MOSES

THE SERVANT OF GOD

Learning about Servant Leadership

Moses – the servant of God

I. **Moses in preparation**
From the forefront of the palace to the backside of the desert

II. **Moses in training**
Learning to serve

III. **Moses enduring**
Lessons on leadership

IV. **Moses beholding**
Face to face with God

V. **Moses the faithful servant**

Introduction

"……..Moses the bondservant of God….." Rev. 15:3

Discipleship is learning to serve. Leadership is learning to serve. We are going to look at the life of Moses, not merely to study his character and see how his ministry developed but to see how God dealt with him to equip him for service and to make him a great leader.

"Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Rom. 15:4

"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come." 1 Cor. 10:11

Biblical biography is the record of God's dealings with people in the past. Its purpose is to disclose the training necessary for those God would make 'fit vessels' for His use.

In other spheres people are trained to lead, but God trains people to serve. We are **His workmanship**. He is the Master Builder. He is the Divine Potter. He is the Vine-dresser. He undertakes to perfect what He begins and to make us Christlike and fruitful if we will submit to Him and learn from His dealings with us.

We will watch God in His dealings with Moses through:

I. Preparation for leadership

II. Training – learning to serve – character development

III. Enduring – lessons in leadership

IV. Beholding – face to face with God

V. Moses the faithful servant

There will necessarily be some overlap as we cover the same ground to learn the lessons of learning to serve.

This first study will cover the first 80 years of Moses' life. The last four studies will cover the last 40 years – the significant years of his life.

Dr. Paul Rees said that *"Moses spent forty years in Egypt learning to be somebody, forty years in the desert learning to be nobody and forty years as a leader learning that God is everything."*

We have instant coffee and even instant tea – pretty foul tasting for an Englishman! But there is no instant holiness – no instant Christlike character – no instant training for service. Time, testing and training are needed. God is not in a hurry. He doesn't begrudge time given to ripening and maturing as we so often do. His is the fruit that abides. His workmanship is something that endures and will stand the test of fire. He deals with us from the perspective of eternity.

Moses the servant of God

I. Moses in preparation for leadership

1. Lessons Moses had to learn

1.1 The lesson of detachment from things

1.2 The lesson of disciplined study

1.3 The crisis of his life: The great refusal of his prerogatives

1.4 The positive choice – by faith – at calculated cost

2. The hidden years in the desert

2.1 The lesson of failure – the bitter school of self-discovery

2.2 The lesson of a pilgrim spirit

3. The flame of fire

3.1 Burnt out

- The bush itself cannot sustain a fire
- The lesson of rejection

3.2 Holy ground

3.3 Now ……. I will send you (Ex. 3:10)

I. Moses – in preparation for leadership

Reading: Acts 7:17-29

His background

"The flesh (the old nature) ***is of no profit."*** (Jn. 6:63)

This lesson was to be written deeply in Moses' heart.

Moses means 'drawn out' (Ex. 2:10). This was his experience throughout his whole life:

- Drawn out of death to be trained as a king's son – Prince of Egypt
- Drawn out of the world of secular power and success into life in the desert
- Drawn out of desert seclusion to become God's instrument for the deliverance of His People from Egypt
- Drawn out of active administration to fellowship with God alone
- Drawn out of the world at Pisgah to God Himself
- Drawn out and withdrawn This is the principle of discipleship and learning how to serve as a leader.

We start as babes in Christ and this is when we are dealt with so tenderly and are left with many props supporting our lives.

"It was I who taught Ephraim to walk. I took them up in my arms, but they did not know I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with bands of love…." (Hosea 11:3-4)

"My heart is not lifted up … like a weaned child is my soul." (Ps. 131:1-2)

1. Lessons Moses had to learn

1.1 A gradual detachment from things and people

What a significant place both people and things play in our lives – dependence on things, on people, on circumstances, on being in a certain place. We are so often dependent on them as props. We are dependent on:

- Circumstances – witness our dismay over sudden changes
- Co-workers – see what happens when colleagues leave and we are deprived of help
- A constant supply of funds

These spring from attachments that have become props to our faith, but if God is to do His work in me, I must learn dependence only on Him and an independence of things and circumstances. I must learn to be *"lifted above all, by the loss of all".* (Madame Guyon)

Madame Guyon wrote from a French prison: *"Yes, let Him take all. The Lord gave; let the Lord take away".*

Paul wrote from Rome: ***"I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus My Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I might gain Christ."*** (Phil. 3:8)

How far are we prepared to go in order to gain Christ? How far will we allow Him to go in His dealings with us? The loss of what? This is the lesson of discipleship for us in this mad age of consumerism. What example are we setting? What is my life teaching in the area of dependence on props or detachment from them?

1.2 Disciplined study and training

Many of us chafe under the discipline of training. We are weary of the discipline and the perseverance in long years of training and service that it takes to make ***"a workman that need not be ashamed"***. Not so Abraham or Joseph or Moses. God takes time. He tests us to produce patience and endurance. Jesus showed no impatience during the quiet years in Nazareth. Paul had to go back to Tarsus **after** the call of God. Years before that God had put him at the feet of Gamaliel for a period of time.

We need to learn to wait on God, to rest in His will and to abide by His time. Let us not throw aside some weary assignment permitted by Him to fit us for some future task that calls for those who will not quit whatever happens.

Moses was a servant of God. You can tell whether you are a true servant or not by how you react when you get treated like one!

1.3 The crisis of his life – the great refusal of his prerogatives

This is the crisis of the inner life – the crisis of the acceptance of the Cross. The Cross must, sooner or later, stamp the life of any who would follow the Crucified. Once the process of the acceptance of the Cross starts, it needs to go ever deeper.

Moses was an adopted son of a princess and, as such, he was a Prince of Egypt. He had all the prerogatives of royalty in that time of absolute monarchy. He lived in what was probably the most refined culture and luxury in the world of his day (midway through the 2nd millennium B.C.). He had absorbed all the learning of the Egyptians – perhaps the foremost civilisation in the world of that day. At the equivalent of Cambridge University of his day he would have studied astronomy, mathematics, chemistry and engineering. Moreover, he was trained as a statesman in oratory, in wisdom, judgement and law. He was also a great soldier. Josephus says he was commander-in-chief of the armies of Egypt in several battles (mainly against peoples from the South) and he was always victorious. Much of this was to stand him in good stead in the future as he led the people of God out of Egypt.

God needed a man of such training to administer a camp of as many as 2 million people (by some calculations). Moses maintained records (for our learning). He trained others to lead and organise. This training was of great importance in Moses' leadership in the future. But although important, it was not sufficient.

Then at the age of 40 came the crisis!

A crisis, whether the outcome is a failure or a positive step forward, always reveals a past process. We don't suddenly succumb to sin, moral failure and cowardice. The thought that produced the decision in the crisis has usually been long harboured and nourished. The capacity for the right spiritual choice in a crisis is the outcome of God's dealings with us over the years and our habitual responses to them.

This process started in Moses in his early years. The lessons taught by his parents – especially his mother – were impressed on him by the Holy Spirit. So even 40 years of living in worldly, licentious, haughty, arrogant and pagan environments could not rub out the deep work of those early years nor undo what he had learned. These were the foundations that were laid deeply and truly in the heart of Moses for God to build upon. But a crisis was inevitable in God's time – a crisis of spiritual purpose and destiny.

"By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the People of God, than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking for the reward." (Heb. 11:24-26)

He disavowed his adoption; he relinquished his power; he resigned his position and rejected his prospects. All this was the negative side. This is what he gave up. But he surrendered these things in order to gain far more.

1.4. The positive choice – a calculated cost – by faith

He chose to suffer mistreatment, to share affliction and to endure hardship. He identified himself with the People of God: ***"Your people shall be my people"***, even though they were suffering slavery and a slow attempt at genocide. The NEB says, ***"He was estimating, counting the stigma that rests on God's anointed, the reproach of Christ, as greater than all that Egypt offered to him"***

How did he do it? **By faith**. He weighed the alternatives – what the world (the world of Egypt) offered against what God offered: time vs. eternity – the material vs. the spiritual. He counted; he chose; he refused; he forsook **by faith**. Those early years had done their work as had the continuing control of the Holy Spirit. In the hour of challenge and of crisis, Moses chose and chose well!

Prof Blaiklock wrote:

"Moses was 40 years old when he made his great renunciation. It wasn't the passionate rebellion of youth nor the hot idealism of a boy who has not known the good things (power, prestige, success) on which he turned his back. Moses was a great man, but ***it was a faith that made him great****. Like Abraham, he steps into history to change it by his mighty trust in God and his firm desire to seek God's will."*

"God turns the scale of events by the weight of a man faithful and true and sufficiently aware of Him to refuse the surrender of his liberty or his religion. There is no man, faithful to a lonely duty or conviction, but makes the world better and stronger." (Chadwick)

What about our children and the young people we have promised to train? Are we teaching them the principles of spiritual life and how to make choices? Or are we making decisions for them? Let us train them to make the right spiritual choices in their daily duties and in the temptations of life.

Moses chose by faith at carefully calculated cost.

This led him to refuse and forsake. These are concomitants of a positive choice. We can't have it both ways! To choose one is to refuse the other. Moses had to refuse pride and power again when he refused to allow God to start again and make him the progenitor of a great nation.

Jesus had to refuse to use His power both at the temptation in the wilderness and on the Cross. "If you are the Son of God, use your power: make bread – give a materialistic demonstration." And again at Calvary, "Come down from the Cross – use your power." Jesus and Moses both made the same choice.

All through life you will be tempted to take up pomp and power (financial or intellectual) that you once refused and forsook when you yielded all to Christ.

All through life I see a Cross
Where the sons of God yielded up their breath.
There is no gain except by loss.
There is no life except by death:
Nor glory but by bearing shame,
Nor justice, but by taking blame
and that Eternal Passion saith,
"Be emptied of honour and right and name!"

The Son of Man must be lifted up. The Cross is inevitable and inescapable. And as for the Master, so shall the servant be. The Cross is the sign of the utmost loss, of suffering, of separation, of identification with those we are sent to serve.

Lord crucified, O mark Your holy Cross
On preference, on motive, all fond desire.
On that which self in any form inspires
Set Thou that sign of loss.
And when the touch of death is here and there,
Laid on a thing most precious in our eyes,
Let us not wonder. Let us recognise
The answer to this prayer.

2. The backside of the desert: the hidden years

What a period of testing this must have been for Moses! He had to learn to be nothing! He had to learn that human capabilities, intellectual or physical, can never profit (or effectively contribute to) God's work. Moses went from the forefront of the palace to the backside of the desert!

At 40 yrs old he was famous – a powerful politician, a military general of great distinction and along with this he was cultured and scholarly. He had arrived! Not only was he qualified, filled with a sense of mission – a burning urgency, but he was also on the threshold of a tragic blunder that was to frustrate all his noblest hopes and high ambitions!

" ….it came into his heart to visit his brothers……" (Acts 7:23) There was nothing wrong with this aspiration. His concern was genuine, his compassion was real. But he didn't know the ways of God. So he acted impulsively, just as Peter did when he drew his sword in Gethsemane and sliced off a man's ear or like Joshua before the first battle of Ai. Moses ***"Supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand …."*** (Acts 7:23) So often we 'suppose' not understanding and seeking the mind and the ways of God.

Years later Moses was to pray, ***"Show me now Your ways"*** (Ex. 33:13). But even before he asked, God had begun to answer. ***"The Lord made known his ways to Moses."*** (Ps. 103:7) And this began in the solitude of the desert – a training that was to last another 40 years – for the years he was to lead God's people. For all his learning, Moses still had much to learn. The school God chose was the desert where one day he was to lead and teach God's People. Moses became a meek man. The first lessons in this were learned in Midian in the Sinai desert.

Why are hastiness and hot temper barriers to usefulness in the work of God? He/she who has control over others in leadership, must first learn self-control! He/she who is to win the obedience of others, must first learn to obey. He/she who has a task to perform for God must, above all, learn patience. That was the lesson that God taught Abraham. Moses needed to learn it. He stepped out in self-will, confident that the Hebrew slaves would rally in gratitude around this 'Prince of Egypt' and accept his leadership. Instead, Moses found rejection!

2.1 The lesson of failure: the bitter school of self-discovery of our human bankruptcy

Human history as we write it glorifies our successes – battles won, new territories explored, new inventions. Human history as God writes it in the Bible tends to focus on people who failed! The Bible doesn't give any picture of the intrinsic worth of success. We actually find the opposite – successful deeds are often preceded, in great detail, with a picture of the failure involved. According to the Bible, all the leaders in the Bible failed to accomplish their task. They looked forward in faith to the ultimate victory of the Lord Jesus. It is a glorious truth that in Jesus **alone** evil has been defeated finally and for ever.

The tragedy of the generation that left Egypt was that they fell short of the ultimate blessing. The analogy is of a believer who falls short of a victorious life and fails – for lack of faith – to enjoy what God has for him. Moses had to learn by failure that man cannot do God's work. God does His work **through** those who have come to the end of self and who have learned that their sufficiency is in God alone.

