

Moses / Aaron

Sermon #1036

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"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints" Revelation 15:2-3.

This is the remnant. These have been taken from the last generation. They are Christ's last legion. They plant the banner of eternal triumph. Thank God, you and I are called to membership in that group. We are told to strive with all our powers to be among the 144,000.

It is significant that they sing the song of Moses as well as the song of the Lamb. I suppose it is clear that this must mean entering into some of the experiences of Moses. We have studied how God got Moses ready to do His work. We have seen his preservation when he was just a little baby there in the ark among the bulrushes. We have seen the wonderful education he received at his mother's knee. Until he was twelve years of age he received a most thorough training in the things of God from a mother who loved God and taught her little boy to obey Him.

We think of that outstanding experience he had in the court of Pharaoh until he was forty years of age. He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and deeds. We think of the choice he made to renounce all the glory of Egypt and cast his lot with the people of God, that humble, despised race down there in the land of Goshen.

As Moses put himself into the work of delivering Israel, he failed in his first attempt. He had been so long saturated in the philosophy of Egypt in how to get things done that even though he had never bowed to their idols he was still unfitted to do the work of God. He wanted to do God's work, but he was so permeated with Egyptian ideas that he killed a man. He thought his brethren would rally, and together they would march out and secure their freedom.

God had other plans. Moses fled. He considered himself a failure. He was looked upon as a failure. Out in the desert in Midian he herded sheep for forty years.

There, in a special sense, God undertook Moses' training. There Moses unlearned the wisdom of Egypt. There, instead of human reason, faith became to be the dominating thing in his life.

He reached the point where he would do anything God said no matter how unreasonable it looked. He learned to put aside the law of force and accept instead the law of love as the way to get things done. God let him learn that lesson on sheep and lambs. And when we think that his training in the military schools of Egypt made such an impression on his mind that it took him forty years to unlearn the law of force and learn the law of love, we can see the great importance of this principle as God sees it. We can see the tremendous hold that other principles get onto the minds of men.

If we ever sing the song of Moses we shall thoroughly unlearn all the principles of competition and human force in trying to beat the other fellow. The better the cause in which we are engaged the worse it is to use the weapons of hell. God does not need to borrow the armament of Satan to fight the battles of heaven.

When Moses had fully learned the way of the Lord and how to get things done, God called him to leave the sheep and take Israel. I suppose it must have been true over and over again that as Moses looked back upon it, hard as that experience in learning to deal with the sheep had been, he felt it was easy compared to dealing with Israel. That is always true when God is carrying on the experience of training a man.

God leads us from the easy to the more difficult. And when you and I thoroughly master the lessons of today we are ready for the lessons of tomorrow where the problems are harder and the lessons more difficult. That is why I feel so sorry when I see people trying to maneuver or whine or complain their way out of a hard situation. Oh, how many people think what a wonderful thing it would be if only they could get out of the hard problem they are in.

God is leading you, friends. He is going to help you solve the problem He has brought you face to face with, and then He is going to lead you into a more difficult problem to learn the sweet lesson of patience and resignation and trust that Moses learned out there in the desert of Midian with the sheep and lambs. We are going to see Moses some day and sing that song of experience with him that he learned to sing.

After Moses had been in the desert for forty years God met him at the burning bush and called him to Egypt to deliver His people. After a series of plagues upon Egypt, Israel was freed from bondage. They crossed the Red Sea and entered upon that long trip to the promised land of Canaan.

The particular thing I would like to study with you in the life of Moses is how Moses dealt with sin; how he dealt with the sin problem as he found it in the camp of Israel. In connection with that I want to study with you how Aaron dealt with it.

These two men were brothers. They had different ways of dealing with the problem of sin. We shall understand each man's methods best as we view them in contrast with each other, and in this contrast we will find very important lessons for ourselves today.

Each one of us here, if we will notice and observe, will find either in Aaron or in Moses our ideal, the type we feel represents the pattern of dealing with sin. I find a very interesting statement made by the apostle Paul. He is talking specifically about the children of Israel in the desert in the very time we are studying.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples:
and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the
ends of the world are come" 1 Corinthians 10:11.

