



Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text
Exodus 2:11-22

Topic
Moses gets off to a bad start
as Israel's deliverer when he kills an Egyptian

Title
"Kill & Grace"

New York lawyer Oliver Wendell Douglas longed for a simpler way of life. So he bought a farm, sight unseen, and moved there to live off the land. Lisa, his socialite wife, never quite got the hang of country living. Hers was a case of, "You can take the girl out of the city, but you can't take the city out of the girl."

If you think that's a true story, you're either young, or unfamiliar with Nick at Nite TV. It's the plot for the comedy, *Green Acres*, starring Eva Gabor as the pampered city-girl.

Depending on the point you're trying to make, you can substitute just about anything for "city" in the idiom I used:

- If you're going for a compliment, you can substitute with the name of a state, e.g., "You can take the girl out of Texas, but you can't take Texas out of the girl."
- If you're going for an insult, you can substitute places like trailer-park, hood, ghetto... or Riverdale.

I was thinking about Moses in that regard. A Hebrew by birth, from at least the age of three he was raised as an Egyptian prince. As to his Hebrew heritage, we could say, "You can take the boy away from the Hebrews, but you can't take the Hebrew out of the boy."

When you get to Moses as an Egyptian, you have to adjust the idiom to something like this: "You take the man out of Egypt, in order to take Egypt out of the man."

- Moses the *prince* could never deliver the Hebrews. He must become Moses the *pastor*.
- God did not need a *soldier*; He needed a *shepherd*.

Commentators see Egypt as a type of the supernatural world system governed by Satan, the god of this world. When you get saved, you are delivered out of Egypt. But because we retain an unredeemed body of flesh, evil forces exert their pressure upon us to compromise with the world.

We are out of Egypt; but is Egypt out of us?

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 God Gets You Out Of Egypt And Saves You Effectually, and #2 God Gets Egypt Out Of You So You Serve Him Effectively.

#1 God Gets You Out Of Egypt And Saves You Effectually

(v11-15)

In the Book of Job, in the first two chapters, you are given a rare glimpse behind the scenes. Job was unaware that in Heaven God had called a meeting of angels. As they gave an account to God of their activities on earth, one of them, Satan, accused Job of serving God only because he had been abundantly blessed.

You know the story: Satan procured permission from God to trouble Job up to a set point, to see if Job's faith would fail. It did not.

In Egypt at the time of Moses, as always, there was stuff going on behind the scenes, in Heaven and in the heavenlies.

Pharaoh was revered as a god among the many gods of Egypt. The man who would deliver the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt wasn't going against a *government*; he was confronting *gods*.

Swords were of no use to the deliverer... But a shepherd's staff would do nicely. Thus we see how the prince-turned-pastor would get out of Egypt and find his staff.

Exo 2:11 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.

When we last saw Moses, Pharaoh's daughter had saved him from the Nile River and adopted him as her own son. He grew-up in her house.

Other than that, Exodus is pretty light on the details. Good thing we have Stephen's speech in chapter seven of the Book of Acts to fill-in some things.

In trouble for preaching the Gospel, Stephen rehearses the history of the Jews to the religious leaders seeking to accuse and stone him.

He says of Moses, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds, [and] when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel." (7:22-23).

Forty years is a long time to walk like an Egyptian. I think it's safe to assume he had the very finest education on the planet at that time. The Egyptians were no dummies. They contributed more than the Mummy. According to one source,

The many achievements of the ancient Egyptians include the quarrying, surveying and construction techniques that supported the building of monumental pyramids, temples, and obelisks; a system of mathematics, a practical and effective system of medicine, irrigation systems and agricultural production techniques, the first known planked boats, glass technology, and new forms of literature.

Moses was "mighty in words and deeds." There is speculation among scholars that he may have been groomed to be the next Pharaoh; but speculation is all that it is. Even without the throne, he was a seriously important citizen of an incredibly advanced, powerful civilization.

