

"The Work of Moses"

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The little babe Moses that God saved in the wonderful manner that we learned of last week, grew up in the palace of Pharaoh into a strong young man, "mighty in word and deed." He did not forget or despise his brethren, the children of Israel, who were kept in cruel bondage by the Egyptians, but remembered always that God had raised him up so that he might help and save them.

But Moses had not yet learned the way of the Lord. He thought that it was by the strength of his own arm that Israel was to be delivered. All round about him in Egypt were the works of men's hands, the magnificent idol temples, and the grand works of Egyptian architecture. Some of these, the Sphinx and the Great Pyramid, can still be seen in the land of Egypt.

So it was natural that Moses should think a great deal of the power of man, and begin to try to do himself the work that God meant to do by him.

He often saw the Israelites very cruelly treated by their taskmasters. When he thought the time had come for him to begin his work of delivering them, he smote one of those Egyptian taskmasters whom he saw ill-treating an Israelite, and killed him. No one else was near at the time, and Moses buried his body in the sand.

He thought that this would show his brethren that he was willing to help them, and that they would all join him in fighting against the Egyptians. "For he supposed that his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not."

The next day he saw two of the Israelites quarrelling, and tried to make peace between them. He was sad to see them adding to their sorrows by being unkind to each other, so he said: "Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another." The one who was in the wrong was angry with him, and said, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill us, as thou didst the Egyptian?"

When Moses heard this he was afraid and discouraged. He saw that his brethren did not receive him as the one sent from God to be their deliverer. Pharaoh and the Egyptians were angry with him for killing one of their people, and his own brethren would have nothing to do with him. So he fled from Egypt, and found a home in the land of Midian with Jethro, a worshipper of the true God. Here Moses spent a long, long time, forty years,—keeping and feeding sheep. What a change from his early life in Pharaoh's palace! But God saw that this was the best way to teach him the lesson that he must learn before he would be ready to lead Israel out of Egypt without upsetting God's plans by trying to do the work in his own way and by his own power.

Here in Midian, as Moses led the sheep among the mountains, the works of the Creator were all around him, and all the works of men's hands were shut out. God spoke to him in all His work, and taught him to trust the power and submit to the will of Him who made everything by His word, for "He spake and it was; He commanded and it stood fast."

The lessons that God taught during these forty quiet years, we are still learning to-day; for he wrote them out in the book we call Genesis, that all God's people might learn them too. Think, then, what a benefit these years of training were, not only to Moses, but to us and all the world.

In his work as a shepherd also Moses learnt many precious lessons of patience and gentleness, which helped him in after years when God "led His people like a flock by the hand of Moses."

But at last the quiet years of training were ending; the time for Moses' great work was come. As he led the flock in a desert place, God appeared to him in a burning bush that drew his attention because it kept on burning without being destroyed. God told him to go back into Egypt, and He would deliver the Israelites from their bondage, and lead them out, as He had promised.

But Moses was not so ready now to undertake this great work as he had been forty years before. He had lost all his old trust in himself, and he now thought that God could find a better instrument for His work.

When God still commanded him to go, he remembered the question that he had been asked before, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" and he asked God what he should say when they asked who had sent him.

God told him to answer: "The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you." And then, in case they should not believe him, and should say, "The Lord hath not appeared unto you." God gave him signs by which he could show that he was really sent of God. What these signs were, and how Moses was received in Egypt, and all the wonders that God worked through him when He led back the Israelites through the wilderness to the beautiful land of Canaan—all this you may read in the Book of the Exodus (which means, the going out), written by Moses himself.

Now I want you to notice particularly two or three things in the life of Moses, for we shall speak of them soon. First: as soon as he was born Satan, working through the Egyptians, tried to kill him. Then when he was grown up his brethren despised him, and would not receive him; and he was taken from them for a time. "But this Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer."