

Moses

Exodus 2:1-25

Studying Moses is like studying some famous entertainer or celebrity. It is easy to identify the stages of his life and to label them. The early years. The middle years. And the later years. It is like reviewing the career of a movie star. Or maybe like the study of an ancient kingdom or civilization, such as a reference to the middle kingdom. And for Moses, it is good outline for the study of his life. And just to make it easy for us understand that and remember the periods of his life, each one was exactly 40 years. For me, then, of encouragement, is the realization that at age 60, Moses was only half way through his middle years. Some of you might have a similar perspective, and if you are under 40, you would still be in your early years.

As we look at Moses this afternoon, I have a great advantage, because I don't need to wonder about how to understand or interpret these verses. I don't even need my commentaries, and I don't need to worry about conflicting views that they might offer. Because the Bible gives us its own commentary. Actually, two separate ones. Two different New Testament references to this very text, and we'll be looking at both of them this afternoon. Hebrews 11:23-29 and Acts 7:20-36. If you like to move around and look at cross references, you might want to put some sort of bookmark in those two places today, for they will be our infallible commentary upon our text in Exodus 2.

So let's begin with the early years.

I. MOSES: THE EARLY YEARS.

The first 40 years. And the very beginning is very familiar, one of the most familiar Bible stories we read. A story children learn very early in their training and education. And a story that can

leave us missing the real point. The story is not about a baby. The story is not about the intrigue and suspense of hiding a baby from Pharaoh. The story is not about rescuing a baby from a basket in the water. From God's perspective, from that ultimate perspective, it is a story about God's faithfulness to keep his covenant promise to build a great nation of his people. I have emphasized that each of these first three weeks of our study of Exodus, because I don't want you to miss or neglect that overall context. God is establishing and building the nation of his people. God is establishing his kingdom on earth in the kingdom of the nation of Israel. They are the people of promise. That's what this is all about, as is made clear in,

v.24

But that's for the end of the sermon. First, in that broad context, what we have is,

A. The work of faith.

The exercise of faith. The practice of faith. Faith in action. And it is Moses' parents who get the attention.

v.1-2

She hid her baby boy from Pharaoh. For an obvious reason. She had to hide him from everyone.

Ex. 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."

This is what we read in Hebrews 11.

Heb. 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."

Notice how that work of faith is described. "They were not

afraid of the king's command." That's what faith is all about. They did not fear man. Instead, as we focused upon last week with the midwives, they feared God.

Ex. 1:17 "But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive."

They didn't concern themselves with the threats of man. They didn't concern themselves with the approval of men. They didn't submit themselves to the ultimate authority of a man. They feared God. They would honor God, above all else. More than anything else, they would do what was pleasing to God. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents." They kept him and cared for him in their own home.

Acts 7:20 "At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months."

They didn't know what would happen to their baby. They didn't know what Pharaoh would do to them if he discovered the baby. Or if one of their neighbors revealed their secret. They lived by faith, not by sight. They protected their baby, and not so much because he was their baby, but because God had claimed him. He was pleasing to God. He was the focus of God's purpose and plan. Their faith was put to the test. Their faith brought forth their work of obedience. They hid their baby because they feared God, wishing to honor him and him alone.

But then they couldn't hide the baby any more. So now what should they do? According to Pharaoh's order, he should be exposed. Simply put out to die, uncared for. Left to die in the elements and the dangers of the world. That's all that they could do. If they kept Moses in their home, he was in immediate danger of being found, and killed. So they would leave him exposed.

They didn't know how their baby would be cared for. They had to believe that God would take care him.

They made provision for his immediate safety, and then they trusted God. That's what faith is. That's what faith does. It trusts. Faith is the willingness to trust God, no matter what the circumstances might be.

v.3-4

What would be done to him? What would happen to him? They didn't immediately know. And that is what faith is all about.

Heb. 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Faith is believing, without seeing. It is what we will study this evening, when Jesus spoke to Thomas, who would not believe until he saw the actual wounds in Jesus' hand and side. He wouldn't believe the word of the resurrection. He had to have proof for himself.

