

Sunday 10th May 2015 AM Preparing a leader - Exodus 2v1-25

Title: Preparing a leader - Exodus 2v1-25

Purpose: To understand what are the typical marks and moments that God uses in defining his type of leaders.

INTRODUCTION

Comparing leaders

Over the past months and perhaps for some of us busy ones, perhaps just in the last week, we have been comparing leaders, political leaders.

Impossible to have avoided it

It is almost impossible to have avoided all the countless mentions of the election that have been going on - you turn on the TV they are debating it, you see a rack of tabloids in the supermarket and you are greeted with less than flattering headlines about some leader or other.

Q. What makes a good/great leader?

And this begs an obvious question: **Q. What makes a good, in fact, a great leader?**

Exodus series

As you may know, we have just begun a new series on this 2nd book of the OT - this book of EXODUS and last week we didn't do a lot more than just mention Moses' name - the reality was that in Exodus chapter 1, it was the ladies that were in the forefront:

- those amazing Hebrew midwives, exercising civil disobedience preferring to honour God
- Jochebed, the mother of Moses, taking steps of faith to defy the Pharaoh's edict in a creative way
- Pharaoh's daughter who had the courage to go directly against the wishes of her father and adopt baby Moses

This morning

So this morning we are going to turn our attention to **MOSES**.

And it maybe that you don't know a whole lot about Moses - you've heard his name, even if that's only because he gave his name to a basket - probably most of us at sometime have been put into what we call a "**Moses basket**" as babies.

In the Gospel of John, in the opening few verses, Jesus is introduced to us by way of comparison:

John 1 verse 17 "... **the law** was given through **MOSES**; **grace and truth** came through **JESUS CHRIST**."

Clearly MOSES is being held up here as being the most-significant person in the OT, and if not that, then a close second at least.

So we are going to be looking at this really important and most practical of questions:

Q. WHAT IS NEEDED, WHAT DOES IT TAKE, TO MAKE A GREAT LEADER?

(And there are few leaders greater than Moses, who was a friend of God and with whom God spoke face to face.)

A straw pole

Now before we dig our way through this second chapter of Exodus - I want to do a quick straw pole (time to vote again)!

Very easy question (and I'll take a show of hands):

- How many people prefer (and I know that this is a choice you don't actually have to make) how many people prefer the OT
- And how many people prefer the NT (OK - so let's have a show of hands: OT? NT?)

Q. Why take trouble with the OT

Let me address people who are finding:

- the NT **better**
- perhaps **easier**
- maybe just **more exciting**
- or simply **quicker to digest and get something from** (this could be all you people who live your lives "on the run")

If you consider the whole sweep of the Bible:

- the OT is *not actually* INFERIOR
- AND the OT is *not actually* INCOMPLETE

What you have in the OT is the whole show (the whole shooting match) JUST NOT UNFOLDED - I guess you could look at it like the acorn that has the full grown 300 foot tall, 300 year old OAK TREE all contained within it - JUST NOT YET UNFOLDED.

It was the great **Augustine** (back in the 4th century), who said, referring to the Bible:

"The **New** (that is the NT) is in the **Old CONCEALED**.
The **Old** is in the **New REVEALED**."

Ways in which OT better

Let me also suggest some ways in which the OT is "better" or "more useful" (and maybe this surprises you that, just possibly, it could have some distinct advantages all of its own):

- what you will often discover is that where the NT gives you a principle, the OT gives you a story
- (put that another way) where the NT provides us with a concept, the OT assists us with a more concrete expression of this concept by way of an illustration

So, for example, where we read in Ephesians (in the NT) that: "Christ has redeemed us through his blood" - the OT shows us this through the whole story of the Exodus, which we are now ourselves looking at.

And when you think about it, the God who made us, also made the Bible for us:

He gave us one brain with two sides:

- One side that is good at **analysis**, at **breaking things down**, at **logic** and **conceptual thinking**

- Alongside this, AND JUST AS NEEDED - he gave us **an intuitive, sensory side, looking at the whole & invoking our capacities for imagination**

And the Bible, you could say, similarly has these two sides that very much complement each other.

