

FROM FEAR TO
FREEDOM



A STUDY ON THE LIFE OF MOSES

PASTOR'S NOTES - PART 12

THE OBEDIENT CHOICE OF FREE WILL

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From Fear to Freedom
 A Study On the Life of Moses
 Part 12: The Obedient Choice of Free Will

Is there any area of my life that is not pleasing to God?

Any area at all?

If there is, you know it! You are fully aware of this area; this lifestyle choice; this attitude; this language; this act; this addiction; this pride; this arrogance; this relationship; this secret; this “thing” of which, potentially, no one else is aware.

Maybe you have gotten really good at hiding it. Maybe you’ve even convinced yourself this “thing” in your life with which you have gotten away with up until now is something with which God isn’t concerned.

Maybe you have, overtime, even convinced *yourself* that this area of your life really isn't a big deal. Or, maybe, because of your circumstances, you've induced yourself, possibly even convinced others close to you, that your situation is “unique” or “different,” and therefore, in some twisted way you have deceived yourself into believing you are deserving of this action because of your past, or family history, or position.

Possibly, because of unforeseen circumstances, or ways in which you have been unjustly treated by others, or a previous indiscretion on the part of someone else that has hurt you, you have allowed yourself to believe this “area” of your life is not of great importance to God. If this is you... and by the way, let me quickly interject... this has been *all* of us at one point or the other...

Know this my friend...

Every area of my life is important to God.

Every area.

There is not an area of my life of which God is not fully knowledgeable of my actions and indiscretions.

There too is not an area of my life off-limits to God.

God is keenly aware of every facet of my life.

God is undeniably aware of every fiber of my being.

If there is an area of my life not pleasing to God, I must remind myself...

This is sin.

Too, if there is an area of my life not pleasing to God, it is imperative I know this:

Not only is God aware...

God too is disgusted with my sin.

God takes very seriously my sin.

God is not in agreement with my sin.

I too would say this is most definitely true. And I have seen this in my own life...

God will not use me to my fullest aptitudes until I address my sin.

God will withhold from me His highest blessings until I obediently surrender this area of my life to Him.

Now listen church... I know that *you* know all that I have just stated.

You know whatever your history is with God, whatever the depth of your walk with Him and allegiance *to* Him; you know that God wants *all* of you.

But this is where we have to be careful as followers of the Christ... because...

My knowledge cannot supersede my reality.

Let me explain...

Just because I *know* God wants all of me does not mean I have given all of me to God.

Just because I *know* His ways does not mean I've surrendered all of my ways to Him.

Just because I *know* the truth does not mean I live by the truth.

Otherwise... especially among the church...

There would be no pride. There would be no gossip. There would be no bitterness. There would be no jealousy. There would be no complaining.

God says pride comes before a fall.

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18

Scripture says that we are to do *all* things without complaining. Not some things... all things!

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky...

Philippians 2:14-15

But church is full of church folk who do exactly these things!

We are going to see as we continue on with Moses that this is exactly the position in which Moses finds himself...

Moses knew what God had asked of him, he had the knowledge of such... but his reality was that he was living contrary to God's expectation.

And this one area of disobedience in Moses' life almost cost him everything! Again...

My knowledge cannot supersede my reality.

My knowledge must not supersede my reality.

So... today, as you listen, if you're a little uncomfortable... welcome the discomfort. If you're a little uneasy... sit in the uneasiness this morning.

Because what we are going to discover in this part of Moses' journey is *so very important to God*, it almost ended the life of Moses before he was ever to stand before the Pharaoh.

I wonder... could it be today Church:

God is withholding something from me as a result of something I am withholding from Him.

Prayerfully marinate in this thought as you listen today to the voice of the Holy Spirit!

Of all the places in the Scriptures where the heart of God is revealed, other than the Cross, upon which we witness the full presentation of God's love for humanity, there is not one relationship more intimate and beautiful than the relationship between God and Moses.

We concluded last week in the middle of the conversation Moses is having with God on the mountain of Horeb. Let's continue...

Exodus 3:11-22

From the burning bush to the moment Moses stands before the King of Egypt, there is so very much that takes place in the life of Moses. Last week, I offered three realities to you about this conversation God has with Moses.