John 20:29 "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Moses father and mother had but one choice. They had to trust God in the most personal and intense way. They had to trust God with the life of their little son.

Parents who have endured the experience of very ill children, or even the death of those children, even preborn children, have occasion to learn what this trust is all about. It is a gut-level experience. But it is,

B. Trust of faith.

That's what faith is all about, at its most fundamental level. "I

will trust God in this situation.” I will trust God to take care of my children. I will trust God because I cannot manage the situation myself. I cannot fix the situation myself. I cannot even endure the situation myself. That’s what it is to walk by faith, not by sight.

I want to urge you to consider that calling today, to walk by faith not by sight. We like to plan our own lives. We like to be comfortable and familiar. We like to maintain stability and we resist change. We like to be in control. By sight. And God calls you to trust him. To walk as if you were blind. To trust God in what you do not know, rather than trying to figure it all out yourself ahead of time.

The trust of faith. And notice God’s reward.

C. The reward of faith.

The blessing of God. You see, God’s plan was perfect. God’s provision was perfect. Nothing is impossible with God. Everything is worked out according to the perfect counsel of his own good and perfect will.

v.5-6

Then it gets even better.

v.7-9

Her faith was rewarded in a most spectacular way. Moses’ mother was able to nurse her own baby. God arranged all the details so that he was protected, and kept under the care of his own mother. Surely, that was more than she could have even imagined when he was born.

And then even still, we read,

v.10

There he was as a stranger in a foreign land, in Egypt. There he was under threat of death. And God made him to be the son of the Egyptian king. So we read in,

Acts 7:21 “But when he was set out, Pharaoh’s daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. 22 “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.”

Why is that again? What is God’s plan? Moses was the man God would use to redeem his people out of the land of Egypt. Moses would be the man, the instrument, by which God would deliver his people out of the house of bondage and be established as the nation of God in the promised land. God would remember his covenant promise. Then we enter the middle years.

II. MOSES: THE MIDDLE YEARS.

v.11a “Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens.”

Here is where the inspired interpretation of Scripture is so helpful. Because I can expound this to you with infallible certainty of being correct. The Bible is its own interpreter.

v.11-12

First of all, Moses would not stay in Pharaoh’s house. He would go to his own people, to the Israelites. “He went out to his brethren.” “He looked at their burdens.” He saw their afflictions, and he interceded on their behalf. Just look at,

Just look how that is explained in,

Heb. 11:24 “By faith Moses, when he became of age, 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 passing

pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”

By faith. This was an act of faith. This was a testimony of faith.

A. The work of faith.

He refused the comfort and security of remaining in Pharaoh’s house. He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. And just look at verse 26 of Hebrews 11, “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”

He would join with Christ in his sufferings! He would be united to Jesus Christ in his afflictions. And he would consider that reproach better than all the treasures in Egypt! So he, too, had to live by faith, by...

B. The trust of faith.

He, too, had to live out his life not knowing what would become of him. Not knowing where he would go or what he would be called upon to do. And the troubles which came upon him were obvious. His defense wasn’t much appreciated, was it?
v.13-15

Thus were the middle years, and another 40 years would pass in Midian. And so we read in,

Acts 7:23 “Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. 24 "And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. 25 "For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. 26

"And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’ 27 "But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 ‘Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?’ 29 "Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.”

Do you see what Moses knew about God’s plan and purpose for the deliverance of the nation of Israel? He knew. He “understood that God would deliver them by his hand.” He knew. The problem was, no one else knew yet. Verse 25 continues in Acts 7, “but they did not understand.”

That’s why Moses had to trust God. He knew something of what God was doing, or was going to do. He understood something of the great redemption that God was going to accomplish. But only he knew. And so he became an exile. An alien. A stranger in a foreign land. For forty years he “became a dweller in the land of Midian.” It was there his two sons were born. All the while he was waiting. Waiting for God’s time, God’s purpose. God’s plan. He lived by faith, a faith that was rewarded in a very ordinary way.

C. The reward of faith.

v.16-22

Notice especially v. 21. He was content! He agreed. He didn’t resist. He spent the middle years of his life waiting for God’s timing and God’s calling. 40 years. And then our text introduces to us the later years.

