

The Emptying of Moses

by E.A. Johnston

The school of Christ is a place of transformation where God empties us of ourselves and fills us with Himself, ultimately leading to a humble heart and a willing spirit.

Duration: 19:28

Scripture: Exodus 3:2

Topics: "Moses"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the life of Moses and how God took him through a difficult and trying time to make him more useful for His purpose. The speaker emphasizes the importance of being emptied of self and being brought to the end of oneself in order to go deeper with God and be more effectively used by Him. The sermon highlights the different graduation points of biblical figures like Jacob, Moses, Paul, and Peter, showing that each person goes through a unique journey but with the same instructor, God Himself. The speaker encourages listeners to trust in God's ways, even when they cannot understand His purpose, and to rest in Him, knowing that He works in them for His good pleasure.

Transcript

When I was writing the biography of J. Sidlow Baxter, there was a comment by Dr. Baxter which has always stuck with me. He said, how can a man, full of himself, preach to Christ who emptied himself? It is an interesting study to see how God prepares a man to serve him, how God will place a man in the school of Christ to prepare that man for usefulness to God. F.J. Hegel, the great Christian writer, had this to say about Moses when Moses was in the desert of Midian.

For forty years, on the lonely slopes of Midian, the fiery Moses is schooled. There were graves, so to speak, scattered all over the mountainside where hope after hope was buried until at last self went down in utter annihilation. And that's true friends.

When God gets ready to use you, he will place you in his school, the school of Christ, and he will empty you of you so you can be filled with him. Do you believe that? Yes, it's true. Alan Redpath once said, God will take an impossible man and smash him so he can do the impossible through that man.

I believe that friends, because I was an impossible man and God had to smash me before he could use me, the school of Christ is necessary training and anyone desirous of usefulness to God will have to go to the school of Christ and be emptied. I repeat, the school of Christ will be your training ground. It is here

that the master teacher employs his greatest resources to bend, strip, purge, break, smash, mold, and reshape us into the image of his likeness.

The coursework is comprised of the anvil of affliction, the furnace of purging, the pruning knife of stripping, the dark tunnel of trial and endurance, each for the testing, proving, and trying of our faith and the building of our character. The school of Christ differs from all other academic institutions by the following attributes. The curriculum differs from pupil to pupil according to the individual needs of the student.

The length of study also varies as to the actual time of graduation. For some students are slower learners and require more instruction and application. The examinations differ as well as each student is tested on what they've learned through laborious study.

The place of graduation is varied as the students themselves. We see this from the biblical record. Jacob graduated at the place called Jabbok.

Moses graduated at the bush in Midian. Paul graduated while fasting in the Arabian desert. Peter graduated after breakfast by the sea.

But there is one common denominator with each. Each student has the same instructor. He is the master teacher, the wise professor, who knows each pupil better than they know themselves, and it is he who determines our personal course of study with our best interest at heart.

Students in this school can expect the following courses of study as applied to required instruction. One can expect emptying, reducing, pruning, and purging. One will become greatly familiar with reproach and rejection, brokenness and sorrow.

Suffering will be your major. Humiliation will be your minor. No electives will be offered.

Did I fail to mention there are iron bars on the classroom windows and steel bolts on the doors, and no student can exit until they graduate from the school of Christ. The degree conferred to all graduates is not a PhD, but a CHD. The Doctor of Christ degree certifies that the student has experienced change.

Well, our subject today, friends, will be the life of Moses as seen in his desert encounter with the living God at the burning bush. Moses spent the first 40 years of his life trained in the best universities in the world. Egypt schooled Moses in all the finer things in life as he was privileged to grow up in the household of Pharaoh.

Stephen the Martyr said of Moses, Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds. You see, friends, the first 40 years of Moses' life was impacting to him in many ways. He became a statesman in Egypt, a man mighty in words and deeds.

He was a very self-reliant man. Yes, Moses, while he was in Egypt, was a very self-reliant man. And God will never use a self-reliant man.

If God chooses to use a man who is self-reliant, then God will first have to empty that man of his self-reliance, empty him of self altogether. He will be placed into that school of Christ for emptying. As F.J. Hegel said of Moses, on the slopes of Midian, the fiery Moses is schooled.

But first, God had to get Moses out of Egypt and into the desert before Moses could become God's chosen vessel to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt. Well, how did God accomplish this? God just let

Moses be Moses. We see this in Exodus chapter 2, beginning in verse 11.

And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren and looked on their burdens. And he spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way.

And when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together. And he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killest the Egyptian? And Moses feared and said, Surely this thing is known.

Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian. You see, friends, all God had to do to get Moses out of Egypt was to let Moses alone and allow Moses to behave like Moses.

Moses was a self-reliant man, full of himself. And when he saw an injustice being done to the Hebrew, he became both judge and jury and executioner, all wrapped up in one. That's a self-reliant man.

He took matters into his own hands because he believed his way was the best way, his way over God's way. And all God has to do to get you out of your Egypt and into your own personal Midian desert experience is to leave you alone and allow you to behave like yourself. And you will eventually hang yourself like Moses did.