Our structure

Well that was **A BRIEF DIGRESSION**, just to encourage us as to the value of our OT's, and especially this book of Exodus that we are in over these Sunday mornings.

Let me tell you:

a) where I'm going and then

b) simply underline the theme that connects things together and hopefully will keep the unity of the passage intact:

The chapter divides in to two parts and so we have two points:

#1 - Verses 1-10 - what I will call: "The early years - a defining mark"

#2 - Verses 11-to the end: "The later years - a defining moment"

And **THE THEME** which runs through is **all to do with MOSES** and with helping us to see:

"WHAT it was
that went into making him
WHO he was"

So then #1 -

1] The "early years" - A defining mark

Almost immediately we are given a description of this infant child Moses:

Verse 2 reads "...she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was **A FINE CHILD**, she hid him for three months."

The word there simply means **GOOD**, or perhaps in this context, **HANDSOME**.

So at a minimum - it does seem that Moses was blessed with good looks.

The other end of the Bible also sheds some additional light - we get the New Testament commenting in two separate places on Moses:

First Hebrews 11 Verse 23 (ESV) "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was **BEAUTIFUL**, and they were not afraid of the king's edict."

And then onto:

Acts chapter 7 and Verse 20 (ESV) which says: "At this time Moses was born; and he was **BEAUTIFUL IN GOD'S SIGHT...**"

I am reminded a little of Noah here and a statement that was made about him at that point in man's history where God is grieved in His heart about mankind because their every inclination of men's hearts are wicked and scripture then goes on to say (by way of contrast):

(Genesis 6 Verse 8) "But Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD."

It is a wonderful reality that God chooses, he elects and purposes to place His mighty hand of blessing upon, NOT because of what we are, NOT because we look lovely, BUT because He simply chooses to do so.

Dual citizenship

Now there are **other factors about Moses that we need to reckon with**, if we are going to properly understand:

"HOW he became WHO he became".

I know for a fact that some of you here today have what we call "**Dual citizenship**" - you are those lucky people who have multiple passports.

So you're a **British Citizen** and also you maybe a **Nigerian** or a **South African** etc. etc.

Moses was also in this category and all of his early years were lived with his Mum and Dad growing up in the family home within a fully HEBREW CULTURE & UPBRINGING.

And, I think it is fair to say, that Moses had a Hebrew, an Israelite passport:

- Q. What was that? Well remember what God told Abraham to do as that sign of the covenant - he was to take his household and **have all the males CIRCUMCISED**.

So the fact is that Moses would never, at least completely, be able to erase his BACKGROUND, his IDENTITY & CITIZENSHIP as a Hebrew.

He had one very clear DEFINING MARK.

More than just a PHYSICAL MARK

But you know that mark was even more IMPRESSED UPON HIM than merely physically.

Growing up in the home through all of his early years and that was probably for the first 5-8 years of his life, he had the ways, the laws, the principles, the stories of the God of Israel impressed and stamped upon him.

This was God's way and this was one truly godly home that fit the pattern that Moses himself would pass on to a future generation of Hebrews:

Deuteronomy 6 reads " These commandments that I give you today are to be **upon your hearts. Impress them** on your children. **Talk about them** when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. **Tie them** as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. **Write them** on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."

Later on just before Moses will die he says this **(Deuteronomy 32)**: "**Take to heart** all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. **They are not just idle words** for you—**THEY ARE YOUR LIFE...**"

Crafting his conscience

I really can't emphasise this area enough - as **Proverbs** puts it:

(Proverbs 22 verse 6) ESV "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

His second identity

Now of course Moses "early years" were **in two distinct halves** because he becomes adopted into Pharaoh's household:

Verse 10 "When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son."

So now we have another phase of his continuing education for which Exodus is silent as to their specific content.

