

Conviction and Moses

Our Relationship with God

John W. Ritenbaugh

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Last week's sermon left off with the proposition that real conviction is the product of a process, and that process is our relationship with God. The process is not just something that happens entirely on its own strength. We ought to realize that because anyone who is dating somebody, or who has married, knows that there had to be something put into the relationship in order for the relationship to develop. If somebody does not put into the relationship, the relationship begins to deteriorate. When it deteriorates, then the knowledge of one another begins to deteriorate as well.

We are involved in a relationship with God, and we want to be convicted about Him above all things in our lives. We are not going to have the kind of conviction that is necessary for the kind of growth that God wants us to make if we are not putting something into that relationship.

Now, this is something that happens because both God and we are actively involved in making the relationship work. On our part, it is a matter of yielding to His way. You might recall, from the book of Hebrews, that the problem in that book was that the people were neglecting so great salvation. They were neglecting their relationship with God.

Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

That will happen. It is just what I described a little bit earlier. If a relationship is not worked on, we drift apart. The same principle is at work with God.

Hebrews 2:2-3 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.

That sets the stage for the rest of the book. The apostle goes through quite a number of reasons why these people ought not to be neglecting their salvation. We are not going to be preaching here on the book of Hebrews, but we are going to be spending a great deal of time in the book. And, in Hebrews 10, Paul reminds these people of the spiritual height from which they had fallen to the place where they were when he wrote this letter.

Hebrews 10:32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings.

Please understand that this was written to the Ephesian Era of the church. You know what it says about them. They lost their first love. But when they were in the bloom of their first love, boy, were they enthusiastic! Boy, were they putting something into the relationship! Boy, were they yielding to God! Boy, were they obedient! Boy, were they submissive! Were they neglecting the way, the relationship? No, they were not.

I bring this up because, even though these people made such a great start, it is possible for a relationship with God to deteriorate—is it not? The evidence is right here. It is in Revelation 2, and it is in the book of Hebrews. They allowed the relationship to degenerate through neglect. Here are some of the things that they were willing to go through then.

Hebrews 10:33-35 Partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore, do not cast away your confidence [or, boldness], which has great reward.

There was a time when these people were deeply convicted. But, because they were not doing things that are necessary for maintaining and building a relationship, they lost what they had. I am sure that part of the reason the book of Hebrews is in the Bible is to serve as a reminder to all of those who came after the 1st century Christians as to what could happen to somebody who did not maintain their part of the relationship.

Another reminder is back in Hebrews 5, just to show you how far these people had fallen.

Hebrews 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

They had regressed to the place where now they were babes again. I think that I would guess that these people had regressed to the point where they were just about as carnal as the unconverted.

Hebrews 5:13-14 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, [Now look at this.] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

They had to be reminded in the strongest of terms that the just shall live by faith, and that God was not pleased with those who turned and ran in the day of battle. We do not want to allow ourselves to get in that fix. Nor do we want to get discouraged, thinking we will never measure up to what God requires of us; and think "Well, this task is too hard."

Jesus, indeed, warned that the way is narrow, and that it is difficult; but it is not impossible because God has promised never to give us something that is too hard for us. God plays the game, if we can put it that way, according to the abilities of each individual. Though there is a standard against which everyone is judged, everyone is judged fairly—according to their natural ability, and according to the gifts that God has given to those people; and to whom much is given more is required.

So no one can look at their neighbor and compare themselves with one another, because none of us knows exactly where the other person stands. There has to be a tolerance there. There has to be a patience with one another. There has to be an attitude of forgiveness, an attitude of encouragement given. There has to be everything that might help that person make it into the Kingdom of God. That is part of our responsibility.

Besides the fact that we know those things, there is also (right from this same book of Hebrews) that "great cloud of witnesses" that are mentioned in Hebrews 12:1. That is, those who have gone on before and are witnesses to you and me that God is faithful. How are they witnesses? They made it! And God has witness of their lives, and how they made it, and why they made it. And He has witness to you and me of His involvement in their lives.

So He has recorded those things so that we can understand that God will deal with us in a very merciful way. He has not called us to lose us. He has called us to save us. And He is able to do what He sets His hand to do. We are in far better hands with Him than we are with Allstate [the insurance company]. We are in the most secure position that we could possibly be. And that "great cloud of witnesses" witnesses to you and me that, if they did it, we can do it too.

So there is no need to get discouraged, even though the way for each one of us is just as hard, just as difficult, as it has to be for you and me. He tells us, in His Word, that He will do far more—over and above what we can even begin to think that He is capable of doing—to ensure that we will be saved.

