Learning lessons from the mistakes of Moses

David d'Lima - FamilyVoice Australia, September 2020

The Bible paints a very human portrait of the early life and calling of Moses, as a very humble man who had a great deal to be humble about! Having thrown away his princely opportunity, Moses became a murderer who fled Egypt only to serve as a shepherd, until at the age of eighty he most reluctantly accepted the divine calling to give testimony to a pagan civic authority and to rescue the descendants of God's covenantal people.

Our knowledge of the early life and work of Moses comes to us from the Book of Exodus (3-4) which records his birth to Hebrew parents who lived in Egypt among the oppressed people of God. When the Egyptian king gave orders to kill each newborn Israelite boy, the mother of Moses firstly hid him, and then launched the baby onto the waters of the Nile, in a basket. Naturally speaking that would be the end of his life.

However, by divine intervention, Moses effectively was resurrected and was elevated to the highest place in the land as a prince of Egypt. He thus prefigured Christ who was taken by his family to Egypt after King Herod commanded the killing of baby boys (Matthew 2:16) and who was raised from the dead and then exalted. After the crucifixion of Christ, his Father *raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything* ... (Ephesians 1:20-23). Like Christ, Moses brought deliverance by God's grace.

Interestingly, the birth name of Moses is not known, as he gained an Egyptian name when adopted by the king's daughter who raised him as her son. Further, we read that *"Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action"* (Acts 7:22) which is exactly how princes are educated.

Although motivated by great concern for his people, Moses took the law into his own hands by murdering an Egyptian, therefore incurring a death sentence. As Moses then fled from Egypt, he effectively threw away his princely leadership opportunity, and instead of helping to run the country, he supervised sheep! He and his wife raised two sons but failed to apply the rite of circumcision, and this brought divine anger (Exodus 4:24).

Moses continued to prefigure Christ, by returning to Egypt with his wife and two sons, having been informed, *"all the men who wanted to kill you are dead"* (Exodus 4:19) - just as Joseph and Mary would return with Jesus from Egypt, *"for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead"* (Matthew 2:20).

Many good things may be said about Moses, including this commendation of him, in Hebrews 11:24-26:

> *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward*.

Although it is good to be prepared to give up luxury, and is honourable to be disgraced for the sake of Christ, a case can be made that Moses threw away his princely opportunity by murdering an Egyptian and fleeing the country. Further, Moses resisted God's calling and showed cowardice and a lack of faith according to Exodus:

> *Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"* (3:11);
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> *Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"* (3:13);
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> *Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me ... ?"* (4:1);
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> *Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue"* (4:10);
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> *But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it"* (4:13).

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