

Conviction, Moses And Us

The Servant of God

John W. Ritenbaugh

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To begin this sermon, we are going to go to Revelation 15:3 to pick up and get back into the theme of what we were talking about the last couple of weeks.

Revelation 15:3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying...

You see the title that is given there: Moses, the servant of God. This appears quite frequently in the Bible; so much so that it almost seems as though it were a part of his name. Mankind, I think, in its vanity, likes to have titles attached to its names. People like to be called the king or the queen, such as Elvis Presley, the "king of rock." People like to be known as the prince or the princess, the champion ("I am the greatest"), Mr. or Mrs. or Miss America, Mr. Universe, Miss Universe, Mr. Clutch, Mr. October, Miss Congeniality, Mr. Personality, and we could go on and on with names that you have seen in news reports from various events around the United States.

I do not think that this is entirely wrong as long as somebody else pins the label on you in honest admiration. At the same time, that one does not let this go to one's head because the Bible does say (and I am paraphrasing here), "Let others sing your praises."

In Revelation 15:3, this is the last reference to the man about whom more is written and who wrote more of the Bible than anybody else except for Jesus. It almost seems as though God has here put His final evaluation about him. It is "Moses, the servant of God."

Of course, Moses is in good company. Yesterday, I tried to find with my computer program if there were anybody else who was given a title somewhat similar to that, and I did find several others. Joshua, Paul, James, and David are all called servants. There are about thirty references to

someone being the servant of God. Only two of them are for Joshua; two of them are for David; and one each for Paul and James. All the rest are in reference to Moses. As I said before, it is almost as if it is a part of his name.

There appears a statement in Exodus 40:16 that I want to look at for a minute.

Exodus 40:16 Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

I think that succinctly sums up why this title was given to Moses. God gave a command, and Moses did what God said to do. This particular section from Exodus 25—40 shows why he was given that title. The instructions are contained within that section for building the tabernacle, and Moses faithfully followed these instructions. He faithfully followed the pattern that was given him by God on the mount.

There is a great deal of practical spiritual instruction for you and me here. Last week, we saw the connection made by the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 4, where he connected the term *servant* with *steward* as being essentially one and the same. Paul showed that, though a steward has authority that a servant may not have, he is still nonetheless also a servant. A steward may have authority, but he is still a servant. He is still under the authority of the owner. Of course, the owner in this case is Jesus Christ. Paul and the other ministers were stewards, but they were really no better than servants; they were servants, as well.

Paul says in that section that it is required of a steward that he be faithful. We in turn connected this to I Peter, and we saw that every single one of us is a steward of a gift of God or, I might say, gifts of God. It can be one or the other. God, by His grace, has given us something to enable us to serve Him and to serve the entire Body.

Moses was "the servant of God." However, I do not want any of us to get the idea that this implies that Moses did his job perfectly, because he did not. It does imply very clearly that what Moses did do pleased God mightily. That ought to be encouraging to you and me. God would like for us to do things perfectly; yet we see that even though someone that really did things very well did not do things perfectly, he nonetheless was accepted by God.

I think this is important because sometimes we may have intense feelings of guilt or discouragement because we are not perfectly faithful to God. Yes, we should strive for perfection, but our salvation does not hinge or rest upon our being perfect but on God's grace through Jesus Christ.

What we are seeing is that conviction is a product of the relationship with God. This is the central theme of these three sermons that I have been giving. We have to see that conviction is not something that suddenly inspires a person to stand up, you might say, for God; rather, conviction is the product—it is the fruit—of a relationship. The relationship about which we are concerned is the relationship with God. It is not something that one has in a flash but a quality that builds through the experiences that we have with God, making Him the center of our life. Why are we convicted? It is because we really come to know Him.

Our perception of God's nature, our discernment of right and wrong, our vision of God's purpose—all of those are elements that feed into strengthening convictions that will prove what we are in the day of trial. It is the growth of these elements about which we are concerned, and the growth of those things depends upon the day-to-day faithfulness in the little things. Please get this: Conviction is a product of the relationship with God, and the growth of conviction depends on day-to-day faithfulness in the little things of life.