In regard to these things, I thought it would be good to look at the life of a man about whom and by whom more is written in the Bible in anyone else, except for Christ; and that is Moses. There is a reason why so much is written about him. He was a great man. He was undoubtedly one of the finest personalities who have ever graced the pages of human history. In this section of the sermon, we are going to begin to see what it was that make Moses so great.

Hebrews 3:2 Who [Christ] was faithful to Him [the Father] who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house.

Hebrews 3:5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward.

Moses is one of that "great cloud of witnesses," and there is much that we can learn from his life. It says that he was faithful as a servant. I wonder if any higher tribute can be given a man than that. "Moses, the servant of God." To the best of my knowledge, only five people in the Bible are called that. Nobody received the accolades from God that Moses has, as we will begin

to see.

He did the job that God gave him, and he did it well. That is what set him apart. He did it well. He was faithful. So well did he do it that, in verse 2, there is a very strong hint that our Messiah—our Savior—is compared to Moses (not the other way around). That is pretty high praise. It says "even as Moses." We are going to go back to the book of Numbers and take a look at where this is taken from.

Numbers 12:1 Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

That sets the stage.

Numbers 12:4-9 Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. Then He said, "Hear now My words: "If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed.

Put yourself in the position of Moses for just a second or two here. How would you like to be accused, and then have God Himself make a dramatic entrance, and hear His voice boom out in poetry in your defense—saying that you were without peer amongst all the people? Do you know what "peer" means? It means equal. God said to Moses, "*There is no one like you.*" He was without peer among the holy. I will tell you, that is pretty impressive stuff. That has not happened very often in mankind's history.

But, on the other hand, there has only been one Moses. Ordinary prophets, there were a lot of them. They had to be content with visions and dreams. But God spoke to Moses personally. Moses was in a class all by himself. There was nobody on earth more intimate with God than Moses. And, as a result of that, Moses was entrusted with all of God's estate. That is what that means: "He is faithful in all My house."

God entrusted to Moses all of His estate. "All His house" is a figure of speech, and it indicates that "house" is put for itself (that is, the building) and everything that is in it. What is normally in a house is a family. So what He was saying is that Moses is faithful—he is without peer—in all of God's Household, in all of God's Family.

Nobody was faithful like Moses was faithful; and, therefore, he could interpret God's will to

Israel with full authority. That is what was behind those words. So if Moses interpreted God's will that it was all right for him to be married to that Ethiopian, God said it was okay. He backed him up, and He said these people [Miriam and Aaron] were out of line. That is why He said, "Why were you not afraid to speak against (or, accuse) My servant Moses?"

It is very clear what set Moses apart from others. He was faithful. This can, I think, clearly be seen when he is contrasted to Israel (who were God's Family at that time). They were the very people that He was leading, but they were anything but faithful! In fact, if you look at the Old Testament and some parts of the New Testament as well, you find that the reason that they failed was because of their lack of faith. And without faith you cannot be faithful.

This thing about Moses has direct application to each and every one of us. We are going to have to go back to the New Testament again, this time in I Corinthians 4 where we are actually breaking into the context of a very powerful argument that the apostle Paul is making. Actually it is an appeal with explanation, because Paul had been falsely accused of taking advantage of the Corinthians and other church congregations.

He was accused of abusing his office. It was an outright lie, slander against him. But in I Corinthians he is defending himself—and Apollos, and Peter as well—against these people who thought they were intellectual giants. Well, they may have been very intellectual; but they were not spiritual. They were not very humble. They were not very converted. And, as a result, they were not obeying God the way that they should. And, because they were not obeying God, they could not discern what was right and wrong. Hebrews 5:14 [tells us that] those who are exercising their senses in God's way are the ones who are able to discern.

Paul had to deal with these people as if he was dealing with the carnal. That is what he said in chapter 3. Now, with that background, look at chapter 4.

I Corinthians 4:1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Remember Moses, the servant of God. Now we have a new word, a new term, thrown in here—a steward.

I Corinthians 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

Now, Moses was faithful in all of God's house. And, as we are going to begin to see, he was the steward of God's house at that time. The context here most directly applies to the ministry; but I will show you, in another minute or two, that it applies to everybody who is a part of the Body of Christ.

"Servants" here is a Greek word that appears only here in all of the Bible. This is the one place that it appears. And I am pretty sure that the apostle Paul chose this word because of what it indicates in terms of being a servant. It literally means "a rower." (You know, like 'row, row, row your boat.')

It is somebody who rows a boat. However, it has a very specific application in

regard to rowing because it describes a galley slave who rowed on the very bottom row of oars that were powering the ships.

Most of the ships in those days had three rows. I guess, if you were on the top row, you were a higher slave than the ones who were on the middle; and you were higher still than the ones who were on the bottom. And so the word "servants" here are the very lowest of slaves—doing the most menial and strenuous of tasks I think that the apostle could possibly think that a person could be doing at that time. That is, a galley slave on the bottom tier, rowing a ship across the Mediterranean Sea.

