

Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 215

Moses' Choice

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 18th May, 2003**

Text: *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Hebrews 11. 24-26).*

There never was a choice like that of Moses. There never was a child of God who ever gave up as much as Moses did for Christ's sake. And there was one thing that did it: the sweet constraining of the love of Christ. So it was by faith, God-given faith, living faith, that he made this choice.

“Living faith will still esteem
The reproaches of the Lamb,
Greater riches than this earth
Can afford the sons of mirth.”

But where do you find those today who are willing to make Moses' choice, willing to give up the world for Jesus' sake? “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.” Now what was it that Moses gave up, that he felt he must give up for Christ's sake? Well, he was a prince. By adoption he was an Egyptian prince. He was a prince in a palace. He was a prince in one of the mightiest empires of the ancient world. Now there is so much written about ancient Egypt; there has been so much research; there have been so many discoveries; there has been the opening of the pyramids; and a few things are very clear. The amazing wealth. Now Moses gave that up, the amazing wealth of Egypt, and the pleasure, and the honour, and the comforts, and the ease, and the fame.

Now when he was come to years, he refused it all. He was willing to give it all up, give it all up for Christ's sake. And do you know why? Because by faith, this God-given faith, he viewed things in the light of a never-ending eternity. Now that is where the world always goes wrong. The world sees everything thinking of today, or at the most tomorrow, but God-given faith will enable you to look at things in the light of eternity. And Moses saw it, and Moses believed it. What did it matter, what would

it matter in a hundred years' time whether he was a prince or whether he was not a prince? What would it matter in a hundred years' time whether he had riches or whether he was poor? What would it matter in a hundred years' time whether he lived in a palace or in a hovel? Now he viewed all these things in the light of a never-ending eternity, and he was made willing by faith to give it all up for Jesus' sake.

Some of us in our little way go back to our spiritual beginnings, and we too saw things in the light of eternity: that we are not here for ever; that one day we must leave everything here below. O and in the light of eternity, didn't earthly things seem empty and vain? For the most part it was an easy thing to give the world up. There were two things, though, in our spiritual beginnings. One was that sight of a never-ending eternity. "Eternity, tremendous sound!" And O those words *for ever and for ever!* And these things we enjoyed, all these pleasures and the things of this world, well then they appeared as nothing. Now it was not really hard to give them up. But the other thing was this: a little glimpse by faith of the Lord Jesus in all His preciousness and suitability and glory, in all His dying love and atoning blood. So there was an attraction. It was something better. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." He had something better. "O, if Christ and heaven be mine." Now he had something better.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." That was it. In the light of eternity and with the faith that God gave him, that true, living faith, he looked on the Lord's people and saw them in all their everlasting blessedness as they stand in Christ. Can't we go back to our early days, and we too saw it? We saw it very clearly. We saw that the Lord had a people, eternally chosen, eternally loved, redeemed by precious blood. We saw them as the excellent of the earth. We saw them as the only ones who are the excellent of the earth. We did not yet feel to belong to them or to be one of them. O I could take you to the very spot where the Lord gave me such a view of the everlasting blessedness of His people standing complete in Christ, "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." I did not feel it was mine. They were *there* and I was *here*. O but then that time came: if I am not among them, if those blessings they possess I never possess, then I am of all men most miserable. I am ruined.

I am eternally lost. O but then those longing desires to be found amongst the people of God, the despised, but eternally-loved people of God!

Now I wonder if there are some of you here like that this evening, some of you young people like that here this evening. We are told it was when Moses *came to years*. Exactly what age he was – perhaps as much as forty. But this expression, “when he was come to years.” We think of a much younger age. Now you young people, perhaps you look on the people of God. Perhaps you did not like them very much. Perhaps you thought they were strange. But has the time come, now you are “come to years,” and you see something different? They have something you have not got. But does it come to this: if I do not have what they have, then I must perish; I must be lost? O but that longing desire to be one of them.

Now I wonder if there is a Ruth here tonight. She looked on Naomi, and she saw she had something that she did not possess. She had heard of Bethlehem. She had heard of the land of promise. She had heard of the Lord’s Israel. O that desire, “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” I believe there are two ways in which a sinner can say that. First of all, it is in the way of desire; it is in the way of prayer, looking at God’s dear people, seeing them in all their blessedness. O that prayer, that desire to be one of them. O that this people might be my people and that their God might be my God! And then later on that resolve of living faith. Now I am going to live and die with them. I am going to leave the world for ever if only I might be numbered amongst them. “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” “Hinder me not, ye well-loved saints, for I must go with you.”

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; *choosing rather* to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Now you know who the people of God were at this time. Well, they were slaves in the land of Egypt, and they were despised, and they were most cruelly treated, and they were in the depths of sorrow. They were groaning under the cruelty of the taskmasters’ whips. But Moses looked on them and he saw them as the excellent of the earth. O for that faith that could compare life in the palace as a prince and life amongst these despised people, and to make that choice in the light of eternity, because that is what it means: “He had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” He viewed it in the light

of eternity. He viewed the blessedness of the despised, suffering people of God. He viewed the vanity of the world, and it was by faith.