When we left off last week, Moses had reached age forty, and he had forsaken his rights to anything Egypt had to offer to commit himself to the destiny of the Israelite slaves. Looking at what he did materially, it was an awesome step. I think that you will agree that, in all the history of the Bible, there was nobody who ever gave up so much material power, wealth, position, honor, social status—you name it—as Moses did. He turned his back on all of it, and it is something that we ought to admire.

We go through such a thing when we begin to accept God's offer and God's challenge. If we would rate it on a scale, maybe we give up as much as he did. I do not know. However, if we looked at the sheer dollar value and the status he had and the power that he had, he gave up more than anybody else.

Acts 7:23-25 "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and stuck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand."

The act that he did here was heroic. It was noble. At the same time, it was also foolish. It was heroic and noble in that he could have just given the Israelites money. Is not that what most of us do today when somebody is in trouble? Especially when we find trouble in the United States, what does the United States government do? They throw money at the problem and say, "Be healed. Be relieved. The oppression is over now because we threw money at you."

Moses could have done that because he was in a position where he could have thrown maybe a great deal of money at them from the treasures of Egypt. Maybe, instead of throwing money at them, he could have relieved some of the oppression by using his influence within the governmental structure of Egypt to help those in government understand and take it a little bit easier on the Israelites and not have the taskmasters beat them or require so much of them. No, he did not do that.

What did he do? Moses gave himself to their plight. He gave his life. He gave his all. That was the heroic and the noble aspect of what he did. The foolish part was that there is no mention in Exodus, in Acts, or anywhere else that he sought God as to exactly what he should do or when he should do it. This is very important in terms of conviction. You can see that because Moses did what he did—giving up all that he did, perhaps leaving the possibility of actually taking over the throne of Egypt—he gave up all of his rights to his Egyptian heritage there to cast his lot with slaves.

He did just the opposite of what Joseph did. Joseph went from a slave to the second highest position in Egypt in the blink of an eye, in a matter of hours. Moses went the other direction. He went from the top to the bottom. Nowhere does it say that he sought God.

However, I think that you will have to agree that, for a man to do that, he must have had pretty strong beliefs, pretty strong feelings about what he was doing. Remember two sermons ago, the sermons about preference and convictions ["Are Your Beliefs Preferences or Convictions?"]? Remember that the Supreme Court said that a preference can be such a strong belief that one will actually give his life to doing something? Yet it is not a conviction by their definition; it is only a preference, and preferences are not protected by the Constitution of the United States. Only convictions are protected. Thus, this is important to us.

Did Moses have a preference or a conviction? We know for sure that he had very strong feelings, and he was moved to act on what he did. However, we also know from the lack of information in the Scriptures that he did not seek God.

Go to Psalm 103. This is that beautiful psalm that begins "Bless the LORD, O my soul." Think of this in terms of Moses in Egypt, and the Israelites.

Psalm 103:6-7 The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. [Certainly he did this for Israel.] He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.

God did make His way known to Moses, but when? When did He make it known?

In Psalm 77:20, the psalmist is speaking to God:

Psalm 77:20 You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

God did lead them like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, but it was forty years later when that occurred. When Moses was forty and he killed that Egyptian, undoubtedly he felt a sense of destiny. He knew certain things. They were at least common knowledge to him, which is why he acted the way that he did. He must have understood in some way that he was the one through whom God was going to lead the children of Israel from their slavery.

Others did not look at it the same way, did they? Maybe some Israelites did feel some of that same sense. Moses felt impelled to do something. However, he jumped the gun—by forty years. That is a long time; that is two-thirds of my life. He jumped the gun by forty years.

The leader, the faithful servant, Moses was not yet ready for what God wanted him to do. He was not yet ready to lead the flock. Moses was acting on his own self-energy. We can see some of his personality here. He was a man who was rash, impetuous, headstrong, accustomed to getting his own way. You can see how his environment, sitting, as it were, in the very family of those who controlled Egypt, would have built that. He was a man accustomed to getting his own way.