However, from the NT, from **Acts 7** we glean this:

"Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action."

From **Josephus, the Jewish historian** writing around the time of Jesus, we read:

"The Pharaoh, from whom Moses had fled, died, and a new Pharaoh had become ruler. Moses travelled to his palace and told him of the victories he gained for Egypt in the war against Ethiopia. . . He also spoke to Pharaoh about what had taken place on Mount Sinai, and when Pharaoh laughed, Moses showed him the signs."

We should never think that time spent in a secular vocation, time spent in university, or college, or doing some diploma or training that gives us skills that sell in the marketplace of this world - are to be considered as nothing.

There would come a day when Moses would need all of these skills of understanding the Egyptian culture, knowing from the inside the Egyptian political system. Days when he would be leading the armies of Israel into battle against bigger foes.

OK - that's these early years and it is fair to summarise that Moses has probably **3 DEFINING MARKS**:

- **his circumcision** -> something that he can't lose
- **his Hebrew conscience** -> something that he can't get away from
- **his Egyptian culture & learning** -> something that he can't fail to find useful for the future

Ok - let's flip over now to the second half - #2:

2] The "later years" - (and what I'm calling) A defining moment

As the **Proverbs 27** says: "...you do not know what a day may bring forth."

And **Verse 11** here in **Exodus 2** gives us **just such a day**:

"**One day**, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand."

2 types of defining moments

I think it is fair to say that there are, under most circumstances, 2 types of defining moments:

- one that **you make happen**
- and the other where **it kind of happens to you**

Joseph was an **example of the first** where, upon the death of his father Jacob, chose to once and for all forgive his brothers for what they had done to him by selling him into slavery in Egypt when he was just 17 years of age.

Gideon was an **example of the second**, where one day he was a nobody threshing in a winepress, the next he is being hailed as a mighty warrior by an even mightier angel.

Q. So what about Moses?

I guess that **Moses' "defining moment"** was a bit of a **HYBRID** really:

- just reading the text, Verses 11 & 12, you get the sense that this day that was going to alter the whole course of his life, was somewhat thrust upon him.

I am sure that he didn't head out of the palace after his usual breakfast of "frosted locusts", thinking to himself - "Well today's the day!"

He wasn't expecting to get caught - after all, before he ends up killing this Egyptian, he looks carefully left and right.

Q. So perhaps, Moses was one of the unlucky ones who was the wrong person, in the wrong place at the wrong time?

Well much as it might look a bit like that - evidence from the NT suggests that there was somewhat more to this than that.

- So perhaps it might also be the case that Moses himself was already well on his way to this point and that God is doing nothing more than simply bringing things to a head.

In Hebrews 11 Verse 24 we read "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, **refused to be known** as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. **He chose** to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. **He regarded** disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith **he left Egypt**, not fearing the king's anger; **he persevered** because he saw him who is invisible."

A defining moment

For Moses this day, when he ventures out to see his own people with his own eyes - this fated day trip when he travels to the area of Goshen, was truly A DEFINING MOMENT.

You see he came to a cross roads. He was 40 years of age at this point (Acts 7 tells us this) and metaphorically he looks to the left and he looks the right and he considers which is going to be the course of his life.

Q. Have you, Christianly or Spiritually speaking, come to that crossroads?

The defining marks in Moses life were now speaking powerfully to him and he could no longer ignore **his Hebrew roots**, he could no longer put to one side **his Hebrew convictions**.

The truth was that his FAITH defined him and *not* his EDUCATION.

Everything goes "pear-shaped"

Well it is upon this day when Moses makes his choice to side with the Israelites that everything goes **spectacularly wrong**:

- **FIRST-OFF** - he thinks that the Israelites will be pleased that he is siding with them and that they will enthusiastically embrace "pretty boy from the palace"

He thinks that he can claim to be a Jew and yet live like an Egyptian prince (exercising his raw power)

- **BUT NOW** - he finds that he is cut off and rejected by his own people AND has to run away from the palace as well.