A "steward" is a deputy, or agent, of the owner. A steward had authority to administer the property of the owner, including the other slaves. But the steward himself was under the authority of the owner; and, therefore, he was a slave too.

What Paul has done here is link the word "servant" (rower, the most menial of slaves) together with the word "steward." He says: *"Let a man so consider us, even though we have authority as a steward, as the lowest in the Body of Christ."* So Paul has linked steward and servant together. This is a wonderful attitude.

And it is the kind of attitude that Moses had too. If we had read another verse or two there in Numbers 12, we would have found that it said that Moses was humble above all men on earth. Even though he had the greatest amount of authority as God's steward over the household, he nonetheless thought of himself though as nothing more than a galley slave in terms of his relationship to Christ. He was merely Christ's deputy.

That is the way Paul was looking at it as well. So he had linked "servant" and "steward" together as being one and the same. Putting this together with verse two then: As a servant/steward, above all things he must be faithful. Let us change that word, because in some modern translations they change the word "faithful." They feel that there is another English word that fits better. They are likely to use the word "reliable." Another word that they will use is "dependable." Another one that they use will be "responsible." Another one that they will use will be "trustworthy."

Above all things, a servant must be faithful, reliable, dependable, trustworthy, and responsible in carrying out his obligations to his owner. Probably one of the most outstanding examples in all of the Bible that everybody is familiar with was Joseph. Joseph was steward over Potiphar's household. From the indication in the Bible, he ran everything.

It was something that Potiphar entrusted to him. Remember that word "entrusted" because it becomes somewhat important in just a little bit. Potiphar entrusted Joseph with the responsibility of administering his property, his household, his business, and his slaves; and yet Joseph himself was a slave in Potiphar's household.

Let me give you I Corinthians 4: 1-2 from Barclay's translation:

Let a man so think of us as the servants of Christ and stewards of the secrets which God reveals to His own people. In ordinary everyday life, that a man should be found faithful is a quality required in stewards.

Is that not interesting? "In ordinary everyday life." That is what the implication is, from the context. It does not actually say that from the Greek; but, in Barclay's translation, he has paraphrased what its intention is—because the real intention of God is to get across to those receiving the letter that they are to be just as faithful as Paul is describing a steward should be.

In I Peter 4, Peter is talking about you and me—all of us who are a part of the Body.

I Peter 4:10 As each one has received a gift, minister?

This is the word *diakonos*, which is sometimes translated "deacon." It is most frequently translated either "minister" or "serve."

I Peter 4:10 ?minister it to one another, as good stewards [Same word as in I Corinthians 4: 1-2.] of the manifold grace of God.

So every Christian has received some gift in trust from God to be held and used for the benefit of the whole church. The gifts may vary widely, but the ministry (or, the service) of each is to be according to the character of the gift. You might remember Paul's body analogy. The finger does not do the same job as the toe; but the fingers are a gift to the body, so that the body can function. But the toes are a gift to the body as well, so that the body can function better. It contributes its part to the well being of the body, but it does not have the same characteristics as the finger does—or the nose, or the ears, or the eyes, or the mouth.

The analogy is that everybody has been given gifts by God. (I guess I really should not say analogy, because it is a fact.) Everybody has a gift from God, and God has given it to the person in order that he can serve the Body so the Body can function. That is, function better than it would have otherwise if it did not have that part, or that gift, that God has given to it.

We are to do this as a steward. And, above all things, a steward must be faithful. One cannot be faithful unless one has faith. That is where faithfulness begins. It begins with faith. It begins with a belief. Then we carry through. And, as we minister the gift to the Body of Christ, we become faithful—reliable, trustworthy, responsible—in carrying it out. So then each is responsible to faithfully follow through in his service to the brethren.

We are not going to leave you right here, because we are going to see something that Jesus Himself added to this. It is back in Matthew 24. In my New King James, as a title for this section beginning with verse 45, it says: *The Faithful Servant*.

Matthew 24: 45-46 "Who then is a faithful [Jesus adds something here.] and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.

So we see a servant is given authority, and he is given that authority in order to provide for the household—to serve it, and to serve it at the right time. According to Jesus, a good steward or

servant is both faithful and wise. Putting all these scriptures together, we find ourselves then—by God's own testimony—as both gifted and responsible, with the charge of being faithful and wise in discharging these things so that, when Christ returns, we are found so doing.

Let me again add something here from Barclay's translation. This is of I Peter 4:10. Barclay says:

As each has received a gift from God, so let all use such gifts in the service of one another, like good stewards of the grace of God.