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The reproaches of the Lamb,
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Can afford the sons of mirth.”

And so by faith he made this choice, this choice to give up the palace, to give up his position, to give up his pleasure, to give up his honour, to give up his fame, and to identify with this poor, despised, suffering people. Why? Because he saw Christ in them; he saw salvation in them; he saw heaven in them. “He had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”

And so by faith he chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” It seems as if the Holy Ghost underlines those words: *for a season*. Moses knew what the pleasures of Egypt were. He knew what the pleasures of the palace were. He knew what the pleasures of an Egyptian prince were. In Egypt there was every kind of pleasure. There was the wealth and the fame. There were refined pleasures. There were coarser pleasures. But by faith he saw this: that all those pleasures the wicked were enjoying in the land of Egypt were only for a season; they were all the pleasures they would ever know, and afterwards, a long, dark night of eternal sorrow.

We give the world a point this evening. The world has its pleasures. We do not deny that. These crowds hastening here and there every weekend, we do not deny that they have their pleasures, and the world has plenty of pleasure. Now we do not deny the world that. We do not contradict the world on that. But we tell the world this: that the pleasures of sin are just for a season. They are the only pleasures that the world shall ever know. Before them there is a dark, long, everlasting night of eternal sorrow. Now then, you young people and you older ones, may the Holy Spirit seal that in your heart tonight, that whatever pleasures of the world you are enjoying at present, they are only for a season. The wise man speaks of it in very striking language like this: he says they are like “the crackling of thorns under a pot.” Whatever does that mean? Well, these branches from a dry thorn bush are put in a pile and set on fire, and don’t they burn brightly and noisily? But a few minutes and the fire is completely out. That is the pleasures of the wicked, the pleasures of sin which are for a season. “As the crackling of thorns under a pot.”

But Moses by faith viewed the opposite. What was the opposite? Well, that the Lord's dear people have their sorrows and their afflictions and their troubles and their woes, but these are all the sorrows they will ever know; that before them there is a long, an everlasting day. And Moses saw it, and by faith he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." There is a counting of the cost. All are warned, all are commanded to count the cost! How the Lord Jesus warned any who would profess His name, who would come after Him, to count the cost. He did not promise them an easy way to heaven. He promised salvation; He promised heaven; but He did not promise them an easy way. It was "through much tribulation." But Moses saw it. He was not blind to it. He knew what the Lord's people were suffering.

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Let us be clear, beloved friends, *there is a choice*. You say, How does this fit in with what we believe about election? Well, there is not any contradiction. Those whom God has chosen will by faith choose Him and His ways. Those whom God has chosen will, like Moses, choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." And by choosing Him they prove His choice of them. As Toplady sings, "Chosen of Thee ere time began, I choose Thee in return." But let us be clear, *there is a choice*. The sad point, the solemn point is this: that by nature every one of us chooses wrong. But *there is a choice*. By nature not one of us chooses right. By nature not one of us will ever choose Christ. It is because of our corrupt nature. It is because of the sinful bias of our will. If I were to loose something from my hand, everyone in this chapel knows which way it would go. It would not go up to the ceiling; it would go down to the ground. And it would not be that I forced it down to the ground; it would just go down to the ground. Even if I threw it up into the air it would still go down to the ground, and even if I threw it as hard as I could so it hit the ceiling, it would still go down to the ground. That is your choice, my choice by nature. There is something pulling it – sin – pulling it to the ground. But those whom the Lord has chosen, He blesses them with faith, frees their will and enables them savingly to choose Christ, to choose salvation, to choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

“O for faith this choice to make,
And endure, for Jesus’ sake,
The reproaches of His cross,
Counting all things else but dross!”

The world only knows one side. We know both sides, and, “Though the world may think it strange, we would not with the world exchange,” not for all the pleasures of sin which are for a season.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Now the world would have called Moses a fool. If I understand things aright – I want to speak carefully and advisedly – even a lot of the Lord’s people would have called him a fool, especially today. You say, Whatever do you mean? Well, so many people would have said, Moses, it is a foolish decision you have taken. Think of all the good you could do if you were ruling over this great empire. Think of what wealth you would have, how you could use it to help the poor. Think of your fame, what good laws you could make. And Moses, do not forget this: you never chose to be the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. You were not born as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. It was through a most mysterious, strange providence that you were adopted and found a place in the Egyptian court. You think of these things and weigh them up carefully. Don’t you think God has put you in this position, and if you stay there you could do so much good? By faith Moses refused all that. “O for faith this choice to make.”