Later on, though, you know what it said about him in Numbers 12. He would become the meekest of men, unobtrusive, conscious of his own weaknesses, and seemingly seeking guidance from God for every step of the way. We might say that he had the makings of a saint, but not until that strong and self-reliant nature could be broken and he could be shaped and prepared to be used the way God wanted him to be used. It took God forty years to get that man ready, forty years before the convictions would finally be right!

I want you to think of this, because we are always in such a hurry. We are so impatient to get things over with. We want to do it right now. What Moses did was well meant; but it was based almost entirely on his own emotions, his pride, and his feelings of strength. He was very, very premature.

We can look back on this, and we can see that the iniquity of the Amorites was not full yet. Does this ring a bell with you? We are supposed to look around, watch what is going on in the world; and we are supposed to look for this in principle, are we not—that is, for the time of the end? We would like to think that things really are bad, bad, bad in the world. Has there ever been so much violence on the street? Is the iniquity of the Amorites full yet? No, it is not. Not yet. As bad as it is, not yet—or God would have intervened. It is not yet time.

Not only that, but Israel's anguish over their slavery had not yet reached its peak. It was not at the place yet where they were willing to repent, at least as

much as they were able, and give up the gods of Egypt to at least make a pass at giving their loyalty to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was forty years away.

This brings up a point that is very important: God has His timetable, and we have our own. Moses obviously was not on God's timetable yet, but he was going to come to be on God's timetable. I want you to think about this, because this is important to having right convictions. If we are on God's timetable, then our convictions are going to be right.

I want to show you a principle. We are not going to expound this very much, but go back to Genesis 18 to see this principle about God's timetable for things. I just want you to see that God has His, and we have ours. Things really click when we are on the same timetable as He is. God is speaking here, and He says,

Genesis 18:14 "Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you..."

God was working things out in Abraham and Sarah's life, and He had His own schedule for bringing Abraham and Sarah to the development where He could use them the way He wanted them.

Is this unusual? No, it is not unusual at all. We all operate according to time schedules; we all set priorities about things. Why, when you go to school, the teacher has maybe 180 days in which to get across the information, the knowledge, and so forth to the student each year in order for him to be able to advance to the next level, the next grade. Are teachers operating somewhat in the same way as God? Yes, they are.

God says within Himself, "It is going to take Me so long to do this, and I am going to bring Abraham and Sarah through a series of training programs until their faith, until their convictions, until their character, is to the point that I can really use it. Then, at the appointed time, Sarah will have the child."

Abraham and Sarah had to cooperate with this, did they not? They had to yield to God's way. They had to exercise the faith that they had. I think, if they were really tuned into God and God was the center of their life, they

were going to see in this process of time and the exercises through which God was putting them (what we call tests or discipline or chastening) that progress or change was taking place in their lives. It was positive and good.

Genesis 21:1-2 And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

"At the set time." If you want to make an interesting study, you will find this all through the Bible.

Exodus 9:5 Then the LORD appointed a set time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land."

In that case, the wait was short. It was only one day—but "at the set time." Next, let us look at a very common one of which you should be aware.

Psalms 81:3 Blow the trumpet at the time of the new moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day.

If you look at the King James or in a Hebrew interlinear Bible, it says "at the set time." The holy days occur right on schedule. It is God who sets the schedule. It is God who set the holy days at a set time. Is it not interesting that, as these holy days are fulfilled, the literal fulfillments occur right at the set time? The ones with which we are probably most familiar are Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost because they already, in that sense, have been fulfilled. The Holy Spirit came when? It came "at the set time"—right on the day of Pentecost.

Psalms 102:13 You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come.

Daniel 8:17 So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end."

It was not going to unfold until God said. That is, until God gave permission for things to unfold at the time of the end.

Daniel 8:19 And he said, "Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be."

It is appointed. Do you remember what Jesus said when He was asked "When will the end be?" He said, "It is not for you to know the time or seasons." Even He did not know it. It is something that God kept to Himself. He has set it, though; the Scriptures say so.