So a good steward is a faithful steward. A good steward, or a good servant, is one who follows through with his responsibility. You see, why we are going to study Moses is because he followed through with the job God gave him to do. He did it faithfully.

I think being a faithful steward of God's gifts can at least appear to be a discouraging responsibility, given our knowledge of how weak we are. But one is never going to be faithful if one's beliefs remain, or are, merely preferences. We must be convicted of the rightness of what we believe, or we will never be faithful.

It is right here that Moses comes back into the picture—at least, as a subject of this sermon. The Moses that we see lauded so highly by God is not the same Moses that one sees at the beginning of the story.

Now, catch this: Moses became convicted. Moses had convictions. But, as we are going to see as we go through here, those convictions were not always the kind of convictions that would meet the test of last week's sermon.

There were times when he waffled. But by the time we get to Numbers 12, Moses was a man of conviction; and he really was faithful. He could be relied upon to do the job that God gave him to do. So much so that God, in a sense, just turned the authority over to him.

We see Moses in his humility, though; and we understand he kept in constant contact with God too. That was part of his responsibility as the employee, as the servant—to keep in contact with the Boss so that he would understand what the Boss' mind would be, and so that he could then faithfully do the job that God wanted him to do.

Hebrews 11:23-29 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea

as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

In that span of verses, faith is mentioned in relation to Moses five different times—two times indirectly in association either with his parents or with Israel (his parents when he was born, and Israel as they passed through the Sea). And even in going through the Sea, I think if we would look there in Exodus, we would find that most of the faith there was on Moses' part and not the Israelites. They were all shook up. But they did walk between the walls of water in a measure of faith, and so they are included here. However, Moses was the one who really had the faith. So we might raise that to four different times.

Three times faith is mentioned directly as the motivation for what Moses did. Remember, faith is the foundation here of convictions. Faithfulness is faith in action. It is the carrying out of the responsibility. It is what shows that the person is filled with faith.

We make a serious mistake in attributing to these men and women in Hebrews 11 extraordinary qualities of courage—of strength of body, or of spirit. If we do this, we miss the point of what is made over and over again in the Scriptures. These people were no different than ordinary people except they had a wonderful faculty for faith. I would say that in many cases, and maybe in most cases, these people that are mentioned here—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, and so forth—maybe in regard to natural gifts they were less well-equipped than most of their contemporaries, living at the same time.

You know that God has a tendency to work through those who are weak. (1 Corinthians 1: 26-29) He did not choose people because they were "highly intelligent." He did not choose them because they were well accomplished in their lives and that they had somewhat to offer Him. Rather, He chose people who are just like you and me. Nothing extraordinary about us, but God did these things so that the praise and honor would come to Him.

As I mentioned before, these people did have a marvelous faculty for faith; but it is a faculty that all of us have the capacity for. Did you get that? All of us have the capacity for the kind of faith that Moses had, that Peter had, that Paul had, that Abraham had. It is not something that we are restricted in. We have this faculty.

Moses was a man who had qualities that needed to be developed, and they needed to be improved. And he had flaws in his character, and deficiencies that troubled him. But even as God gave him grace in order to use him, God will give us grace in order that He can use us.

Did you ever notice that when Immanuel—God with us, Jesus Christ, the Messiah—when He was walking the earth and when He called His disciples, He did not stop and say to them, "*Now, what qualities of character and power do you have to offer to Me? Have you gone through college? Do you have a PhD?*" Did He say anything like that to them? "*Have you been to rabbinical school? How intelligent are you? What is your IQ? What kind of things can you do to earn money for Me?*" Or whatever.

He did not do any of those things. He simply said "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men," just to cite one example. With the faith that they had, they up and left and followed Him.

And I think you will have to admit that, when Christ began with them, they were pretty rough-hewn characters, or personalities.

Now, faith was what made Moses what he became. We will see all of this as we proceed. But we need to ask ourselves "Why cannot we have it too?" God's methods are never out of date. God did not change who or what Moses was. He did not give Moses new strengths or abilities. He took Moses' characteristics and He molded them to suit His purpose.

Moses had to cooperate, or to yield; or Moses would have never been any use to God. Moses did this on the strength of his convictions, which in turn are based on faith in God. We too shall have this if we are willing to pay the price of enduring God's discipline. You know that Moses did. He endured God's discipline. And if we have this faith and the kind of conviction that Moses did, why will we not have our own exoduses? Why can we not have the way opened up before us? Why can we not see foes defeated? Why can we not see miraculous feedings, and healings, and sing songs of triumph to God the way they did?

God will deal with us no differently than He did with Moses, because God is not a respecter of persons. He has not called everybody to do the same kind of work that He called Moses to do. But yet, in principle, God has called us to experience the same kinds of things that Moses did. Moses became faithful as a result of his relationship with God; and, brethren, it was a long, long process.