Here are two additional thoughts for you today:

1. I cannot fully comprehend the ways of God.

I can obey the will of God.

As we move forward in this journey with Moses, you are going to be tempted to wrestle with this thought:

Why doesn't God simply exercise His authority, do what He desires, and destroy anyone who gets in His way?

Obviously, if He desires, at the command of His voice God could rain down fire from a holy heaven upon Pharaoh, his armies, and the entire nation of Egypt.

After all, would this not be easier? Rather than Moses having to leave his homeland, go stand before the King of Egypt, place his life and the lives of every Hebrew at stake, and go through the process of which we are about to unpack of plague after plague after plague consuming Pharaoh and the entire Egyptian kingdom, and only then, after all of this, Pharaoh finally allowing the Hebrews to leave Egypt... God could just unassumingly speak the words and His people would be free, and Moses could simply live out his days tending to sheep in Midian.

Well, such a question opens itself to many, so very many, concepts as to how God can exercise His omnipotence and supremacy. As to not veer too much off course with this ever-important thought, I will offer this one principle:

Free will.

In his new book, *Determined, A Science of Life Without Free Will*, Stanford University Neurobiologist Robert P. Sapolsky writes that man has no free will, no ability to choose or to not choose God, and therefore, cannot be held accountable for his/her actions no matter how dark and distorted.

“We have no meaningful command over our choice of careers, romantic partners, or weekend plans. God is not real, there is no free will, and we primates are pretty much on our own.

It is impossible for any single neuron or any single brain to act without influence from factors beyond our control. Therefore, there is no human free will.”

Robert P. Sapolsky, Neurobiologist, Stanford University

If this were true, which it is not, then why do I feel guilty when I disobey God? Or even for a non-follower of the Christ, why does one experience regret when having made a choice riddled with consequences? If man does not possess free will, then not only should my actions be out of my control, but too, when my actions negatively impact another, I should not be moved by any regret or guilt.

Or, for any human, believer or not, if there is no free will, then why do we punish those who commit crimes? If man does not have the freedom to choose, then man should not have to assume responsibility for the choices he makes.

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Jesus said this to Jewish leaders in Jerusalem who were persecuting Him:

And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept glory from human beings, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.

John 5:37-42

Jesus states that these Jewish leaders have made the decision, thus exercising free will, to refuse Him.

The beautiful aspect of free will is one discovering the journey of trust while exercising the freedom to choose.

When I choose to place my trust in God, I am exercising the act of free will while also learning what it means to experience true, authentic love and respect and intimacy for and with another.

If God were to remove man's ability to choose, then man's position in the world would be minimized to a mere robotic and emotionless experience.

And if God were to demand all of humanity to follow His ways, and, in the case of the Pharaoh, to stop the brutality against His people and end the dynasty of the Egyptians, this would essentially entail God taking man's free-will off the table.

Now, of course, God has every right and privilege and ability to do so. But such a move is completely contrary to the ways of our heavenly Father.

Instead, we see that God has a different disposition – one that tolerates mankind to make their own decisions; a design that offers us each freedom to choose. And in doing so, mankind is faced with the ultimate choice – to obey or to disobey God.

God gives us the freedom to choose. But immersed in this will of freedom is an equally important responsibility and expectation on the follower of the Christ to align one's free-will with God's holy expectations.

Freedom for the follower of the Christ is always coupled with the charge to obediently align my will with God's ways.

What is ironic about this way in which God works...

God loves us so much that, in offering free will *to* us, He is willing to *let* us fail Him.

Yet this too is ever-important in this process with God...

He too loves us so much that He is not content with the choice of disobedience in our lives.

So there is this holy tension in my life of exercising my free-will while too aligning this will with His ways...

Why is this so very important for us to understand in this journey with Moses?

Moses does not yet fully comprehend what God is doing. Nonetheless, whether I fully do or do not understand the fullness of what God is doing, what I am learning from the man Moses is the responsibility I have, while exercising free-will, to obediently follow the ways and workings of God.

The ever-popular Proverb states it like this:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

King Solomon, the writer of these words reminds us:

It is my obedience to God's will, not my understanding of God's will, that matters most to God.

This reality is going to be an extremely important concept moving forward for Moses. For God is going to ask much of Moses as they journey on together.

