

Undiscovered Self (2)

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In Moses', more than in any other life, is the necessity of self-exposure clearly seen. How complete was his consecration; rank, wealth, pleasure, coolly and deliberately rejected for the greater honor of suffering affliction with the people of God, and the greater riches of the reproach of Christ. The Scriptures contain no more magnificent description of a dedicated life than Hebrews 11:24-26. yet that same man was a helpless fugitive a few weeks later, his plans for leading Israel out of their bondage shattered to a thousand bits. No power in that consecration! One might surely have thought that God would stand by such a man and scatter his enemies. But no. It was his enemies that scattered him. It had to be. For not even God Himself can be the strength of a man, not even God Himself can lead him forward in triumph, until that false usurper, who has planted himself in every man's heart since the fall, is cast out. Moses had his sin and left the world, but he hadn't left himself. "Learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, mighty in words and in deeds, he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them." Exactly. Moses had one enemy left, one hindrance to power, and that was—Moses.

And so, with Jacob and Joseph and many another, he had to tread the long, long trail of self-exposure, out in his case to the backside of the desert, to do the one job which an Egyptian execrated—shepherding. Truly the way to God is down, not up. It lies through the valley of humiliation. Blessed valley. It leads to the heights, but is the only trail to them.

But, as with other, Moses could take it. For these are not lessons for the rebellious. They are the secret things to be learned only by the whole-hearted. So when the winds blow and the floods come, the house is seen to be founded on a rock, the rock of a genuine surrender. If God wills it so, well, it all seems utter confusion to a Joseph or Moses, but painful though it is, they accept it. For them it is God first, at any price. Though He say them, they will trust in Him; and the key to those forty years which Moses spent in the desert was the statement that he "was a

content to dwell with the man (Jethro)" So God could work in that yielded, puzzled heart, and every shred of the flesh could be cauterized in those lonely years of heart searching. True, faith did not die, the faith that God could and would deliver His people, but faith in himself had its thorough funeral.

Then came the moment, the revelation of the permanent presence of the I AM, in the fire that never went out, the commission to a shrinking Moses (how changed from forth years before), the provision of the rod of faith. In one day the pygmy within had become a giant without, whereas forty years ago the seeming giant within was proved to be a pygmy without. God had joined Himself to that humbled, finite self. There was now room for Him. He, who is really always there in all the resources of the I AM, could not then be seen and felt and known, for a self-sufficient ego filled the foreground. Now the vision was cleared—not I, but Jehovah, the I AM, the all-sufficient. Now, that brilliant brain and that character trained to leadership was available for God, for the purpose for which He had instruments in brain and hand long before they know Him, that in the fullness of time lifted out of themselves and into Him, these years of training and special abilities might be put to the use of His Kingdom. Did not God say to the young Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations"; and to Paul, that it was God who had separated him from his mother's womb and called him by His grace?

What a man came back from Midian to Egypt! A child with in simple and humble dependence upon God, but a "god" without; the fugitive became a pursuer; a leader, rejected in the tinsel display of his own superiority, now revered and followed in the anointing of the Holy Spirit; a man who could not find enough power in his God to save him from the first threat of danger, now wielding all heaven's resources to rescue a nation, paralyze an opposing empire, feed two million for forth years, and give them moral laws which have been the foundation of a world civilization.

We must hasten on, passing by many an outstanding character whose history teaches the same lesson. There was *Joshua*, learning his first lesson against the Amalekites that his

own generalship was not enough; then descending from commanding an army to being Moses' servant for forty years; then coming to his life's crisis his brook Jabbok, on the return of the twelve spies, when he decided, after a night's hesitation, that God, not human opinion, was to be his trust (for this was doubtless the reason why, on their first report to Moses, only Caleb protested against their pessimistic outlook; but a day later was joined by Joshua in his isolated stand); and, finally knowing his God and doing exploits from the death of Moses onward, God now using his natural gifts of military leadership purged from their self-sufficient bias. Then we have *David*, holy in his youth like Joseph, daring in his boyhood faith, performer as a young man of a national exploit of faith as magnificent as any in history, and showing all the evidences of one who has found the key to the proper use of faith. But not really so. The fierce fires of testing through Saul soon found him wanting and showed that the same old enemy, in David, had to be exposed and dealt with, as in all the rest. David took charge, not God, as he listened to Michal's panicky advice (it was Abraham and Sarah over again); fugitive in a cave for eight years, the heart knew its own bitterness, till, once for all, David gave his self up, died and rose again, as in that hour of desperate distress at Ziklag he turned from his own tears and fears to "encourage himself in the Lord his God". A new David mounted the throne a few weeks later. Not David indeed who could not fall, that is another matter for later examination, but a David whose reign to the glory of God has been unequalled in history.