Mark 1:15 And saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

You will find throughout the Bible *set time, appointed time, in the fullness of time*, and terms of that nature, showing that God is directing the operations of His purpose and the plan that He has for carrying these things out.

We see that Moses was premature. There were things that he did not know. As far as we can see from the Scriptures, he did not seek God. He went out and did what he did forty years too soon. I do not mean to imply that every single little thing in our lives is happening at a set time, but I think the Scriptures do show that God is working within a general framework of time for each one of us. Most of the time, we seem to be on "fast time" compared to God.

I think that God reveals a general principle, though, that we need to take into consideration. Do you not want to work within time schedules? Do you not also set times for the things that you do and want to accomplish? Sure you do. Why? We do this in order to bring harmony to our plans and to avoid confusion.

God is not the author of confusion. I do not think that you can show me anybody who is more "ordered" than God. Thus, He sets times that He is going to have certain things accomplished. Remember this, which can be

very encouraging: We are His workmanship. God is a Creator. Even as teachers in school, He has a time schedule that He is following so that, at the end of certain times, things are accomplished in our lives.

That is why He says—He promises—that He will never give us a trial, a temptation that is beyond our ability to bear, because at the time schedule that He is working out, we would not have reached the place where we could do certain things. However, He is moving us in that direction so that we can. He will always give something to us that is within the framework of our ability to accomplish what He allows us to do. As long as we yield to Him, whatever it is involving His purpose will get done.

I want you to think of this because, if it is not within His purpose, then anything else in life is of very little account. The only things in life that are really important are those things that are important to God's purpose. Everything else, though it may seem important to us, is minor by comparison.

Again, I want you to think of this in relation to Moses. He was not on the same time schedule as God. He did not look upon things as really being under control, but they were—because God runs His universe. It was not out of control. However, Moses, looking at it carnally, said, "It has to be done right now!" and he rushed out and did something that resulted in the death of a man. He was not ready, and God was not ready.

Have you ever done anything by getting out in front of God, in your enthusiasm, in your belief? What usually happens? The same thing that happened to Moses: It fell apart. It failed.

Using the test given by the Supreme Court that I gave you in the first sermon of this series, there is a way to tell that Moses' beliefs at the time were merely preferences. Go back to Exodus 2.

Exodus 2:11-15 Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting,

and he said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?" Then he said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us: Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" So Moses feared and said, "Surely this thing is known!" When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.

How does this compare with what it says about Moses in Hebrews 11:27? It says there that he "feared not the wrath of the king." He did fear here, did he not? Look at this again:

Exodus 2:12 So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one [was looking]...

That is very interesting in light of the Supreme Court's test.

Exodus 2:14 Moses feared and said, "Surely this thing is known!"

Exodus 2:15 Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh...

Suppose Moses believed that what he was doing was God-ordered; that is, that he—Moses—was going to be the one to lead Israel out of Egypt. Remember the Supreme Court test. This is one of their tests. If you have a conviction, it means that you believe that what you are doing or what you are saying is God-ordered. The Supreme Court said: "Who can argue with God?" You cannot argue with God. Therefore, what Moses did here was based upon a preference because he feared. He did not really have the conviction that what he was doing was right. He looked this way and that.

Can you remember what the Supreme Court said? If you are concerned about what other people think about you, you have a preference, not a conviction. If a person really believes that what he is saying and what he is doing is God-ordered, it does not matter what people think. It does not matter what people say.

In order to see this kind of conviction, you have to go all the way to Christ maybe—at least, just at this moment in the sermon. We are going to see, however, that later on Moses had that conviction, even though right now he did not. Now he was afraid of people. He was afraid of what they would think of it. If he really had the conviction, he would not have cared.

Flash back to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Did they care what other people thought about them? No, they did not. They did not look around to see if anybody else was going to stand with them. They stood while everybody else kissed the ground. They did not care what the most powerful man in the world—Nebuchadnezzar—thought of them, because they believed that what they were doing was God-ordered—and who can argue with God? You do not bow down to an idol. They told Nebuchadnezzar, "We do not care if you give us another chance. We are not going to bow down, because our God has said, 'You shall not bow down yourselves to an idol.'"

