

Moses, Paragon* of Self-Denial. Heb. 11:24-26.

Sunday, August 13, 2006

“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.” Heb. 11:24-26.

*(Paragon: a model or pattern of something good)

John Owen (1616-1683): “The work of faith in all ages of the church, as unto its nature, efficacy, and method of its actings, is uniform and the same. They had not of old a faith of one kind, and we of another. This in general is the design of the apostle to prove in this whole chapter (Hebrews, Chapter 11).”

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.” Jn. 8:56.

The first acting of saving faith – “the faith of God’s elect” (Tit. 1:1) – upon the first rumblings of the irresistible call from “him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3) – is SELF-DENIAL. Moses “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” – in what is probably the greatest recorded instance of SELF-DENIAL since the foundation of the world:

Matt. 16:24-25 – “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him DENY HIMSELF, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” Thus you see, that he who does not deny himself and take up his cross and follow Christ will lose his soul, i.e., be cast into Hell.

“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.”

Suffering affliction for the cause of God and truth in the earth is not a lone wolf affair. It is done “with the people of God,” who are noteworthy by being despised and rejected by all mankind – foolish, weak, base, despised nobodies. (1 Cor. 1:28). Ergo, it is at your soul’s peril if you fail to accurately identify just exactly who these “people of God” are – AND JOIN

THEM. They are not hard to identify. They are universally hated, and the hatred is irrationally passionate. They are described over and over in the Psalms. Crying out to God for relief from the wrath of their enemies, who are their enemies wrongfully and without cause and who are more than the hairs of their heads for multitude. They are identified in Hebrews Chapter 11, and a compendium is given at the end of the chapter: Heb. 11:33-38.

The "affliction" these "people of God" suffer is a word only used here. It is a strong word. It signifies to be vexed and pressed with things evil and grievous. It is a much stronger word than the word "affliction" is commonly understood to be. Owen: "to be pressed, vexed, distressed with things evil, burdensome, destructive to nature."

There is contained in this title - "the people of God" - that which is infinitely above all things that may be enjoyed in this world, and which inexpressibly outbalances all afflictions. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." 1 Jn. 3:1.

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." He could no longer straddle that fence.

For full 40 years (the years of gusto and relish in a man "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians...mighty in words and in deeds" - Acts 7:22) Moses had increasingly embraced the Hebrew race and religion, while legitimately enjoying the benefits of his royal estate. But the time came in the sovereign wisdom of God when he could no longer enjoy these outward benefits ("the treasures in Egypt") without committing the greatest sin imaginable; namely, the neglect of the only great duty incumbent on all mankind; to wit: the open, bold profession of faith in the one true God and the one true religion on the one hand, and persecuting the church of God ("the people of God") on the other.

The church, in all its distresses, is ten thousand times more honorable than any other society of men in the world - indeed, than all others combined. It is - exclusively - "the people of God." Their being so, and professing and avowing themselves so to be, is that which provokes the world against them, and which is the cause of all their persecutions. The world cannot endure to hear a company of poor, despised persons take to themselves and own this glorious title of "the people of God." Other things they pretend against them, as the Egyptians did against the Israelites; namely, that whereas they are a people who have a peculiar interest of their own, there is danger of sedition from them against the state, Exod. 1:9-10. This is the usual pretence. The true cause of their rage is "the people of God" claiming their exclusive right to such a title.