2.2 The lesson of a pilgrim spirit

Moses had to live and learn in the desert for 40 years to fit him for future service. One of the lessons here is that a leader must be touched by all that touches those he leads – as was true of Jesus.

Moses had to be weaned from cultural and materialistic surroundings of Egypt – weaned away from the stimulating, intellectual companionship of those in his society as well as being weaned away from the pleasures of sin. Moses had to learn cultural adaptation (and probably language learning). In fact Moses needed to drink deeply of **the pilgrim spirit**.

Moses had to learn patient waiting in hope. He had to be tried and to prove the acceptable will of God. He learned the futility of mere human endowments in the work of God. We are not called to commit ourselves to the task of world evangelism, but **to commit ourselves to God**. It is not degrees, training or experience that counts, but our relationship to God in faith, dependence and obedience. **It is not our activity or ability that counts, but our restful availability to go anywhere and do anything – a pilgrim spirit**. We have to learn that God is not in a hurry.

How common is our anxiety and restlessness. How few of us attain a calm serenity that should be the fruit of faith in an all-wise, all-loving God! Rest of soul is for those who untiringly apply their faith to all the problems of life – to all stress, all sorrow and suffering and in so doing, build that fund of experience of God's presence and God's blessing on which confidence may draw in the future.

Moses went out into the desert to learn: ***"Be still and know that He is God".*** (Ps. 46:10)
As we learn to serve, we must also learn to worship and to adore the God we would serve.

Moses had to learn to shepherd his sheep. Peter had to learn to catch fish. Jesus said, ***"You are..., you will be ...".*** Previous lessons in the secular world illustrate valuable principles in Christian ministry.

Finally, God often prepares His people in secret and then reveals them in the day of crisis. He said to Elijah, ***"Go and hide at the brook Cherith"*** (1 Kings 17:3) long before gave the command, ***"Go show yourself to Ahab … stand on Carmel"*** (1 Kings 18:1). There must be a hiding – where the old nature dies – before there is a demonstration, in God's time, of the risen life and power. The corn of wheat must die for the abundant harvest. Moses was 'drawn out' – withdrawn to be alone with God, before being sent forth.

This is the way of God with those who would learn to serve.

3. The flame of fire – the burning bush

There are three aspects I would like to emphasise:

- The transforming presence of God
- The commissioning revelation of God
- The prostrating vision of God

It would seem that at some time or other in the lives of all God's servants there comes a prostrating vision of God together with and often climaxing in a period of being hidden. This gives God's servants a great capacity to endure – to bear burdens, to overcome and to serve the Lord with fear. And this is true for Moses as he treads the path of discipline and learns to serve. I would like to emphasise three major truths:

- Burnt out
- Holy ground
- The "Now come"

3.1 Burnt out

"When forty years had passed…." (Acts 7:30) In Egypt when Moses went out to deliver his brethren, he burnt out in 24 hours! He remained an ash heap for the next forty years until any spark of hope in self and all confidence in the flesh had withered and died.

Martin Buber in **Essay on a Biblical Leader** wrote this:

"Whereas history, as the world writes it, glorifies success; the Bible glorifies men who have failed. The Bible looks at things differently; the Bible knows nothing of the intrinsic worth of success. On the contrary, when it announces a successful deed, it is duty bound to announce with the utmost detail the failure involved in success. All leaders in the Bible, according to the Bible record failed to accomplish their task. Moses knew only partial success. He was continually thwarted by defeat, failure and frustration. The history of David can be summed up in the same sentence. The long line of the prophets is plain failure. They live in failure. Failure is the breath of their nostrils – for them to fight and not to conquer."

We would add that the only exception was Jesus. He has not failed, but we have yet to see His complete triumph.

- **The bush itself can't sustain a fire**. It is a heap of ashes in a matter of minutes, but any old bush will do with God in it to sustain the fire. ***"Without Me, you can do nothing"*** (Jn. 15:5). The secret of being an effective servant-leader is "Christ in you". Moses, highly qualified and self-confident, went into the oblivion of spiritual uselessness for forty years to learn this lesson.

  The long years in the quiet desert took away the impetuosity of the old Moses. As a Prince of Egypt, he had tried to help the Hebrew slaves in proud self-reliance, with a strong arm, ready to force his own way. Now, forty years later, he is full of self-distrust. The ingratitude of his own people had bitten deeply into Moses' heart and destroyed his trust in other men. The silence of the desert and the years of solitude with the sheep made him slow of speech. As ardent people often do, Moses swung the pendulum to the other extreme. Rashness is one extreme, but withdrawal is cowardice. Courage is an attribute of faith remote from both. Impetuosity and self-esteem are destructive, but so is the other end of the swing of the pendulum – hesitation and paralysing self-distrust. Moses had moved to this position. God began the process of drawing him back to usefulness by a stern command.

- **The lesson of rejection**
  Moses was brought up to command. His will had been unchallenged and his slightest wish gratified. Now the lesson of rejection was bitter and hard to accept, ***"He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they didn't understand"***. (Acts 7:25)

  Human prowess, misguided effort, undisciplined indignation didn't help his brethren to understand. Operating in the flesh will never authenticate God's calling and commissioning. To be a man sent by God, Moses must demonstrate entirely other credentials – a person meek and lowly in heart.

  - Moses was rejected by his brothers.
  - Joseph was also rejected by his brothers.
  - David was also rejected.
  - Paul wasn't welcome in Jerusalem and was rejected by the Judaisers everywhere.

- So too was Jesus ***"Despised and rejected of men"*** (Is. 53:3). ***"He came to His own and His own received Him not"*** (Jn. 1:11)

God was burying Moses, the Prince of Egypt, the imperious judge and ruler of men in those 40 years in the desert. At the burning bush He brought to life a new Moses – the servant of God – the friend of God – the man sent from God by the will of God – the meekest of men (until Jesus).

Nahum 1:14 reads, ***"…. I will make your grave, for you are vile."*** What a frightening statement for God to make! But in fact it is a great door of hope when we are burnt out and at the end of self. ***"I will make your grave …."*** And so God has! ***"We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin"*** (Rom. 6:6).

So out of the ashes of an abandoned selfhood, out of the living sacrifice of ourselves and out of rejection, God raises up a new man in Christ ready to walk and serve in newness of life. This is very good news for God comes to one who has made a really miserable mess of his life. But **this is our God!** He comes to us and speaks to us by name – seeking helpless and hopeless failing people. And to crown it all, God restores reinstates and commissions us.

3.2 Holy ground

All hope in self had withered in Moses heart. Failure and rejection had been accepted. The flesh was stilled in the quiet of the desert. His ***"heart was as a weaned child."*** Then a **flame of fire** appeared out of the middle of a desert bush. Moses looked and the bush kept on burning, yet it itself was not burned! That common bush – with God's power – burned on. Moses early attempt at bringing deliverance had burned out in 24 hours. ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*** (Phil. 4:13)

This is when God met him! By then Moses was an experienced shepherd. He was in his daily routine when he found himself standing on holy ground. The angel of the Lord appeared in the flame of fire. Moses hid his face in awe and reverence! So often our true worth (useless ashes) is revealed to us in the awesome worthiness of God.

Note:

Job also bowed in self-abhorrence at the vision of God.

Jacob at Peniel confessed himself a cheat with shame in the presence of God.

Elijah's petulance was broken by the still small voice.

Daniel, greatly beloved, found his comeliness turned to corruption and he was appalled by his virtues rather than any vices. (Dan. 10:7)

Peter cried, ***"Depart from me O Lord!"***

Paul who had justified himself as perfectly legally righteous in his early days found himself to be the chief of sinners after he had a vision of Jesus.

John, seeing a vision of Jesus in his glory, became as one dead even though he had enjoyed most intimate fellowship with Jesus for years. (Rev. 1:13-17)

We pray, ***"Search me O God…".*** The vision of God gives to us a vision of ourselves – our uncleanness and our blind wilfulness. We become as dead. It is the end of self, but the beginning with God.

"Do not come near!" (3:5). God's holiness excludes and destroys all that it cannot assimilate. But God's holiness does assimilate all that can partake of the nature of fire – of His holiness. Fire is purging and transforming. But first of all it is prostrating – causing the worshipper to say, ***"Woe is me … !"*** Later God says to us, ***"Draw near" "Come up"*** and He will draw near to you!

3.3 "Now … I will send you" (Ex. 3:10)

God reveals His compassion for the people in Egypt (Ex. 3:7-8).

"I have seen …."

"I have heard …."

"I know…."

"I am come down to deliver."

God will deliver **this** time, but **through** the hand of Moses. God always works according to His time. He isn't governed by the chronology of the solar system. His time relates to the maturity of the instrument of His choice (in this case Moses) and to the ripening of events. An example of this would be, ***"In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son…."*** (Gal. 4:4). At the right time God sent Barnabas to Tarsus to fetch Paul. So in God's dealings with Moses, the Pharaoh who had sought Moses for his life had died. The People of God were crying out to God for deliverance. God's promises to Abraham and Jacob had not been forgotten. God's time had come. In God's eyes, Moses was finally ready! His words, ***"Here I am"*** preceded God's word, ***"Now come"***.

Do you sometimes feel God has forgotten you or overlooked some past dedication? Do you feel irked at the routine of your work and its apparent insignificance? Have you forgotten His clear call in the past to get involved with world mission? In this age of rapid change do you feel frustration at the slow pace of your own spiritual growth? Is God training you to teach the flock by giving you some humble sheep – only a few in some out of the way lonely place? Probably He is helping you to be faithful in that which is least! Here is the true test of our love for the Lord Jesus. ***"Do you love me? Then feed my lambs."*** (John 21:15)

Have you waited long for release from some responsibility that would set you free for what you feel is your ultimate calling? Then keep waiting. Learn patience. Rest in His will: ***"Lie still and let Him mould you."*** This is Luther's translation of Psalm 37:7. ***"He is silently planning for you in love."*** He will never be late. In due time, if you are patient and do not faint, you will hear him say, ***"Now come … I will send you"***.

So Moses had a second chance. The word of the Lord came to Moses – as to Jonah – a second time. Satan nags us with a message of despair. The Gospel is the news of hope and recovery, ***"Where sin increased grace increased all the more."*** (Rom. 5:20) Like Elisha, we can prepare ditches for a flood of abounding grace (2 Kings 3). Our God is the God of the second chance. The Bible teaches that no failure need ever be final. No defeat need prove fatal. Out of every defeat and failure God can make us more than conquerors through Him who loves us. (Rom. 8:37) Moses and Elijah both knew tragic failure. How significant it is that these two were chosen to appear with Jesus in all His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. Both were more than conquerors!

So, ***"Now come! I will send you."*** Moses is now no longer the organiser and leader of the deliverance of God's people. He becomes merely the instrument through whom God executes His plans and judgments. God revealed Himself to Moses:

- First, ***"I am God."***
- Then He showed Moses something of His heart, ***"I have seen … I have heard".***
- Now He shows His plan: ***"I will send you."*** **It is to be done by God using the hand of Moses, not by Moses with the help of God**.

Is our commission from God or is it by self-appointment or even appointment by men? Are we those sent from God, like John the Baptist, with the mark of heaven on our ministry? In Rome Paul was a prisoner of Jesus Christ – not a prisoner of Nero – because he was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.

After 40 years of being burnt out and 40 years as a heap of ashes, Moses encountered God in the flame of fire. He was touched by the flame, purged by the fire and empowered by "tongues of fire". So Moses learned to present to God his weakness and not his strengths to demonstrate that the crucible of human weakness is the place where the power of God is perfected.

So, like Moses, let us present to God, our failure, our nothingness and our weakness along with our willing obedience. Let us lay aside all confidence in the flesh, in our training, our past experiences and our ability. Then we will hear, "Now come ….. I will send you". ***"Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*** (2 Cor. 12:9-10)

Dr. James S. Stewart says, *"It is a thrilling discovery to make that it is always upon human weakness and humility, not on human strength and confidence, that God chooses to build His Kingdom: that He can use us not in spite of our ordinariness and helplessness and other disqualifying infirmities, but precisely because of them. Nothing can defeat a church or a soul that takes not its strength, but its weakness and offers it to God to be His weapon.This is the strategy to which there is no retort. This is the victory that overcomes the world."*

What made Moses perhaps the greatest of all human leaders? We are born, as Moses was, at a time that is ripe for our service. Our birth was no accident. God provides training suited to our calling so we may be fully equipped for His task for us.

Going off under our own steam will produce nothing of lasting value. Yielding our lives to God in His service will have eternal significance.