When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did that, they had convictions. When Moses did what he did in Exodus 2, he had preferences. Moses needed to be prepared for the job that he was going to do.

You might say, "Yeah, but Moses was going to kill a man here. Would that not make a difference?" That is a pretty big step—to kill a man. I want you to think of Moses forty years later. That same Moses, taking orders from God, marched before the Pharaoh and condemned to death tens of thousands of people; and he did it without quailing before him. He did it absolutely without fear, because now Moses was convicted that if God ordered him to tell the Pharaoh all of his firstborn were going to die (or even before, that all of his cattle were going to die), there was nothing Moses could do to change that. He stood by the strength of his conviction that what he was telling Pharaoh was God-ordered. He did not just run up to Pharaoh and say, "Pharaoh, I have this message," and then run out before the soldiers got him.

Do you see the difference between a preference and a conviction? It took God forty years to get that man there! I am going through this to help us to be encouraged. God is not done with us yet. When He gets us to the place where He can use us, whatever the test might be, we will be ready because

God says we are ready. Otherwise, we would not be going through this. He would deflect it aside, because He does not want to give us twelfth grade trials while we are still in the first grade. We have not advanced to that yet.

Moses went out and did what he did when he was forty like a first grader trying to do the work of a twelfth grader. He did not have the right convictions yet. It was noble, but it was misplaced. Forty years later, the difference was in his faith. He now had the right convictions because he knew God; he knew himself; he knew God's purpose; he knew God's plan infinitely better than he did forty years before. The reason he acted as he had before was that he was out in front of God, acting on the basis of his own human strengths, which were considerable.

The Moses that we see forty years later was a far different man. I do not know exactly what happened. I do not know the steps, the chastening, the disciplines, the schooling, or whatever it was. I do not know what God did to Moses out there while he was shepherding those sheep. Whatever it was, God gradually changed him into a useful servant—mostly by taking the pride out of him.

Now look at Exodus 3:10. This is right after that episode with the burning bush. God spoke to Moses, told him that he was standing on holy ground and to take his shoes off, which Moses dutifully did. Now Moses is going to receive his commission:

Exodus 3:10 "Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

"Come now, therefore, and I will send you..." The time had come. Before, Moses thought he was ready, and he impetuously promoted himself to do the job. "Here God, I will do it." He did it without waiting for God. Now, however,

Exodus 3:11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Look at the difference. Before he promoted himself. Now he says, "God, who am I?" What a change! What a change has taken place in this man's thinking! He not only hesitates about going, but we are going to see that he almost seems petrified about the prospects of going.

This is a true principle of those who have been humbled in their field of expertise. When we are young, we foolishly think, in our vanity, that our strength is going to be able to carry us sailing through any problem. We are deceived by our own ignorance. "The pride of a young man is his strength." We foolishly, like Moses, get ourselves into things because we rush in where angels fear to tread. We think that our strength will somehow carry the day. When we really come to understand, though—usually after years of experience—we realize how little we know, and that there is so much more already that we do not know.

This is clearly seen by people who are truly humbled by people in, let us say, areas of science. They think that they know something, let us say, when they are twenty-five. They have graduated from high school. They have graduated from college. Maybe now they have a master's degree, and they are working on a doctor's degree, and they are learning a great deal. However, after maybe twenty years of experience of dealing in the field of chemistry or biology, the way they look at themselves then is that now they realize there is a great deal more that they do not know than what they already know from the accumulation of schooling and experience. They begin to see God's creation and the Mind that created all these things in a much different light.

That is what has happened to Moses. In those forty years, that impetuous spirit of his has been dissolved away; and now he is seeing the power of Egypt in its true light. "Oh, boy! I do not want to do that! Send somebody else. I mean, that's dangerous, God." You know that Moses did not actually say these things, but that was behind his thinking. "That's dangerous. A guy could get killed doing those things. Even if I do not get killed, I might get thrown in prison." Or, "God, I am going to be made to look like a fool before those people."