The margin says "types". Are we the people upon which the ends of the world are come? Yes. Here is something that has been written for us. What is it? The experience of the children of Israel. And those things which happened to them happened for ensamples, or types. So when we study the experience of the children of Israel we are not just studying some history of what took place thousands of years ago. We are not just getting acquainted with some individuals who lived back there. We are studying examples for the remnant down here today.

Do you suppose that what Moses did back there will be done today? Yes. Do you suppose that what Aaron did back there will be done today? Yes. Do you suppose the different things the Israelites did back there either have been done or will be done today? Without a question. "All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Don't misunderstand me. That doesn't mean God made it necessary for us to make all the mistakes they made. In fact, He says He wrote it down to keep us from doing it.

"Now these things were our examples, to the intent we
should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.
Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is
written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose
up to play." 1 Corinthians 10:6-7.

We are not fatalists. We do not believe that anyone has to sin. Not at all. Those things were written down to keep us from following the wrong example.

Somebody asks, Is it idolatry to eat and drink and rise up to play?

Sometimes it is. And it is worthy to study what idolatry was and how God dealt with it; how Aaron related himself to the problem and how Moses related himself to it.

With this background let's go to Exodus 32 and 33. These two chapters tell the story that Paul is alluding to in the Scripture that I have just read.

Soon after the children of Israel left Egypt they came to Mount Sinai, and stayed for several months. God made a covenant with them there. They promised to do everything God said. They pledged to keep His law. God came down upon Mount Sinai, and with His own voice spoke the ten commandments which He later

gave to Moses, written with His finger upon the tables of stone. Not long after God spoke the law upon Mount Sinai He called Moses up into the mount. There He gave Moses the directions for making the sanctuary which was to be the place where God dwelt with Israel.

As far as I know, Moses didn't tell the people how long he was going to be up there in the mount. I don't know that he knew how long he was going to be up there. God didn't tell him. So the people had a time which to them was a time of delay.

What do we do when there seems to be a delay? Some people get restless with a delay of five minutes. They begin to find someone to blame. Other people can stand that long a delay, but when hours go by and lengthen into days, and things don't happen that they think ought to happen, then they get restless.

I have tried to imagine some of the conversations that took place in that camp. There were between one and two million people there. That is a lot of people to have in one place. Their leader was gone upon the mount, and they do not know when he is coming back. There is a cloud up there. Lightning is up there occasionally. They understand that God is up there. But days and weeks have gone by and not a word has been heard from Moses.

What are we going to do? Moses said he was going to take us to Canaan. It doesn't look like we are getting there. We are no nearer now than we were last week or the week before. We will never get anywhere on this program.

Was that a real problem to them? It must have been. I can imagine them coming around to Aaron and asking when Moses was coming back. What could Aaron say? I don't know. There is the trouble. The man in charge doesn't know anything either. A spirit like that can begin to permeate the camp. And so it did.

I can also imagine that some of the people began to say, We have got to do something for the young people. We have been out of Egypt for quite a while, and they are used to seeing things going on. It is true we had to work hard down there, but there was always something going on Saturday night. Out here in the desert there is nothing going on at all. Of course, we have had some religious meetings. We have had the covenant and the sacrifices, but that has been some time ago. Moses is gone, and there is nobody that has anything with any light in it. We have got to do something. Doubtless there were a great many ideas in discussion; a great deal of conversation.

Mark it: while Moses was talking to God the people were talking to one another. Oh, the difference in the result. Moses was listening to God and the people were listening to one another. Could they have been listening to God? Yes. Not in the same sense that Moses was up there on the mount, but had God given them enough to think about. Just a few weeks before God Himself had spoken to them from the mount. It was an experience no other people had ever had, or have ever had since. Certainly He had given them enough to study about and pray over.