Moses the servant of God

II. Moses in training – the discipline of character development

2.1 Early years of training and discipline

- His mother's example
- Family teaching

2.2 The discipline of failure

- Having a vehement temperament
- Examples of his lack of control
  - Moses' uncontrolled vehemence
  - Striking the rock (Num. 20:10)
  - Coming down from Sinai (Ex. 32:15)

2.3 The discipline of rejection

2.4 The discipline of difficulty

2.5 The discipline of disappointment

2.6 The discipline of obedience

2.7 The discipline of responsibility

II. Moses in Training

The discipline of character development

Exodus 5:10-6:1
14:10-15
16:2
32:1
Numbers 14:1-4

Introduction

The person who thinks lightly or rejects discipline at the hands of God will not get far in learning to serve. Without the discipline that develops our character we will never become fit for our Master's use.

Air travel doesn't make effective cross-cultural workers! It takes years of discipline imposed on us by our leaders, by the rules and regulations of language learning, by cultural adaptation and the discipline of incarnational living. All these are over-ruled by the providence of God and are part of His moulding hand on our lives. Above all there needs to be **self-discipline**. In our leadership we will be judged not so much on what we say, not by the excellence of our messages, not by our decision-making but by what we are. How do we behave in difficult situations? How do we react when challenged? Can Jesus be seen in us **then**?

Christian cross-cultural workers need discipline! We really do – life-long, daily, purposeful discipline. Discipline is the knife of a pruner and pruning produces good fruit, more fruit, much fruit and fruit that remains – i.e. that stays attached to the branch even in storms. If we want a harvest, we must submit to discipline.

Samuel L. Rutherford [the 17th century preacher – 1600-1661 – one of the great pioneers of the Scottish Covenant Movement] said, *"Let Him plough! He purposes a crop."* God's plough may be painful, but it is always purposeful. We get the maximum benefit from reflection on the situation we are in and conscious co-operation with God in how He is trying to change us. So is our self-discipline ordered and purposeful? What of our disciplining those we lead? Do they appreciate the purposefulness of it?

The purpose of discipline is **the development of character** expressed in conduct. We need a belief that behaves. To produce good fruit God deals with the root. He is more concerned with our **being** than our **doing**, because if the being is good, the doing will be productive.

We are going to look at **seven disciplines** Moses went through to see how these developed great character qualities in Moses.

2.1 The discipline and training of the early years

- **His mother's example**

  This is a lifelong influence in many a life. What happens in the early years is very important. Moses' father and mother were, "***Not afraid"*** (Heb. 11:23) because they had faith in God and cast their care (Moses) on Him. This fearlessness and faith was probably communicated unconsciously to the baby Moses.

- **Family teaching**

  Moses' mother, as she cared for her son in the court of Pharaoh's daughter, must have taught Moses about the Covenant between God and this particular family – now a great people. She taught him about the Living God – the God of their fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. She would have told him of **God's promises** and of God's faithfulness. This prepared Moses' heart and this held him fast through nearly 40 years in a pagan court.

The foundations of character are usually laid in youth through the influence of parents and family, but not necessarily so. Many great men in the Old Testament had a terrible family background.

- **Hezekiah** had a background where the odds were stacked against him. His father, Ahaz, was one of the most wicked kings Judah ever had (see 2 Chron. 28:1-3). Good parents are no guarantee of good children and bad parents are no guarantee of bad children. Hezekiah brought revival to his people (2 Chron. 29-32).
- **Josiah** had an equally bad father (2 Chron. 33:21-24). He was murdered and his son, Josiah, came to the throne aged 8. At 16 he began to seek the Lord and at 20 the great revival began (2 Chron. 34 & 35).

In the case of Moses, it was on the basis of the faith and teaching of his parents that he made choices 40 years later. The Holy Spirit made that early teaching spirit and life to Moses at that moment of crisis. It became truth and reality to him.

So the teaching of Scripture and reading to our children are of vital importance in the early years. The foundations of character are often laid in youth, but are constantly being moulded by God. Moses was brought up with the godly influence of his mother and the pomp and splendour of Pharaoh's Court.

In Numbers 20:10 we see the "Egyptian Prince" in Moses speaking to a rabble of fellahin. It took 40 years in the desert of Midian to train that proud and regal spirit and make a man of meekness out of the fiery protégé of Pharaoh's daughter.

2.2 The discipline of failure

- **Moses vehement temperament**
  Moses had a vehement temperament like Paul and like the Zebedee brothers, John and James – the sons of thunder Mk. 3:17. This temperament often showed itself in his later life. He found it hard to control his temper. Moses was a man of quick action – a very valuable quality, but one that needs much discipline and strict control.
- **Examples of lack of control**
  - When Moses struck down and killed the Egyptian overseer (Ex. 2:12) injustice was rebuked by a reaction of the flesh (the old nature) – an action that can never be used by God.
  - When Moses struck the rock (Num. 20:10). He called God's people, ***"You rebels"***. He was now old and weary of their constant complaining. His self-control broke down and the old vehement temper broke out in an expression of the self-life and not of God. So he misrepresented God and acted again as a " Prince of Egypt" speaking to a crowd of Egyptian fellahin. Moses, the meekest of men, failed at his strongest point. In presumptuous pride and in impatient anger this much tried, tired servant of God struck the rock. But the rock (our Lord Jesus) needs only to be smitten once in order to produce living water. Thereafter only speaking to it (Him) is sufficient for all our needs to be met. (1 Cor. 10:4)
  - Coming down from Mount Sinai, Moses' anger burned hot! (Ex. 32:15) He threw down the stone tablets God had carved and broke them. He took the golden calf and burnt it (melted it). He ground the gold to powder, scattered the powder on the water and then made the people drink it. Then he cried, ***"Who is on the Lord's side?"*** What an amazing example of righteous anger! God's wrath burned against sin. Moses' anger was a reflection of this. Moses shared God's compassion for His people and sought their forgiveness. Here his vehement temperament **was** under control.

The lesson is that God can use our temperaments when they are controlled and disciplined by the Holy Spirit. God doesn't use weak-willed people, but those of strong disciplined wills. But

it is also true that by the power of the Holy Spirit, weak-willed people can become strong, disciplined people. Each of us needs to understand his/her own temperament. We must discipline its excesses; strengthen areas of weakness and place all under the control of the Holy Spirit.

God's Word warns us that the greatest and the most godly people have had their points of deviation and loss – surprisingly not at their weak points but at their strongest.

- **Adam** failed yielding to his wife's offer to eat the forbidden fruit.
- **David**, the man after God's own heart, fell to sexual lust.
- **Peter**, to preserve his reputation as leader of the Apostles, dissembled though he had once boldly declared, ***"We ought to obey God rather than man"***.
- **Paul** – who rebuked Peter – also deferred to popular opinion and conformed to the Jewish law, which ended up in a riot. Paul – also of a vehement temperament and also late in life, under the provocation of being struck at his trial retorted with blazing anger, ***"You white-washed wall …."*** (Acts 23:3). But he did repent and apologise quickly.

We fail at different levels – physically, socially, emotionally or spiritually. We fail in different spheres – at home, in ministry, in public or in private. ***"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands, take heed lest he fall."*** (1 Cor. 10:12) We need persistent, watchful self-discipline. Let us constantly seek the grace of God.

So Moses knew the discipline of failure. Have we learned this discipline? God didn't dismiss Peter for his terrible failure. Repentant Peter became the preacher at Pentecost! Mark too failed, but later he was to become, ***"A profitable servant of Jesus Christ"***. (2 Tim. 4:11) If we will accept the discipline of failure, God will use our defeats to open a door for a wider ministry. God does not waste even failure if we will learn from it.

Alexander Whyte wrote, *"Neither penitence nor service is forfeited by the truly penitent. Both are better secured and more fruitfully employed as a result. It must be a breaking, burning, consuming, ever-deepening life of penitence and that too before God and man."*

The morning and evening sacrifice instituted in the desert by Moses impressed on the mind of Moses that sin was an ugly thing linked with death involving the innocent and unceasing in its pressure and its presence. The altar of sacrifice must have been very unlovely; but through its physical ugliness shone the thought that God would forgive and accept the substitute for a sinner.

Calvary too was an unlovely place! Sin reached its brutal climax there and the wickedness of men inflicted upon a man one of the most awful spectacles men have ever seen – tormented dying flesh, shed blood and man-made agony. Jesus died in the **midst of horror**, nailed to an instrument of torture conceived in the dark depths of depraved minds.

And yet the Cross has become a symbol in which we glory. For at the Cross God met man to turn failure and sin away from us. His power can give beauty for the ashes of our failure.

2.3 The discipline of rejection

Have we learned from the discipline of rejection? It is important in learning how to lead to know what it means to be accepted and loved by God. Have we learned to accept ourselves as we are with all our limitations? We will not learn to accept others or even just to be patient with them or have compassion on them, unless we have first accepted ourselves as we are and been cleansed from self-pity and striving to be someone else.

Moses suffered much from rejection, but he learned much from it. He was rejected when he was sent back by God to be the deliverer of His People in Egypt and through this, he learned to die to everything loved by the leader who longs for popularity.

It wasn't long before the People of God rejected Moses' leadership and wanted another leader who would take them back to Egypt. This was at Kadesh-barnea. (Num. 14:1-14)

Numbers 12 records the sin of Miriam – Moses' elder sister. She was probably the most senior woman among the People of God. She was obviously a woman of ability and had made for herself a place of importance in the camp. Now, aged about 90, she spoke out against Moses' wife. This was probably Zipporah who had rejoined Moses. Miriam felt ousted by her and so a situation ripe for envy arose. Life in extended families has many parallels to this. So Miriam, a mother in Israel and a prophetess, watched Zipporah. Her mind revolted at having to resign her primacy to ***"that woman"***. Envy in Miriam's heart led to envy in Aaron who was always easily led and both spoke against Moses. Even Moses' own family rejected his leadership! God, in an awesome way, vindicated Moses. Read Numbers 12:7-15. David was to say later in Ps. 37:5-7:

"Commit your way to the Lord.
Trust in Him and He will act.
He will bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.
Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him."

This learning to ***"be still before the Lord"*** is part of what we learn through the discipline of rejection.

Barclay has this to say about **meekness**: *"The word 'meek' is used for a beast that has been tamed. …. The supreme characteristic of a man who is meek is that he is the man who is under perfect control. … Moses was the meekest man upon earth. But this same Moses could act with bold decision and even with a righteous blaze of anger when the occasion arose. … To such a character no man can attain by himself. … The man who is meek is perfectly God-controlled for only God can give him that perfect mastery."*

It was through the hard discipline of rejection that Moses learned meekness, compassion, intercession and a fellowship with the sufferings of Jesus – for He too was ***"rejected of men"***. He learned to shun self-pity and, above all, he learned to seek the praise of God rather than the praise of men.

2.4 The discipline of difficulty

Moses knew the discipline of difficulties. It is difficulties and problems that lead to the growth of faith in God. He had to face the difficulty of confronting Pharaoh, the difficulty of escaping from Egypt and crossing the Red Sea, the difficulty of dealing with the Amalekites as well as the problems of the need of constant supplies of bread and water in the desert. Is there any difficulty or problem we will know that he didn't know? What exacerbated the difficulties was the problem of murmurings and the lack of loyalty. His one recourse was to go to God in humility and in faith. He cried to the Lord again and again (Ex. 8:12, 15:25, 17:4; Num. 12:3 etc.). God answered each time and showed His solution. Moses was learning **dependence** on God.

The grumbling of God's people was a thorn in the flesh to Moses. But he realised – as Paul was to realise later – that it was there lest he should exalt himself. Praise God for difficulties and problems that keep us low before God.

Jesus also knew constant grumbling and criticism – an expression of the discontent of the religious people among God's People in His day and sometimes from His disciples – ***"Why this waste?"***

You will know the murmurer. He complains about the food, the weather, the arrangements, the division of duties, about this person or that. If he doesn't complain about the team, it's the local people, the shopkeeper that cheated you, friends who lie to you, people who are dirty etc. There is always someone to complain about! In England we call this whinging!

Fourteen times it is recorded that the people murmured. In spite of the awesome deliverance at the Red Sea, the people were murmuring at Marah (Ex. 15:24). In spite of the amazing provision of manna, quails and water, they murmured. In spite of a miraculous deliverance from their enemies, they broke into murmuring, disloyalty and despair.

In Acts 6 we read that murmuring about difficulties threatened the early church. It threatens us constantly today. It is destructive of all God's purposes and the spirit of discontent robs us of His blessing in a life of dependence on God. Murmurers have a short memory and they remember all the wrong things! When we are spiritually short-sighted, we fail to see the presence and providence of God in a situation. When we are short of faith, we are afraid of future problems. Sometimes God delays His help and we despair or rather we vent our spleen on colleagues. But in fact, our murmurings are against God.

We have to learn the secret of how to be full and how to be hungry – how to abound and how to be abased – to be content in whatever state we are. Notice: God allowed them to hunger for a while so they could learn that it is not by bread alone that man lives. (Deut. 8:3)

2.5 The discipline of disappointment

Moses knew the discipline of disappointments and the danger of success. He experienced the triumph of the Red Sea, but the bitter water of Marah followed it three days later. At Kadesh-barnea they turned back and refused to enter the land of Canaan. And at Meribah Moses was to experience the supreme disappointment of his life – to be refused entry to the Land of Promise – all his hopes blasted!