Is this not what encumbers and constrains us, as well? We worry, and we have fears that we are going to look foolish before friends and relatives if we

obey God—whether it is keeping the Sabbath, whether it is tithing. How many of your relatives have castigated you because of tithing? "Here you are having a tough time making your income stretch, and yet you are tithing to that church." It seems awfully dumb to them, but what is our feeling in it? Are we fearful of what they will think about our doing those kinds of things?

You see, now Moses more fully recognized his weaknesses as compared to Egypt; and he is quailing at the thought. God has to now overcome Moses' resistance. What a change! Moses was going to do it on his own before; now God has to overcome his resistance. All of these things are good for the right kind of conviction. By that, I mean all the things through which God put Moses in testing these things so that the faith becomes right. We are going to follow this through, at least just a little bit. First of all, in verse 12, God assures Moses that He will be with him:

Exodus 3:12 So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

However, it was not enough. Moses came back with another question. "What is Your name? What do I tell them?" You know, God has to have a name.

Exodus 3:14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM."

He is saying, in effect, "I am the unchangeable God who inhabits eternity."

Exodus 3:16-17 "Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, "The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, "I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt; and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites."

Then God assures Moses,

Exodus 3:18 "Then they will heed your voice."

Moses demurred again. It was not enough.

Exodus 4:1 Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

God gives him three signs that he can use to assure the Israelites, to convince the Israelites, but we find that Moses demurred again.

Exodus 4:10 Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."

God came right back, and He exhorted Moses by assuring him that He would speak through him. I am going through this because I want you to see that what we have encapsulated here is the way God works with us to produce the conviction that is needed in our lives, and that He indeed really is with us. We have all kinds of fears. We have all kinds of worries. We have all kinds of reasons. We have all kinds of justifications for why we "cannot" do something.

God will be just as patient with you and me as He was with Moses. However, know this from the experience that we have here written of Moses: There reaches a time when God says "Enough," and shoves you right into the middle of it so that you learn from experience. That is what He had to do with Moses, who demurred again:

Exodus 4:13-14 But he said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send." So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: "Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart."

This time God severely chastened him; but at the same time, He provided Moses with Aaron. God must have known that Moses was going to react this way, because He had already put it into Aaron's mind to be on his way. God

knows us well. He knows us inside and out. He knows our heart; He knows our inclinations; He knows our leanings; He knows our weaknesses He knows our strengths. You see how He is supplying the need all along the way so that Moses, His servant, can do the job. Do you think He will deal any differently with you? No, He will not deal any differently. He will always supply what we need.

What a change had come over Moses in those forty years! The hesitant and restrained Moses was a far better man for God's purpose than the impetuous one at the age of forty. However, there was still one more test for Moses before he got back to Egypt, on his way back with Zipporah and his children.

Exodus 4:23-25 "So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him so, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn." And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the LORD met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!"

Most commentators feel that what happened here was a life-threatening illness by which God was going to kill, to slay. It came to Moses, undoubtedly in his prayer or meditation, that the problem was that he was resisting God in the circumcision of his son. There is an interesting little sidelight here, because it seems from the information that is given that the reason the son had not been circumcised is that Moses conceded to Zipporah that the son would not be circumcised. What God was teaching Moses was that, as the head of the house, he was responsible to see that God's rules, God's orders, God's policies, God's direction was followed.

Once he passed that test, Moses had another conviction. He knew that Zipporah could not go with him. Therefore, he sent her back, and he went on alone. At least, his life was spared because Moses followed through in what he should have done.

When Moses got to Egypt, we first see a meeting with Israel and then Pharaoh in the presence of Aaron, but with Aaron doing the talking and the

acting. Though their success seems to go up and down, and Moses gets discouraged from time to time, you see that he does not quail before Pharaoh, either.

Exodus 5:22 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me?"

Now when he meets resistance, Moses turns to God. He did not do that before; he just went out and did things on his own strength. Then, after seeking God, he carries through with the action that is needed. We begin to see a gradual change in the wording of the narrative. Look at the first plague:

Exodus 7:19 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt.'"