God was patient with him, and He forgave him. Often He forgave him. He taught him, encouraged him, corrected him, disciplined him, humbled him. But Moses too was an apt disciple, and he yielded to God, and he took the discipline that God gave to him—so much so that, when we finally get near the end of the book of Deuteronomy, it is said in there that the Messiah would be like Moses. Deuteronomy 18:15—"a Prophet like unto me," God inspired him to write.

Hebrews 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

Like us, we shall see that Moses was born into an end of an age. However, he did have an advantage of birth that most of us do not have (though some have had it). He was born into a truly God-fearing family. It was a family that had faith. This verse witnesses to the faith of his mother and father. God has always reserved to Himself a remnant of people that do have faith, and Moses happened to be born into a family of faith.

I think it is needful for us to evaluate ourselves against Moses' roots and his background, lest we begin to consider that we have been unfairly dealt with. Consider this man, Moses, by turning back to Exodus 6. Here we have a series of genealogies that are given to establish Moses' roots.

Exodus 6:16 These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the years of the life of Levi were one hundred and thirty-seven.

Exodus 6:18 And the sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

Exodus 6:20 Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses. And the years of the life of Amram were one hundred and thirty-seven.

Moses' family was not one of any distinction in Israel. He was descended from Levi, through Kohath to Amram who married Jochebed. Jochebed was Amram's aunt, strangely enough. She was his father's sister; and I would tend to think that she was probably about the same age as Amram or maybe even younger. But he nevertheless married his aunt, and from that marriage Moses was born. I think that it is interesting to consider that, in Leviticus 18:12, such marriages were forbidden. But this was before that time, and so Moses himself came out of a very interesting relationship.

Exodus 1:1 Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob.

Then, in verse 2, they are named; and Levi is named there.

Exodus 1:8-11 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look, the people of this children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly [wisely] with them, lest they multiply, and it happened, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land." Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.

If you think that you have trouble, consider these things: First of all, Moses was born into an alien race in a foreign land. It had been well over 300 years, coming very close to 400 years, before that his people had migrated into Egypt. And, if you remember the story, at that time they were welcomed as valuable allies. But there were a great many differences—so many differences that the Pharaoh at the time told Jacob to settle in Goshen because shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians. That was just one difference, but there were a lot of differences between these people and the Egyptians.

There were religious differences. Israel worshipped the one God. The Egyptians were polytheistic and about as pagan as one could get. The Israelites tended to be shepherds, whereas the Egyptians concentrated in cities and were noted for their building. Israelites tended to be wanderers. They were more nomadic, Bedouin types. They did not like to be tied down. They were very independent, and strongly that way. The Egyptians had a very deeply rooted culture and were a settled people.

And so, I think wisely, the Pharaoh said, *"Get your people out of here. You can have the best of the land there. But keep them separated away from the Egyptians"* so the two could live in peace. That is the kind of a situation, at least right on the surface, that Moses was born into.

Second, during those almost 400 years, the wheel of history turned; and, by the time that Moses was born, the alien race was now an oppressed minority. They were an oppressed minority that was feared by the establishment because of their burgeoning population, which the establishment feared would join their enemies; and they would then have a formidable internal foe to fight.

So the Israelites were then forced from their normal shepherding routines into the brick-making industry. And I think that probably just is a collective term for everything associated with the kinds of work that the Egyptians liked to involve themselves in—construction and the building of proud monuments, whether cities or otherwise, to themselves.

And so they were forced, then, from their normal routines into the brick-making industry. The job was laborious, to say the least. But, to compound the problem, the taskmasters were made to make them work under the threat of whips—probably to break their spirit and to tire them so that in the evening time they would be so tired that they would not think about rebellion. All they wanted to do was to survive.

That was good psychology on the part of the Egyptians, because people who are concerned about survival are concerned about themselves. Though they may have feelings, and thoughts, and emotions of anger and resentment; they lack the ability to revolt because they are so concerned with survival. So the Egyptians knew a thing or two about how to keep a people subjugated, and that was what Moses was born into.

But it does not end there. There was a third factor as well. He was born into a time of unusual trouble in that the Egyptians had imposed the destruction of every male child at birth by casting them into the river.

Exodus 1:22 So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive."

As long as a family is intact and there are people who love one another in that family, who are sharing the same kinds of privation and hardships, they can stand scorn. They can stand rigor and hard work. They can even stand slavery. But this last thing was probably the most bitter element of all, because it was going to move to destroy the family and that family's heritage. And I have wondered, in thinking about this, was the 10th plague a payback for what the Egyptians did? Where God destroyed the chief strength of Egypt by killing their firstborn—[was that] a retaliatory measure for what they did to the Israelites? Maybe. It is a thought anyway.