Moses learned to **endure**. He learned the fellowship of the sufferings of Jesus. He learned the cost of identification as Jesus did when He was ***"made sin for us"***.

Moses learned to endure the 40 weary years of looking after sheep in the desert and now another 40 weary years leading God's People in the desert. He suffered the ingratitude of those he led. His hopes were disappointed. He went up Pisgah alone (Deut. 34:1). But Moses **triumphed** and what a great reward he had! He was to stand in the Land on the Mount of Transfiguration with the Lord Jesus in all His glory!

Another great area of disappointment for a leader is rebellion – the refusal of those you are serving to follow you any longer. After Kadesh-barnea the people cried, ***"Give us another leader"***! There were still smouldering fires of rebellion in the camp and Korah seized the opportunity to fan the fire into a flame (See Num. 16). There were 250 princes, men of renown, with him. This was a formidable conspiracy indeed. They refused Moses' leadership. They were jealous of his influence and they rejected his authority. So God again acted to vindicate Moses. He will vindicate the meek, but no one else!

What are we to do about envy, about those who will not accept our leadership any longer? David suffered from envy, as did Paul from the Judaisers and false apostles. The Lord is passionate for the good of others, but often the Lord's people are envious of the good things others do.

Note here the personal attitude of Moses (Num. 11:29), ***"Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets that the Lord would put His Spirit on them!"***
The meekness of the Lamb was at work in Moses' heart!

Do I have a single eye for God's glory? Am I willing that the Lord should bless through others? Can I pray sincerely for blessing through my colleagues, other leaders and even other groups? Do I encourage leadership in others?

Let us recognise the ever-present possibility of envy in our disappointments and guard against it. Envy is a self-centred reaction. Let us adopt a positive, God-centred, accepting attitude in our disappointments. Let us claim the meekness of Jesus. All we need is in Him – peace, joy and patience. Let us cultivate a habit of silence in the face of envy and be swift to

hear and slow to speak (James 1:19). Let us leave it to God to vindicate all that is of Him in our conduct and to deal with all that is wrong in us. Let us give ourselves to prayer for those who envy us – even as Moses did for Miriam – remembering that envy does far more to hurt the one who harbours it than the one envied. ***"Oh God, please heal her, please!"*** Moses prayed (Num. 12:13).

Resentment of those who disappoint us is a terribly the deep-seated thing. It embitters our spirits and narrows and constrains our gifting. It often affects us physically. Yet it is all too widespread among leaders. Yet as deep as resentment can be, there is a deeper cleansing and deliverance. We are sadly, pretty small-minded people who are easily disappointed, easily murmur, easily rebel and easily show a fractious party spirit – all because we have a love of power and recognition. But God wants to make us great in His sight! The highway to such spiritual greatness is through the low way of humbling ourselves to the discipline of disappointments so we may learn of Jesus, who is meek and lowly in heart.

2.6 The discipline of obedience

Moses had to present God's commandments to the people and to enforce their compliance. But first, to win obedience he must learn to obey.

"At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him (Moses) ***and sought to put him to death."*** (Ex. 4:24)

Moses' infant son was uncircumcised. God met him – on his way to confront Pharaoh – with the need of drastic, complete obedience. Moses learned the lesson. There can be no trifling in obedience if a man is to have God's authority in his life. Disobedience is never trivial. Great principles turn on obedience in little things. Spiritual disaster springs from small beginnings. Obedience in the common daily duties of life determines availability for great responsibility.

God disciplines those He loves. The greater the discipline of pruning, the greater the fruit bearing capacity will be. The most refined metal and the finest pottery are subjected to the greatest heat. Moses was to be used on the heights of leadership and so Moses was to be subjected to the severest discipline.

What of us? Do we welcome God's discipline of us and accept its necessity from the hand of God? ***"It is the Lord. Let Him do as He will."*** (1 Sam. 3:18)

Do we accept discipline from those set over us or from a fellow worker? Or have we a blind spot towards self? I must also accept self-discipline at my own hands. I need this increasingly as I grow older and am freed from other forms of discipline. Let the Heavenly Farmer plough! Let us accept criticism. It isn't always just, but we can always profit from it for unjust criticism reveals pride in our hearts.

And how do we discipline others? This is part of discipling others. This is the purpose of the law. There can be no freedom without the law – only licence. There is no sense of security without the discipline of law. Am I discipling others and teaching them to serve? This is bound up with example. Then there is also a ministry of encouragement. Do I teach, correct, reprove and exhort with all long-suffering? Do others leave my presence with quickened footsteps or a leaden heart?

2.7 The discipline of responsibility

The government is upon His shoulder. Moses learned that obedience brings rest. Knowing that we are in God's will gives us the assurance that He will handle the consequences of obedience. ***"His burden is easy: His yoke is light."*** So let us not carry a heavy burden of our own making.

Hudson Taylor wrote to his sister that once he had been a burdened man – burdened with all the trials and responsibilities of leadership in the early years of the China Inland Mission. But

the Lord led him into what he called "The Exchanged Life" where he drew all his strength and all his resources from the Lord Jesus. Later, at the time of the Boxer Rebellion, as day after day news came of the martyrdom of many missionaries and hundreds of Chinese evangelists, Hudson Taylor was heard singing in his office:

"Jesus, I am resting, resting
In the joy of what thou art."

Joshua learned this lesson of "exchanged command" when he heard the Lord say, ***"I am the Commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come"*** (Josh. 5:14). **Now** the government was upon His shoulders. It was this that gave Moses his fearlessness (Heb. 11:27). ***"By faith he left Egypt not being afraid of the anger of the King*** (Pharaoh)***, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible"***. Faith and fear cannot coexist in the same heart. ***"Why are you afraid? O you of little faith!"*** As faith grows it ousts fear. The power of the visible is weakened. The power of the great invisible Reality (God) grows. Faith grew as Moses endured testing and trial. The shield of faith protected him against the wrath of Pharaoh and the fear of man. ***"If God be for us, who can be against us?"*** (Rom. 8:31) By faith Moses experienced the substance of spiritual reality (Heb. 11:1).

Some people are more prone to fear than others. Some have sensitive natures and shrinking souls that can suffer agony seeking to be faithful to God's call. Gideon and Timothy may have had difficulty with a spirit of timidity (2 Tim. 1:7). Their temperaments – with the need of strength, stability and courage – drew them to the Lord Jesus who abundantly supplies all of these and much more. There are relatively few Pauls among us and he had his fears in Corinth! There are many more Timothys both on our teams and among those we work with who have come to faith. After 40 years in the desert Moses was a shrinking, diffident person. Such people have the right basis for Christian nobility and courage. Their need is constant encouragement and God certainly gave this:

Ex. 3:12:	"***Certainly I will be with you."***
Josh. 1:5/9	"***Be strong and of a good courage ...."***
2 Tim. 2:1	"***Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."***
Mt. 28:20	"***Lo, I am with you always …."***
Heb. 13:6-7	"***I will not fail you or forsake you, so that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not fear.' "***

Let us encourage the timid and the weak, for it is out of their weakness that God will make them strong. ***"Be strong in the Lord."***

Moses the servant of God

III. Moses enduring – lessons in leadership

3.1 The need to maintain a high morale

3.2 Dealing with depression

3.3 Administration - learning to do it well

3.4 The devolution of authority

3.5 The use of experts/consultants

3.6 Counselling is a God-given skill

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III. Moses enduring – lessons in leadership

Introduction

Moses was one of the greatest leaders in history. Nothing in his life was wasted in the economy of grace. All came into use in God's time. During his 40 years as a 'Prince of Egypt' he acquired great practical experience and much 'secular' wisdom. In the next 40 years he learned to care for sheep along desert paths of the Sinai and during this period he developed a pilgrim spirit. Spiritual lessons and practical/secular lessons are always synthesised into a whole in the economy of grace. A leader must be subjected to all that his people will face. Our Lord Jesus was tested in all points as we are, yet without any sin. It is on this basis that He is able to help, strengthen and encourage those who are going through testing. The only way to strengthen and encourage others is to submit to the tests and disciplines of the economy of grace.

We will look at eight lessons Moses learned about leadership in the last 40 years of his life. These are all crucial and as leaders we need to learn them.

We live in a world of increasing destabilisation. The nations and peoples are increasingly like a restless sea and it is in this environment that we have to lead. Moses lived in such times and he **endured**. Endurance is the capacity to hold on and see beyond the tangible and the visible to the great unseen promises of God. For Moses, this was the Promised Land, the promised deliverance and the promised triumph. For us it is the day when, ***"Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord!"***

3.1 The need to maintain a high morale

High morale on a battlefield is often the supreme battle-winning factor. The same is true in most sports; confidence in oneself to win is often the margin of difference between two players. In our spiritual warfare against the ***"principalities and powers"***, this is comparable to faith. In British history a great proponent of "faith" was General Montgomery. After World War II he was asked to give a lecture on leadership at St Andrews University in Scotland. This is what he said:

"Faith is inspiration. It gives the infinite capacity for taking pains. When everything is done, all preparations made, all anticipated, and then when the situation favours boldness, go out to victory. Faith is the quality of inner conviction – the ability to soar from the known to the unknown and seize victory." "The first thing a young officer must do is win the battle for the hearts of his men. If he wins it, he can lead them anywhere. If he loses it, he will never do so."

A great leader can inspire a nation. One of the greatest needs in the church today is to be inspired by the Holy Spirit through true apostolic leadership.

The People of God coming out of Egypt were afraid. They had a subservient slave mentality. The morale of Moses was high through faith, ***"Seeing him who is invisible"***. (Heb. 11:27) He had direct contact with and confidence in God. The People of God didn't have this. It is a mystery why they didn't trust a leader with the stamp of heaven's approval – remember the amazing plagues! But their hearts were in Egypt all the time. They wanted deliverance from slavery in Egypt, but they wanted to live as the Egyptians. They had no heart for the conflict that would win the Land of Promise. That was the root of the tragedy. As a result they fell short of the ultimate blessing of faith.

This is the mystery of the free will that God has given to us. If we will not respond, God will not compel us. When the People of God were at the Red Sea they had one glimpse of the Egyptians and their morale collapsed. This is an indication of the spirit of slavery they still retained. (Ex. 14:12) This same 'spirit of slavery' indwells all new believers and many others. Moses rallied them, ***"Fear not, stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will***

work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you and you have only to be silent." (Ex. 14:14)

It is never wise to underestimate our enemy Satan, for this leads to presumption. But it is equally foolish to overestimate him. The devil isn't all-powerful nor is he omniscient nor can he be omni-present. Always remember, ***"Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."*** (1 Jn. 4:4)

At Kadesh-barnea their morale collapsed again on hearing the majority report given by the spies sent into the Land of Promise. (Num. 14:1) Yet how often in history have the majority been wrong! We easily assume things that are not true and as a consequence we jump to the wrong conclusions. Always listen carefully to a creative minority. Caleb and Joshua tried to rally them, but failed: ***"Only do not rebel against the Lord … do not fear the people of the land for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them."*** (Num. 14:9)

"Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart." (Ps. 95:7-8; Heb. 3:7-8, 3:15, 4:7) But the hearts of the People of God were hard and rebellious and insensitive – ever looking back to Egypt. So God sadly signed the death warrant of that generation that had come out of slavery.

Moods are infectious. The fear or faith of a few can determine the level of morale on a team or in a church. Jesus constantly called for courage, faith and high morale. At the height of the attack, on the eve of Calvary, where the powers of darkness were pressing in their attack, Jesus confidently said, ***"Be of good cheer for I have conquered*** (overcome)***!"***

What do we feed our hearts on – leeks, garlic or onions (Num. 11:5) or the words of the Lord Jesus? What enormous encouragement there is for us in the Scriptures!

- ***"Be of good cheer."***
- ***"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."***
- ***"Put on the whole armour of God. Having done all – stand."***
- ***"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."***
- ***"If God be for us, who can be against us?"***
- ***"We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."***

Beware what you feed your mind and spirit with. For ***"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."*** There is much opportunity to feed your heart with garlic and onions. Joshua and Caleb caught Moses' spirit – it can be catching. Are others catching from us boundless faith – adventurous, challenging and courageous? God grant us to be transmitters of faith and high morale.

3.2 Dealing with depression

Was Moses, this great leader of men, ever depressed? Read Num. 11:10-15. He complained to God of the injustice of leading the People of God:

"Why have You dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favour in your sight, that you lay the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing child to the land that you swore to give their fathers'. Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep before me and say, 'Give us meat that we may eat'. I am not able to carry all these people alone. The burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once … that I might not see my wretchedness."

Basically Moses was at a self-pity party – deeply depressed.

Moses was subject to extremes. At times he showed impetuosity, at other times a paralysing hesitancy. But God repeatedly called him to a quiet confidence and trust in God and this was the only way of usefulness and responsibility.