Think of Elisha, so happy in his youthfull consecration, making a farewell feast before he left all to follow Elijah; and Elisha, twelve years later, a desperate seeker and suppliant. For what? The spirit of Elijah. Those intervening years had shown him that consecration was not enough. He must know the secret of Elijah's power with God, if he was to be Elijah's successor. In other words, self-confidence had to die. In desperation he sought: "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave him." And God meets the desperate. The heavenly vision was opened to him, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel had the housemen thereof." He learned and grasped his resources in the lord of hosts, and the bewildered seeker became the ready

dispenser of the grace and power of God. The one who saw the chariots of the Lord at Elijah's departure lived in that ever-present reality, and could at once see them around him without effort, fear or doubting, in beleaguered Dothan. "Alas, master, what shall we do?" cries out his terrified servant. "Fear not," at once he answers, for "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." "Lord, open the young man's eyes that he may see." And he saw "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha". Here is the inner victory, the birth and progress of a faith that overcomes the world.

The New Testament is not so prodigal in vivid character sketches as the Old; but two or three teach us just the same truths. It is most interesting to note that the early days of the Savior, perfect Man as well as God, give the same indication of a definite attitude that had to be taken towards self; though, in His case, of course, "without sin"; and this fact in itself is an interesting pointer to the truth that the human self is not sin, only the poisoned, fallen of unregenerate man—a truth we probe into later. We read that He "increased in wisdom and stature," and that He "waxed strong in spirit," indicating that in all three realms—spirit, soul (mind) and body—there was growth. A stage in that development was plainly the scene of the visit to Jerusalem, the three days spent with the Rabbis in the temple, and the surprised exclamation to his parents: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Clearly it had not occurred to Him that He was offending and giving anxiety to those whose charge He still was. To Him, the Father's business was all that mattered, but in came the warning note. Does that "must" come from the Father? Has the divine call yet come for the public ministry? Without hesitation, without a moment's inner conflict, He rendered perfect obedience, returned with His parents, was "subject unto them" another eighteen years. He "learned obedience." He worked out as a Man the perfect submission and interaction of the self-life with its true Indweller. He went the way of probation and self-abnegation that Adam failed to go, which was to have had its consummation at the Tree of Life. By Him, that was realized in the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove upon Him. It was the full sunlight of realized union. "This is my beloved Son." "I and My Father are One." "The Spirit

of the Lord is upon Me." And, in the glorious ministry which followed, no emphasis of His was stronger than upon the fact that "the Son can do nothing of Himself;" "I came not of Myself". Always it was "The Father that sent me," "He that sent me," "I do always those things that please Him." Total self-emptying, total God-filled: and, in that holy and perfect relationship, the greatest life was lived in three years that ever has been, or can be, lived; the greatest words spoken, the greatest death died. How plainly the lesson comes home; self-realization begins, continues and ends with self-emptying.

Peter, the last we look at, was a plain instance. How wholehearted was his consecration: "Lo, we gave left all;" "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." "Peter, Peter, you don't know yourself; you don't see that self-confidence is your snare and downfall. You must learn by disaster. But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." The same old trouble, undiscovered self, and it took a bib crash to bring the face home. But, there again, as with the other men of old, Peter's heart was in the right place. If he failed momentarily, he still loved; and because he loved, he wept bitterly. The lesson was learned, a chastened Peter came forth; and when the Holy Ghost fell, He could take that warm heart, that bold tongue, that courageous spirit, freed now from self, and use it as His mouthpiece to the world.