As an aside, just food for thought, Moses must have participated, at some level, in the religious rituals of Egypt and its gods. He certainly would have been catechized as a boy into the worship of Egypt.

Excuse the pun, but Moses was at the peak of the pyramid - one of just a few super-privileged individuals. When we read, "it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel," the gap is as wide as it can be between his lifestyle and his heritage.

That phrase, "it came into his heart," is the inspired commentary of Stephen in the Book of Acts. It describes a stirring of his heart by God the Holy Spirit. We can assume that Moses had received some kind of word from God. We read of him in Hebrews 11:24, "by faith, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

Where did his "faith" come from? According to Romans 10:17, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

It's an example of God speaking - through creation, or some other way - in order to give everyone (in this case Moses) an opportunity to believe.

Maybe Moses learned about the God of Abraham from his mom, who was paid to nurse him until he was weaned.

However it happened, by His grace, God stirred the heart of Moses, and he responded by faith. We would say he was saved. He believed God, and God counted it to him as righteousness.

His belief was costly. We further read about Moses in the New Testament Book of Hebrews:

Heb 11:25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,
Heb 11:26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

Moses “chose” affliction and reproach because he now looked beyond Egypt to the “reward,” which is eternal life in Heaven.

Stephen said, “When Moses was grown... he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren... “And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian” (v24). Then in Exodus we read,

Exo 2:12 So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

This was murder; a capital crime. Moses tried unsuccessfully to do it in secret; he hid the body; and the next day one of the Hebrews will make an accusation against Moses that sets him on the run. Pharaoh, when he heard about it, sought to kill Moses.

Moses was off to a poor start. How do you come back from murder to be God’s deliverer? Truth be told, we’re all murderers... and adulterers... and covetous. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There is no one righteous.

We need saving; and that doesn't just mean the one-time receiving of Jesus as our Savior. Stephen Cook explains salvation this way:

Regarding salvation, the Bible teaches that it is a process. Once a person [believes God], he is saved from the *penalty* of sin (Romans 8:1; Ephesians 2:5, 8), the *power* of sin (Romans 6:11-14), and will ultimately be saved from the *presence* of sin when God takes him to heaven and gives him a new body like the body of Jesus (Philippians 3:20-21).

This truth is related to the three phases of salvation: *justification*, *sanctification*, and *glorification*.

1. *Justification* is the instantaneous act of God whereby He forgives the sinner of all sins - past, present and future - and declares him perfectly righteous in His sight.
2. *Sanctification* is the process whereby the believer moves from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity over time as he learns God's Word and makes good choices to live according to God's will (Ephesians 4:11-16; Second Thessalonians 2:13; Second Timothy 3:14-17; First Peter 2:2; Second Peter 3:18).
3. *Glorification* is the final phase of the believer's salvation experience and occurs when he leaves this world, either by death or by rapture, and enters into the presence of God in Heaven (Romans 8:17-18).

I outlined this first set of verses by saying "God Gets You Out Of Egypt And Saves You Effectually." What I mean is that, after *you are justified*, you are then predestined to become like Jesus Christ. God is constantly at work to *sanctify* you; He will ultimately *glorify* you. He Who began a good work in you - salvation - will be faithful to complete it.

Exo 2:13 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?"

Exo 2:14 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!"

Stephen's commentary on this is, again, insightful: "For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand" (25).

Moses thought he was ready to deliver his people. "By his hand" is the key phrase. Moses' had powerful hands. Politically, socially, materially, his hands got things done. It seems he killed the Egyptian taskmaster with his bare hands. Powerful.

Nevertheless, it would be by God's hand, *not* Moses' hands, that the Hebrews would be delivered.

Truth be told, can you think of a better deliverer for the Hebrews than Moses? He seemed uniquely qualified - the one man among all the Hebrews fit for the task. I'd have rallied behind him.