There is usually a recognisable, physical cause for depression. Amy Carmichael referred to this from time to time as "**the concentrated essence of spiritual distress**". Everyone suffers from it at some time. All of us are liable to it at any time and some of us are temperamentally more prone to it than others. All who are suffering this "**concentrated essence of spiritual distress**" need our understanding and sympathy.

Often it is accompanied by an outbreak of irritability and vehemence. The great tragedy of Moses' life occurred at the Waters of Meribah (Num. 20:2-13; 27:12-14). The terrific stress Moses was under had a long history. Aaron had objected to Moses' leadership. Korah and others had rebelled. Miriam had died and was buried. Moses was alone and had borne the burden for many long years. He was suffering from constant rejection by his people. Along with them he had suffered in the first turning away from entering the Promised Land.

Probably he was overtired and depressed when he struck the rock in a fit of temper. Yet no leader dare yield to depression which leads to despair, despondency and defeatism! Moses was going to be affirmed by God again and again, but be warned! The heights of leadership are a place of spiritual vulnerability for any leader. We are liable to swing to extremes – from great heights to depression.

Oswald Sanders knew this. He wrote, *"Who hasn't experienced that nameless feeling of misery and hopelessness – indefinable and yet so desperately real? There is comfort for us in the realisation that we are not alone in this path of experience. Men and women of God have trodden the same shadowy path before …. There is a way of deliverance for us, as there was for them."*

Many great servants of God have been subject to depression. Moses was not the only one.

- **Elijah** said, ***"O Lord take away my life!"*** (1 Kings 19:4)
- **Jonah** pleaded, ***"O Lord take away my life from me."*** (Jonah 4:3)
- **Paul** also knew what it was to be cast down – even as he knew what it was to be comforted in his distresses. Paul never lived in a perpetual bubble bath of happiness. He learned to press on along the rugged pilgrim path of suffering, hardship, loneliness, sorrow and disappointment. It was on that path he experienced the reality of the comfort, grace and strength of God.

All these were men of God. Like Moses, they bore heavy burdens. They were under great spiritual pressure and tension. They were tested, tried and stretched to the limit. All were physically strained and tired. In these circumstances something always gives. Self-pity intrudes. Self-esteem disappears and strong godly men yield to petulance, resentment and despondency.

Jesus deals very tenderly with his overwrought servants, with these fits of depression and passionate outbursts of anger. Jesus experienced their causes. He knew how Moses felt, how David felt and how Elijah felt. And *"He from fight victorious came"* and is able to understand and strengthen appropriately.

We need to recover our spiritual perspective in such situations. That is what David did as he shows in Psalm 73. He was envious, confused and embittered, ***"But as for me ... my steps had nearly slipped."*** (Ps. 73:2) But he recovered his perspective when he went into God's presence. (Ps. 73:17)

The same recovery of perspective happened to Habakkuk in his perplexity (Hab. 2:20) when he moved from fear to faith. ***"But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before him."*** In the presence of God he recovered his perspective.

For John on Patmos, working wearily as a slave labourer in a marble quarry, it was the same. He saw that, ***"The Lord God omnipotent reigns!"*** (Rev. 19:6) Like Moses, John too was able to endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

We need to see that the government is upon **His** shoulders – not ours. The work is His – not ours. So, ***"Cast all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you"***. (1 Pet. 5:7) All history, great or small, is under His control. ***"His way is perfect."*** (Ps. 18:30) He never relinquishes control. Moses had no need to fear for God's people or for God's purposes.

On the far reef the breakers recoil in shattered foam.	Oh mighty sea, thy message in changing spray is cast.
And ever the sea behind them urges her forces home.	Within God's eternal purpose it matters not at last
Her voice of triumph surges thru all the thunderous din	How wide the shores of evil, how strong the reefs of sin.
The wave may be defeated, but the tide and sure to win.	The wave may be defeated but the tide is sure to win.

We need to find **practical solutions** to the problems of strain and overwork. We should do this for ourselves, although often we cannot and we need the help of others. We should certainly seek to help others find practical solutions and welcome all their input and help in our lives.

We need to **recognise that despondency comes from the adversary** and forearm ourselves. We have been provided with ***"the helmet of salvation"*** with which – when it is on – we can protect our mind because this is where depression begins. We need to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ – with His disposition, confidence and courage. We need to strengthen our faith, fortitude and hope by having the perspective of our Reigning Lord, ***"Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."*** These things need to be practised. Discouragement must be resisted. We need to endure as seeing the Invisible through the visible and tangible.

Always translate into action the conviction that God has revealed His will to you. Don't allow an interval between the certainty that a line of conduct is right and its adoption.

3.3 Administration – learning to do it well

Moses was a great administrator. He began to learn the art while a Prince of Egypt and he learned well. It is very important to recognise the need for efficient administration. In the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 6) they learned the need to balance efficient administration with the ministry – prayer and teaching the Word of God. Paul urged Timothy to be a good administrator. He told him to set matters in order in the churches. To function efficiently, 'the body' must be organised under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Notice the organisation of the camp in Numbers 24:5-6. The People of God had left the Red Sea as a disorganised rabble of fugitive slaves. Within less than twelve months they left Sinai in battle array with about 500,000 men in arms. They had a code of law that included a lot of legislation relating to sanitary enactments that have become a model for many countries today. Just think of the logistics of such a people on the march! Suppose you had to estimate quantities and procure food for ~ 2 million people for over 40 years. What kinds and what quantities would you order? Suppose you had to make payment for it all. How much would you budget? Moses didn't walk by sight through these issues. He had faith in God. It is really amazing what God did in providing for such a huge migration of refugee people. He did it through Moses – a man of faith and practical administrative ability ***"Who endured as seeing Him who is invisible."***

When the tabernacle was pitched, the cloud of God's presence hovered over it and around it. The tents of the priests and the Levites formed an inner circle around it. The twelve tribes were camped in orderly array just beyond this inner circle – three tribes on each of the four sides. No wonder Balaam (an enemy of God's people) sang, ***"How lovely are your tents O Jacob, your encampments, O! Israel – like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside the river……."*** (Num. 4:5-6)

The building of the Tabernacle in the desert was a masterpiece of administration. Moses didn't neglect records. The statutes and commandments of the Lord were written down and the history of the people recorded. Written records and orders are of great value. In English history, King Alfred (9th-century) was the first king to insist that all his military officers, judges and administrators were literate. Someone has said, *"The nation that doesn't know its history is destined to repeat it."* The Pentateuch is the careful record of God's dealings with His People.

Professor Blaiklock of New Zealand has written, *"No nation had its past so superbly recorded as Israel – its mistakes explained and its triumphs set in true and proper light. So was the Old Testament built and the prime objective of its record was to keep alive that awareness of God's purposes that ever preserved a remnant of true men dedicated to His plan."*

"But the same principle holds good for our lives. There is a time when we should remember the past. The vanished years can claim no dominion over us. Their sin has been purged, forgiven and forgotten. Their triumphs should not tempt us to rest on false laurels. Their disasters should no longer daunt or discourage us."

"On the other hand, faith is fed by the memory of God's past grace. Feet are made wary by the recollection of old stumbling. Humility is fed by the awareness of past mistakes. The past may be surveyed by a healthy mind and an undaunted spirit if it is remembered as a past committed to God – the God of all time; its sin absolutely and utterly pardoned; all its circumstances the raw material from which God's creative hands can bring unimagined good."

3.4 The devolution of authority

The classic passage is Numbers 11:14-17, 24-25. This is an extremely important matter in leadership. Moses learned to delegate his authority. This is the only way to meet the mounting problems of work and the pressures found in Christian ministry. A leadership ministry like that of Moses taxes all a person's capacity. It often wearies the heart with the perplexities, sorrows and cares of anxious team members. Virtue goes out of a person to the extent that others are helped and blessed.

May God give us a Jethro (Ex. 18:13) who can see that the burdens are accumulating before we feel their weight beginning to crush us. And God give us the grace to listen to our Jethros – we seldom do! They are seldom even thanked! But Moses heeded Jethro's advice and delegated his authority. God knows our capacity and He will not overload us. To delegate authority well is a true sign of God-appointed and God-empowered leadership. To refuse to delegate is either a sign of pride, a sign of sheer overtiredness or it may be a lack of trust in God and others.

It is necessary to delegate for the sake of others. We waste their time if everyone has to come to us. It is wasteful and inefficient if only one man can take decisions. If we fail to delegate, we retard the growth of others. Don't let the talents and training of others be unused. The Holy Spirit gifts each one and their gifts need exercise. Carefully choose able people – people who fear God – people of faithfulness to duty. Set them to work. It will develop their abilities and skills and lead to the training of others for God's work.

To be able to delegate authority is a sign of true leadership. A leader must learn to **trust** his subordinates both for their sake and for his own. Inability to delegate business and authority to others is frequently a mark of pride and it certainly causes many tensions and a great deal of inefficiency. This isn't to suggest that Moses was arrogantly clinging to what he should have surrendered earlier. He stood so loftily above others that he hadn't realised until the clear eyes of a practical man saw the truth that under his shadow others were growing in ability and grace.

It is thought that Alfred the Great – the great Anglo-Saxon king and devout reader of the Bible that he had translated into Anglo-Saxon – based his "Saxon Constitution" with its administrative division of England, with its sheriffs and shires and appointed lawyers and administrators, on the Mosaic administration from Exodus 11 and Numbers 11.

Responsibility and authority are inseparable. Some hanker after more authority, but don't want responsibility. Others want less responsibility, but keep their authority. Transfer duties together with authority to carefully chosen people. This includes the freedom for them to learn from their mistakes.

3.5 The use of consultants/experts

In Numbers 10:29-32, Moses persuades Jethro (Hobab) to come with the People of God and advise them because he and his people were experts in the ways of the desert. They knew the better routes, where to gain supplies and the better camping grounds. I think Moses was wise to consult with those who had expert knowledge. The decision-making never left his hands. Today we need the expert advice hard won by others – in finances, in information technology, in crisis management, in pastoral counselling and in many other fields. Call in experts from time to time. Listen carefully to their advice, but always remember that you are responsible for the decision. On the other hand, don't overdo asking for advice. It can be a form of procrastination.

3.6 Counselling is a God-given skill

The example of the Lord Jesus is helpful here. There is nothing more important than dealing with people. It is people who matter most. When Jethro came to the camp he found Moses busy with counselling. (Ex. 18:13-14) Most of Deuteronomy is given to counselling. God counselled Moses and Moses collectively counselled people.

In a passage like Deut. 8:2-4, 11-20 Moses was counselling the whole nation – calling them to remember God's dealings with them and warning them with a prophetic voice, ***"Lest they forget the Lord."*** At some times, speaking with a prophetic voice is the task of a Christian leader. Paul taught his team to declare the standards of Christian behaviour, to exhort and reprove with all authority (Titus 2:15). Timothy was inclined to timidity and shrank from such responsibility, but Paul gave him a solemn charge in 2 Tim. 4:1-3. He was to convince, rebuke and exhort with unfailing patience. Sensitive people are often more willing to approach a person like Timothy and take counsel from him, because Timothy obviously took no delight in the reproof of others.

3.7 Training a successor

See Deut. 3:28: ***"…. charge Joshua and encourage and strengthen him, for he will go over at the head of this people……"***

See also Ex. 17:8-9 – Joshua leads the army against Amalek and Ex. 32:17 and Ex. 33:11.

For every Moses God intends there to be a Joshua. With every Paul there ought to be some Timothys. Deut. 31:7-8: ***"…. Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, 'Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land …. It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.' "***

Joshua was Moses' trainee apparently for the best part of 40 years. It says much for both of them that they could be together so long without Moses – a strong character – turning Joshua into a clone of himself and ruining the individuality of Joshua. Do you dominate or mould those who work with you? The art of leadership is to draw the best out of others. It is a great tribute to Moses that Joshua was ready to take over when the time came.

Do you stimulate initiative, develop responsibility and encourage leadership in others? How do we apply quality control? How do we check faults and deal with failure? Do people leave us with quickened footsteps or with a leaden heart? Do they feel defeated and despondent or courageous and intent on rising again, pushing on and building afresh? May God give us the ministry of encouragement and practical help to those we are training in leadership. May God help us to discern tomorrow's leaders?

Moses himself was judged with severity – Num. 20:10-13 and Deut. 3:23-29. This was the most solemn lesson of Moses' life. It makes us tremble in the presence of God and ***"work out our own salvation with fear and trembling."*** (Phil. 2:12) God deals with the sins of leaders with greater severity than those of others. The greater the leader, the stricter will be the standard by which he is judged. It is so in the law. The greater the trust given, the greater is the betrayal, the guilt and the punishment. Paul had no illusions about this for he tells us of his fear of being disqualified (1 Cor. 9:27).

Samson is a warning that spiritual power and leadership are not automatically retained. ***"He did not know that the Lord had left him!"*** (Judges 16:20) He trifled with the secret of spiritual power and authority and his sin found him out.

God said to Moses, ***"Enough from you! Do not speak to me of this matter again."*** (Deut. 3:26) Self-pity has to be silenced. Has this solemn word a place in your spiritual vocabulary and a response in your heart?