So, in one fell-swoop he's cut off from his past and he doesn't seem to have a future:

- **at the start of the day** -> he was probably thinking:

"I'm ready! I know who I really am and I just need to get out there and make myself know! I can do this - after all I am a prince in Egypt!"

- **at the end of the day** -> he was probably thinking:

"I've had it! I've lost everything! I am truly between a rock and a hard place!"

Hedged in - A rock and a hard place

Q. Have you ever experienced choosing to go God's way, choosing to commit yourself to Him **ONLY TO FIND that somehow He seems to put you between a rock and a hard place?**

I know that Bola & I have.

I know too that this was a common experience for various biblical characters:

Jeremiah said this: (Lam 3 verse 7) "He has walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains..."

Job put it this way: (Job 3 verse 23) "Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?"

Put it like this: Q. What is God up to when it appears that he PARKS YOU!!?

It was **Charles Haddon Spurgeon**, that great preacher of the 1800's who famously said:

"If I knew I had 25 years to live, I would spend 20 of them in preparation."

Q. What was Moses missing?

Q. So what then was Moses lacking?

AND Q. What should take 40 whole years in the backside of the desert to achieve it?:

- **WELL** -> Moses had **BELIEF**, he had that priceless **CONVICTION** of his faith that his parents had instilled into him at a young age.

Moses had 40 years of **EDUCATION** - so that meant he had **CONTENT**, he knew what his people believed, he also knew what his surrounding culture believed.

- **BUT** -> (and there is always a but) - Moses did ***not*** have the **CHARACTER** to be of any use.

GIFTS & GRACES

You see in Scripture - we read of:

- the GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT & the FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
- put another way we have GIFTS & we have GRACES

Now, if you have **only GIFTS and no GRACES** then you will become a **LIABILITY** -> Moses demonstrated that nicely by becoming a murderer on DAY ONE!!

If you have **GRACES and no GIFTS** then, to be honest, you're a **CONTRADICTION** -> the Bible teaches that ALL have gifts.

If you have **the two together - GIFTING & the needed GRACE to carry it off** - then you are truly an **ASSET** in God's hands.

Q. What did the 40 years give him?

So what did these 40 years give him? Let me suggest 3 things:

- **FIRSTLY** -> he **gained a wife**
- **SECONDLY** -> he **gained a family**. We know of 2 children and their names are quite instructive:

The first one was called **Gershom** - because, as **Verse 22** tells us, "I have become an alien in a foreign land."

Now he can identify with what it feels like to be isolated, now he can feel something of what the Israelites must have felt everyday.

The second one was named **Eliezer** - because, as **Exodus 18 Verse 4** informs us: " he said, "My father's God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh."

Moses now acknowledges that this is all God's doing and he is grateful enough to enshrine this fact in his son's name.

- **THIRDLY** -> Moses **gained a new profession** - he looked after sheep. This was what his ancestors had done back in the land of Canaan and what they continued to do when they first arrived in Egypt. And we know from the end of Genesis that the Egyptians despised people that were shepherds.

And so in this Moses is able to identify with his fellow Israelites and the constant feeling of being despised. More importantly, he is gaining experience in dealing with objects that do not really like being told what to do and where to go.

All in all a pretty good way to learn how to do this when you are going to have to do this for real with people who will be exactly like stubborn sheep.

CONCLUSION

So in this 2nd chapter of Exodus we have been given all we need to better understand what went in to making Moses the person we will come to know through the rest of this book.

Q. What does it take to make a great leader
a great person
a great Christian?

Well there are, I would suggest:

- **DEFINING MARKS:**

Starting with our NT equivalent of Circumcision - CONVERSION
Going on with added CONTENT
& crucially with a clear CONVICTION of which side we are on
& what our life is about henceforth.

- And then comes **REFINING MARKS:**

When God works on our CHARACTER.

Conversion - Content - Conviction and then Character

And God willing, next week, one more that we'll add: Calling.

Let's pray AMEN