have to give up any idea of going back to the land that the Lord had promised to give to His people. Many would have advised him stay with the royal family because he would have been in a better position, they would argue, to help his people. Besides taking his place with the Hebrew people meant "suffering affliction with the people of God." Many would have advised him to stay where he was rather than identifying with the people of God. But Moses had his eyes open to riches that were far greater, and much more long-lasting, than the treasures in Egypt. And that was to suffer the reproach of Christ. The Egyptians would have said that he had lost his mind. Moses "had respect unto the recompense of the reward." This meant that he was looking beyond time into eternity and the rewards that will be given to those who put the Lord first in their lives.

Although Isaiah 55:8 and 9 had not yet been written, yet Moses had that truth upon his heart. And many have followed Moses since then forsaking financial security and a place of advancement in this world, to do the will of God. God's ways and God's thoughts are not only different from ours, but they are infinitely higher and better. The presence of the Lord was a great reality to Moses. "He endured as seeing Him Who is invisible."

So the will of God was very clear in Moses' heart. In fact, it had become the burning passion of his life. But having answered the question, what?, he was going to fail in answering the second question, when? And if we are wrong on the *when*, we are probably going to be wrong in answering the last question, *how*?

I am sure that many, many times Moses had seen his fellow Hebrews suffering at the hands of the Egyptians. He knew that the beatings often led to death. And time and time again Moses had not done anything about it because he knew that there was no point in doing anything. But this time he couldn't stand it any longer, and so, when felt sure that no one was watching, he killed the Egyptian before the Egyptian could kill the Hebrew, and then hid his body in the sand.

At that moment Moses became a murderer. He felt guilty in doing it or he would not have looked around to make sure that no one was watching.

I don't believe that all Muslims are murderers, but radical Muslims are. And the more people they kill, the greater they feel will be their reward when they get to their "paradise." They feel that this pleases their god Allah. But we know, or we certainly should know, that we don't serve the living and true God by murdering anyone. I am strongly opposed to abortion. I believe it is infanticide, murdering babies. But I would never be a party to burning down an abortion clinic or killing a doctor who practices abortion. I am sure that God is greatly displeased with those who practice abortion and with those women who submit to abortion. But we are not to take matters into our own hands because that usually means doing something else that is displeasing to the Lord. We can and should vote against it if we get the opportunity, but we are not to do wrong in order to correct another wrong. Moses made a big, big mistake.

The next day he went out to see how his people were doing, and he found two Hebrews fighting. He tried to mediate their trouble, when the offender said, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killest the Egyptian?" (Ex. 2:14). Even Pharaoh had heard what had happened, and he had taken steps to see that Moses died for what he had done.

What did Moses do? He got out of Egypt as fast as he could go, and that started a forty-year period of exile when this former member of the royal family became a shepherd in the land of Midian. Do you know who the Midianites were? They were descendants of the fourth son that Abraham had by his second wife, Keturah. They became great enemies of Israel. They were Arabic people.

We don't know what the Lord would have done if Moses had really waited for the Lord's time. But we do know that the Israelites suffering

continued for another forty years while the Lord waited. Before the Lord could do His work *through* Moses, He had to do a work *in* Moses. Moses knew *what* the Lord wanted him to do, but he did not know *when* or *how*! The Lord's work needs to be done in the Lord's time and the Lord's way, and they are just as important as knowing *what* it is that the Lord wants us to do.

Did Moses delay the Lord's work? It appears to us that he did. Did Moses change the Lord's work? Definitely not! The Lord's will is unchangeable. But as godly as Moses had been (as expressed in Hebrews 11), he still needed more to be done in his heart.

Wouldn't you like to have been able to read Moses thoughts when he got into the land of Midian, "and sat down by a well." He must have been one discouraged man, feeling that he had forever ruined any possibility of being a useful servant to the Lord. The future must have looked to him like the blackness of the darkest night. He did not know that he was going to be there for forty years. But one reason he was there was to learn patience.

But let me give us all a word of encouragement before I close. Please notice the last three verses of the chapter.

Concl: When we fail, or when others fail, the only thing we can do is to get our eyes back on the Lord. We fail, and those we have trusted often fail, but God never fails. And He who has begun a good work in us, will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil. 1:6).

Although there is no indication in these last three verses of the chapter that the people were crying out to the Lord. They were sighing and crying because of their misery, but Moses in writing this want us to know that there is never anything wrong with the Lord's hearing ("God heard"), and there is never anything wrong with the Lord's memory ("God remembered"), and there is never anything wrong with the Lord's vision ("God looked upon the children of Israel"), and that there is never any change in God's love ("and God had respect unto them"). Knowing these great truths about God, we know He cares and that He will help us even when we may be looking unto Him.