How wonderful it would have been if they had gathered their families and studied and meditated on the ten commandments. How wonderful it would have

been if the complaining and murmuring and restlessness had been stilled by Aaron and by other leaders. But it was allowed to run. And the picture we get of it is that as the result of the delay the people finally came to Aaron and said get busy and do something.

"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" Exodus 32:1.

We are told Aaron was an agreeable man. He disliked controversy. In fact, he thought Moses was a bit too severe. He thought that if Moses would only be a bit more lenient with the people, a bit more willing to take suggestions and go along with their ideas, that things would be a great deal more peaceable.

Now he had his chance. Moses was gone and he was in charge, so he proceeded to carry out his philosophy. God had told them just a few weeks before not to make any graven images, but Aaron didn't say he would not do anything of the kind. Aaron was not that kind of man. Aaron was a meek, mild, agreeable man.

He had followed that program in his home. He didn't restrain his children. He was too nice, too kind, too loving to do anything like that. As a result his two boys were struck by the fire of God because they came into the sanctuary under the influence of wine and offered strange fire instead of the sacred fire that God had commanded. That was some of the fruit of his weak administration. That was the kind of man he was.

But he a great favorite. Everybody loved Aaron. Everybody had a good word for him. He wouldn't make enemies, you understand.

The people came to him and said, Make us gods. Aaron thought, what will I do. I am not going to do like Moses. I know pretty well what he would do, but I think Moses makes mistakes. I think he is too severe, too stern. I don't think they ought to make these gods, but if I tell them that the only way to get these gods is to bring all their gold earrings, they will say it is a bit too expensive. Maybe we had better get along without it. He counted on their pride and selfishness to keep them.

So he told them to brake off the gold earrings from their ears and their wives ears and their children's ears. He thought that would stop them. But he had not reckoned with the force of the time. He was amazed when they came bringing them by the bushel.

Have you ever worked with people and tried to get them to give up a tiny little ring on their finger? Have you ever seen the struggle some people go through to give up a little piece of jewelry? I have seen people who had to weep and pray to do it. But over a million of these people did it in just a few minutes. They were ready. It is amazing what people can do when they want to.

That is the secret. They wanted these idols. You might wonder why they wanted a senseless idol that could not speak or do anything, but when you see what happened you will understand it better. It wasn't just the idol they wanted. It was what went with it. They wanted something going on. They had been down in Egypt. They knew what happened when people worshipped gods. There was something doing. There was life.

So Aaron had the gold. He had gone too far to turn back. Meek and pliable as Aaron was, once he accepted the idea of the people he became a great leader, a mighty general. They all thought so, and Aaron went right to work to give leadership to that movement of apostasy. Aaron got in himself and helped. He had other workmen help, and pretty soon they had a great golden calf for the people to worship. As they looked at that calf there was a shout of triumph through the camp. "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Think of it. Giving glory to that ox; saying that golden calf had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They all knew it was just a bunch of earrings that had been melted down and molded into this thing.

Pleased with the way everything was going Aaron said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." Did that make it all right? Ah friends, putting a sacred label on a heathen custom doesn't make it holy. It makes it worse. You can read for yourself in *Counsels to Teachers*, page 350, 351 that there are some things that are very common today which the Spirit of God tells us are a repetition of this idolatry at Mount Sinai.

An experience that took place half way around the world in Australia at a school which was established as a pattern school. The principal of the school decided it would be a fine thing to have an anniversary celebration. They asked Sister White to speak to the students in the morning at the chapel, and she did. In the afternoon they had what is called a good time.

You can read about what they did. And unless you have studied these things, as you read it you might say, I don't see anything especially wrong about that. Everybody does that.

That's what the people thought about the golden calf. They had been living in a land where everybody worshipped the calf. They were used to it. What they were doing was just what they had seen all their lives. They probably said, After all, you have to have a little relaxation once in awhile. And if you do it in the name of religion, especially the religion of Jehovah, then surely it will be all right.

Counsels to Teachers says that the celebration in Australia was a repetition of what took place back there at Sinai. Literalism would say, What is Sister White talking about anyway? There was no golden calf down there at Avondale.

