

Moses - Leadership

by T. Austin-Sparks

True leadership is born of the sovereign act of God, firsthand knowledge and experience, and a spirit of service, and it requires faithfulness, promptness, and humility in ordinary and unspectacular affairs.

Scripture: Exodus 3:2

Topics: "Spiritual Leadership", "Divine Sovereignty"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the principles of spiritual leadership through the example of Moses, highlighting God's sovereign choice and the anointing of leaders for specific purposes. He explains that true leadership is rooted in firsthand experience and spiritual understanding, rather than mere human qualifications or abilities. Moses' journey illustrates the importance of humility, service, and the deep discipline that comes from failure and self-discovery. The sermon also underscores that God's work is fundamentally spiritual, requiring leaders to rely on divine strength rather than their own. Ultimately, the encounter with the burning bush symbolizes the transformative power of God in the life of a leader, enabling them to endure and triumph against all odds.

Transcript

Having introduced this matter of leadership in a more-or-less general way, we now proceed to look into it more closely in order to learn from Bible examples the principles which are basic to it and the features which delineate it.

Before coming to our first great example let us emphasize the two common factors in spiritual leadership.

One is the fact of the sovereign act of God. In His choice of men for specific responsibility God acts in the absolute right and independence of His own sovereignty. No one is allowed to question His act, His judgment, His reason. Sovereignty is unpredictable. God is answerable to no one, neither is He responsible to anyone. His thoughts and His ways are unfathomable, and in His wisdom He waits long past His acts for vindication. But it is always vindicated in the final issue.

The second factor is that of God linking Himself with a vessel -- a human vessel, and linking that vessel with Himself for a special purpose. This is the meaning of anointing in both Testaments. Anointing in which God so commits Himself to the vessel is always related to purpose, and man cannot touch that vessel or dispute its work without having -- sooner or later, by sudden intervention or the slowly-grinding mills of God -- to reckon with God. It is here that we are forbidden to judge God's instruments on the ground of

their humanity apart from God. We may think that they provide ground for adverse judgment but if God is using them and is with them it will only bring us into a controversy on the part of God with us if we touch His anointed, in word or deed. The Bible has many instances of this. Provided the vessel remains in meekness, God will take full responsibility for its defects, and for its vindication.

Having said that, we can now proceed to the first example of leadership in the Bible. While the principle of leadership was at work from the beginning, leadership only had its full expression when there was a people needing and prepared for it. This full expression of the principle first came out in Moses.

Moses -- the first of the great Bible leaders

What we have said regarding the sovereignty of God is unmistakable in the case of Moses. From his birth and preservation at birth right through his history all the evidences of his being "a chosen vessel" are clear. He was where he was because God did it. Even when, out of sympathy and wrath, he essayed to assume the position of deliverer, that was negated, because this thing had got to be so utterly of God.

The endurance of Moses is a matter that is remarked upon in Scripture, but that endurance, as ours will be, was greatly supported by his later knowledge that he was where he was because God had done it, and it was not of his own choosing. How important it is that Christians, and especially Christian leaders should be in a position to say emphatically that they know how true Christ was when He said, "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you". This foundation of "an act of God" is the only one to support the tremendous weight of responsibility and demand that leadership has to experience.

The second thing that comes out so clearly as making for leadership is the firsthand knowledge and experience of that out from which we are to lead others.

Moses had forty of the years in Egypt when the Pharaoh-complex of Joseph's time had so utterly changed from favour to hostility. He was born into that hostility and hatred and would have known from his mother and sister of his own Providential escape. He knew the palace and its tensions. He lived in the atmosphere of mingled fear and animosity. He daily saw the conditions of his own people. As with Joseph, "the iron entered into his soul". No doubt that background contributed greatly to his later reluctance to go back and his effort to find a way out of so doing.

It is not God's way to send inexperienced people into leadership-responsibility. Such people are really handicapped and in serious weakness. A part of the training of any leader should be a firsthand knowledge of the world and its inimical forces, and a life with God in the midst thereof.

Many a servant of God has been profoundly thankful in after years that, in the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God, he had periods in conditions against which God reacted through him. This may apply to various aspects and phases of life. God places His servants in situations which are not His ultimate will for them, and the time will come when they react against what at one time seemed to be wholly or almost wholly of God. It is strange that it is possible at one time to believe a position to be wholly of God, and later to discover that it was only the provisional will of God to qualify for something quite other. Such servants of God take with them through life a very real inside knowledge which makes it possible for them to say, "We speak that which we do know". We could hardly exaggerate the importance and value of this factor in leadership.

