

Power With God Exemplified in Moses

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores Moses' role as a mediator and the profound commitment required to align with God's purpose for His people.

Scripture: Exodus 32:31-32, Numbers 14:11-20, Deuteronomy 1:9, 2 Kings 2:2, Jeremiah 15:1, Matthew 5:14-16, Luke 23:34, Romans 9:3, Ephesians 5:25, Hebrews 11:24-27

Topics: "Intercession", "Commitment to God's Purpose"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the profound relationship between God and Moses, illustrating how Moses' deep commitment to God's purpose exemplifies true power with God. He argues that Moses, despite his human frailties, stood in intercession for the people of Israel, demonstrating a heart aligned with God's intentions and a willingness to sacrifice his own standing for their sake. This relationship reveals that God seeks individuals who are utterly devoted to His purpose, not merely to the work of ministry, but to the people involved. Sparks challenges the congregation to reflect on their own commitments and the depth of their love for God's people, urging them to embody the same heart of responsibility and love that Moses displayed. Ultimately, he calls for a generation of believers who are committed to God's purpose in the Church, emphasizing that true service is born from love and a shared destiny with God's people.

Transcript

Reading: Exodus 32:31,32; 11-14; Numbers 14:11-20.

"Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind would not be toward this people" (Jer. 15:1).

God Seeking To Make A Man Utterly One With Himself

"Though Moses.... stood before Me." We have to get right into the heart of this matter as quickly as we can, and it seems to me that the best way of doing that is first of all to look at this God who is presented in these passages. What impression does it all make upon you when you see a man, who himself is shown to be a man of weaknesses and imperfections and human frailty, seeming to exhibit more patience than the Lord with whom he is dealing, and trying to persuade the Lord to be gracious, to be merciful, not to be 'unChristian', not to be so impatient, and not to be so revengeful, so swift and utter in His judgments? How does that impress you? It almost looks as though Moses is, in grace and character, superior to God. It almost appears that Moses is trying to bring God up to a higher standard. That is how it looks. Taken just

by themselves, lifted clean out of the whole Bible and context, such passages of Scripture would put God among the gods of the heathen - cruel, swift to anger, needing to be appeased from His wrath, and persuaded to be kind. But, of course, you all shrink from such an ideal. There arises in you, perhaps, something of indignation that one should even say such a thing, but I want to get into the heart of this thing as quickly as I can, and I think that is the best way of doing it.

Is that the Lord? Is that the true position? Is it really a fact that Moses had more of those graces than God had, and had to win God over to his side, to his point of view, to his position? Was it true? No, not in the slightest, not for a moment! Oh, but here it is! Here is God saying that He is going to do something, He is going to blot them out and destroy them, and Moses comes along and says: 'No, don't, Lord! If You do that, You see what it means. First of all, the Egyptians will hear about it and they will say: "See the kind of God that they have! He is one who starts on a thing and finds He cannot carry it through, and so has to wipe it all out" - the God whom we have declared the only true God above all! They will say it just is not true, that is all. He is not the only God, and He is not any better than any other god.' Can you imagine for a moment, while Moses argues with the Lord like that and presents the situation, the Lord saying: 'I had not thought of that, Moses! That is a new idea. Thank you for reminding Me! You have saved Me.' - Moses saving the Lord from getting into trouble and disgrace with the nations of the world! Do you accept that? It looks like it, does it not? No, we cannot have it. There must be some other explanation, for that is not it. Then what is it? Well, it is just this. The Lord is Himself taking that line deliberately in order to get this man over to His side. The Lord had no intention of blotting this people out, or disinheriting them. He said: 'Let me...', but Moses said: 'No, I will not let you' - and that is the point. The Lord wanted to get this man to the position where he was so truly one with the Lord's deepest intention that he could not entertain the slightest suggestion that God should not stand up to His Name, His honour, and carry through His purpose. You will notice all the way through the Bible that that sort of thing is happening. What is He doing? He is out to make a man so utterly one with Him as an absolute necessity for the realization of His purpose.