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” O that *rather*, that weighing things in the balances of the sanctuary, and the world weighing light and Christ weighing heavy. That is the *rather*. “Choosing *rather* to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” It reminds me when I used to preach at The Dicker, and some of you remember the old Mr. Tyler, not the pastor, the pastor’s old father. What a good, godly, gracious man he was! On one occasion, it was when he was very old, when he was in his nineties, he was telling me that when he was a boy he was left an orphan, and a very wealthy gentleman wanted to adopt him. Later that gentleman was honoured – he received a knighthood – and that eminent, wealthy

gentleman wanted to adopt him. At the same time there was a very poor couple, and they wanted to adopt him. They were poor, but they were very godly. He said, “I was only a boy, and I was given a complete choice. They said, ‘You can choose. Do you want to go and live and be adopted by this great man, or do you want to go and be adopted by this poor, godly couple?’” I think the tears ran down his face as he said, “By faith, as a boy, by faith I chose ‘rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.’” O but the point was this: he never regretted it. He blessed God that God enabled him to make that choice. What he might have been as the adopted son of this great man! But he blessed God that he was brought up in that godly home by that poor, godly man and his wife.

“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” It is interesting – “the reproach of *Christ*.” Well, Christ was not yet come. Christ was not yet born. But the Holy Ghost said it was “the reproach of Christ.” Really, it was constrained by the love of Christ. It was for Christ’s sake. I often wonder just how much those Old Testament saints knew of Christ. O beloved friends, they had a good religion. Now just ponder it for a minute. Moses had not any Bible to read, and he had not any chapel to attend, and he had not any minister to listen to, and Christ had not yet come. It was still a very dark dispensation. But look at Moses’ religion. You can take it with many of them, those we read of this evening [in Hebrews 11]: Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses. Those old patriarchs, what a good religion they had! And they had as much religion as they had received directly from God. If you and I had our Bibles taken away and our chapel going and all that, I wonder how much religion we should have left, how much religion we would have if we only had as much as we have received direct from God. You know what it says about some of those old patriarchs: they saw God face to face, and their life was preserved. But you and I do not know how much or how little they knew of Christ. Perhaps Moses knew a lot more of Christ by faith than you and I have ever realised. Well, he esteemed “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” We know that the treasures of Egypt were fabulous. Some of you have read about them at school. There are a lot of books and magazines about Egypt and the things that have been discovered, the great cities that were built and the Pharaohs. Moses esteemed “the reproach of

Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” It is a wonderful thing if you and I are blessed with a right estimation. Paul said, “That ye may approve things that are excellent,” in the light of eternity, by faith.

Well, what are true riches? Is it money? Is it wealth? Are these things true riches? I had an aunt in Haslingden. It was not too long before she died, and she said to me, “I had a strange dream last night.” She said, “I dreamed I was in the bank in Deardengate and there were all these banknotes, and they said, ‘You can take as much as you want.’ I was full of amazement. They said, ‘It is the end of the world. All this money is no good. It is useless. You can take as much as you want.’” She woke up, but it left a profound effect. But it is true. O to see where true riches are! We think of that beautiful expression, “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” O that man, that woman, that girl, that boy is truly rich, “rich to all the intents of bliss,” if blessed with a saving knowledge of the Son of God. O the riches of His precious blood, the riches of His righteousness, the riches of His love, the riches of His all-prevailing intercession!

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” He had something better. But this is a strange expression. Not esteeming the *blessings* of Christ, or the *salvation* of Christ; esteeming the *reproach* of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” If you will the *worst*, the very *worst* that Christ gives to His people, that reproach they have to bear for His dear name. It was not just Moses esteeming the blessing, or the hope, or the salvation, or the heaven; the very suffering, the very worst. He esteemed “*the reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Moses never regretted it. Have you noticed the very last word he spoke before he died? “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!” Before he went up to the top of Nebo to die, he looked upon God’s people and he saw them as an eternally blessed people. He was persuaded he was one of them. I think he went back to those first beginnings when he chose to suffer affliction with them, and now their everlasting blessedness is before him, and he did not repent of his choice. “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!” And happy am I, a sinner saved by grace. Happy am I to be found amongst them.

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Going over from Manchester to Rochdale last Lord’s day afternoon brought back a lot of memories of my early days, especially one. As a young believer there came a time when I had to stand, and it was not easy to stand, and it brought a lot of reproach. I felt that reproach keenly. Now you young people, if you take up your cross to follow the Saviour, there will be a reproach, and there will come very soon the testing time. How sad it is to see people of whom we have hoped well and they come to the testing time, and they stumble and fall at the very first hurdle! There will be the affliction with the people of God. There will be the reproach for Christ’s sake. I remember that afternoon walking through the streets of Rochdale and feeling the weight of the reproach and going past Hope Chapel, Rochdale, John Kershaw’s Hope Chapel, Rochdale. O how this word dropped right into my heart: “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”

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There is the affliction. There is the reproach. There is the counting the cost. But the Lord calls His people, constrained by the love of Christ, to go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach. Why? Because Jesus bore the reproach. That is why. “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” For, “If any man will come after Me,” says Jesus, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross” – there is a cross to be taken up – “and follow Me.” And Jesus still says, “Follow Me.” But He says, Let him deny himself; let him take up his cross; and then let him follow Me.

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make, and endure, for Jesus' sake," those reproaches of the Lamb, constrained by the love of Jesus, for Jesus' sake.