

Moses is Exiled

Exodus 2:11-25

Bible Memory Verse

Exodus 2:25 NIV

So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

Bible Story

From Moses' growing up years till now, he has been a resident and quite possibly a "prince" in the land of Egypt living in the household of Pharaoh (much of these years are subject to conjecture on behalf of storytellers, but some of it can be assumed). Because he was the son of the daughter of Pharaoh (Exodus 2:10), he possibly had privileges and rights and education and culture and authority. But, nonetheless, the story opens up with the statement that Moses had grown up (Exodus 2:11).

Now he was out watching the Hebrews perform their hard labor and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. He quite possibly had seen this before and took no notice of it, but the text divulges a significant reason why Moses reacted the way we will see in moment. For some reason, he now knew he was a Hebrew himself. Whether this was a new revelation to him or an old one, is not known. But Moses knew who he was—a Hebrew. And he probably sympathized with his fellow people and their status as slaves.

This particular incident resulted in the death of an Egyptian at the hands of Moses. Moses killed the man who was beating his fellow Israelite, and he buried him in the sand in secret (Exodus 2:12). The next day produced a similar event to the previous save but for the Egyptian. This time it was a fellow Hebrew that was beating another fellow Hebrew. Why? That is the question that Moses asked of this fellow. He responded with a couple of questions of his own: "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" (Exodus 2:14). It is interesting to note here that right now Moses does not see himself as ruler and judge, but, yes, he will eventually be ruler and judge over the people of Israel. I wonder if this is literary foreshadowing?

Moses was afraid because what he had done had become known. In addition, Pharaoh heard of the incident and wanted to kill Moses (the reason why is not specifically known: did Pharaoh know that Moses was a Hebrew and was waiting for an appropriate time to deal with him in the same way as his fellow Hebrews? Or did Pharaoh just discover the true identity of Moses and therefore wanted to kill him because he was a threat?). Whatever the reason, Moses ran away—far, far away to a land called Midian.

Interestingly, Moses sat by a well and through a series of heroic circumstances he rescued these daughters of a priest of Midian and one eventually became his wife. This is a very biblical thing to do, by the way, sitting by a well. You see Isaac's servant met his master's future wife Rebekah at a well (Genesis 24) and Jacob met his soon-to-be wife, Rachel, at a well (Genesis 29). So this is a significant pattern in the biblical narrative so far. We are only one book and a few chapters into the Bible and we have seen three men meet their wives at a well (food for thought). Nonetheless, Moses found refuge in the land of Midian, far away from his problems and past in the land of Egypt.

However, this account of Moses' killing and fleeing does not end here. In the text there is a reference to what is going on back in the land of Egypt (this tells the active reader that Moses' role in Egypt is far from over, even though he is physically far from sight). The text tells us that the king of Egypt dies and that the Israelites

“groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them” (Exodus 2:23-25).

The end of chapter two is explicit in referring to God as the hearer of his covenanted people in bondage and we are left with the question: “How then will God come to the aid of his covenant people?” And thus the stage is set for the rising of a “ruler and judge” over the people of Israel who will lead them out of slavery and into the land promised by the God of their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Scholars divide the life of Moses into three 40-year segments (see Acts 7:20ff.).

- The first 40 years were spent in Egypt, with a recorded event to mark the transition to the next 40 years (Moses kills and flees, Exodus 2:11-25).
- The second 40 years were spent in Midian caring for Jethro's flocks (his father-in-law) and hiding from the Egyptians, with a recorded event to mark the transition to the next 40 years (the burning bush, Exodus 3:1-4:17).
- The third 40 years were spent in the wilderness, wandering with the grumbling, rebellious Israelites.

This particular story is a transitory event in the life of Moses from his world of privilege in Egypt to his solitude and wandering in Midian.

Life Application

Your sin will find you out. Moses thought that no one saw that he had killed the Egyptian, but someone did. At least it was well-known enough that the next day when he came upon the second incident those people knew about it. We all have secrets, but do they rule our lives? Do we become slaves to the secrets that we so desperately want to keep because we think that if we are found out the consequences will be too hard to bear? Eventually it will come out. If anything, God knows. Be open and confess. Honesty and integrity are high on the godly character list.

Do you think it was right for Moses to run away from his problem? Maybe it was more self-preservation because the Pharaoh was going to kill him!! But think about it, is it our tendency to face our problems or to run away from them? If you are anything like me, then often my first thought is to flee instead of face. We try to rely on our own strength to face things or to run away from them. Might not our practice be more fruitful and godly if our tendency was to rely on the Lord in our times of trial rather than on ourselves? Might not the process be more holy and God dependent if we rendered immediate obedience rather than delayed obedience? Obviously there is wisdom in when to flee, face, or fight, but that wisdom should be based upon the Lord than on our short-sighted view of self-preservation. Surrender of our lives is always the best option.

It is good to protect women from bad guys.

Sometimes the Lord requires patience from us when we do not have a clue as to what is going on. Do you think that Moses knew what his future destiny would be? Do you think he even had a clue as to how God was going to use him for his kingdom? Not yet. So be faithful. Trust God, even when you may not be able to see how He is working. He is, he always is. Pray that our eyes would be open to see the things that are unseen.

God hears our cries. The Israelites were groaning in their slavery wondering if God even heard them. He did. He was prepping, setting things in motion that would forever alter history. They are the covenanted people of God. They are special to him. We are special to him. He cares about us. He hears us when we are hurting. He sees our pain and he understands. Be faithful, he is working.

God remembers his promises. He never forgets. Even though we forget and are so unfaithful, the Lord God of heaven does not. He is ever faithful.

Review Questions

1. Who did Moses kill? An Egyptian.
2. Who wanted to kill Moses? Pharaoh.
3. Where did Moses run to? Land of Midian.
4. Where did Moses meet some young women? At a well.
5. What were these young women's father's name? Jethro.
6. How many years did Moses live in Egypt (before he killed the Egyptian)? About 40 years
7. How many years did Moses live in the land of Midian (after he killed the Egyptian)? About 40 years.

Coloring Sheet

Next page



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