

## ***Tempered By Trials***

### **Sermon # 4**

#### **Moses: Learning to Wait on God's Timing**

##### **Acts 7:17-34**

We have been doing a series of character studies entitled "*Tempered by Trials*", in which we have not tried to look at every little detail in their lives. But we rather we have specifically looked at the way the problems and trials they faced in life shaped them to the men and women they became. The hard truth is that they would not have been the great men of God they were if it was not for their trials. The trials and the problems, the troubles they faced made them into the people they became. Trials may not be pleasant but they are necessary tools that God uses to forge our characters.

The story of Moses is of course the story of the deliverance of his people, but it is also the story of the development of a person. The life of Moses in my mind at least is all about learning to wait on God's timing.

The life and experiences of Moses can be neatly divided into three forty year periods.

*The First Forty Years – Schooled In Pharaoh's House (Acts 7:17-29) - Learning to be a Somebody!*

Moses was born into a Israelite home at a very difficult period. According to 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 (18) till another king arose who did not know Joseph. (19) This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our fore-fathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live. (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.

The parents of Moses hid him in the house until he was three months old. Then in trust and dependence on God they construct-ed an ark of bulrushes and placed him in the river. Not only did God give Moses back into his own mother's care, but he actually managed it so that the daughter of the Pharaoh paid her to do it. How long was Moses in the care of and under the influence of his real parents? Probably at least until he was weaned and in that day and time it could he could have been as much as five years of age.

Moses parents remind us of a crucial truth, that the influence of consistent loving parents cannot be over estimated! The influence of godly parents in the early years of a child's life has an immeasurable impact on the values that will guide that child throughout their life.

We are told of Moses time in the Pharaoh's household beginning in verse twenty-one, "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.”

We really don't know many details about the first forty years of Moses' life, his life in the palace. We do know that for the first forty years he lived a royal life with all the advantages of the Pharaoh open before him.

He was trained as a scholar, a prince, a statesman and a soldier. For forty years he knew what it felt like to be “a somebody.”

The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that this Pharaoh had no children apart from his daughter and his daughter had no children apart from the adopted Moses. There is every likelihood that Moses would have succeeded to the throne of Egypt as the next Pharaoh. Yet Hebrews 11:24-26 tells us, “*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.*”

To put it as simply as possible, Moses believed God. Moses knew what God had promised his people, the Hebrews, and he believed that God's plan to Abraham would be fulfilled.

Moses could have identified with the hymn that says,

*“I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold,*

*I'd rather be His than riches untold.*

*I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands,*

*I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hands.*

*I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause,*

*I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause.*

*I'd rather have Jesus than world-wide fame,*

*I'd rather be true to His holy name.*

*Than to be the king of a vast domain,*

*And held in sin's dread sway.*

*I'd rather have Jesus than anything*

*This world affords today."*

He had renounced the pleasures of his position in Egypt and followed God by faith. But as so often the case, what was begun as an act of faith, he tried to accomplish in the flesh. He tried to do in the flesh what God had only promised to be possible in the Spirit. What God had put into his heart through the promised of the Word of God, Moses tried to accomplish in his own power and it didn't work!

In our text in Acts 7:23-24 we read,

"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."

How and where did Moses go wrong? Two things fairly leap out at us. First, Moses went wrong when he allowed himself to be ruled by his passions. He was angry that his fellow Hebrews were being mistreated and he struck out. Perhaps we as believers need a bit more fire in our lives, but we cannot let our passions take over. We do we will almost always make the wrong response. The second thing he did was the acted prematurely. It is often at this point that we also get into difficulties, we don't know what to do, we are waiting on god but we don't wait long enough and we devise our own way out of the situation rather than wait any longer on God. The result is inevitably a disaster.

Moses had tried to rescue his people and he had been the right man, in the right place, with the right motive ...but *at the wrong time!*

The end result was that we read in Acts 7:25, "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?"

At the age of forty, Moses became a murderer – a marked man. His rash, impetuous, and violent action severed all ties with his previous way of life. Overnight he went from the heir-apparent to the throne to a fugitive on the run. His own people, the Hebrews, did not want and indeed feared him. Nothing had turned out as he planned. His dreams lay broken and buried with the man he had murdered and hidden in the sand. And Moses ran.

The Second Forty Years – Schooled in the Desert of Midian (Acts 7:29-34) - Learning to be a Nobody.

In Acts 7:29 we read, “Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.”

Moses fled from Pharaoh’s presence to what he later described in Exodus 3:1 (KJV) as “the backside of the desert.” When you get to the backside of the desert you have officially arrived “*in the sticks.*”

Here according to Exodus chapter two he encountered the daughters of Jethro as he rested (Ex 2:16), Moses moved into a new phase of his life. The account in Exodus (2:21) says that Moses was “*content to dwell*” with Jethro. He is “content” but probably not altogether happy. For the next forty years he who could have been king of Egypt learned to become a simple shepherd. He would become Moses – the unknown. Moses the nobody. And he had every reason to believe that his life would remain this way until he died.

No doubt Moses spent some time playing the “*if only*” game. As he wandered through the barren hills of Midian with his sheep, he must have relived the painful incident many times. “*If only*” I killed that man! “*If only*” I had not been so impulsive! “*If only*” I had waited on God’s timing!

All of his schooling in Egypt was not enough to prepare him for his great work of delivering Israel from bondage. God equipped him for this task by forty years of preparation in the desert area of Midian.

The second forty years of schooling in the desert is finally broken when God appears in a fiery bush. And his life would never be the same! Verse thirty reveals, “And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai.”

Just as eighty-year old Moses was contemplating a nice quiet retirement in Midian, God breaks 40 years of silence. God said, “*Moses I have a job tailor made for you. I want you to return to Egypt and lead the Israelites out of bondage.*”

In verse thirty one we read, “When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, (32) saying, ‘I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and dared not look. (33) ‘Then the Lord said to him, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. (34) I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.”

The irony of this encounter is the man who was chomping at the bits to be God's deliver, so much so that he committed murder to do it, now that it is God's time has come, he offers excuses.

The Third Forty Years – Learning the God Can and Does Use Nobodies.

According to Deut 31:8 Moses lived to be at least 120 years of age. He had spend his first forty years learning to be a somebody, he had spent his second forty years learning to be a nobody and he used his last forty years learning that God can and does use nobodies.

Someone has said that had God allowed Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt without first leading Moses through the desert school of Midian the desert would have been littered with bodies of dead Israelites that Moses had killed always to the Promised Land.

We can see the change in Moses in the way he reacted to the situation revealed in Exodus 32:9-10. Moses had gone onto the Mount to receive the Ten Commandments, but while he was there the people had quickly lapsed into idolatry. God is under-standably very angry, in fact he is so angry He was ready to destroy them. On one side is a very angry God ready to destroy these people and start over. And on the other side are over two million, men, women and children. And in between – is one man, Moses.

In fact to make the temptation even worse God says, *“Moses, I will use you like I used Abraham, and I will make of you a great nation and I will still be able to make good my covenant with Abraham.”* (32:10) After all the grief these people had already given Moses, all he had to do was stand aside. Just stand aside and say, *“Go get'im God!”* But Moses didn't do that.

Moses stand in the gap and prays for his people and in so doing revealed the change that God had wrought in the desert of Midian.

Desert training will never be pleasant but it will help to mold us into the place that God wants us to be! The story of Moses is the story of a man who enjoyed an extraordinary relationship with God. Scripture says of him that *“the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”* (Ex 33:11)