You see, MAN is involved in this. This is a great heart principle of redemption. God could have dispensed with all instrumentalities and mediators and intercessors and go-betweens, and Himself, sovereignly from heaven, acted directly and have done the whole thing. He could have done it, but that is not the principle, and that is not the way. The whole Bible comes in to show and to prove that, man himself being involved in this, it requires a Man to redeem man. We sing the hymn: "A final Adam to the fight, and to the rescue came." The Man Himself, Christ Jesus, the redeeming Kinsman, the Mediator - that is the principle. Moses is called the 'mediator of the covenant'. Moses, the mediator, had to be in that position where, on the one hand, he was so truly one in heart with God's purpose, and, on the other hand, so truly one in heart with the object of God's purpose, that he brought the One who purposed and the object of the purpose together in his own person. He took the hand of God and the hand of man and brought them together in his own person. That is the whole work of the Lord Jesus, and the principle is here. God is testing this man in the same way as Elijah tested Elisha: "Tarry here... for the Lord hath sent me as far as Bethel. And Elisha said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel... And Elijah said to him, Tarry here... for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (II Kings 2). Elijah was apparently trying to shake this man off, but was really testing him because of something tremendous in view. He had already cast his mantle upon Elisha, who was to come into the good of that mantle on Elijah's ascension and do greater works than Elijah had done, but he is going to suffer a tremendous testing. But he went on and refused to be put off.

God is working on that principle with Moses. 'Let Me destroy this people, disinherit them.' Supposing Moses had said: 'All right!', what sort of mediator would he have been? And, mark you, the point is this - that God would have lost the essential basis of His work and purpose, and the essential basis was a man whose heart was so deeply and terribly in this matter that he himself would rather perish and lose all than that, on the one hand, God's Name should be dishonoured and, on the other hand, God's purpose should not be fulfilled.

That is a ground of power with God - a tremendous thing! He is saying: 'Oh, I acknowledge it, I perfectly agree and I make no excuses for them. "This people have sinned a great sin." It is quite true. "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-".' He does not finish... "And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Could anything be more utter than that? 'You disinherit THEM and You disinherit ME. I have nothing to live for. I do not want to go on in life at all if you disinherit them.' What a oneness! And that is the kind of thing that God requires in order to do His great things. You notice that God went on and did His great things because He had that ground. That ground prevailed with God again and again. And the Lord said: "I have pardoned according to thy word." ... "And the Lord repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people." That is only a way of putting it. God said: 'All right, I will not do it - ACCORDING TO THY WORD'.

Absolute Oneness With God's Purpose

Where do we begin, then, with this? It begins here. Moses had become, in heart, deeply one with God's purpose concerning His people. God had indicated and intimated what His purpose was concerning this people. Moses quotes that to the Lord: 'Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and what You said.' He has become one with God in His purpose concerning His people, he has seen what that purpose was, his heart has espoused the Divine purpose for the people of God, and he has involved himself in that utterly and without a reservation. For him his eternal destiny is bound up with that and he has nothing else to look for, or hope for if that fails.

I expect you are wondering what that has to do with us! How does it apply to us? It is all very true about Moses, but I think this indicates something to us of what the Lord's will and desire is, and also it is a searching and challenging word. If God, for the realization of His purpose, must have an instrument or instruments (personal or corporate) like this, because He has bound Himself to this kind, and cannot get on with it without such instruments, may it not explain why the coming of the Lord's people to the inheritance, to the fullness of Christ, the attainment of the Church unto the glorious purpose of the ages in which it is called, is so retarded and delayed, and why there is something wrong in this respect? Dear friends, this, to me, is a most searching thing. It has searched my heart tremendously as I have dwelt upon it. It is not just some Bible teaching; this is something which will search us very deeply. What are we committed or devoted to?