I repeat, the calf is not the whole thing. It is what goes with it. It is the excitement, the frivolity, the mirth, the gluttony, the eating and drinking, the singing, the dancing, the general high time. You can read about it in the Bible. You can also

read about it in that chapter in *Counsels to Teachers*, and how all those things lead to the breaking down of the barriers against self-indulgence.

It is really an intoxication both by way of the stomach and by way of the eye and ear. People can get drunk by what they see and hear as well as by what they eat and drink. All the avenues were being used at Sinai, and all the avenues are being used today. There is many a thing which is called a social gathering, a party, a picnic, an excursion which is a repetition of these same things.

Don't misunderstand me. There is true, genuine, Christian recreation, but it is as far apart as the poles from the thing we are studying. There is precious little of the true article. God's true program on recreation and amusements is just as different from the world as God's true Sabbath is different from the false sabbath.

As the children of Israel went on with the mirth and frivolity, intoxicated with eating and drinking and music and dancing, and went into the terrible things of idolatry, upon the mountain Moses was blissfully ignorant to all that was going on. God finally said to him:

"Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let M alone, that M wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" Exodus 32:7-10.

Moses did not say, It is too bad if that has to be, but perhaps that is all that can be done. It is good enough for them. They are a group of worldly compromisers. Let's clean them up and out. Let's have a real reform, and let's have people who follow the Spirit of Prophecy, and be done with all these worldly compromisers. No. Moses got down and pled for those people.

"And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever" Exodus 32:11-13.

Moses pled with God. He begged. God harkened to a man. God listened to a poor human being who loved those people so much that instead of wanting to see them destroyed, he wanted to see them saved.

With the assurance that God would be with him, Moses came down the mount. As he came where he could see what was going on, and as he saw that calf and the people dancing around it half naked, perhaps some of them entirely naked, the righteous anger of Moses rose so high that he took the tables of the law that he held in his hand and threw them down and broke them in token of the fact that they had broken their covenant with God. He strode into that camp and made his way to that idol. He pulled it off its pedestal and had it ground up into powder and threw it into the brook. The whole thing was destroyed. Then he summoned Aaron.

"And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?
And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot:
thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief"
Exodus 32:21-22.

Where did Aaron lay the blame? On the people. Oh friends, that is the sin of many a leader today. He is looking to the people instead of looking to God. Aaron believed in democracy, but Moses believed in Theocracy. That is the difference between the two men.

Aaron was listening to hear what the people thought. Moses was listening to hear what God thought. That made the difference in their attitudes. If everybody in the camp of Israel votes to make a golden calf, it doesn't make it right, neither does it make it right for a leader to yield to that sort of thing. Aaron was soundly and verbally whipped. He was reprov'd and rebuked by his younger brother, Moses, who was the appointed leader of Israel.

We should call attention to Aaron's excuse:

"And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire,
and there came out this calf" Exodus 32:24.

What a silly thing. It shows the length men will go to try to excuse their apostasy and compromise. Moses was not fooled by that, of course. He went the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me."

Read the story in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. At his right hand all who had not joined in the apostasy were to come. At his left hand those who had been worshipping the calf came weeping. And as the trumpet was blown all the camp was summoned to line up.

Moses called for action. He did not leave anyone to be neutral. They must either come on the right side and say they had not worshiped the calf, or come on the left side and repent and say they would not do it anymore, or else they stay in the camp and keep on with their revelry.

That man who had interceded for Israel on his face on the mount then issued the command by inspiration:

"And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor" Exodus 32:27.

That day three thousand men were slain. What would you have done if you had been there? What would have been your attitude? Which one of those leaders would you have approved?

Many a person would have said Aaron was wrong in worshipping the golden calf, but Aaron had the right spirit. Moses was right as far as sticking to the law of God and these reforms, but why couldn't he have been nicer about it? Why did he have to be so stern and strict?

That state of mind does not understand the character of God. I want to tell you, the people who sing the song of Moses upon the sea of glass will be misunderstood down here in this remnant of time just as Moses was misunderstood back there in the camp of Israel. There are golden calves that are being worshipped today as truly as that one was worshipped back there at the foot of Mount Horeb.