Your wicked heart and your self-will is all God needs to move you to the place he needs you to be. And that is in the school of Christ. God will put you into that school as a means of getting you out of your current trouble and trial.

This is what God did to Moses. And it worked. Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian.

You see, friends, Moses spent the first 40 years of his life in Egypt, trained in the ways of Egypt. And it took God 40 years to transform Moses into the man God needed. It took 40 years for God to use me.

I can relate to Moses. Sometimes God can do his work quicker in a person. But for me and Moses, it took 40 years.

It took 40 years for God to get Egypt and the world out of Moses. On the lonely slopes of Midian, Hegel said, were graves scattered all over the mountainside where hope after hope was buried until at last self went down in utter annihilation. And God will do that to you, friend, if he needs to.

God will place you in a prison, a circumstance, a trial so impossible that you will die over and over and over again until there are graves, so to speak, where your old self-life lies buried deep beneath the sand. God will do this to anyone he plans on using in a remarkable way. You can count on that, friends.

The school of Christ is a school whereby change is affected. When Jesus was here in his earthly ministry, wherever he went into various villages and towns, those who came in contact with him experienced change. Jesus is in the business of transforming lives, transforming you into his likeness.

Is that not what the text from 2 Corinthians 3 states? But we all with open face beholden as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. This is what God did to Moses in Midian, those 40 years of emptying. The emptying of Moses is an interesting study and one in which we can all learn from.

You see, friends, God had to get Moses to the place of going from being a self-reliant man to a God-reliant man. All his props had to be knocked out from underneath him. Everything dear to Moses had to be stripped away from him.

His comfortable home in the palace of Pharaoh, his comfortable life of ease and respectability all taken from him to where he is a man in the desert of affliction until he comes to the end of himself. Moses becomes a shepherd of the sheep, mighty Moses of the household of Pharaoh who once walked with the movers and shakers of Egypt now walks with a herd of smelly dumb sheep. There are few dumber animals than sheep.

One jumps into a ditch and two or three will follow it. Moses goes from sitting in the palace with wise men, powerful men like himself to tend and dumb smelly sheep until he smells just like them. He is brought to the end of himself.

Listen, friend, have you ever been there? Has God ever snatched you out of your comfort zone and placed you in a terrible trial or affliction which so buried you, so emptied you that you were emptied of self? If you want to go deeper with God and be more mightily used by God, this will have to happen to you. You will have your Jabbok. You will have your desert experience.

You will have your personal Midian. Some of you already know of which I speak. So this painful process whereby the divine pruning knife is applied to our lives is one applied in the school of Christ.

And that is how God transforms us to become the man or woman he can use. God had to allow Moses to behave like Moses so he could be forced out of his life as he knew it and placed into the school of Christ for a season. He was placed in the refiner's fire to purge out all impurities so the gold would shine forth with a pure brilliance reflecting the Almighty.

We see this as it occurs from the book of Exodus in chapter 3. Allow me to read you the following passage. Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the backside of the desert and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, here am I. Notice that the text says, when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God was watching him.

As a matter of fact, for the entire 40 years of obscurity that Moses had to endure while living in Midian, God never once took his eyes off him. God was with Moses in the desert. God was with Moses during his trial.

God was with Moses during his death to the self-life to such a degree that when God announces to Moses that he has chosen Moses to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt to this, Moses replies, who am I that I

should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt. You see, friends, had God asked Moses that same question 40 years ago while Moses was still a self-reliant man, Moses would probably have replied, sure, I could do that. I'm your man, God.

But after being in the school of Christ for all those years and during that long trial of his hopes becoming graves in the desert, he is now ready for the task that God requires of him to perform. He is ready because he is now small in his own sight. Who am I? We see the same thing in the life of King Saul.

When he was little in his own eyes, God blessed him with many victories over his enemies and prospered Saul. But when King Saul became a self-reliant and disobedient king, God took his hand of favor away from Saul. He was grieved with Saul, even that he made him king.

So to hear in the life of Moses, Moses had to be brought out of Egypt and self had to be emptied out of Moses before he could come to the end of himself and say, and believe it when he said it, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh? Do you see this friends? Do you see the usefulness of the school of Christ in the emptying of Moses? Do you see from this study how God makes a man before God could use Moses for his purposes, in this case to bring the people of Israel out of the Egyptian bondage before God could use him. He had a empty Moses of Egypt and of himself. This study in the life of Moses has shown us how God will take a person through a difficult and trying time and strip them of everything so that in the providence of God, he can make that person more useful to him as a vessel for his honor, for his purpose, for his glory.

God's ways friends are always best. Even if we cannot see his purpose in our circumstances, we can trust him in our circumstances and rest in him and have confidence in him that our best interests are in the mind and purposes of God who works on our behalf to bring himself glory and to make us more useful to him. Philippians 2.13 declares, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Well, I hope this study in the life of Moses has been useful to you friend, and may God in his time and with your best interest at heart bring you into your most fruitful place of usefulness to him, all for his glory. Amen.

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