God Needs Those Committed To His Purpose In And Through The Church

Shall we go back a step before that and say: are we committed? Are we devoted? Here is a company of the Lord's people; not a large company but a representative company, and sufficient to stand right here before the Lord to meet this challenge and to hear it said in the Name of the Lord that the Lord needs people like this, constituted on this-wise, like Moses. He absolutely needs them. He cannot get on with His work until He has this at His command - people who stand in this relationship to Him, to His purpose and to His people, those who are the people of the eternal purpose. God must have people like this, men and

women who have seen God's purpose concerning the Church and who know what that purpose is.

It is not just a matter of doctrine, teaching, or Bible study. God needs people who have seen it in their hearts. And then He needs such people who, having seen it, are committed up to the hilt to it without any reservations. God is needing such people, committed utterly to Him for His purpose in relation to His people, the Church. Have you seen? What is it that you are doing? This is where I think the thing is so searching and challenging. There are many people of God who are committed to the work. I am not asking you if you are committed to Christian work or Christian service. That is not what I am after at all. There are any number of people who are up to their eyes in Christian work. Let the work test them out, and they will resign from the work. Let the conditions become too hard, and they withdraw from the work, or they will change their sphere of work, or the nature of their work for the Lord. It is the work. The work has an appeal. Oh, the appeal that is made for the work of the Lord, and how appealing it is made to be! The romance of it all, the fascination of it all, the idea of realizing something, expressing yourself, of being in the work, is the force of the appeal.

Moses is not there. Ask him about the work! He would say: 'Oh, may the Lord have mercy upon me and deliver me from the "work!"' Moses said he was not able to bear the people (Deut. 1:9), and that is the 'work'. Moses was not interested in, or concerned with the 'work'; he was concerned with a people for the realization of God's purpose. We can get this abstract idea of the 'work' of the Lord. We do not stay to define it, but, somehow or other, it is something we get into. We come up against difficult people and we begin to despise and criticize them. We think of them according to their natural constitutions and put them into 'pigeonholes' - 'THIS is a worthwhile person, THIS is not.' There is all this sort of thing - human judgments about people. We have no room for certain people. All that, however, is false to this principle. No people on God's earth have ever been more difficult than Israel! Yes, all that you can say about the Jews is true, and yet look at this man! It is not the work; it is the people. He loves the people and his heart is bound up with them. Oh, what a people - and yet the marvel of this love for them! Not the WORK, but the people, just as they were and as bad as they were. He put his whole destiny at stake for that people. Why? Because he saw that God's purpose was bound up with the people and not with the work and not with organization.

It is challenging! What am I committed to? Is it a ministry, or a teaching? Am I interested in the teaching of the Church, this teaching and that teaching, this kind of work and that, and this kind of ministry and that? The people may be another thing. Do you see the point? You can divide between those two things. You can be thoroughly in your work, in your ministry, in your teaching, in your system of things - but the people! There is something else when you really come to think about it. How much pains are you going to take with the people? How much are you going to give yourself to the people, to THAT difficult one, and THAT difficult one, and THAT awkward one, those who show so little response to it all, those who turn upon you when your heart is really burdened and say: "Who made you a ruler?" That is what they did. And when Moses went to them in Egypt, they turned against him. We sing: "From Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand" - all wanting you to come. If only you will go to China they will all rush to you and be saved. Go and see! They will begin to stone you.

Well now, what about the people? Moses met that affront on the very first movement into Egypt to bring out the people. God needs those amongst us who are not interested in teaching, and orders, and Christian work as such. It can all be so abstract and can all be a fool's paradise when you come up against facts. God needs those who are right in this thing for His purpose, and who will meet the affront and the discouragement, and who will not suffer the shock of disillusionment because they have been building

'castles in the air' about the Lord's work. Those who know that this is a life and death matter, that it is going to cost everything, and they are in it to that degree. They have no illusions. "I know this people have sinned a great sin." You do not make any excuses for them, but nevertheless your purpose is bound up with this 'bad lot'. 'I am committed to the purpose.' That is what the Lord was trying to get.