The responsibility of office keeps the leader before the eyes of people. God's honour is involved in the leader's actions, in his character and his conduct. In a Christian leader these should reflect those of God – as did Samuel's. Where the leader fails, God must rebuke him and disown his action. Moses' sin was unbelief and anger. This involved a derogation of the divine glory of God. It was committed in public before all the people and before God. Could Moses, as he was God's appointed leader, be spared when a lesser person would be punished? Could God be charged with favouritism and inconsistency on Moses' behalf? The very character of God was at stake. God – who spared not his own Son when He was made sin for us – couldn't spare Moses.

Moses eventually bowed to God's judgment. He was a man under authority. ***"Let God appoint whom He will."*** (Num. 27:16) Was God severe? It is essential to enforce the principal: to whom much is given, of him much will be required. Ultimately Moses was magnificent and showed no self-pity, no miserable self-centredness, no blaming others and no plea of extenuating circumstances. God's People are his only concern. He may not have fully understood, but he knew God must be true and just. He bowed in meekness and accepted the judgment of God. ***"All His ways are just."*** (Deut. 33:2-3) ***"Though He slay me, I will hope in him."*** (Job 13:15)

How God vindicated his much-tried servant. He buried him with his own hands and raised him again to stand with the Lord Jesus in all His glory in the Land of Promise on the Mount of Transfiguration. Again he spoke with the Lord face-to-face. So God deals with those He loves. He chastens us and disciplines us for our good, but tempers mercy with justice. He does more abundantly above all that His servant could ask or imagine in the hour of anguish and loss.

It was said of Archbishop Cranmer that nothing so became him in life as the manner of his death. [Queen Mary burnt him at the stake with Latimer in Oxford at the time of the Reformation in England.] Nothing so became Moses in life as the way in which he accepted God's judgment even though it was a terrible disappointment. Nothing was more gracious in God's dealings with him than the manner of his death and burial.

3.8 The relinquishment of office

Numbers 27:12-20 is the classic passage of this subject. We will all face the day when we have to relinquish our leadership and hand over our role to another. We will all have to face the fact that our period of effective leadership is at an end. When was Moses' finest hour? At the Red Sea? On Sinai? Surely nothing became this great man more than his acceptance of God's judgment when he bowed his head to God's command to go and appoint his successor. Moses had served well, but there were faults woven into his nature that made his leadership unsuitable for the new phase in the nation's life. His first thought was not for self in the place of honour, but for the people.

Joshua had been trained for the job. No one can lead who has not first learned to follow. Joshua was tried and tested in obedience before being entrusted with command. It is well to remember this fact when serving on a team seems irksome, the task imposed unreasonable and serving no purpose and when the leader is uninspiring.

Moses went alone up Pisgah. His moral and spiritual greatness separated him from all others and nothing was more appropriate than that climb alone to the top of Pisgah to meet with God in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. When our time comes to relinquish leadership, may we go gratefully, gracefully, with no regrets, but as a blessing to all.

Moses had served well. He ranks as one of the greatest leaders in history. He had discipled a nation to greatness – with indomitable courage and faith – and to the threshold of a great destiny. What lay ahead was a task for new leadership and this great leader was called to pass over leadership. To do this gracefully requires true humility. Age becomes conservative and is wedded to the past. The time called for new methods, new ventures and new leadership.

A Prayer

Lord Jesus, help us to learn the lessons Your love and discipline would teach:

- To face trial, testing and difficulty without fear or murmuring
- To quell in us the faults of temperament

May we live and serve You so that our lives are not marred by ingratitude for Your great love and kindness, that there is no betrayal of Your trust and no failure in a life of holiness. May we be kept from stumbling by the power of God and be presented before you faultless and with great joy.

Burial of Moses

by Mrs. C.F. Alexander (1818-1895)

"He buried him in Moab in the valley opposite Bethpeor,
But to this day no-one knows where his grave is." **Deut. 34:6**

By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale of the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave.
But no man built that sepulchre
And no man saw it e'er,
For the angels of God upturned the sod
And laid the dead man there.

That was the grandest funeral
That ever passed on earth.
Yet no man heard the trampling,
Or saw the train go forth.
Noiselessly as the daylight
Comes when the night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek
Grows into the great sun.

Noiselessly as the springtime
Her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills
Unfold their thousand leaves.
So without sound of music
Or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown
The great procession swept.

Perchance the bald old eagle,
On grey Bethpeor's height,
Out of his rocky eyrie
Looked on the wondrous sight.
Perchance the lion stalking
Still shuns the hallowed spot.
For beast and bird have seen and heard
That which man knoweth not.

But when the warrior dieth
His comrades of the war
With arms reversed and muffled drums,
Follow the funeral car.
They show the banners taken;
They tell the battles won.
And after him lead his masterless steed
While peels the minute gun.

Amid the noblest of the land
Men lay the sage to rest.
And give the bard an honoured place
With costly marbles dressed.
In the great minister transept,
Where lights like glories fall
And the sweet choir sings and the organ rings
Along the emblazoned hall.

This was the bravest warrior
That ever buckled a sword;
This the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word,
And never earth's philosopher
Traced with his golden pen
On the deathless page truths half so sage
As he wrote down for men.

And had he not high honour?
The hillside for his pall!
To lie in state while angels wait
With stars for tapers tall.
And the dark rock pines like tossing plumes
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand in that lovely land
To lay him in his grave!

In that deep, deep grave without a name,
Whence his uncoffined clay
Shall break again – O wondrous thought,
Before the Judgment Day.
And stand, with glory wrapped around,
On the hills he never trod.
And speak of the strife that won our life
With the incarnate Son of God.

O lonely tomb in Moab's land.
O dark Bethpeor's hill!
Speak to these curious hearts of ours
And teach them to be still.
God hath His mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell
He hides them deep like the secret sleep
Of him He loved so well.

IV. Moses beholding face-to-face

"The Lord spoke to Moses face-to-face." (Ex. 33:11)

The goal in life, in death and in glory
Deut. 32:48-52; 34:1-8, 10-12

Introduction

4.1 Face-to-face with God

- God's glory is veiled before our immaturity
- Moses had to pass through the thick cloud
- Moses had to go alone

4.2 The fellowship of Christ's sufferings

- Identification with God's People
- Identification with God's purposes

4.3 Face-to-face : Moses learned the primacy of fellowship

4. Face-to-face with God – the goal of life

Introduction

The amazing story of Moses ends with a strange pathos with the solitary figure of Moses on a mountain top about to die – his dearest wish denied by God. (Deut. 32:48-52) He was lonely as all great leaders are. He had turned the solitude of the desert to immense fruitfulness in the last 40 years of his life. But even in this time, severance from the people he loved (Aaron, Miriam etc.) had taught him more of divine fellowship and had brought him face-to-face with God.

He had known the long hard schooling to which all great leaders are put all who would learn to serve. That schooling had turned the passionate gifted Prince of Egypt into the great lawgiver and leader of God's People. As he had grown closer and closer to God, he bore his people's burdens and suffered for their sin. He wrestled with their carnality and their faithlessness. More than this, Moses himself was to become meek and lowly in heart – conformed to the image of God's Son.

"Father, I desire that they also whom you have given Me, may be with Me where I am to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world."
(Jn. 17:24)

This was the prayer of the Lord Jesus and His purpose for each one of us. ***"Christ suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."*** (1 Pet. 3:18) What a price God paid to restore the lost communion of Eden. To what purpose has God redeemed us and brought us near if we do not see the face of the King? Why this suffering if we are not brought within the veil to see the Lord face-to-face – see His glory and have great fellowship with Him?

'Within the veil': be this, beloved, your portion,
Within the secret of your Lord to dwell;
Beholding Him until your face His glory,
Your life His love, your lips His praise shall tell.

We are His workmanship. Jesus is the master craftsman we see at work in the life of Moses. He is the heavenly potter, the shaper of lives that are marred. He is the divine gardener pruning for spiritual fruitfulness.

We have watched the life of Moses as he learned to serve and we have noticed that there is:

- a divine purpose for each of our lives in the calling of God
- a divine patience in moulding our personalities
- a divine discipline of our character to produce fruitfulness

The deliverance from Egypt was part of God's eternal purpose to plant a nation in the place of His choice so they could demonstrate to all the nations the blessedness of His rule. Out of such fallible material as these faceless, murmuring, fearful slaves God was building an instruction book of His ways. The people's lack of faith lost them the heritage that would have been theirs. Today leaders and people still fail God. His plan in life and in history pauses till those unworthy hands pass away and others more faithful move into His purposes. Those purposes never fail – as with Moses so with us.

4.1 Face-to-face with God

But God was dealing individually with His servant Moses. Through all the weary desert and through suffering and setbacks, He was drawing Moses into fellowship with Himself – face-to-face – this was the end God had in view. ***"Draw near to me and I will draw near to you."*** (James 4:8) How God longs for this!

- **God's glory is veiled before our immaturity.**

God leads the willing person on step-by-step. Moses trod the long path of discipleship and of discipline as he was learning to serve God and learning about God.

God first revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush. At that time Moses hid his face in awe and dared not look at God. But though he had little faith and confidence, Moses obeyed. He went to Pharaoh to speak God's judgments. Through this obedience his faith was strengthened. At the Red Sea he was to experience the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Then (Ex. 19:3) after three months, they came to Sinai and Moses went up the mountain of God where he had first met with God. In relating this experience, Moses said, ***"I am trembling with fear."*** (Heb. 12:21) Moses was on the path of learning the knowledge of the Holy One.

At the Red Sea he had seen the victory and triumph of God. At Marah he had proved the power of "the tree" to change the bitter to the sweet water of life. He had learned to war against Amalek. At Sinai he had come to learn God's holy commandments and the great sinfulness of sin. Moses went up again and again into the thick cloud that covered the mountain.

"Come up to Me on the mountain and wait there …." (Ex. 24:12-17) And when Moses went up and entered the cloud, he received God's directions concerning the tabernacle, the altar, the mercy seat and the priests. In Ex. 33:13 Moses pleads, ***"Please show me Your ways."*** In Ex. 33:18 he pleads, ***"Please show me Your glory."*** He longed to be with God, to know God's ways and have a glimpse of His glory. And Moses was led to this position step-by-step. So God leads our responsive hearts, **drawing us on** in our pursuit of God.

Veiled before our immaturity is this face-to-face communion with God. ***"I still have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now."*** (Jn. 16:12) ***"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, what God has prepared for those who love Him."*** (1 Cor. 2:9) But our eyes are capable of seeing further than our present spiritual horizons – there is far more out there while we are content with so little! But Moses pressed on after God Himself.

The great English historian Macaulay wrote of the Puritans in his **Essay on John Milton** (author of **Paradise Lost**) *"They were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of a being (God) for whose power nothing was too vast and for whose inspection nothing was too minute. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the verities through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze fully on His intolerable brightness and commune with Him face-to-face. The puritan therefore, was never alarmed when he was bidden to stand still and listen to the voice of God. His closet and his church were full of the reverberations of that aweful, gracious and beautiful voice to which he listened. He made little of sacraments and priests because God was so intensely real to him. What should he do with lenses, who stood in the full torrent of the sunshine?"* In this Moses was a puritan.

- **Moses had to pass through the thick cloud.**

"Clouds and thick darkness are all around Him, righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne." (Ps. 97:2)

The approach to intimate communion with God is often through thick clouds of the mystery of His will being worked out through our lives: sickness, the death of those we love, distress, pressure and stress. It may mean being brought into great darkness – deep depression or other things – our equivalent of Gethsemane and Calvary. Usually there is no way to a crown, but by a cross.

- **Moses had to go alone.**

Moses went alone, sometimes accompanied by Joshua (Ex. 24:14) even as the Lord Jesus had to go alone – in Gethsemane a stone's throw beyond His disciples and then on alone to Calvary. ***"When you pray go into your room, shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret."*** (Mt. 6:6) Like Jacob alone at Peniel and John alone on Patmos, if we would come face-to-face, we must come alone to spend time with God.

Heb. 10:19-22 says the way into the holiest – the right of access – is through the rent veil of Christ's death. Andrew Murray asks, *"Was His flesh rent that yours and mine might be spared?"*

In **The Pursuit of God**, A. W. Tozer writes:

"Self is the opaque veil that hides the face of God from us – self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration and self-love. We must bring our 'self' and our sins to the Cross for judgment. We must invite the Cross to do its deadly work in us."

"In human experience that veil is made of living, spiritual tissue. It is made of the sentient, quivering stuff of which our whole being consists and to touch it is to touch us where we feel pain."

"To say otherwise is to make the Cross no cross and death no death at all. It is no fun to die! To rip through the tender stuff of which life is made can never be anything but deeply painful. Yet this is what the Cross did to Jesus Christ and it is what the Cross would do to every man to set him free. The Cross is rough and it is deadly, but it is effective."