What do we think about it? Have we gotten so used to it that we say everybody is doing these things? Study the *Testimonies*. Find out what God expects in diet, dress, recreation, amusement, courtship, marriage, education, and in every other phase of life. God has not told us these things for naught.

When we forsake the word of God and the testimony of His Spirit, when we do things like the Egyptians do, sooner or later Moses must come. And when he comes some men are not going to understand his spirit. There will always be pliant Aarons who do what the people want, and defend and excuse and compromise. As the result, thousands of Israel will be cut off today as they were back there. Which spirit are you going to partake of, Aaron or Moses?

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" Exodus 32:30.

We see Moses treading that rocky path up to the height of Mount Sinai again. What is he going up there for? To try to get forgiveness for Israel.

"And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold" Exodus 32:31.

This is the same man that destroyed the calf the day before. This is the same man who summoned Aaron to that stiff and stern reprimand. This is the same man that told the Levies to gird their swords on and slay utterly everyone who persisted in idolatry. Listen while he pleads with God.

"Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin ——; if not, blot me,
I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written"
Exodus 32:32.

Ah friends, who loved the people the most? Aaron, with his time serving compromise, or Moses? You know. Can you sing the song of Moses? Do you love people enough to die for them? Do you love them enough to tell them the truth, to try to help them give up their wicked ways? In the light of this study we see that love is no cheap sentimentalism, no weak coddling, no yielding on the part of parents to children, teachers to students, church leaders to those who want to bring in the world. That is not love, it is weakness. True love is in the heart of the man that pleads with God on the mount and comes down to the camp and gets some action; who cleans up those who will clean up, and cleans out the others, and then goes back on the mountain to plead with God for forgiveness for his nation, his people, his church.

When the prophet, Ezekiel, had a view of the last hour, he saw the angel going from home to home in Jerusalem with instruction from heaven to set a mark on the foreheads of men who sigh and cry for the abominations that are done. It is a miracle of God to get the sternness and love of Moses all into one heart at the same time. There are people who would like to copy his sternness, and all they succeed in doing is making fools of themselves. There are others who try to copy his meekness and love, and many times all they succeed in doing is making good imitations of Aaron.

We are told that love and kindness are worth nothing without the discipline God has said should be maintained. If there is one thing I long for and pray for it is to get these two things together. What do you say?

A great love for righteousness and a great hatred for iniquity. A spirit to exalt the standard and a spirit to give up our lives rather than see others lost. When that spirit has gripped our hearts, we shall be ready for the finishing of the work, and ready to sing the song of Moses on the sea of glass.

Notice that in our opening text it is coupled with the song of the Lamb. Jesus too loved righteousness and exalted His Father's love. Jesus too taught and followed and practiced strict obedience. Jesus, like Moses, offered His life, and far infinitely beyond Moses, Jesus gave His life.

God could not accept the sacrifice of Moses' life as an atonement for anyone else, but God could, and did accept the sacrifice of His Son as the atonement for the sins of His people. Just as Moses made the offer that those Israelites might be delivered from sin, so Jesus gave His life, not that we might linger on in compromise and worldliness, but that He might be able to present to Himself a glorious church not having spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing.

Our heavenly Father, we thank Thee that all these things happened unto them for ensamples; that they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come. As the spirit of worldliness and worldly conformity invades and

permeates, grant that we shall have the spirit of Moses to resist it rather than the spirit of Aaron to compromise with it. Teach us to not only love righteousness, but to hate iniquity. And with it, Lord, give us that deep love for Thy people, Thy church, that we would rather be blotted out ourselves than see Israel lost. Give us the spirit of the tender shepherd that our own lives may be lost sight of in our burden for the lives and souls of others.

Oh, my Lord, only Thou can give the Spirit, and we pray for it. Help us to see Jesus the great Savior, the great leader giving His life that men might be saved from sin; giving His life that His church might be washed white and clean.

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