

Bethel Christian Church
In God Alone

Moses: Meek, Weak and Mighty

Moses in Midian

The Egyptian beat upon the Hebrew worker mercilessly. Each blow sent a surge of sickening bile up Moses throat. It was as if the blows fell upon him. The quick anger of a young man turned his brain white hot. With the guile of Cain he furtively looked around the scene. There were only three, the Egyptian, the bloodied Hebrew and himself. In a justice rage he struck out at the Egyptian: Returning to the Egyptian his own blows plus the blows of a thousand other Egyptian masters on a thousand other oppressed people. Moses lashed out with murderous excess against them all. The man died at Moses feet, his blood clumping the sand into small red balls.

Immediately Moses was consumed with the fear of all murderers. Frantically digging he covered the evidence of his crime. As the sand enveloped all that remained of the Egyptian's life it seemed that the terror of murder was reduced to a lump in the sand. Or was it?

The Hebrew looked up with a mixture of thanks and strangely greater fear. Now he was implicated in more than a beating. He was a murderer. In a 'justice rage' he had struck out at the image of God. The Hebrew's thanks seemed to give some justification to Moses rage. So often our anger is 'justified' as 'the work of God'. But no self justification could stop the cold shiver ripple up from his belly into his brain cortex. Nothing could reverse the cry of his conscience "Murderer!" Or could it?

Who observed the murder and let the news of out we are not told. Perhaps some hidden set of eyes which Moses furtive glances had not noticed. Had the Hebrew told his friends?

Now Moses was changed. The miracle of God's grace, the 'beautiful' baby faithed away in the rushes, had blood on his hands. The honourable prince in the court who refused to be named as an Egyptian was now a common killer hunted by the very court he grew up in. Moses fled the scene he hoped to save; ran away to Midian; to the sheep, to the back end of the desert. This would have been the kind of event from which most would have never recovered, in their own heart or amongst their people. Would this be the definitive evil act, prohibiting a person from God blessed service and relegating Moses to uneasy desert wanderings for ever? It seemed so.

Forty years later Moses was 'still' a shepherd. Now an old man (near 80) he wandered with Jethro's flock in the back-side of the wilderness near Mt Sinai. Was he still getting as much space between himself and Egypt as possible? What lay ahead for this old sheep herder? The compassion, the rage, the murder, the running, the sheep, the desert were memories never quite silenced by the wilderness and a wife, and a job. They all had to be given over to God. Only God could glorify his name in such a rats nest. Could Moses deal with his conscience? Could 40 yrs diminish the accusation? Could Zipporah or Gershon ease Moses sense of being a stranger in a foreign land?

When Moses wrote down the story of his flight to Midian, he book-ended it with God.

Why? Because he saw that his entire life had been book-ended by God. No chapter or book between the book-ends was the final word. Not the bad ones. Not even the good ones. Overall it was all about God's grace triumphing. Overall it was about God accomplishing his glory for Israel and ultimately his Son who as the Greater Moses would accomplish the greater Exodus of humanity from slavery.

God's book-end at the beginning of his story

During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew (Exodus 2:23-25).

God heard their cry. God remembered his covenant. God saw them as his people. God knew his people. Had Moses lashed out at the Egyptian because he forgot that God: heard his people? Remembered his covenant? Saw them as his dear people? Knew them and cherished them as his very own treasured possession? How often is our prevailing spirit, our prevailing attitude to each other our church and our work our family the product of forgetting what Moses forgot?

God's book-end for Moses forty years later: God spoke to him directly and set him aside for ministry. How patient is our God? Why not send the burning bush day one in Midian? Moses would have been younger and more vital. In the worlds eyes he would have been more qualified to be God's strong passionate leader.

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.

And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

(Later Moses said that his relationship with God was 'face to face' *Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.*)

Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

What do we notice from God's book-ending of Moses' life 40 yrs later? It is the front book-end affirmed and extended. God sees, remembers, hears, knows, and now promises to act (including Moses).

What was God on about in Moses in Midian? What did Moses see when God 'book-ended' his life in Midian? God was making a shepherd for his people Israel.

(You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron (Psalm 77:20)).

But more amazingly he was preparing the way to make a Shepherd for the Nations.

True Shepherds/sheep know that God sees, remembers, hears, knows and acts in grace so that they are included.

So God's testimony to us through Moses' testimony is simple

- If I am to walk where he wants me to go and if I am to walk in the manner he wants me to walk I must see my life and my church and my brethren and my leaders as book-ended by the God who sees, remembers, hears, knows and acts.
- All my past may only be swallowed up (no longer sending me to the back-side of the desert) when he comes to me remembering his gracious covenant love.
- This knowledge may and will cause us to truly fear God but we will know him as our Friend who speaks to us face to face in Christ the Good Shepherd.