"Our part is to confess, forsake and repudiate the self-life and then reckon it crucified. Let us not rest content within a neat doctrine of self-crucifixion. It must be the work of God in us in response to our self-despair in the one who is wrecked upon Jesus."

Then comes the resurrection, the power and the glory. The veil is removed and we enter the spiritual experience of the presence of God – face-to-face. Do we only know a judicial standing – theological and theoretical – or have we entered in through the rent veil of the flesh into communion with God face-to-face? To what purpose have we been brought to near if we do not see the face of the King?

Jesus suffered to bring us to God. Only in conformity with His sufferings, only through the rending of the veil of our flesh, only through the discipline of God – the daily dying – can we know what it is to commune with God face-to-face.

"Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourself with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh had ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions, but for the will of God." (1 Pet. 4:1-2)

4.2 The fellowship of Christ's sufferings

Moses had to learn that fellowship in suffering comes before the glory of resurrection power.
For Moses this meant identification with the People of God and with the purposes of God.

- **Identification with God's People**

In Egypt Moses made the magnificent refusal, disavowing his adoption, relinquishing his prerogatives, resigning his position and rejecting his prospects. All this he did to identify himself with the People of God. In obeying the call of God, Abraham had to forsake his own people. Moses, on the other hand, had to join himself to them. As he did this, he thought he had paid a great price, **but it was only the beginning**. God was about to take him a long way right into the fellowship of His sufferings. Moses made **love for God** the supreme quality required for leadership. This is the way of the Lord Jesus. We, His servants, are only effective in so far as we are like Him.

In Ex. 32:11-12 Moses was led by God to lead with compassion and involvement with personal sacrifice. In Ex. 32:32 we read, ***"But now, if You will forgive their sin, but if not, please blot me out of Your book …."*** Prof Blaiklock says:

*"Moses was 40 years old when he made his great renunciation. It was neither the passionate rebellion of youth nor the hot idealism of a boy who has not known the good things that made him great. Like Abraham, he steps into history **to change it** by his mighty trust in God and his firm desire to seek God's will. Moses had chosen to forego all Egypt had to offer for the sake of the reward. This reward, he now offers to forego! Did any man come nearer to the heart of Calvary? **"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. He made Him to be sin Who knew no sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."*** (2 Cor. 5:19-21)

'Face-to-face' what does this involve? What will be the cost in our life and ministry? In Rom. 9:1-3 Paul says he is willing to be 'accursed' and cut off from Christ for the sake of his brothers, his kinsmen according to the flesh.

What of the church – Christians in the Muslim World who are often a despised minority? How deep is our concern for national believers? What is our compassion and our heart's desire? Are we careful not to be too closely identified with them? Is it 'us and them' or 'all we together'? Are we, as cross-cultural workers, not more often like the Israelites than like Moses?

God is bringing His People in the Muslim World out of darkness that He might bring them into the fullness of His grace. So many today seem to be content to "be delivered from Egypt" and even to bear the name 'Christian' and yet have no heart for the unsearchable riches of God in the Lord Jesus into which He longs to bring them. How deep is our concern at this state of affairs? Have we a real compassion for these individuals and are we truly involved in this situation?

- **Identification with God's purposes**

Moses showed his true identification with God's purposes in His People. ***"Consider too that this nation is Your People."*** (Ex. 32:13) Moses reminded God that all His honour, all His glory and all His eternal purposes were bound up with His People. Neither at the cost of God's People nor at the cost of God's glory did Moses want any reward for himself. He had passed beyond self-interest here and in the future. He was having fellowship with Christ's sufferings.

How far am I willing to be identified with God's purposes, with God's long-suffering, with God's pain? How do I react to the situation of the church in the Muslim World? There is a tendency to write off the small Christian minority churches in the Middle East or the Armenians in Iran or the despised churches of Pakistan. Do we want to start something new just to make a name for ourselves? I think these verses have something to teach us through the costliness of Moses identification.

What is our motive for ministry? Moses pleaded with God, *"Consider Your covenant, Your promises, Your purposes – Your name is bound up with this people."* Do we plead, *"Remember Gethsemane, consider Calvary, remember the travail of Your soul."* Do we plead that He might see His seed and be satisfied? Remember he was promised, ***"I will give you the nations for your heritage."*** (Ps. 2:8)

4.3 Face-to-face: Moses learned the primacy of fellowship with God

God wants our love and fellowship more than our service and ministry. He wants a heart of love towards Himself more than anything we can do for Him.

"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deut. 6:4-5)

If Moses was to teach this commandment to the people, it must first become a reality in his heart. How was it that Moses, the great lawgiver, could have this revelation of the nature of God in this command? Surely it was because God had led him along the path of fellowship to come face-to-face with God. God wants us to enter into fellowship with His eternal love for people, into the self-giving love of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

How unique was the thought (and law!) that men should love God! No other religion believed that God loved people, let alone that we should love God in return. It is an awesome thought that God, who needs nothing, should delight in our love and devotion. God is our Father. If He is truly so, He loves us with perfect love and He also guides us with willing hearts, in perfect wisdom.

His purpose is that we may know the love of Jesus that surpasses knowledge. (Eph. 3:14-19)
This is the love that spared not His Own Son – the love that longs for **all** people to be saved – the love for ***"the other sheep"*** and the compassion that says, ***"Them also I must bring."*** (Jn. 10:16)

"Show me Your face, show me Your glory,
One transient gleam of loveliness divine.
And I shall never think or dream of other love save thine.
All lesser light will darken quite; all lower glories wane.
The beautiful of earth will scarce seem beautiful again."

That face is marred still by the indelible scars of Calvary – the glory of a Saviour crucified. Twice Moses spent 40 days up the mountain. His character was refined and his longing for God intensified. His passion for God grew. ***"If I have found favour in Your sight, please show me now Your ways that***

I may know You in order to find favour in Your sight." (Ex. 33:13, 18) God waits to be wanted with a holy, ardent desire. God answered Moses (v. 21, 22), ***"Behold, there is a place by Me where you shall stand on the rock. While My glory passes-by I will put you in a cleft of the rock and I will cover you with My hand, until I have passed by."***

We too are hidden in the pierced side of our Saviour Jesus and sheltered beneath His pierced hands. Face-to-face with the awful cost of Calvary, we come face-to-face with God. Like John we can say, ***"We have seen His glory, glory as of the Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** (Jn. 1:14) ***"To him that has, more will be given and he will have an abundance …."*** (Mt. 13:12) Moses sought to press ever nearer into the presence of God. His whole being followed after the vision of God.

As Moses talked with God face-to-face as talking with his friend, he was unaware of the marvellous change, such fellowship was effecting. When Aaron and all the rulers of Israel saw Moses, ***"Behold, the skin of his face shone and they were afraid to come near him."*** (Ex. 34:30)

"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever increasing glory that comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2 Cor. 3:18)

The Kingdom, the power and the glory are inseparable. God never separates them. Where He establishes His Kingdom, the power and the glory are demonstrated. When we are face-to-face with God, we behold His glory – the glory of a Saviour crucified – the glory of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. But ***"beholding the glory"*** leads to transformation and that transformation leads to a costly identification with Jesus in His saving mission. ***"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body – that is the church."*** (Col. 1:24)

Paul sums it up so well in Phil. 3:10, 13, ***"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death …. But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."***

My goal is God Himself, not joy, nor peace,
Nor even blessing, but Himself, my God;
'Tis His to lead me there – not mine, but His
At any cost, dear Lord, by any road.

So faith bounds forward to its goal in God,
And love can trust her Lord to lead her there;
Upheld by Him, my soul is following hard
Till God hath full fulfilled my deepest prayer.

No matter if the way be sometimes dark,
No matter though the cost be oft-times great,
He knoweth how I best shall reach the mark.
The way that leads to Him must needs be strait.

One thing I know, I cannot say Him nay;
One thing I do, I press towards my Lord;
My God, my glory here, from day to day,
And in the glory there my great Reward

Fredrick Brook

Moses the servant of God

V. Moses – the faithful servant

5.1 Moses learned to be faithful in that which was least

5.2 Moses learned to be obedient to God's commands

5.3 Moses learned to rest

5.4 Moses learned the power of intercessory prayer

5.5 Moses learned to live by faith

5.6 The reward of faith

5. Moses – the faithful servant

"As Moses was also faithful in all God's house." (Heb. 3:2)

"Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant." (Heb. 3:5)

"… My servant Moses … is faithful in all my house." (Num. 12:7)

Read Numbers 12:1-15; 16: 1-15.

Lessons to be learned – The seven league boots to spiritual maturity!

5.1 Moses learned to be faithful in that which was least

He had learned to care for a few sheep day in and day out for 40 years before being set over God's house. He learned to shepherd on the job – so did David.

"And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not….." (Jer. 45:5)

No! We must seek to be faithful in the little things. This is a stern test of our daily duty – faithfulness to the trust you have accepted and that goes with the job you are doing. Everything you do must be done for the Lord Jesus.

So seek first and foremost His Kingdom – not any sense of honour or promotion. Seek His glory, not your own. **God seeks faithfulness**, trustworthiness, fidelity and integrity in those who would serve.

- **Joseph** was faithful in small responsibilities.
- **David** was a faithful Shepherd – unknown he tackled a bear and a lion without running away.
- **Jesus** is always the supreme example – faithful while in obscurity – doing the will of God for 30 years in Nazareth.

What about job satisfaction? We should shine in whatever we do – as a medical specialist, a sports coach, a teacher etc. God wants me to learn to serve and to be the servant of all – to be like Jesus.

Jesus wasn't a carpenter in Nazareth for the job satisfaction it provided. A village carpenter didn't have a lot of honour. He would be an odd job man – making things and fixing what was broken. It was the role of being a servant to the village. He did it faithfully in order to glorify the Father.

"Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." (Col. 3:23-24)

Are we inculcating faithfulness in ourselves? Are we giving an example to others of faithfulness in the unnoticed chores – the details of life? For Moses, this was to be uncompromising in his faithfulness. Remember that Pharaoh tried to **negotiate** and compromise God's order to, ***"Let My People go!"*** But Moses held unswervingly to God's requirements.

- First option: you can offer up a sacrifice **in** Egypt (just 3 days journey)
- Second option: Just the men could go – Moses said ***"all"***.
- Third option: all can go, but not flocks and herds – Moses reply, ***"Not a hoof shall be left behind!"***

Here is a test of leadership! Are you being true to God's requirements and the standards and values of God's Word? It is true when the world's leadership seeks a compromise from us our people suffer! (for a while) – then true liberation.

Uncompromising faithfulness! Here are some other examples:

- Moses and the golden calf
- Nehemiah 8:1-38 – the Commandments read by Ezra. Nehemiah enforced compliance.

A leader must know God's **values** and must faithfully seek compliance. This is a hard task.

5.2 Moses learned to be obedient to God's commands

"God spoke to Moses and commanded him to say to the people, 'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel." (Ex. 19:5-6)

Jesus said, ***"…. He*** (the Good Shepherd) ***goes before them and the sheep follow Him for they know His voice."*** (Jn. 10:4)

Moses saw what disobedience did to Pharaoh. ***"But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice and let Israel go?' "*** Judgement engulfed him and all his people. The lesson to Moses was clear: **obedience brings blessing – disobedience brings judgement.**

In many spheres of life, when given an order by someone in authority over you, it isn't given as a basis for discussion, but for immediate compliance. God wants to bless us, but the condition is **obedience**.

"Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father and I will love him and manifest Myself to him …. If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make our home with him." (Jn. 14:21-23)

"If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and abide in His love." (Jn. 15:10)

"Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and in truth." (1 Jn. 3:18)

"***Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—<u>he will be blessed in what he does</u>."*** (James 1:22-25)

Guidance

Obedience is related to guidance. God led Moses in wisdom and in love and the movement of His will was not always to be easily explained. The people received their marching orders day by day. The future is seldom clear and God doesn't often reveal more than the next step. Pause as well as advance is in God's will and guidance. The cloud stayed still and the cloud moved on. So it is with us. Restless people seek only to press forward. Delay irks them and stirs up impatience. But delay is as often God's will as is moving on. At such times God appears inactive, but His great wisdom lies in such apparent inactivity. God's pauses are purposeful. Events mature us and prepare us for the future challenge. The perils of haste are avoided and the refreshment of rest and quiet thought are secured. We must learn patience in obedience. Being tense, hasty and fretful helps nothing.

How can we help our team members to maintain a loving obedience to the commands of Scripture? Our hearts are as wayward now as then! (Heb. 8:8-12) Obedience and faith go together. Every act of obedience strengthens faith. We need to affirm that God's Word is true and to be obeyed whatever the consequences. God will always vindicate His promises under these circumstances.

5.3 Moses learned to rest

Obedience brings rest. The knowledge that we are doing God's will gives us the assurance that He will handle the consequences of our obedience. He has told us that His burden is light and His yoke is easy.

Hudson Taylor told of a time when he was restless, toiling under a heavy burden of responsibility. Then he learned the secret of what he called 'the exchanged life'. He learned this during the terrible time of the Boxer Rebellion when news came in daily of many martyred CIM workers. Hudson Taylor began to sing what became his favourite hymn:

Jesus I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art.
I am finding out the greatness of Thy loving heart."

