Have you ever made a big mistake?
- I mean, a big mistake

All of us have made mistakes in our lifetimes
- We are sinners, so we are prone to mistakes
- As the old adage says, “To err is human”

The issue is not whether we make mistakes
- But whether we learn from our mistakes

Let me go one step further
- Not only should we learn from our mistakes
- But we should learn from the mistakes of others

Part of wisdom is learning from others
- Not having to make their same mistakes

In 1 Corinthians 10, the apostle Paul reviews some of Israel’s history of idolatry, immorality, and grumbling
- Then in verse 11 he says, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction”
- In other words, look at Israel and learn their lesson!

This is part of leadership development as well
- Leaders of all kinds need to be keen on learning from their mistakes
- As well as learning from the mistakes of others

Moses is definitely viewed as a leader throughout the Scriptures
- After all, he led the nation of Israel out of Egypt!

But Moses was a sinner
- He made mistakes

This morning, we will see how one mistake on the part of Moses affected his life
- And how it affected the lives of countless Israelites

We will learn some practical lessons about leadership this morning
- Some lessons, as we will see, are harder to learn

Let’s read Exodus 2:11-25

These verses from Exodus 2 remind us of several lessons that Moses had to learn before he became Israel’s leader
- Moses must control his emotions (2:11-15)
- Moses must defend the weak (2:16-22)
- Moses must follow God’s leading (2:23-25)
I. Moses must control his emotions (2:11-15)

11 Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up.

The last thing that we learned last week in Exodus 2:10 was that Moses was given to Pharaoh’s daughter as a child
- His mother had been allowed to raise him for a while

But in our Text this morning, Moses isn’t a baby anymore
- He is a grown man!

Moses is no longer floating in the Nile River in a basket
- He is grown up and making decisions that have consequences
  - Consequences for his life
  - And consequences for the lives of others

Moses’ life can be divided into three broad portions of 40 years
- Let’s examine these briefly

1st 40 years – life in Egypt
- Treated as royalty
- Given the best education

2nd 40 years – life in Midian
- Working as a shepherd
- Becomes a husband and a father

3rd 40 years – life in the wilderness
- Leading the children of Israel out of Egypt and toward the Promised Land

Exodus 2:11 simply tells us, “now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up”
- So we fast-forward over nearly 40 years of Moses’ life to this point!
- There will be quite a few fast-forwards this morning

Moses, as the author of Exodus, isn’t interested in telling about his childhood and early adulthood days in Egypt (not an autobiography)
- He wants to cover the main, thematic events in his life

Listen to these words from Hebrews 11, “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward” (11:24-26)
- It’s easy to read those verses
- But think of what Moses forfeited

Moses gave up a life of ease and comfort
- He chose a life of hardship

Moses gave up the privileges of royalty
- He embraced the responsibilities of following God
Moses gave up the pleasures of sin
- He considered the reproach of Christ greater than the riches of Egypt

This was no easy decision!
- This was a life-altering decision!

Moses is now a grown man
- 40 years old!

How do I know that Moses was 40 at this time in his life?
- Acts 7:23 tells us, “But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel”

The first 40 years of his life are nearly over
- The first major stage of his life

What will transition him into the next stage of his life?
- Let’s keep reading in verse 11

that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.

From what we just discovered from Acts 7:23, we can surmise that Moses had not made a habit of visiting the Israelites
- Perhaps God prompted his heart to go and “visit his brethren”

Notice the specific wording of that phrase, “his brethren”
- Stephen uses it in Acts 7:23
- Moses himself uses it twice in verse 11

We see a hint that Moses is about to make a huge decision
- A decision to forfeit his royal upbringing and to identify with his Hebrew people

We are told that Moses went out and “looked on their hard labors”
- We don’t know if this was the first time he saw how the Hebrew people were being treated

But Moses is deeply affected by what he sees
- The verb used for “looked” implies seeing with emotion
- It speaks of looking with sympathy
- Moses was moved by what he saw

As he is looking at how the Hebrew people are being treated, he notices something else
- We are told, “he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren”

I will be honest and say that I don’t think I ever connected the dots of this verse with the previous context until the past few weeks
- But now it makes complete sense

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2 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Exodus, 312.
Why was this Egyptian beating a Hebrew?
- Exodus 1:11 has already told us how the Egyptians “appointed taskmasters over [the Israelites] to afflict them with hard labor”
- Egyptian overseers were forcing the Hebrews to make clay

This wasn’t just a random act of violence
- Moses was seeing a normal routine of how the Israelite people were being mistreated!