Exodus 8:5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses [in the second plague], "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your rod over the streams.'"

Exodus 8:16 So the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land.'"

That is the last time that occurs. From that time on, Moses does everything. Is he growing? Yes, he is. Has the conviction come that God indeed really is with him? Has God overcome Moses' feeling of inadequacy? His feeling about "God, are you really with me? God, will you give me the strength? God, will you protect me? God, will you give me the words to say?"

Now we see a different Moses. He really believes. He is convicted that God is with him. There is no fear. There is no quailing. He does not care that he is not eloquent; it does not matter because the power is not in the words. The power is in the God who is working through him. Moses is absolutely convinced that what he is doing is God-ordered. Moses now feels that he is going to be immortal as long as God wants him to be immortal. That is, that nothing can touch him until God says it. Then, if God says it, it is God's will; and Moses dies.

It is no wonder that he is called "the servant of God." Few people have ever reached that height. Can you imagine going and facing down the strongest power on earth with just a staff in your hand? That is pretty impressive stuff. The Moses of forty years before had strong beliefs, but he did not go out from the Lord. This reminds me of a complaint that God made back in the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 23:21-22 "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings."

When Moses did it on his own strength forty years before, nothing happened. He ran to do the work of the Lord, but God was not in it. Do you see the point that God is making? No matter how sincere a person is, if he is not tuned into the will of God, even though he does a fairly great work and is noble and pure of heart, the success comes from God because God is in it—not because of the efforts of the man. The result then was a sincere effort but futile. What Moses did created a stir, but it was ineffective because God was not in it. God was not in it because it was not His will. It was not His will until forty years later.

What happened to Moses in the intervening years was that he was truly humbled and converted. He had, as we would say today, given himself to God to such an extent that he was almost afraid to move; and God had to bring him back a way in order to restore some of his initiative. However, now that initiative was going to be used in harmony with a strong relationship with God. Since Moses truly had the fear of God in the right way, he took God into account in every action. That is what the fear of God does to a person. It makes a person take God into account in everything that he does.

Moses grew to know God so well that he could interpret God's mind as few men ever had. There are a lot of people with strong beliefs, but are they right? Are they in harmony with God's will? A belief must not only be strong, but it must also be right. The way it is proved right is in the processes

of living. Those actions will produce fruit. That is why Jesus said, "By their fruits you shall know them." The fruits of a person's life will show what a person believes and will produce in the person living them a resolution that what he is doing is God-ordered and he dare not turn aside or change it. Is not that what the Supreme Court is looking for? Are you living what you believe?

Colossians 3:1-2 If then you were raised with Christ [baptized—went into a burial in the waters of baptism and then were raised out of that water—then the command is:], seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.

Moses did not do that at age forty. He was not in harmony with God. So his energy expended proved to be futile.

Colossians 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

That Moses did, forty years later. He went out from the Lord. He came back and consulted with the Lord. He got God's wisdom, and then he knew that he was in harmony with what God wanted him to do, and he was convicted.

Colossians 3:9-10 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge [Get this:] according to the image of Him who created him.

I have said it before, and I will keep on saying it because we need to be reminded of it over and over: We will conform to our image of God. Whatever our image of God is, we will make effort—expend energy—to conform to it. We had better be sure that it is the right image! That conforming will take place just as surely as a child born into a human family will conform to the image of that family and pick up their characteristics, whether they want to or not. You know that is a true principle. That is the principle that God is talking about here, only it is in a spiritual vein. Since

the Christian is to be renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, he cannot be renewed in knowledge unless he is conforming to the right image.

What Moses did when he was forty amounted to this: He knew about God, but he did not know God. He had head knowledge of God. He had head knowledge of the prophecy that was made to Abraham. He had head knowledge to know that the four hundred years were pretty close to being up. He had head knowledge to know that, counting Levi, he was the fourth generation that had been in Egypt.

He had head knowledge, but he did not know God. Therefore, he jumped the gun. He was excited and zealous, but he was way off base as far as God's plan was concerned. However, in the intervening forty years, he came to know God. As he did, his beliefs about God changed; and thus his convictions changed as well. They were becoming more in harmony with the true knowledge of God.

