

MOSES: The Servant of God

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CHAPTER ONE

OUR STANDPOINT

“By faith, Moses . . . “ (Hebrews 11:24).

THE writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews lays bare the secret of the marvels effected by the heroes of Hebrew story. Obedient to his summons, they range themselves in one great battalion, and with united breath, cry, Why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had effected them? The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, made bare his holy arm and wrought by us. And his name, through faith in his name, hath done all these wonderful works.

We make a profound mistake in attributing to these men extraordinary qualities of courage, and strength of body or soul. To do so is to miss the whole point of the reiterated teaching of Scripture. They were not different from ordinary men, except in their faith.

In many respects it is most likely that they were inferior to ourselves. We should probably be much surprised if we were to encounter them in the daily walks of modern life, and should find it almost impossible to believe that they wrought such prodigies of valor, endurance, and deliverance.

Gideon and Barak, Samson and Jephthah, were rather of the type of the sturdy Borderers of olden days, whose wild doings kept our northern counties in constant agitation, than like our modern clerics or Christian philanthropists. But there was one characteristic common to them all, which lifted them above ordinary men, and secured for them a niche in the Temple of Scripture that they had a marvellous faculty of faith; which, indeed, is but the capacity of the human heart for God. Four times over this is cited as the secret of all that Moses did for his people.

The same truth is repeatedly corroborated in the teaching of our Lord. He never stops to ask what may be the specific quantity of power, or wisdom, or enthusiasm, which exists in his disciples. In his judgment these things are as the small dust of the balance, not to be taken into serious consideration, and not likely to affect the aggregate results of a man's life. But his incessant demand is for faith. If only there be faith, though it be but as a grain of mustard-seed, sycamore trees can be uprooted; mountains cast into the midst of the sea; and demons exorcised from their victims.

To a father He once said:

“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23).

And what is this faith? It is not some inherent power or quality in certain men, by virtue of which they are able to accomplish special results unrealized by others. It is rather the power of putting self aside that God may work unhindered through the nature. It is the attitude of heart which, having ascertained the will of God, and being desirous of becoming an organ for it, goes on to expect that God will work out his purposes through its medium. It is, in brief, that capacity for God which appropriates Him to its uttermost limit, and becomes the channel or vehicle through which He passes forth to bless mankind.

The believer is the God-filled, the God-moved, the God-possessed man; and the work which he effects in the world is not his, but God's through him.

There are, therefore, these necessary conditions of all true faith:

- The sense of helplessness and nothingness.
- An absolute assurance of being on God's plan.
- Entire consecration, that He may work out his will through heart and life.
- The daily food of promise.
- A daring to act, in utter independence of feeling, on a faith which reckons absolutely on the faithfulness of God.

It will be our contention throughout our study of the remarkable life before us, that, though Moses may have had commanding features of mind and body, and have been versed in all the learning of his time; yet the marvellous outcome of his life-work was not due to any of these qualities, but to the faith which knit his soul to God. His faith sufficed to do what all his other qualities, without his faith, must have failed in doing.

We hope to go further, and show that all the blessings which God in his mindfulness of his covenant bestowed on Israel, came to that rebellious and stiff-necked people through the channel of Moses' faith. It is God's method to seek the cooperation of man in the execution of his purposes, and to fulfil his promise through his servant's faith. In this case it was Moses who was called into partnership with the Lord, and it was through his faith that God fulfilled the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Each of the above-mentioned conditions of a mighty faith was fulfilled in the history of Moses.

He was allowed to make his first efforts for the emancipation of his people in the energy of his own strength, and to fail egregiously; so that he fled away to Midian, abandoning all hope of delivering them, and spending his years in solitude and exile, until it was with the greatest difficulty that he could be induced to undertake the Divine commission. He was reduced to the last extreme of helpless nothingness when the burning bush flamed in his path, a symbol of utter weakness, possessed and indwelt yet unconsumed by God, who is a consuming fire.

He could have no doubt as to God's plan; for that lay unfolded before him in the promise made to Abraham long years before, fixing four hundred years as the limit of the Egyptian sojourn. And, in addition, God distinctly told him that He had come down to deliver.

He was as thoroughly yielded to the purpose of God, as the staff which he held in his hand was to his own will. Hence his chosen name, "**the servant of the Lord**"; and the constant recurrence of the phrase, "**as the Lord commanded Moses.**"

He fed daily on the promises of God, pleading them in prayer, and leaning his whole weight upon them. And he often knew what it was to leave behind him the familiar and tried, for the strange and new; at the bidding of God, he stepped out, though there seemed nothing to tread upon, launching himself and three millions of people absolutely on the care of God, assured that God's faithfulness could not fail.

His faith made Moses all he was. We shall see this more clearly as we proceed. For it is our eager desire to learn exactly how such a faith as his was produced. Why should we not have it? God's methods are never out of date. It is certain that we shall have his faith, if we but pay the price of enduring his discipline. And if only we possessed his faith, why should we not see another Exodus? - seas seamed with paths of salvation; foes defied; chains snapped; captives emancipated; and the Lord worshipped with songs of triumph! Surely there is no limit to the possibilities of a life which has become the aperture or channel through which God can pour Himself forth.

Are you willing to die to your own strength; to forsake your own plans for God's; to seek out and do his will absolutely; to take up the attitude of entire and absolute surrender to his purposes; to feed daily on the promises of God, as a girl on the pledge of her absent lover; to step out in faith, reckoning, without emotion of any kind, on the faithfulness of God, only fully persuaded that He will perform all that He has promised? Then surely through you God will, here or hereafter, work as in the times of old, of which our fathers have told us.

It is certain, as the present age draws to a close, that God has great schemes on hand which must shortly be realized.

According to his invariable method He will have to perform them through the instrumentality and faith of men; the one question is, Are we in such a condition, is our faith of such a nature, that He can work by us to the glory of his holy Name? Let us ponder well the lessons taught in the life and character of Moses, that in due time we too may become vessels meet for the Master's use, and prepared to every good work.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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