III. MOSES: THE LATER YEARS.

The last 40 years of his life, when God would use him to lead

this nation of God's people out of the house of bondage and into the land flowing with milk and honey. So much was tied up with the land, for it was the land of promise. It was the tangible evidence of God's covenant faithfulness.

And yet for Moses, it was,

A. The work of faith.

We read in our text,
v.23-25

That, of course, is the introduction to the rest of the book of Exodus. That is what we will be studying for many weeks to come. It is God's work brought about by God's goodness. But look first at how the book of Hebrews interprets those later years of Moses' life for us in,

Heb. 11:27 "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned."

By faith he left Egypt. He walked by faith, not by sight, believing God who is invisible. By faith he passed through the Red Sea. And in all those ways, he pictures for us the Lord Jesus himself. And so we read in,

Act 7:36 "He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37 "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'"

Moses was to the people of Israel as Jesus would be in his

day. And so his work of faith is recognized and acknowledged, teaching us about the prophet who would later come.

But if you will notice, the real emphasis here in Exodus 2 is not Moses. The real emphasis is not upon a man at all. Rather, the focus is clearly set upon,

B. The covenant faithfulness of God.

v.23-24

That's the most important sentence in this whole chapter. God remembered his covenant. Not that he forgot! Not that he had previously failed to recall what he had promised – but rather that he remembered, he brought to fulfillment all that he had promised.

Similarly we read in,

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."

Notice that phrase, "the time of the promise." That's what is so important.

Now, let me step back a minute and ask, "Why is all of that so important?" What is beneficial in all of that for us? For you and for me, here, today? Where is the practical application?

The answer is this, here we have a presentation and declaration of the nature of God. And I propose to you that understanding the nature of God is the most practical application in the whole Bible. Knowing God. Understanding God, as God reveals himself. And above all else, our God is a God who is faithful to keep his promise. He is faithful to maintain the

promises of his covenant. And that faithfulness is the very basis and foundation of your salvation.

It is also the very basis and foundation of any confidence you might have in this world at all. Any ability to live in the midst of all the troubles and uncertainties of your own life. Any ability to live successfully as an alien and stranger in a foreign land. Any ability to do any of those things comes directly and immediately from a full confidence in God's faithfulness. God will keep his promise.

And all the more when eternity is in view. How can you know that God would forgive you your sins? How can you know that you will stand in the day of judgment? How can you know that he will give you entrance into the eternal bliss of heaven? Because he has promised!

How can you know God loves you? How can you know God will always love you? How can you know that he will accomplish his purpose in your life, no matter what the outward circumstances might be for you, no matter how hard and difficult they might be?

How can you know? Look at,
v.24 "So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob."

With one final note of encouragement, namely the motivation within God for his own faithfulness. It is not mere faithfulness, though in a real sense that would be enough. But it is not simply that God keeps his promise. More fully, more completely, more personally, however, we see...

C. The affectionate mercy of God.

v.25

God looked upon them. Those words seem simple enough. But consider the "look" of a new parent, gazing upon a newborn child. That's the look we have here, the look of love. The look of affection. And he acknowledged them. Literally, simply, he knew them. Again, with all the richness that simple Hebrew word embodies. He knew them with his own affectionate mercy.

He heard their groaning. He responded to their groaning. He understood their trouble. He recognized their affliction. This wasn't a dry or superficial response. This was the covenant God expressing his affection for his covenant people. He loved them. And so he determined to redeem them out of the house of bondage. That is what the rest of this book will be all about.

Everything that follows in Exodus, chapters 3 through 40, is but the outworking of these two verses.

v.24-25

Everything that follows in Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy is but the application of these two verses. And then the triumph of Joshua, the final conquest of the land and the possession of the land. All of that is the consequence of the covenant faithfulness of God expressed in his own affectionate mercy.

Now, how does that apply to you and to me?

Very simply, and very directly, our lives as Christians are described in the New Testament with reference to the experiences of the people of Israel. They form a picture for us, even a type, of our lives. The delivery out of bondage, the wanderings in the wilderness. And the promised land of the inheritance. Those are the stages of our lives as well.