That is three problems, but there was a fourth. This fourth one really was underlying all of the other ones.

Joshua 23:14 [Joshua says:] "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him

in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!"

In the intervening years, from the time that Levi came in with his father Jacob, the Israelites forgot about God. They gave up their monotheism—their worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Instead, they copied the people of the land; and they began worshipping the gods of Egypt (something that their progenitors had also done). There is an interesting statement in the book of Ezekiel. Regarding this same period of time, Ezekiel says:

Ezekiel 20:5 "Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On the day when I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them?"

Remember that: "Made Myself known to them." Had they forgotten Him in Egypt? Yes, they had. They did not know God any longer. Just a few did, like Amram and Jochebed. But they retained the religion, the worship of God.

Ezekiel 20:5-8 "and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I raised [lifted] My hand in an oath to them, saying, 'I am the LORD your God.' On that day I raised [lifted] My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, 'flowing with milk and honey,' the glory of all lands. Then I said to them, 'Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.' But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said, 'I will pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.'"

Did you see that? The Sabbath was forgotten. Circumcision was forgotten. We know that circumcision was forgotten because of what happened in the wilderness and what happened when Joshua did take them into the land. In the wilderness, they had to circumcise the men. Why were not they already circumcised? Because they had forgotten the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They had forgotten those things. Instead, they adopted the religions of Egypt; and they were worshipping false gods. They were participating in heathen festivals.

We might be able to say very easily from this section here in the book of Ezekiel how close they came to being destroyed before things even got under way. That is the kind of a situation that Moses was born into. They came that close to having God wipe them out, but God repented of that thought for His name's sake. Because He had made the promise to Abraham, He said, "*I am going to go through with this thing anyway.*"

If God had not gone through, we would not be studying here about Moses, and comparing ourselves to him. Moses was born into a bad situation. You think you were born into a bad one? Well, compare yourself to the start that he got. But he had one thing really going for him. I mean, humanly. That is, that his parents were Amram and Jochebed.

Moses, of course, was unaware of these things at this point; but this is where God supplied the saving grace, and it came in the form of Amram and Jochebed. The Exodus account focuses on the part of Jochebed because it was she, undoubtedly, (along with Miriam) who actually carried out the casting of Moses on the River Nile. But Hebrews 11:23 uses the term "parents," plural, so that we can understand that Amram too was involved—with his faith.

Did you notice, there in Hebrews 11:23, that it says they were not afraid of the king's command. The Bible does not say what it was that strengthened their faith, but what they did was a pretty dangerous thing. They put their lives on the line, as well as Moses' life on the line, by putting him out on the water. Did God speak to them in a dream? Did God give them a vision of some kind? Did God send an angel to them? Or were they relying on the promise that was given to Abraham, knowing that they were coming to an end of an age? I do not know, because God does not say.

But whatever it was, in a way it does not matter. All that matters is that somehow—whatever way it was done—they believed it; and they followed through with it by doing this thing that, at least on the surface, appeared to be very risky. Brethren, were they convicted? You had better believe they were convicted! And even the power of Egypt could not turn them aside from that conviction. Even the thought or the threat of losing their lives could not turn them aside. They did not have a preference. They were convicted! They put their lives, and their son's life, on the line—because they trusted the word of this God.

Exodus 2:9-10 Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her [Jochebed], "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages."
So the woman took the child and nursed him. And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, "Because I drew him out of the water."

As you ought to be able to see in part of this long process of faith building and conviction building in Moses, God was laying the foundation in this child in that people of faith parented him during his most formative years. Do not ever get the idea that the first several years of a child's life are not important, because it is in those first couple of years that he is started down the path. What path is it going to be?

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

That word "train" means to hedge him in. It means to put walls around him. It means to narrow his way in. That is what God was doing with Amram and Jochebed. They were starting Moses down the right path. We do not know for sure how long Moses was with Jochebed and Amram.

We only know that it was probably, at least, until he was weaned. In those days it seemed to be a custom for a child to be on the breast for about two years before he was weaned.

It is possible, some commentators will say, that understanding the culture of Egypt it was very likely that Moses was with Amram and Jochebed until he was about six years old. The reason, they say, was to get the child through those "bad years." That is, "the terrible two," etc., etc.—because they had them too. So by the time he was turned over to Pharaoh's daughter, he was over the hump; and she would not have such a hard time then taking care of him. So it may be that he was actually with Amram and Jochebed for what we could call the pre-school years.

There is an ironic twist here, in verses 9-10. God so worked it that the child who should have been killed at birth by order of Pharaoh is now under the secure protection of the powerful family that ordered his death. God has a sense of humor, does He not? I think that is so funny.