The third factor in this leadership is a fundamental lesson that the work of God is essentially spiritual. Moses was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians". He no doubt had natural endowments. He certainly had rich acquired qualifications. He was evidently a man of considerable physical strength. His natural disposition was to be thorough in anything that he undertook, as we see from him slaying the Egyptian and separating the quarrelling Hebrews. He was not lacking in zeal nor weak in initiative. But with all this God did not take him up on those grounds. "Not by might, nor by power" are words which very aptly apply to Moses at the age of forty years.

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal". The real and eternal aspect of God's work is spiritual, therefore only spiritual men with spiritual experience and resources can do it effectively. God's true leaders are spiritual men and men of the Spirit.

All our natural ability, our training, our acquired qualifications, our strength, zeal, and learning will prove of little avail when we come up against the ultimate forces of the universe, which are spiritual. This Moses well knew when he came actually to his life-work.

Leadership is often born of the deep discipline of failure and self-discovery. The second forty years of his life served such a purpose and were no doubt deeply tinged with the bitterness of self-disillusionment. He was in a much safer place when he shrank from the responsibility than when he self-confidently tackled it in his own strength.

A further qualification for leadership as seen in the case of Moses is faithfulness, promptness, and humility in ordinary and unspectacular affairs.

Tending a few sheep at the back side of the desert by an erstwhile royal prince of Egypt for a considerable number of years could be a fair test of patience and lack of bitterness. The opportunity to help some defenceless women to get their flocks watered was neither beneath his dignity nor an annoying interruption in preoccupation with "higher and more important matters". He was not so disaffected by his disappointment as to be contemptuous of a humble piece of work. High-mindedness is a disqualification for leadership. The Lord watches the out-of-sight life and determines His approval there. A true leader is not one who has to be shown and asked to do menial things, but one who sees a need and self-forgetfully lends a hand. It is quite evident that God knew where Moses was and that he was not a castaway servant. Moses had been inwardly disciplined in the school of inaction, a very hard school for his active and energetic type. The self-emptying had been a painful process, but it had effected God's intention and put him on that essential ground of spiritual leadership which is "no confidence in the flesh"; "all things are of [out from] God".

But the immediate point is that upon which the Lord's eye was looking during the time of waiting. That is, a spirit of service. It is so easy to be active and energetic when there is some big, interesting, or worthwhile job on hand, especially if it is in the public eye or alongside of others. But the real test is when things are quite otherwise and we are right down to bedrock principle; the principle of conscientiousness without the influence of relatedness in responsibility and another's eye upon us. Service is a spirit, not an outward obligation. There is very little of the spirit of service left in the world now, but with God it has always been something of which He has taken particular account. This is His law of trust and approval: "He that is faithful in that which is least". Say what we may about Moses himself, and of divine sovereignty in his life, but let it be understood that divine sovereignty does not bypass simple "everyday" behaviour in what may seem to be very insignificant matters. A whole life's vocation may turn upon a seemingly small issue. It is

our spirit that God looks at. The few sheep at the back of the desert; a few helpless women in difficulty had a place in God's esteem which led to a true exaltation.

The fifth point is the lesson of the bush. The episode of the bush was the crisis and turning-point in the life of Moses. We could say that the past forty years found their meaning and issue here and the following forty their strength. There is an incomparable meaning in this and the significance was immense, for here we are in the presence of the Triune God in combined operation unto the emancipation of an elect people.

God the Father was in the bush. God the Son was the indestructible humanity -- the Son of Man. God the Holy Spirit was the fire. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). "Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit..." (Luke 4:1). "Ye shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you" (Acts 1:8).

The full and glorious meaning of the incarnation of God's Son unto redemption is symbolized in the non-burning bush. (The Bible does not speak of the bush as burning in the sense of being consumed.) When Moses, many years after, pronounced the blessings upon the tribes, the highly esteemed Joseph was to know "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush" (Deut. 33:16). Moses came to understand that "good will" in all its redeeming love. What a basis and background for leadership!

Moses may not have understood all the New Testament meaning, but he came into the power.

What Moses was meant to understand for his great responsibility, was that humanity in itself may be frail, weak, and as vulnerable as a bush of the desert, but if God links Himself with it in the power of the Holy Spirit, it can endure and live and triumph when naturally it should succumb.

In the first place the bush represented Christ.

In the second place it represented the church.

In the third place it represented every God-chosen instrument of purpose.

Not merely survival but supernatural triumph -- in a scorching desert -- is true of each.

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