

Moses, the Meekest Man

(Part 1)

~Llewellyn Martin

“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num 12:3). This is a very strong statement awarded to a man; to be one who wholly relies on God rather than his own strength. Two questions that come to us are, firstly, “What can we learn from this patriarch,” and secondly, “How did he receive this blessing?” To help us better understand Moses, we need to reflect upon several things. Where did Moses come from, and what things affected his life? Was he meek, or did something impact his life to bring about this result?

The Bible gives us a few details about his life. Moses came on the scene about 180 years after the Israelites were in Egypt. They were no longer in favor with Pharaoh, and in his desperation to control this growing population within his borders, he made them his slaves and commanded their baby boys to be killed. Moses’ God-fearing parents decided the only way to avoid their son’s destruction was to keep him in hiding.

After a couple months, they put him in an ark among the bulrushes. Pharaoh’s daughter came down to the river, found him, and miraculously accepted the proposal to allow Moses’ mother to care for him for a season. We do not know how long she had this privilege, but it must have been long enough for her to leave an impression on his heart. Moses was then taken to live with Pharaoh’s daughter. Acts 7 makes an interesting comment about him, *“And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.”*

Does secular history have more to say about Moses? Josephus writes that he was a very beautiful and smart child, to the point that people would stop and take a second look at him. Egyptian history talks about a very strikingly familiar person. In the 18th dynasty, Pharaoh’s daughter, Nefure, had a son named Senmut (mother’s brother or in modern terms, adopted son). The Pharaoh at that time did not have a son to become the next ruler and therefore needed to adopt one. There are statues of her holding him wearing royal ornaments. Different images found of this person depict a man having a high-bridged nose, typical of Israelis, instead of the traditional Egyptian straight nose. His shrine does not have the customary earthly and funerary feasts, but instead includes a depiction of someone being embraced by a crocodile-headed god (someone protected by crocodiles). But it appears this Senmut was instantly stripped of all his privileges and disappeared under mysterious circumstances. His unused tombs were desecrated and his monuments were vandalized. Historical records are tantalizingly silent about Senmut’s death. An interesting comment in a historical writing reports that it is probable that Senmut abused his power and that at a particular point in the reign he fell into disgrace. The damage done to most of his monuments would seem to confirm this possibility.

As is typical of a prince, he started building impressive structures. One of the beautiful buildings in Thebes, Egypt was probably a temple built for his stepmother Nefure. Above the building is a grave with an uncompleted statue of a woman holding a little child. The names engraved in the tomb are Nefure and Senmut. Just below the grave is a chamber with two mummies with the names Hatnofer and Ramose, which may be Moses’ parents. The grave within was never completed, neither was anyone buried in it. Upon entering this grave, one would notice that it is unfinished and appears

as though the workers simply left at the end of the day with plans of coming back again another day. During this same time, there was a ruler that came to power in the middle of a reign, without any record of his ascent to power.

Josephus says that Moses was trained in the Egyptian court to prepare him to become the next Pharaoh. Because of his wisdom, Moses was made a general in Pharaoh's army and won many battles. As a result, he was put in charge of fighting the Ethiopians, who were attacking frequently and capturing more and more territory. Unlike the Ethiopians, Moses did not travel the typical route of the Nile river. While his choice to travel across the desert placed him in contact with dangerous snakes, Moses took some ibis birds, the snake's mortal enemy, along in baskets and released them when necessary. He arrived before the Ethiopians expected and achieved a decisive victory. By this time, Pharaoh was becoming envious of Moses and fearful of his abilities. Moses was part of a growing "sub-nation" within Egypt's borders. Pharaoh desired a reason to have Moses killed. When Moses killed the Egyptian, it gave Pharaoh the opportunity he needed. When Moses discovered that his murder was known, he fled for his life to the safety of the now familiar desert.

What can we learn from all of this? While these things are not recorded in scripture, they support the Bible account. It appears that Moses was well schooled in the Egyptian culture. His training to be the next Pharaoh gave him all the abilities necessary to lead a nation. He had everything he could wish for materially. From an earthly point of view he had it made, and was "ready" to lead a nation.

Next month we would like to look at some lessons we can learn from a man who was willing to forsake Egypt to identify with God's people.

April 2011

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(Part 2)
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Let us now look at a number of lessons we can learn from a man who had everything he could wish for in Egypt, from position, to wealth, to power, but was willing to give it all up to identify with God's people.

It does not work to run ahead of God. Moses killed the Egyptian that was smiting a Hebrew, and then later when two Hebrews were fighting he stepped in to straighten them out. Acts 7 states that Moses thought that the people should understand that he was going to deliver them, but they did not. Although he had the training and abilities to lead a nation, outside of God's timing they were worthless. Sometimes we try to figure out life on our own without seeking God's direction. Then we wonder why things just do not go as we had planned. If we would instead allow God to lead, then when plans change we could have that quiet confidence that God has led us every step of the way, and that He will continue to guide as He has in the past.