Not only that, the family of Moses not only get their baby back; but they are paid wages for doing something that they would have gladly done for free had the situation been different. It is things like this that caused later writers to say that God knows how to deliver the godly out of their temptations, out of their trials. A really good one is in Ephesians 3:20, where Paul says that He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—the Holy Spirit.

In Genesis 15, we will continue to lay the foundation of how this Moses became what he became.

Genesis 15:13-16 Then He [God] said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs [That turned out to be Egypt.], and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete [full]."

Here is the promise that I am sure sustained the faithful during this period of time—especially during the period of time that we are talking about. That is, the time about when Moses was born. Those people were able to count. They were able to keep tally. They knew that it was getting awfully close to 400 years, and they knew that for four generations—from Levi, to Kohath, to Amram, and now to Moses (who represented the 4th generation)—they were getting close to the end of an age.

We can count too, can we not? And we know that we are getting very close to the end of 6,000 years. We are getting very close to when the odometer turns over to the Sabbath; and, from biblical reckoning, that ought to be the time that mankind and the earth are given its rest. God has already raised up the Deliverer who is going to do it, and that Deliverer is going to come back and deliver His people from that kind of a situation. But we too are living at the end of an age. Are we going to be faithful—like Amram, like Jochebed, like Moses? It remains to be seen.

When Moses was born, the end was not yet for those people. In Acts 17, remember these words from Stephen:

Acts 7:17 "But when the time of the promise drew near?

"The time"—remember that. God had set a time. He told us so, back there in Genesis 15—that He had set a time. Has God set a time for the end? Jesus said that nobody knows [it] but God Himself. But that is God's *modus operandi*. He sets times. And probably in the next sermon, I am going to show you place after place where God shows that things happen at the appointed time.

God was right on schedule, even though the end of that age had not come. But the people did not know that. They did not know any better than we know today. They knew they were in the ballpark, but exactly how many years or how many days were beyond them. And so they had to live by faith until that was fulfilled.

Acts 7:17 "But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt till another king arose who did not know Joseph."

You see, the deliverer had not yet been prepared to do his job. God was going to do that in the midst of this troublesome time.

Acts 7:22-23 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

Forty years had gone by since Exodus 1. Moses is now 40 years old. There is not a lot that we specifically know about his life, but there are things that can be put together. From archaeological finds as well as some written histories, I think it is easily understood that Egypt was the greatest land of its day. It was the 'United States of America' of that time.

Moses probably lived in the palace with his mother (Pharaoh's daughter), Pharaoh and his family, for about 35 years. We can understand from that (it is conjecture, but I think it is pretty strong) that the cream of everything of Egypt flowed towards Moses. He was brought up in the palace. So, if he rode forth on a chariot, the people on the street bowed. If Moses went out on a barge, it was probably a golden painted barge or something. He would have had the best.

When he came of age, he probably had the finest tutors available in the land. We know for sure, from written records, that they had a great university. It was probably comparable to what an Oxford or a Harvard would be in our day. From other written records we know that he would have been instructed in astronomy, in chemistry, in mathematics, in engineering, in music, and in art. And I think in the movie, *The Ten Commandments*, they depicted this pretty well.

Now, undoubtedly, much of it was nothing but sheer foolishness—just as much in our modern universities is sheer foolishness as well. But the overall affect of all these things was filling him with things that were going to stand him in good stead later on. You see, in all of these 35 years, I feel absolutely certain that—even though Jochebed and Amram turned him over to the Pharaoh's daughter—he never really lost contact with the people of Israel; and he never lost contact with his [real] family. From time to time there would have been visitations that he had with them. He would have had access to the history of Israel, and he knew things; and his mind was being formed. It was being filled with knowledge.

It says that he was "mighty in words and deeds." He was a statesman, and he represented the nation in that way. We know that he was a soldier, again from written records. The years passed. But even though he was being prepared for a high office, the memories of his early childhood and his real parents—the knowledge that they were slaves and that his kinsmen were groaning in the brickyards. You can be sure that it never left him. You see, a mind was being formed over those years.

I hope you will not forget yourself in all of this. God has been dealing with you and me a great deal longer than our conversion. I am absolutely certain of that.

Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

"When he came of age." Had an appointed time arrived in God's purpose? I think so. He was 40 when he did this. And there are, again, things that we need to consider in light of what he did—because there was probably nobody in the history of mankind who ever gave up so much in the way of material well being as Moses.

First of all, he did what he did in the full maturity of his natural powers. He was not any kid. He was one of the best-educated people of the world in his day. Besides that, he was a man that had a great deal of natural ability to go along with those things. But he did what he did in the full maturity of his powers.