Another thought I want to make sure you capture in this moment God has with Moses on the mountain:

2. I may not always see myself as significant.

I can as I see the significance of "I AM."

Look again at this monumental moment in this conversation between God and Moses:

Exodus 3:11-14

Moses is obviously fearful at this moment. He does not have very much confidence in who he is nor in his ability to be used by a Holy God. I am sure, as we discussed last week, though 40 years is a very long time, Moses can still recall burying the Egyptian's body in the hot, Egyptian sand, just as it was yesterday.

Moses is still hanging on to the past at this point. I presume Moses feels extremely inadequate; insignificant; unworthy; sinful; alone.

Thus, on numerous occasions, though speaking to the Yahweh from a burning bush, Moses responds with tremendous doubt in his own abilities.

Can you relate? I sure can!

Think about your feelings of inadequacy; consider how you question yourself; doubt yourself; beat up on yourself...

Why do we do this?

Though God tells us:

**For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
Psalm 103:11-12**

**But Jesus looked at them and said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.
Matthew 19:26**

**For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more
Hebrew 8:12**

Though we know these words of God to be true, we often have a hard time believing these words are true for ourselves, don't we?

A friend of mine called me Wednesday to tell me exactly this. He said,

"I can't stop thinking about all of the things I have done in my past." He said, "I get why Moses felt like he was unworthy to be used by God. At times, I feel the same way!"

If you can relate, then this moment is for you my friend. You see... I presume God is fully aware of how Moses feels about himself.

This is why God answers Moses in the way that He does! And this is why I am continuing to implore you to place yourself in this story and on this mountain with Moses. Because, at times, we all, in some way, see ourselves as insignificant. And the words God has for Moses are too the same words He has for you and me today:

Why is this response from God so very important to Moses' confidence? It's simple.

My understanding of who God is affords me confidence in who I am.

You see...when God states, "I AM WHO I AM," God is saying:

**I AM WHO I AM
= I am Yahweh.**

These words, “I AM WHO I AM,” are the very characters in Hebrew spelling the name Yahweh. And too, Yahweh is the most intimate name for God in all of the Hebrew language.

God is telling Moses:

The Creator of the Universe; the Creator of all things; the Creator and Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Creator of your father; Yahweh; “I AM” is here journeying step in step with you.

Tell Pharaoh that, Moses!

Then He tells Moses to assemble the entire elders of the nation of Israel together and to tell them the same thing!

Y’all, I sure hope that today you find great confidence in these words spoken to Moses. This moment in the story is so very important for everyone today who finds themselves immersed in feelings of insignificance.

You may not think much of you. You may even carry around your own personal indiscretion of burying the sins of your past in the sand!

What I find most interesting about this moment is that God does not take the time to inspire Moses. He does not give Moses a pep talk about learning from the past. He does not take the time to tell Moses, “Hey buddy, it’s okay! No matter where you've been and what you've done, the past is the past!”

Though all of these things are true, and though it is absolutely true that, with God, and because of what Jesus did on the Cross, you and I do not have to live in the past as we once did...

God does not use such a moment as the opportunity to give Moses a motivational speech about “day one of his new life in Him.”

He does not even take the time to convince Moses that he is significant.

No, instead, God just simply says...

I AM WHO I AM.

And today, you too can confidently believe...

I AM WHO I AM is with me.

Church... I beseech you to take these words with you today. For anyone here this morning carrying the weight of a regrettable past; for anyone present who feels saturated in insignificance; for the person here today who has emotionally ingested the lie, “I am not good enough.” I appeal to you not to miss this moment...

God is saying...

**Knowing who God is, empowers me to move past my past.
Knowing who God is, grants me confidence to never again look back.
Knowing who God is, enables me to realize... I am significant.**

For the same God who spoke to a barefoot Hebrew standing before a fire on the mountain of Horeb is the same God whispering into your heart today:

I AM WHO I AM.

... Let these words consume you today:

**He is with me.
He has gone before me.
He will journey alongside me.
He has already forgotten the past that has toiled to define me.
He has removed the indiscretion of yesterday, today, and even tomorrow.
He has dusted the sand off of my feet and is now longing to warm me by the fire.
He is enough.**