I think you ought to be able to see where I am headed here. Strong belief must be present, but it also must be *right*, or it is out of sync with God. Those beliefs will not produce the right fruit because the way of life will not correspond with the true image of God. In other words, if our knowledge of God is not correct, it will not produce the right fruit because it does not conform to the true image of God.

At forty years of age, Moses' image of God was wrong. In his excitement and in his zeal, he went out, but he did not produce the right fruit. He could not, because his image of God was wrong. Forty years later his image of God was much more correct, much clearer. Did it produce the right fruit? Yes, it did. Israel was released from their slavery because Moses was in harmony with God's will. The image of God was right, and he was conforming to it. If the image is wrong, then the way of life will not be consistent with God. Just like Moses, we need time for this process of coming to know God to take place.

In II Corinthians 4, I want verses 16-18; but we will get to that in a minute. This context has its roots way back in chapter 3. We will just read verse 18.

II Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory [That is, the glory of man to the glory of God. A transformation is taking place in the sons of God], just as by [Here comes the means:] the spirit of the Lord.

At the beginning of chapter 4, Paul shows his humility in verse 7 where he says:

II Corinthians 4:7 We have this treasure...

What treasure? The treasure is the knowledge of the image of God. The treasure is the knowledge of the *true* image of God.

II Corinthians 4:7 We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

Please connect this to Moses and his experience. When he went out on his own power, it did not produce anything right. When he went out from the Lord, it produced the Exodus. The fruit was right because now Moses had the right image of God in his mind, and he was conforming to it. God's will was Moses' will. No wonder he was faithful!

Now, apply this to yourself:

II Corinthians 4:8-10 We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

Was the life of God manifested in what Moses was doing? You had better believe it was!

All of us have similar experiences and go through difficult trials. That is what he is talking about there—being hard pressed, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair. Everybody with whom God is working is

going to be going through those things. Like Moses, we see problems that need to be resolved. He knew that Israel had to be freed, and he tried to resolve it.

We find ourselves, then, in afflictions, in persecution, in perplexity. At times, we do not understand. Like Moses, we find ourselves in solitude, alone—even in a family.

II Corinthians 4:13 Since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak.

Paul shows his faith and encourages them to see that God is faithful. He will carry through in bringing us to His image.

II Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. [Moses saw that which was invisible. Remember Hebrews 11.] For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

We see in those three verses that the faith concept continues. For us, and for this sermon, the important thing here is the phrase *even though the outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day*. Do you know what Paul is describing here? He is describing the process of dying and renewing. The outer man—the shell, the body—is decaying. What is causing the decay? In the context, it is the trials of life—the perplexities, the afflictions, the persecutions, the solitude.

The outer man is being decayed through the trials of life, while the inner man is being strengthened through the same trials. The energy of the body is spent in doing God's will, and it is being transformed into the energy of the spirit. Moses was so energized that it says at the age of 120 his natural forces were not abated.

You are aware of this principle because transformations of energy are taking place all around you every day. Energy from the sun strikes the earth; and plants transform that energy into leaves, into flowers, and then into fruit. The energy of a river can be transformed into electricity, which in turn is transformed into light and heat—one form of energy turned into another.

Paul is saying here that if we yield to God, through it expends our physical energy, it will be transformed into what? Christ's likeness. You will become like Christ. The key is to expend your energy in doing the will of God. Otherwise, the right fruit will not be produced. Even though you have to sacrifice yourself in doing it—you give up your time; you give up your energy; you give up your resources—what it is going to produce is spiritual energy. The physical energy will be transformed into the beauty and power of the spirit until death, and then the resurrection releases the full power of the spirit. All along the way, the fruit of that process is going to be true conviction because you know God.

Brethren, we have this treasure in earthen vessels. If we submit to God's discipline—expending ourselves and yielding to God in the little things day by day—we will see our conviction grow. Then, if people call us into account, we will not be worried because we know; and we know that we know, because we have lived it. That is the kind of faith God wants us to have.