

"Let My Son Go"

Exodus 4:18-31

April 18, 2010
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“And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace. And the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life. And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand. And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn. And it came to pass by the way in the inn, 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 his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision. And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.” (Ex 4:18-31)

It was not the purpose for Moses to record everything in strict chronological order, but rather to carry forth the narrative in a way that would be according to the purposes that God had for Him. Here we have some things that do not completely flatter Moses and his family, for self was not the purpose for which he wrote these things, but the glory of God. God did not choose Moses to glorify Moses but God intended to glorify Himself.

Moses had some things that were not flattering to him, but they are recorded faithfully. He began his life as the son of an obscure people in bondage in Egypt. All that they had going for them was the promise of God. He was hidden in a basket in the reeds along the river because the law was against his life, and his mother was an outlaw for not killing him when he was born. He was saved by the daughter of the king and grew up amid the decadence and wickedness of the court of Pharaoh. He committed a murder in defense of one of his kinsmen and had to flee as an outlaw into the wilderness of Midian, where he settled down as a shepherd for 40 years, married the daughter of a shepherd, and had two

sons. The eldest he named Gershom because it meant a “foreigner,” a stranger in a strange land. Moses was a strange figure in a strange land. He never found a home anywhere, for he never even got to go into Canaan, the land promised to Abraham. Truly it could be said of Moses, and was said of Moses by the writer of Hebrews:

Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. We are also called strangers and pilgrims by Peter:

1Pe 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

His father-in-law, Reuel, or Jethro, took some risk in taking Moses in, for it was certain this lone Egyptian in the desert was in some disfavor with the kingdom. But he was useful and had proved himself brave and trustworthy and he lived among the Midianites, who were also descended from Abraham. But that descent was from a long distant past, for hundreds of years had passed since Abraham had lived in tents in the Land of Promise. From this account, it appears that although the knowledge of the true God still existed among the Midianites, the practice of circumcision had appeared to have lapsed among them. The corruption was not total yet, but before Moses died he completely destroyed the nation of Midian. [Numbers 31] They had tried with Moab to have Balaam curse Israel and had corrupted Israel with fornication. But that was some forty years in the future from these events.

I. But God had appeared to Moses and had promised to put his words into his mouth and commissioned him to return to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let the Son of God go. Several things are to be noted here.

A. Moses had to inform his father-in-law, and he did, and obtained permission to take his wife and sons with him to Egypt.

B. He informed Jethro that God had told him it was safe to return to Egypt. Jethro agreed to let him go.

C. We see the great poverty and abasement of Moses. His family rode upon a donkey, but he had the rod of God in his hand. With this authority, the success of his mission was assured no matter comical the whole scene would have appeared to the proud Egyptians.

D. God said he would harden Pharaoh’s heart. How offensive this is to the humanist. I agree with Calvin: God is more honored in the display of His power than in the display of Him doing nothing. God presides over the affairs of men, and directs them. He is not a bystander and observer of events. Proud men are ashamed of God and would rather have Him excuse Himself from the affairs of men and stand weeping on the sidelines. They will find that this is a debased and

ignorant view of the Almighty and they will find themselves to be terribly wrong about it.

E. Pharaoh would pay a terrible price for his wickedness and unbelief; the hardening of his heart by God was a spiritual, but very just, penalty for his wickedness and pride, and God would be glorified in this.

F. God's reason: "Let my firstborn go." The Lord Jesus Christ was present in Israel in promise, in the physical seed of Abraham, and in the promise that all the world would be blessed. If Pharaoh did not let the people go, the penalty would be the death of all the firstborn of Egypt, including the firstborn of Pharaoh.

G. Evidence for this: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." (Heb 1:5-6) Not Israel after the flesh; but the Lord Jesus Christ is the first begotten: in fact, the only begotten Son from eternity. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Mic 5:2 AV)

II. The Second thing is this: You cannot help but feel for Moses' wife. Our poor wives are often called upon to endure things and put up with things that they do not know about. Poor Zipporah must have wondered many years what she had done when she married Moses, but things were quiet for forty years.

A. When Moses drove away the shepherds that were harassing the daughters of Reuel, she was no doubt impressed with the brave Egyptian, and consented to be married to him. How did she know things would turn out the way they did? Could she be blamed for expecting that she would lead a quiet life raising her sons in the desert. There was peace in the desert and life was not complicated.

B. But now all this had changed. Her husband had been talking to God in a bush in the desert. What was she to make of that? And now, she had to pack up, leave her father and family and friends and go back with Moses to Egypt. Who knew what would happen there. But she would be a good sport and got on the donkey.

C. But this circumcision business was more than she could bear. Moses wanted her to do what to her sons? Not on your life. Because of this account, we may assume that the reason that Gershom and Eliezer had not been circumcised was the objection of Zipporah, perhaps with the support of her family. Moses was to be blamed for this, for Gershom and Eliezer should have been circumcised long ago. He should have had this battle long before they left for Egypt, but Moses was a meek man and avoided this, perhaps because the rest of his family opposed it

also. At any rate, the sign of the covenant that God had made with Abraham was absent in Moses' sons. Why is this important:

1. The covenant with Abraham involved faith in Christ, the Messiah who would come and bless all the nations of the world.

2. How could Moses with any consistency, go tell Pharaoh to let the first born of God go from the land, if Moses' own sons did not bear the sign and seal of the promise of God? How was the Son of God in Egypt, if not by the sign and seal of the promise of God?

D. So Moses' life was in mortal danger. God had told Abraham that those not circumcised were to be cut off, for they had broken God's covenant. God met Abraham and sought to kill him. Some say that Abraham took deathly ill, but there is not a shred of evidence in Scripture; we don't know what the specific danger was, but Moses and Zipporah knew that the danger was from the personal act of God.

E. Zipporah, rashly and with a most rebellious spirit, took matters into her own hands. Finding a sharp stone, she circumcised Gershom, the firstborn, at least, and threw the skin at Moses feet. She was wrong of course, the method was not according to the ordinance of God, and her spirit was wrong—there was no meek and quiet spirit here. But she did save Moses' life, to her credit. "You're a bloody husband" she said, but God let Moses go.

F. I am sure that this event provided grist for the mill of the gossips for many years in Israel. "Moses hasn't always done right. He didn't even circumcise his kids. Do you hear what Zipporah did? Nice meek little wife there, now, isn't she." Buzz, buzz, buzz. But Moses is to be commended for obeying God in recording the event, even though he doesn't look well in it.

G. This also shows that the sacrament may be valid, even if it is mutilated by human pride and impatience.

III. The coming of Aaron.

A. As I said, these events are not necessarily chronological, but the loose ends are tied up. Aaron had been sent by God, and he came as God had said he would. He would become the mouth of Moses, just as Moses was the mouth of God.

B. Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt, called a meeting of the elders and told them all that God had said. They also did the signs that God had given Moses: the rod into a serpent; the leprosy in the hand of Moses and the restoration of his hand; the pouring out of the water and its turning to blood.

C. All the people believed. We are going to see that this is a transient faith, but

this was enough at the time to create a people for the Lord. Their carcasses would fall in the wilderness because of unbelief, but this was the real birth of the nation of Israel and the beginning of the journey that would take them through the Red Sea, to Mount Sinai, to the law of God, through the wilderness, and finally to the inheritance in the land of Canaan.

Amen and Amen
God bless you.