It would have been an epic fail. Moses was going to go up against gods, represented by things like water, frogs, and lice. He was going to go up against Pharaoh, who thought himself a god.

Swords were no good; but we'll see that a shepherd's staff was perfect.

It was perfect, that is, if wielded by a shepherd. We can be certain Moses, in all his learning, had no experience as a shepherd. He'd gain it, and use it not just to deliver the Hebrews, but to lead them in the wilderness.

God looked upon him and knew he was not at all ready. God needed to get Moses out of Egypt, in order to get Egypt out of him.

Moses killing the Egyptian - that's on him, not God. I'll go out on a limb and say it wasn't the way God wanted to get Moses out of Egypt. It would have been better for the Spirit to lead Moses out - like He did with John the Baptist being led out into the wilderness; or Jesus.

Moses' heart had been stirred, but he had a lot to unlearn.

A great deal of the time spent on our sanctification is God getting Egypt out of us. We have a lot to unlearn. We almost always prefer the weapons of this world to the spiritual weapons at our disposal.

Our serving God using carnal things, with a fleshly attitude, will not be effectual. It will not destroy enemy strongholds, or open spiritually blinded eyes to the forgiveness of sin.

We need a Jesus-style ministry. He came to serve, not be served. Jesus came to die, that we might live; but we live by taking up our Cross, dying to self, surrendered to Him.

1Co 1:27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

1Co 1:28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

1Co 1:29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

The man, or woman, God uses must be willing to look “foolish”; to be perceived as “weak”; to be considered “base”; to feel “despised.” I doubt any of those qualities are on resume builders.

Exo 2:15 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.

Moses typifies what we are taught, by the world, to strive for. Education... Power... Security... Achievement... Promotion... Health. It ought to dawn on us that the things the world values cannot be the things that will overcome the world.

Sanctification is becoming less like 40year-old Moses and more like him at 80 when he returns to overcome Egypt.

Older ‘you’ should be headed that same direction.

#2 God Gets Egypt Out Of You So You Serve Him Effectively

(v16-22)

Dirty Jobs is a fun show to watch, isn't it? Mike Rowe performs disgusting, messy, or strange jobs alongside those who must do them every day.

If he were doing a show in Egypt, one of the dirtiest jobs, at least to their way of thinking, was tending livestock.

In Genesis, when Joseph is prepping his father and brothers to meet the former Pharaoh, he said,

Gen 46:33 So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?'

Gen 46:34 that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination to the Egyptians."

Typical of God, He was going to confront and defeat Pharaoh with someone and something that the Egyptians considered abominable. Moses' shepherd-school was about to begin, starting with the incident by the well.

Exo 2:16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

Midian was a son of Abraham's by his second wife, Keturah. Thus the Midianites had the knowledge of the God of Abraham. So when you read, "the priest of Midian," it's more likely this family believed in God than in pagan gods.

Exo 2:17 Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

Chivalry was dead, it seemed, in Midian. The male shepherds, instead of lending a hand, made the ladies wait.

Moses wasn't raised that way. Not everything in your upbringing is bad. There are things that can be sanctified as you offer yourself to God.

We see that Moses had a bent towards helping the disadvantaged, e.g., slaves and women. We ought to have compassion on all those who are less advantaged than us. We ought to seek the Lord on when and how to come to their aid. We live in the land of opportunity, true; maybe it's you that is going to give someone less fortunate their opportunity.

Exo 2:18 When they came to Reuel their father, he said, "How *is it that* you have come so soon today?"

Reuel means something like, *friend of God*, so, again, I emphasize these were believers. Reuel is also called Jethro in the Bible. Not a problem; a lot of Bible characters had more than one name.

Being hassled by the other shepherds was a regular part of their day. Returning early was odd; and I'm guessing they were more than a little giddy.

Exo 2:19 And they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock."

That's something that didn't happen everyday. If you're like me, you prefer a routine. If so, look for things that interrupt your regular routine. They may be divine appointments at the well of the Holy Spirit.

