

EXODUS 2: 15-25

THE HUMBLING OF A HERO

Back in Genesis chapter 15, God made a covenant with Abraham. Abraham was put into a deep sleep as God moved between pieces of animal carcasses. This was how covenants were made in those days. The two parties in the covenant would cut animals into and lay half of the animal in one spot and the other half in another spot. They would then walk around and between the two animal halves in the shape of a figure eight. The difference in chapter 15 was that Abraham was asleep and only God walked in the pattern. This signified that God had taken full responsibility for the covenant. It fell entirely upon Him to fulfill the promise. What was the promise? God promised that Abraham would have many offspring and that a nation would come from him. They would go into a foreign land where they would be enslaved but would eventually come out of the land with more than they entered.

In the final chapters of Genesis we saw Abraham's descendants go down into Egypt. We read where they were enslaved in Exodus one. In the first part of Exodus chapter two we saw that Moses was educated in all the ways of the Egyptians but chose to identify with his own people - the Hebrews.

Moses knew he had a calling on his life but he wasn't sure how to go about fulfilling that calling. So he was going to liberate his people by killing the Egyptians one at a time. That was what we called a "false start." Moses got ahead of God and had to flee for his life when Pharaoh got word of what happened. He fled into

the land of Midian or modern day Saudi Arabia and finally sat down at a well.

Not being in lockstep with the will of God can at times be dangerous. It certainly isn't helpful.

Moses had a rough idea of God's plan but didn't hear the snap-count. He jumped early and as a result found himself back in spring training.

This is where we pick back up with the story in Exodus chapter two, verse 15.

15 When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.

16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock. 17 Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

When reading your Bible you will see that lots of things happen at or around a well. In an arid climate they are the center of life. You can't go long without water so a well becomes a gathering place. This isn't unlike the water cooler in the workplace. It is often a gathering place.

Moses has been on the run for some time when he came upon the well in Midian. It would have been natural for him to sit down there, gotten a drink and rested for a while. While he was there some ladies came up with a flock of sheep. While they were drawing water some shepherds arrived and pushed the

ladies out of the way, moving themselves to the front of the line. Moses was not one to stand for the bullying of people so he stood up, told the men to back off and then helped the ladies water their father's flock. This resulted in them getting done early.

I would like for you to take note of Moses' chivalry, bravery and reluctance to walk away from a fight. That is the pre-desert Moses. This is what had gotten him into trouble in the first place. Was it wrong to stand up in defense of someone being beaten back in Egypt? I don't think so. Was it wrong to stand up for the ladies at the well? It most certainly was not. So why was Moses sent to the desert? Moses is an impetuous man - a man prone to knee-jerk reactions. He has to be rid of that trait. Now don't get me wrong, there are times when you have to act quickly, especially when it comes to helping someone, but when it comes to carrying out God's plan there is a timeline that has to be followed. And there is also the fact that when it comes to God's plan He is the one to be glorified; not man.

What I want you to take note of here is that Moses will not be the same when it comes time for him to go back to Egypt. Just mark that verse. In the book of numbers, Moses is known as the "meekest man on earth."

18 When they came to Reuel their father, he said, "How is it that you have come so soon today?"

19 And they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock."

20 So he said to his daughters, "And where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."

21 Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he

gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses. 22 And she bore him a son. He called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

The girls' father, Reuel, was the priest of Midian as is stated in verse 16. Reuel means "friend of God."

You may be asking how Moses fled to a foreign country and found a priest of the same God as the Hebrews. Midian, the man for whom the land was named was a son of Abraham through his wife Keturah. You can find that in Genesis 25:2.

In chapter three he (Reuel) is referred to as Jethro, but this isn't a proper name. It means "excellence" and was most likely a title due to his priestly office rather than his name.

In verse 21 we see that Moses became content to live with Reuel and was eventually given one of the daughters – Zipporah, as a wife. The word content means to yield. Moses was now yielding to another way of life. He went from someone that had always been served to a servant. He became a shepherd. Can you think of a better way to learn how to lead people that sometimes don't want to be lead, than to become a shepherd?