We can rest because ***"The government is upon His shoulders"***. (Is. 9:6)

Joshua had a similar experience of rest when he met "the Captain of the Hosts of the Lord" (a theophany of the Lord Jesus). Another army had entered the field – the unbelievably powerful army of God! All Joshua had to do was obey orders, for the other army was going to bring about the victory.

God tested Moses again and again to teach him where **the real responsibility lay**.

Ex. 32:7 ***"The Lord said to Moses, 'Go down for <u>your</u> people who <u>you</u> brought up out of Egypt have corrupted themselves."***

Moses comes to God (Ex. 33:13), ***"Consider too that this nation is Your people."*** Then Moses repeats the phrase ***'I and Your people'*** in verses 15 and 16.

Ps. 37:1 ***"<u>Fret not</u> yourself because of evil doers."***

Ps. 37:3 ***"<u>Trust</u> in the Lord and do good."***

Ps. 37:4 ***"<u>Delight</u> yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."***

Ps. 37:5 ***"<u>Commit</u> your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will act."***

Do you fret? Are you stressed? Do you feel pushed and pressured? Ps. 46:1-3 was written for a people to sing when under stress – ***"God is our refuge and strength, a very present*** (or well proved) ***help in trouble."***

So we will not fear. We will be still and know that He is God (Ps. 46:10). We will quietly submit to the gracious sovereignty of God and place the responsibility on His shoulder while we rest in faith.

5.4 Moses learned the power of intercessory prayer

Ignorance of God, His heart and His written word lies at the source of much aimless prayer. How can we add, "If it be Your will" when He has plainly revealed His will concerning much that we ask for? We need but to point to God's Word and say reverently, "You promised, so please do it." God has yet to fully teach us, His children, the prayer of faith that has what it asks because it is asked according to the will of God.

Thank God for His promise that if we don't know how to ask, the Holy Spirit can give us intuitive knowledge of His mind that comes from a diligent study of His Word and a close walk with Him.

Like all the great personalities of the Old Testament, Moses had Christ-like qualities. He suffered for his people's sin. At a certain moment the people are ready to reject him as leader and reject all he stood for and to choose for themselves some corrupt Barabbas to lead them back to Egypt and to slavery and bondage. Moses forgave such treachery without a word and stands before God in eloquent intercession for his rebellious people.

There was no need for any intercessor to remind God, as Moses did, of His great promises. God never forgets His Covenant with His own people. At the same time, it is refreshing in our prayers for us to quote the Word of God to God Himself!

5.5 Moses learned to live by faith

"By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the King, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." (Heb. 11:27)

Fear and faith can't coexist in the same heart. As faith grows, it supplants fear. The power of the visible is weakened and the power of the invisible grows.

Faith grew as he endured testing and trial. Moses used the shield of faith as protection against the wrath of Pharaoh – the fear of man. ***"If God be for us, who can be against us?"*** (Rom. 8:31)

By faith Moses experienced the reality of the spiritual, the invisible, as over that of the merely temporal. Some are more prone to fear than others. What about Timothy or Gideon or even Joshua? There are many examples of those with shrinking natures who dislike the limelight. Their very nature attracts them to Jesus for strength, for courage and for an escape from fear. Most of us are like this. There are only a few inherently brave people.

Long years in the quiet wilderness had taken away, to some extent, the impetuosity of Moses. As a Prince at Pharaoh's court, he had stepped forward to rescue the Hebrew slaves in proud self-reliance, with a strong arm, ready to force his own way. The ingratitude of his own people had bitten deeply into Moses' heart and destroyed his trust in other men. The silence of the wilderness and the years of loneliness, made him slow of speech. Rather typically of such temperaments, Moses had moved to the other extreme.

Rashness and impetuosity are an extreme, but so also is the opposite an extreme – cowardice, hesitation and paralysing self-distrust. To this position, Moses had moved. God drew him back into usefulness by a stern command from a friend – his own half-forgotten brother.

So we know that at the age of 80 Moses was a shrinking, diffident person. Perhaps such people have the right basis for Christian courage, for they need the encouragement of, ***"Certainly I will be with you."*** (Ex. 3:12).

"Be strong and of a good courage" (Josh. 1:5, 9) or as to Timothy, ***"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"*** (2 Tim. 2:1) or as to frightened Jewish background believers, ***"I will never leave you or forsake you. So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper. I won't fear what man can do to me.' "*** (Heb. 13:5-6)

Let us encourage the weak and timid for ***"Out of weakness they were made strong."*** (Heb. 11:34) The faith of leaders will be tested. This is an inevitable part of the walk of faith. This is the only way the capacity of faith grows. God must have leaders with implicit trust in Him.

We are told to endure hardness as a good soldier (2 Tim. 2:3) and to run with patience a race set before us. (Heb. 12:1) Such information doesn't suggest a smooth and easy way miraculously purged of all difficulty. Our character qualities are trained and strengthened by the experiences God permits us to face. Out of both the joy and the pain God teaches us His lessons.

Faith is progressive. Each stage of its growth leans on the past and sustains the future. Moses, striding ahead with the rod of God in his hand, must have silently rebuked those following who complained and murmured and were wondering about God's purposes.

Some of the tests of faith include:

- **Freedom from rigid patterns of work** – recall the power and influence of the rod of God:
  - It turned into a snake and Moses was defenceless. To rub in his vulnerability, he was to take it by the tail.
  - The rod was used in the first three plagues. After that the words of Moses were enough.

  There is a danger of leaning on means and rigid patterns of work. Elijah experienced this:
  - The brook Cherith dried up
  - The widow of Zarephath
  - An angel of the Lord

  Jesus used a variety of means and people. The Holy Spirit works in different ways. Christian ministry is often ruined by continual use of traditions from the past as methods and approaches. These traditions substitute for an active faith in the living God.

  Don't be bound by preconceptions of how God will work. Remember the two on the road to Emmaus: ***"But we had hoped that He was the One to redeem Israel."*** (Lk. 24:21)

  Moses learned to be pliable in the hands of God. God won't have us lean on **things** or on **other people** – even if He has given us these things/people and even if He has blessed us in the past when we used these things. His seemingly strange dealings with us are to lead us along the path of faith – the blessing of an unoffended heart.

- **Expressions of discontent and murmuring** – Moses was constantly plagued with this. Jesus knew this from critics and even from His own disciples – remember Judas Iscariot complaining about a

waste of money! All team leaders will have experienced murmurers – about the food, the weather, the duties and tasks, the living and travelling arrangements, others on the team, the neighbours etc.

Fourteen times it is recorded that people complained to Moses and rebelled against God.

[Ex. 14:10; 15:26; 16:2; 17:3; 18:17 (Jethro) Lev. 10:6; Num. 11:1; 12:1; 14:2; 16:3; 20:3; 21:5; 25:3]

In spite of the mighty deliverance at the Red Sea, three days later they were murmuring. In spite of the daily provision of manna and quails – the miraculous provision of water, the amazing deliverance from their enemies – again and again they broke into rebellion, despair and bitter complaints.

Complaining threatened the early church (Acts 6) and it constantly threatens us today. It is very destructive! It robs us of the blessing of God!

Murmurers are **short of memory**. They remember all the wrong things. They are **short of sight**. They fail to see the providence and presence of God in the situation. They are **short of faith** and fear future dearth. God sometimes delays His help and immediately we despair and a spirit of discontent takes over. We may complain to leaders, but our murmuring is against God and not man. Our grumbling and discontent is directed against God's love and faithfulness towards us.

We have to learn by faith **the secret of contentment** – how to be full and how to be hungry – to abound and to be abased. Sometimes we hunger in order to be reminded we are ***"not to live by bread alone"***.

Sadly **once** Moses failed. Now weary and old and faced with the never ending problem of the complaining, faithless multitude, the great man's self-control broke down. The old habit of imperious command reasserted itself and Moses took the place that was rightfully God's. ***Must we fetch you water out of this rock?"*** (Num. 20:11)

- **Envy and rebellion** – Numbers 12 records the envy of Miriam. She was older than Moses – now aged about 90 years old. She was probably the 'senior woman' in Israel. It is obvious that she was an astute, talented woman. Perhaps she gained great honour among the women at the Red Sea with her great song. She was Israel's 'First Lady'. Now she spoke against Moses' wife. Probably Zipporah has joined Moses in Sinai. Perhaps she was with Jethro, her father, when he visited Moses. Now Miriam felt ousted by Zipporah out of her honourable position.

  This is a situation ripe for envy. Similar situations are seen in our day. Miriam watched Zipporah and her mind revolted at having to resign her place to "that woman". Miriam was a very great woman "a mother in Israel" – a prophetess! Envy in Miriam caused Aaron to be envious. Aaron was always easily led astray. So both Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses. God vindicated Moses. We are given a terrific endorsement of Moses' meekness and Christ-likeness.

  "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will act. <u>He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday.</u>" (Ps. 37:5-6)

  God safely guards the reputation that is committed to His hands. He champions and vindicates His own. The true servant of God need not be fretful and anxious over the slanders, lies and misunderstandings of men. All who have sought to serve God have suffered in this way. Jesus suffered in this way.

  Then Moses experienced rebellion! After the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea (Numbers 14) when the people refused to enter the Land of Promise – ***"Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt",*** Korah seized the opportunity to fan the fire of rebellion into flames. He put together 250 "chiefs" in a confederation – ***"Well-known men chosen from the Assembly"*** (Num. 16:2). This group of men tried to stage a coup d'état against Moses. It was a formidable conspiracy. It was a revolt against Moses – a rejection of his authority. They were jealous of his growing influence.

What did Moses do? ***"When Moses heard it, he fell on his face and he said to Korah and the company, 'In the morning the Lord will show who is His …..' "*** (Num. 16:4) And God acted in an awesome way to vindicate Moses.

What are we to do about envy and rebellion? What are we to do with those who will not accept our authority?

- First realise you are not unique. David suffered from envy. Paul suffered much from the Judaisers who did not accept his authority.
- Do you have a single eye for God's glory? Remember Num. 11:26 – ***"Would that all the Lord's people were prophets. ... Are you jealous for my sake?"*** Are you willing that the Lord should bless others and use others?
- Are you sincerely praying for blessing on colleagues and other leaders and other groups?
- Are you warmly welcoming others into leadership? Do you encourage and empower ability in others?
- Recognise the ever-present possibility of envy. Guard against it. If envy is a selfish, negative reaction, do all you can to adopt a positive attitude of actively promoting others.
- Claim the meekness of Jesus. All our needs are met in Him!
- Cultivate the habit of silence, ***"Swift to hear, slow to speak"*** (James 1:19) when other people are inclined to reject our authority.
- Ask God to vindicate all that is of Him in our conduct.
- Let us give ourselves to prayer for those who are envious and rebellious – remembering that envy does far more harm to them than it does to us. Remember Moses' prayer for Miriam, ***"O God, please heal her, please!"*** (Num. 12:13) Resentment and envy are very deep-seated. They embitter our souls, mar our relationships and damage the work of God. But however deep the resentment, there can be cleansing and deliverance.
- A rebellious spirit leads to factions – a party spirit – a desire for power and recognition – note the factions in the church in Corinth. The answer is to **humble** yourself. The highway to spiritual greatness is the 'low way' of trial, tribulation, stress, discipline and a constant humbling of self.

Out of the fallible material of the murmuring, envious, rebellious People of God, God was forming lessons to be learned. As the New Covenant People of God we have no grounds for believing we are any better. In fact we are probably worse, for they were fresh from slavery, weary with the journey and tense with uncertainty. It is no wonder they grumbled and rebelled. We have far less excuse!

How heart-breaking for Moses was the dullness, stupidity and carnality of those he led. For these wretched, faithless people he had given up the wealth, position and worldly honour that might have been his. Yet it was for **these** people he offered his life. (Ex. 32:32) It was for these people that he prayed, laboured and fought. Such pain is the common experience of leaders. The Lord knew such loneliness and disappointment in His people. He knows it still!

The march to Canaan was a **movement** in God's plans. The happiness, ease and comfort of the people were not the first concern of Moses. It was rather **the planting of a people in the very place of God's choice** – the fulfilment of a destiny. Happiness is certain to follow obedience to such a cause!

Let us remember that the Lord's presence with us will never produce strife and jealousy. It is the presence of our old sinful nature that spawns such things. When God is near we see clearly our own faults and we are blind to the faults of others – real or imagined. In His presence the contrite heart seeks no excuse and covets no self-exaltation.

5.6 The reward of faith

"My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest." (Ex. 33:14)

The request to be shown the Lord's glory was partially fulfilled (Ex. 33:18-23) and then fully fulfilled on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:2; Mk. 9:2).

When Moses came down from the mountain the skin of his face shone. (Ex. 34:29) ***"And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."*** (2. Cor. 3:18)

"God ... has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6)

The reward of faith in this life is just this – glory! May it be ours!