When God calls, be ready to step forward in His strength. And Moses said unto God, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Even after God had promised that He would provide for him, Moses still had a hard time accepting God's call and believing he could do what God asked of him. Sometimes we, like Moses, may have a hard time believing God will provide for us, but usually the problem lies in the fact that we are not willing to give up our comfortable easy lifestyle to work for Him. The beautiful fact is that even though Moses faced a lot of trying times while leading the children of Israel, God always provided a way through his challenges! When we step out with faith in God, He will never let us down! He will always provide the strength and wisdom that we need to fulfill His purposes.

True wealth comes from serving God, not making money. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. Moses had the prime opportunity in a rich culture to make his fortune without a lot of work. According to secular history, he was already constructing buildings for himself. He was headed toward being a Pharaoh where everyone works to build your kingdom. Instead, he gave that all up to slave away for God's people without any financial benefits. The only way he could accomplish this was to see beyond this life to the eternal rewards awaiting him. We need to learn to see beyond this world's temporal riches to eternal wealth.

Life is all about promoting God's kingdom, not ours. Once when Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp, Joshua wanted Moses to stop them. Instead Moses said, "*Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them.*" Moses was humble enough to realize that God can work through others. Another time Korah, Dathan, and Abiram tried to turn everyone against Moses. Moses was obviously called of God, and had the capabilities to lead God's people, but he did not try to prove that to them. Instead he called out to God and allowed God to take care of the situation. Failure to act as Moses acted is one of the greatest reasons there are divisions and contentions in the church. We seek to build our own kingdom and to protect our own position. We so quickly forget that our calling is to serve God and help point people to Him and His way. We forget that God has created the church as a body with each one lending their abilities to the strengthen God's Kingdom. What is more important to us, that God's Kingdom is promoted and strengthened, or that we receive recognition that His Kingdom is growing because of our work?

Consider a couple of questions in summary: are we willing to serve God in His time and His way? Can we trust him to give us the grace to fulfill His will in our lives? Do we truly believe that serving God is more fulfilling than making money? and lastly, are we willing to build God's kingdom without receiving any credit for ourselves?

May 2011

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In this last part, let us look at what constitutes meekness and what changed Moses into a meek person.

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(Num. 12:3). Vine's defines meekness like this: "It is an inwrought grace of the soul; and the exercises of it are first and chiefly towards God." It is the attitude of accepting God's work in our lives without disputing or resisting what He brings our way. It is the ability to see everything that comes along as something that God allows and wants to use to strengthen and purify our character. Whether it is circumstances that are contrary to our plan or people that insult or injure us, we realize that God has allowed it to purify us. It is complete reliance on God in what He asks of us or brings to us.

We tend to view meekness as weakness or mildness; however, in reality, meekness is strength. We know that Jesus was meek, but He was not weak. It took strength to meekly accept God's lot for His life without using all the resources at His disposal to avoid it. He instead laid that all aside to follow through with God's plan for Him. Meekness is the ability to use God's power to fulfill His will when we have the power and ability to follow our own plan or defend ourselves. It is not being at the end of our rope and then needing to rely on God. It is having rope left but choosing instead to accept God's plan. Therefore, meekness is the opposite of self-assertiveness or self-interest. It is the calmness of spirit that is neither self-exulting nor self-degrading; it is not preoccupied with self at all. Meekness can only be realized through the Holy Spirit empowering our lives.

Moses was obviously very capable of doing the work that God had directed him to do. He had gained valuable insights regarding leadership while in Egypt. He had gained a lot of experience on the backside of the desert on wilderness living. He was directly called and led of God. But one thing that is interesting is that the Bible does not comment much at all about Moses' abilities in leading this mass of people or his knowledge of desert life. Rather, it focuses on his dependence on God. Moses had an unwavering confidence in God's ability to provide for the needs at hand. Moses was also willing to lay aside his position to serve others who were "lower" than he was. But Moses' focus was not on himself or on his position! God would not have called him the meekest man had he trusted in his own abilities.

What brought the change in Moses' life? He had been raised as an Egyptian and had prematurely started to take care of the problems facing his people. But God sent him out into the desert to herd sheep. It would appear that God used that experience to mellow his character and prepare him for the task at hand. Hebrews 11 also talks about his faith. It says that he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. He chose to suffer with God's people instead of enjoying sin for a short period. Moses saw beyond what Egypt had to offer and realized that there was more to life than earthly position, glory, and pleasure. He chose to allow God to control his life instead of using his own talents to build a large empire for himself in Egypt.

In summary, let us ponder a few personal questions. How well do I accept the circumstances that God brings into my life without complaining or blaming God or others for them? How quick am I to defend myself against injustice or insult? Am I able to lay aside my power to save myself, and allow God to accomplish His work in my life? Can I see beyond the glamour and position of this world to a Heavenly Father with a perfect plan for my life? "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*" (Matt. 5:5).

~Columbiana, OH
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