Moses spent 40 years in this post. Every day he would do the same thing. He would take the sheep out to graze while he kept watch for predators. He watered, fed, nursed and tended to them every day for 40 years. He had spent 40 years in Egypt and now it would take 40 years of monotony to humble him in order for him to be the man God needed him to be.

I'm sure he brooded on Egypt and what he saw as a lost

opportunity while he sat there tending the sheep. But over the course of time it probably faded and he eventually resigned himself to the fact that this was his new life. We get a glimpse of this in the name he chose for his son, Gershom, meaning “stranger.” Little did he know that as he sat on a rock watching sheep that back to the West his people were in need of him.

23 Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. 24 So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.

The Pharaoh that had sought out Moses died and the burdens placed on the Hebrews were getting heavier and heavier. As this happened the children of Abraham cried out to God and their cry came up to God because of their bondage.

The phrase, “in the process of time” is very important. The word process carries with it the meaning of accumulative years. It seems that the bondage had an accumulative effect on the Hebrews. Though they had been in bondage for over 200 years, they were just now crying out to God. If you recall, forty years earlier they didn’t want to be delivered, at least not by Moses. It was only now that they cried to God for deliverance.

That is one reason Moses had to go to the desert and be a shepherd. The children of Abraham didn’t want to be free until that very point in time. You can’t free someone that wants to be in bondage.

Have you ever dealt with an addict of any kind? If they want to be an addict, you can't help them. Until they hit rock bottom and are tired of being in bondage, you have to go to the desert and pray. It is the same way for the sinner. Until a person cries out to Jesus, there is nothing that will deliver them from their sin. Until we ask Jesus to take away that sin that so easily besets us then we can and will hang onto it.

The Hebrews are now ready to be delivered. God heard their cry and remembered His covenant. He looked upon them and acknowledged them. The KJV says he had respect unto them. The word translated respect means to acknowledge.

It is important to understand why this is worded this way and why things had to happen this way. God heard their cry and "remembered" His covenant with Abraham. We talked about it at the beginning of the message. God looked upon them and "acknowledged" them as His own people - the people of the covenant.

Now, remember how God put Abraham to sleep and walked between the animal sacrifices Himself? The fulfillment of the covenant was all on God. God has to do the delivering and God has to be the one that is glorified. God has been preparing Moses to be the instrument of deliverance.

If Moses had been allowed to stay in Egypt and kill Egyptians – who would have been glorified? Would it have been Moses or God? It would have been Moses.

God's plan is much more complex than just killing all the Egyptians. He has a point to make and lessons to teach.

Exodus 34:14

14 (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),

God alone will be glorified. Our goal should be to glorify Him and not our selves. Moses would have glorified himself if God had not moved him to the desert to become a shepherd. Moses had to be humbled. His impetuous nature had to be taken out of him. **The time it took to do that “just so happened” to coincide with the cries of his people.**

Now they are ready and Moses is ready. Now the next phase of God’s plan can be initiated.

- **Can the next phase of God’s plan for your life be initiated?**
- **Are you humbly submitting to what he wants you to do?**
- **Are you in the right place to get it done?**
- **Are we being patient as God humbles us in order to make us what He wants us to be?**
- **Have we cried out to God lately in prayer, especially on this subject?**

Our God, the same one who made this covenant with Abraham and Israel, wants to include us in His plan. He wants us to be imagers of Him and His plan. He doesn’t need us, but He wants to include us. This is a great responsibility but it is also a great honor. We, who so often don’t think of ourselves as worthy or qualified, have been seen as worthy by God and as His calling is our enabling, we are qualified to perform this task. God is moving the people into place that need to hear His Word and

we simply have to be willing to share the Word. So let's humbly take advantage of "down time" as preparation time and be willing to hear from God when we find ourselves at the wells, which we find ourselves.

Let's marinate on these questions this next week as we read ahead in chapter three of Exodus.