

Getting Ahead of God

Acts 7:23–29

23 “Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. 25 For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. 26 And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’ 27 But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?’ 29 Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.

Moses has been raised in the household of Pharaoh and has had the advantages that go along with that. We are told by Josephus that this Pharaoh had only one child, his daughter and the daughter had no children beside Moses.

It would seem then that Moses was in line to sit upon the throne. From there he could free his people or at least lessen their burdens. It would seem that providence had smiled upon him and Israel.

He has had a number of years to think about that. And so he goes down to see how things are going with the Israelites. There he sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. So he strikes the Egyptian and buries him in the sand.

But the next day when he comes out again, this time he sees a Hebrew mistreating a fellow Hebrew. So he asks why he would do a thing like that. The Hebrew shows contempt for Moses and reveals that his secret is out. So Moses flees for his life.

His career as deliverer has come to an end. I am sure that to Moses it seems that he is finished. He is thinking how can this be. I was in the perfect place to deliver my people but now that is finished. I’ll bet he’s thinking how could I have been so wrong.

So he spends the next 40 years on the backside of the desert raising sheep.

So what went wrong? Well primarily, Moses got ahead of God. How does that happen to us?

- I. We get ahead of God when we see things only from our own perspective.
 - A. Moses saw himself as a deliverer but that would never be.
 - 1. God would be the deliverer, while Moses was simply a servant.
 - 2. You see, if Moses would have delivered them he would have gotten the credit.
 - 3. But when God delivered them He did it with might power that only God could claim.

- B. Since this is Palm Sunday we need to say that the disciples were in this condition.
 - 1. They saw the great throngs of people praising Jesus.
 - 2. They were no doubt caught up in the celebration.
 - 3. But they were looking at it all from their prospective.
 - a. How would this affect them?
 - b. What standing would they have in this coming kingdom?
 - c. Which one of them would be the greatest?
 - 4. Just because you have a multitude, does not mean that it is of God.
 - 5. Some of the most successful movements of history have been completely anti-God.

- II. Moses was looking for man and not God for guidance.
 - A. Notice that before killing the Egyptian, he looked this way and that.
 - 1. "looked this way and that way." This action teaches a deep practical lesson to all the servants of God. There are two things by which it is super-induced, namely, the fear of man's wrath, and the hope of man's favor. The servant of the living God should neither regard the one nor the other. CHM
 - 2. Concerning Jesus C.H McIntosh said, "When we turn away our eyes from man, and fix them upon the only true and perfect Servant, we do not find Him looking this way and that way, for this simple reason, that He never had His eye upon men, but always upon God. He feared not the wrath of man, nor sought his favor. He never opened His lips to elicit human applause, nor kept them closed to avoid human censure. This gave holy stability and elevation to all He said and did. Of Him alone could it be truly said, "His leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Everything He did turned to profitable account, because everything was done to God. Every action, every word, every movement, every look, every thought, was like a beauteous cluster of fruit, sent up to refresh the heart of God. He was never afraid of the results of His work, because He always acted with and for God, and in the full intelligence of His mind. His own will, though divinely perfect, never once mingled itself in aught that He did, as a man, on the earth. He could say, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." Hence, He brought forth fruit "in its season. " He did "always those things which pleased the Father," and therefore never had any occasion to "fear," to "repent," or to "look this way and that way." CHM
 - B. When we put our interests above those of God it will not turn our well and we cannot be said to be doing the will of God, but our own.

- III. We get ahead of God by misunderstanding the will or timing of God.
 - A. Moses supposed that it was time.
 - 1. He was ready.
 - 2. He was in the prime of his life.
 - 3. He thought he was fully educated and trained.
 - B. The disciple did not know the timing of God.
 - 1. They could never have conceived the plan of God.
 - 2. Although Jesus had told them time and time again.
 - 3. But you see they were not listening because He was not saying what they wanted to hear.
 - a. There is a danger for all of us in this.
 - b. We often do not listen to God unless He is saying what we want to hear.
 - c. And we just interpret what God is doing by our own desires.
 - 4. That is what the disciples were doing.
 - 5. They thought it was their time.
 - 6. They thought they were in the right place.
 - 7. Oh what plans they had, but they were not God's plans.
 - C. Now it is true that God's plans for us are much better and even greater than the one we have thought up ourselves.
 - 1. Moses thought that he would deliver the Hebrews by his mighty hand.
 - 2. But it was God's mighty had that would accomplish His Own will.
 - 3. Ex 7:3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. 4 But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. 5 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them."
 - 4. Ex 14:17 And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. 18 Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

IV. Providence is not an infallible guide.

- A. Nature will constantly regard such openings as warrants for self-indulgence; whereas faith will find in them opportunities for self-denial. Jonah might have deemed it a very remarkable opening of providence to find a ship going to Tarshish; but, in truth, it was an opening through which he slipped off the path of obedience. CHM
- B. God's promise to His child is, "I will guide thee with Mine eye" (Ps. 32:8). His warning is, "Be not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." It is much better to be guided by our Father's eye than by the bit and bridle of circumstances; and we know that, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, "providence" is only another word for the impulse of circumstances. CHM