

“WORKING IN THE FLESH OR WORKING IN THE SPIRIT?”

Acts 7:17-34

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INTRODUCTION

We walk by faith, and not by sight as we saw in vv. 1-14. But there is another very important spiritual principle that we must not forget: *we must not walk in the flesh but must walk in the Spirit.*

Moses learned this most important principle the hard way when he first attempted to deliver God’s people in the flesh—his way—and then later after a long time of spiritual discipline he was able to deliver God’s people in the power of the Spirit.

This passage shows us:

We must do God’s work in God’s way, depending upon God’s power.

Here we see the *desperation* of God’s people, the *deliverer* that God raised up for His people, and the actual *deliverance*—first by the attempt to deliver God’s people through ***the flesh***, then the successful deliverance through the power of ***the Spirit***.

I. THE DESPERATION OF GOD’S PEOPLE (17-19)

- A. The real promise
- B. The real problem

This was a time of desperation; desperate measures were needed! Surely, someone who could deliver God’s people needed to rise up. Yet, from another perspective, the mistreatment was good for God’s people—*otherwise they might have grown content and comfortable in Egypt.*

II. THE DELIVERER OF GOD’S PEOPLE (20-22)

It was not an accident that Moses was born at this time—God was taking action on behalf of His people.

- A. Moses’ natural _____—He was “fair to God”
- B. Moses’ nurturing
 - 1. By His mother
 - 2. By Pharaoh’s daughter
- C. Moses’ _____—“in all the learning of the Egyptians” (22)

- Note the value of good education.
- God puts no premium on ignorance!
- In “all” the learning—a well rounded education.

D. Moses’ Character—“He was a man of power in _____ and _____.”

Note the implied comparison Stephen makes between Moses and Jesus:

- **When he fullness of time came—at the appropriate season**, both appeared.
- Both were born during terrible times.
- Both experienced childhood trauma and flight—Moses cast out at 3 months.
- Both were in Egypt—Jesus’ parents fled there.
- Both “visited” their brethren; Moses in his 40th year, Jesus in His 30th year.
- Both were rejected by their people and were not understood (v. 25)
- Both were “pushed away” (27).
- Both were denied (35).

Despite all of this, the Lord used both men to bring **deliverance** to His people.

III. THE DELIVERANCE OF GOD’S PEOPLE (23-34)

Moses failed to deliver his people at the first attempt because he acted in the flesh; here the parallel stops between him and Jesus. Jesus made no such fleshly attempt, even though He did not deliver the majority of the nation at His first coming.

A. Failure in the _____ (23-29)

Moses’ failure was not due to bad motives or to a bad cause.

1. Good motives (23, 25)

He supposed that “his brethren” understood his motives and that God was going to work through him to deliver them (25). **(Note the parallel with Jesus’ intentions being misunderstood by the leaders and people of Israel.)**

2. Good Cause—Social Injustice (He saw one of the Israelites being “treated unjustly” (24).

- He thus defended the helpless and oppressed Israelite.
- He took vengeance against the Egyptian.
- Once again, one cannot help but see how Jesus **continually took action to help and bless the people of Israel at His first coming—but He did not take a fleshly action; He healed, taught, and blessed the poor people.**
- I cannot help but note many of the misguided efforts taken today by both liberal and evangelical groups to RIGHT SOCIAL INJUSTICES. The

causes may be good, but so often the focus moves them away from the primary work of preaching the gospel.

3. Carnal Action—He killed the Egyptian—“striking him down”.
4. Rejection by His People (25b-28)

Jesus was “pushed away” by His people also, and was abusively spoken to by them: “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross” etc.

5. Flight and exile (29)

- **It took 40 years to learn the meekness and humility necessary in order to be the true deliverer of God’s people.**
- Jesus did leave His people for a long time, but did not have to learn such a hard lesson as Moses.

- B. Success in the _____ (30-35)

1. Divine appearance (30-31)

This time Moses waited for the Lord to direct him and to take action.

2. Divine commission (32-34)

- a. The presence of God
- b. The Holiness of God
- c. The awareness of God (**God knows our circumstances better than we do; WHAT MAKES US THINK THAT WE HAVE TO TAKE MATTERS INTO OUR OWN HANDS?!**)
- d. The action of God—“I have come down to rescue them” **God is faithful!**
- e. The commission of God—“I will send you to Egypt.” **When the time is right he will use us to do His work.**

3. Moses’ response

- a. He marveled at the Lord’s _____.
- b. He “shook for fear”—the _____ of the Lord (32)
- c. He “would not venture to look”—he had lost his _____-confidence.
- d. He acknowledged the _____ of God—taking off his sandals.
- e. He accepted the _____ of God.

CONCLUSION

We must not act in the flesh—but in the Spirit.

We must do God’s work in God’s way, depending upon God’s power.

There is fleshly salvation (Rom. 4:4-8) and fleshly service (Gal. 3:3-7)

Let us depend upon **the Lord’s presence**, learn to **fear the Lord**, give up our **self-confidence**, **acknowledge the holiness of God**, and **accept His commission**.