People are capable of a great deal of zeal and enthusiasm for a goal to be accomplished. We can see this on athletic teams. If they want to accomplish winning a pennant, or winning a title, they will give themselves over to it. They do not even have to be 40 years old, but they will give themselves with a great deal of zeal to something they want to accomplish. This is going to be important in just a little bit, but we will not get to it in this sermon.

Moses here began to show some of the deliberate resolve that would later become of such great importance. This has to be seen. What he did was really impressive when you consider what you have had to give up in comparison to what Moses had to walk away from? You think that there were not people telling Moses, "*You are dumb. You are stupid. You are idiotic. You are walking away from all this wealth, all this pleasure, all this honor, all this praise? You are going to walk away from this and you are going to go live in a hut? You are going to go to the brickyards? You are going to associate with slaves?*"

You had better believe that he had the pressure put on him by his peers. You had better believe

that he had the pressure put on him by his Egyptian family. They would have been thunder struck that anybody could do something like that. *"He must have gone crazy." "You are out of your tree, Moses."* [Consider] all of the scorn that would have been heaped on him. I doubt very much if any of us had to take anything like he had to take. Everybody in the court would have been buzzing, and his name would have been mud. But he thought it all through, and he was committing himself to something.

Moses could not do what he did hidden in a corner. You just cannot help but be impressed with what Moses had to do. Remember that he did this in the full maturity of his powers. How much of life had he been witnessed to—from the top to the bottom? Warfare. As a statesman, he had been involved in their Parliament, or whatever it was that they had that was the equivalent of it. Who knows how many cases he must have argued, you might say, before the Pharaoh, or before their Parliament, or whatever. *"Let us do this, instead of that."*

It would seem as though he had everything to lose and absolutely nothing to gain by what he chose to do. He did this when Israel's fortunes were even lower than when Moses was born. It was even worse that it was before. And yet he still did it. He counted these things that he had within his grasp as nothing. That is what it says right here. He took the yoke, and he went on.

Now think of this. He was 40 years old. He was in the prime of his manhood. He was only one-third of the way through his life. I mean all the juices were flowing through him. He was at the time when the pleasures of sin that is mentioned here in the Book would have been their most tempting. Temptation has no power at all if it is not pleasurable—pleasurable to the eye, pleasurable to the ear, pleasurable to the mouth, pleasurable to the taste, pleasurable to the touch. And he did this coming from a court, from an environment, where purity and chastity must have been unknown. The Egyptians do not have a good record for chastity. That is a historical fact.

All of us have times in our lives when we have to take similar steps. They may not be as big as they were with Moses. The stakes may not be so high. But the principle is the same; and, in one sense, it is just as big for us as it was for Moses. We have to die in the waters of baptism in order that we might rise to true life. Unless we are willing to give all to Christ, we are not going to rise to the true life. That is what Moses was doing here. We have to be buried if we are going to bear the right kind of fruit.

Think of it in this way: We have to lay what we love so dearly—our Isaac—on the altar, in order to become a leader of the faithful. I will shift from Moses to Abraham. Abraham loved Isaac dearly, but he did not love Isaac as much as he loved God. Yet, in principle, that is what Moses did; and that is what we have to do.

It would be very easy to continue to walk on what appears to be a sunlit garden path, instead of turning aside into a stonier, darker path—one that we cannot see exactly what is ahead. But those who have done these things can understand what Moses did, and they can see then the nobility and the greatness of Moses' choice.

Do not forget this: The thought that led Moses to do what he did was by faith. Faith rests upon God's promise. Because God has said it, it is as good as done. Moses was convicted that God said He was going to release His people in the 4th generation, and it was the 4th generation.

God would not fail. He believed it. He was convicted. And he put everything on the line. It was not a preference. Moses cherished a fervent belief that from the ranks of Israel, God would raise up a deliverer. He believed that there was a destiny awaiting the chosen people that would make all the treasures of Egypt seem as just a shadow by comparison.

Moses' conviction had risen to its highest point at this time. He believed, and he expected that Israel would see that he was the chosen deliverer. We will get to that next week. But we are going to see that they sadly disappointed him. They did not see it in the same way that he did. But, brethren, we have to cherish the same fervent belief that Moses did. That is, a belief that God says He is going to send the Deliverer; and that we are going to give our lives over into His hands.

If your convictions are ever to firm and to strengthen, they must be acted upon daily in order to train our senses to discern the right from the wrong. That is the point here that I am making going through this. Those verses in Hebrews are so important. Conviction is the result of a process—a process in which we are involved every day. As we practice the way of God, the conviction becomes firm because we know—we know what is right and what is wrong, because we are doing it the right way. And we will have it at the time that it is needed, just like Moses did.

He made right choices. That is why he did what he did. And he did what he did because he was convicted, and he was convicted because he believed God and was striving hard to practice God's way within the context of what he already knew.