You can follow it through to His Son, the inclusive, supreme example of this very thing. Oh, He has given all, and He has been cast out by those for whom He had given all and for whom He had left the glory. What is the end? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). His heart still yearns. He is not invoking Divine judgment upon them because He is a disillusioned and disappointed man, and they had not responded. His heart is in this.

Hear Paul! "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake" (Rom. 9:3). That is the sort of thing. It is that that has power with God. That is why Moses, to speak after the manner of men, caused God to repent, changed the mind of God. It is not true when you know the real truth, but that is how it looked. He had that power with God. God said: "According to thy word."

What are we committed to? Are we committed to the interests of the Lord like that? Have we seen His purpose concerning the Church? Are we in it? - and do remember that the appeal is for servants of God. Two great titles used more of Moses than of anyone else are these: Moses, 'the man of God', and Moses, 'the servant of God'. Outstandingly Moses carries those twin titles: 'The man of God', and 'Moses My servant'. The Lord is wanting men of God, servants of the Lord.

But this is the nature of service. I do not ask you to come and give yourself to the work of the Lord, to go out and begin to organize Christian work here and there, near and far, and to do this and that and other things for the Lord. The appeal is: the Lord needs people, not necessarily to go out in the romance of missionary service, but just where they are to be committed right up to the hilt to the Lord's own honour as bound up with His purpose in the Church and through the Church, and upon whose hearts in the first place is the Church. I am very emphatic and careful in saying that - in the first place, the Church. If only that were recognized there would be a very great deal of difference in the situation today. God's instrument of evangelization is the Church. God's means of realizing His purpose is the Church. The Church has been ignored, and the thing has been attempted on a wide scale without the Church. The result is, for one thing, a terrible failure to accomplish the purpose, and you have to say that in a large degree the Church has failed. And what about the type of Christian that exists? A vast number of converts do not go on very far. You cannot leave them alone. You have to hold them up, support them, and put them on crutches all the time. And so you find that, whenever people try to organize an evangelistic campaign, they have to start with getting the Church right. Very often the whole thing resolves itself into a mission to Christians first.

Israel was not an end in itself. If Israel failed, if God let Israel fail, or let Israel go, the nations would be lost. But by means of Israel being kept and strengthened and built up, and moved on, the nations will be compelled to confess that God is in the midst of them and God is with them. That is Moses' argument: God is amongst you, and this is the kind of God He is. That is revealed by a people living in the good of Divine fullness.

Responsibility Born Of Love

What does it amount to? It just amounts to this: coming into a place of the responsibility born of love. Not busy responsibility, nor official responsibility, but the responsibility born of love. It is the responsibility which a mother feels for a child, a parent for a child, and a parent's sense of responsibility for a child is not

a business responsibility, nor an official responsibility, but a heart responsibility. The heart is bound up with this. Will you not agree with me that the most terrible and tragic thing of which we can conceive is a parent without a sense of responsibility for his or her children? And here the relationship between Moses and Israel was the responsibility born of love. Something had been wrought deep down in the soul of Moses, so that he and the people were one in life, and one in destiny. It was a great love.

"Christ... loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it" (Eph. 5:25). There is a relationship there which is the deepest, most sacred of all the relationships God has ever created: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church." Moses loved Israel; Christ loved the Church. And if you want to see all that summed up in few words, you have only to look at Hebrews 11 and read: "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." That is the first thing about Moses - he refused. "CHOOSING rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Refusing all the honour, reputation, status, resources, and choosing, definitely choosing, to be evil-entreated with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. "Accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." ... "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible." Just make a sum of those words: He refused, he chose, he accounted, he forsook, he endured. There is a heart in something. It is a HEART that is the ground of power with God. That is the kind of servant that the Lord needs, concerning whom He can say: 'If Moses stood before Me... Moses My servant'.

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