Exo 2:20 So he said to his daughters, "And where *is* he? Why *is it that* you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."

First, dad was embarrassed by their lack of hospitality. Even if he had not helped them, in that nomadic culture, they ought to have invited him to at least come to meet dad. Visitors in the desert were rare.

Secondly, dad was on the hunt for husbands. Seriously - with seven daughters, living in the desert, with a bunch of brutish shepherds as potential son-in-laws... This Egyptian needed to be snagged as quickly as possible.

Exo 2:21 Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses.

How much time elapsed, I can't tell. The arranged marriage was perfectly normal.

What are the odds that Moses would find a believing family, with a believing wife? If you're in the marriage-market, it can seem like a vast desert, filled with brutes - both men and women.

Stay seated by the well until a believer comes along. Trust in God's counsel to not be unequally yoked with a nonbeliever.

Exo 2:22 And she bore *him* a son. He called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

Gershom means *stranger*. Every time Moses looked at him, his firstborn reminded him of his fugitive status.

Bible parents are really out there in naming their kids. Rachel, in her dying moments, names her child Ben-oni, *the son of my sorrow*. Jacob mercifully renames him Benjamin, *son of the right hand*.

Parents, give careful thought, please, to names. Especially what nicknames are going to be suggested by the name. That's all I'm gonna say.

Moses thus embarked upon a second career. He'd gone from prince to pastor. He would learn the ways of a shepherd, and the use of the staff.

You and I know what's coming; confrontation with Pharaoh. Staff beats sword in that one.

We also know what's coming after that; Moses leading the Hebrews - like a shepherd - on the eleven day journey to the Promised Land.

We know, sadly, what's coming after that; Moses must lead a disobedient nation in the wilderness for forty-years.

No prince of Egypt could accomplish those tasks; only a pastor, a shepherd, of God could be inadequate enough to be adequate for God to use.

God needed a pastor, but one who first rejected being a prince. If God isn't using you, maybe you haven't rejected things that you believe make you strong and ready.

The apostle Paul once said of himself, "If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:4-6).

Paul had it going, as far as the world of Judaism was concerned. But he came to the following conclusion:

Php 3:7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

Php 3:8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Did God ever use things in Paul's background? Sure. But it seems He only used them after Paul submitted to being mistreated for the sake of Jesus.

For example, we know that when the authorities in Philippi came to release Paul from jail, he invoked his Roman citizenship. They had illegally incarcerated him. Paul put fear into them - probably so they would leave the little group of believers there alone.

Paul could have mentioned his citizenship the day before. He did not, and instead was put in stocks, in a cell. It's the time he and Silas were singing praise songs when, at midnight, God sent an earthquake freeing the prisoners. The jailor, knowing his life was forfeit, would have committed suicide but for Paul's intervention. Not only did he live, but he and his family came to know the Lord.

Only after all that did Paul invoke his rights.

It tells me that we sometimes invoke our rights too soon. We refuse to suffer and, therefore, God is not able to use our surrender, our weakness, to reach others for Jesus.

That problem you are having at work... Maybe you should file a grievance, or apply for another position.

Or maybe you should patiently endure it, as a Christian, and see what God can accomplish through you.

As a young believer I was exposed to the music ministry of Keith Green. His song, and album, *So You Wanna Go Back to Egypt*, is a classic.

*So you wanna go back to Egypt
Where it's warm and secure
Are sorry you bought the one way ticket
When you thought you were sure?*

*You wanted to live in the land of promise
But now it's getting so hard
Are you sorry you're out here in the desert
Instead of your own back yard?*

The rest of your life, God is going to be working to get Egypt out of you - this desire to compromise with, and even return to, the world He has delivered you from.

You can hold-on to the world and think you're a prince. Or you can let go of the world and be used as a pastor - to shepherd others into the knowledge of salvation and eternal life.