If a Hebrew worker wasn’t pulling his weight, he was probably beaten severely
- Perhaps even killed

The word used for “beating” in verse 11 will be used in three consecutive verses here in Exodus 2
- 2:11 – an Egyptian was “beating” a Hebrew
- 2:12 – Moses “struck down” the Egyptian
- 2:13 – one Hebrew was “striking” another Hebrew

Of course, it doesn’t always have the intent of killing
- But it can have that meaning

In verse 11, we are simply told that Moses observed an Egyptian “beating” a Hebrew
- And that drove Moses to take action

12 So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

I love the way that Moses writes about this part of his life
- He includes details that others would potentially leave out

We can visualize Moses standing there, watching this Egyptian beating a Hebrew
- Then we can see Moses look around, side to side

Why does Moses look “this way and that”?
- To see if someone else would help the Hebrew?
- To see if anyone was looking?

Most likely, the second option
- I say that because of what Moses does next

When he saw no one around (other than the Egyptian and the Hebrew, of course), Moses “struck down the Egyptian”
- In a rage of fury, Moses began beating this Egyptian

Was it Moses’ intent to kill the Egyptian?
- We are not told
- Remember, the Hebrew word can imply striking or death

But rest assured of one thing
- Moses had murdered an Egyptian
What a drastic action
- This would have repercussions for many years

Christians have been divided over whether Moses’ action was right or wrong
- I think that his action was perhaps from a right motive to help his own people
- But still wrong in that he took the life of another

Moses was right to defend the weak and to uphold justice\(^3\)
- But he was wrong in his timing and method of dealing with this situation

Moses was trying to do things his way, in his power, in his timing
- He needed to submit to God’s timetable\(^4\)

After killing the Egyptian, what did Moses do?
- We are told that he “hid him in the sand”

Egypt has no shortage of sand
- After all, it is positioned near the Nile River

Much of this sand would be loose
- So hiding a body wouldn’t be that hard
- Those of you who have played in the sand on a beach know what I am talking about

Moses’ heartbeat must have been racing!
- He has committed murder
- Now he was trying to cover up his mistake

If no one was around, then maybe he got away with murder
- No pun intended

But someone did witness the murder
- The anonymous Hebrew who was being beaten!

We are not told of any dialogue between the two men
- Moses doesn’t include it if there was

How are we supposed to understand this?
- Again, Stephen’s words in Acts 7 help us out tremendously

“But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand” (Acts 7:23-25)
- Moses thought that his people would understand that he was their deliverer!
- But the children of Israel “did not understand”

\(^3\) Ibid., 311.
\(^4\) Philip Graham Ryken, Preaching the Word, Exodus, 63.
13 And he went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other;

Verse 13 fast-forwards to the following day
- And it seems that Moses once again returns to where the Hebrews were working

Some have even presumed that Moses returned to the scene of the crime
- Was he trying to make sure that no one discovered the body of the Egyptian?

What did Moses see on this day?
- “behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other”

The little word “behold” shouldn’t be skipped
- It is designed to be a Biblical speed bump, designed to slow us down

In other words, Moses was astounded, shocked, amazed, and flabbergasted over what he saw
- Not an Egyptian fighting with a Hebrew
- But two Hebrews fighting with one another!

We are not told why these men were fighting
- But the same word for “beating” in verse 11 is used here for “striking”

and he said to the offender, “Why are you striking your companion?”

Moses approached these two men and asked, “Why are you striking your companion?”
- Moses intervenes, diagnosing who was guilty and who was innocent

But Moses was certainly not ready for the response that he was about to receive from the two Hebrew men

14 But he said, “Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian?”

Instead of receiving Moses and welcoming his intervention, one of the men said, “Who made you a prince or a judge over us?”
- In other words, “What right do you have in interfering with our business?”

This must have been a blow to Moses
- He was simply trying to help
- But his assistance had been rebuffed

This man, representing the nation of Israel, rejected Moses’ leadership
- This was a crushing blow to Moses

Not only was Moses a murderer
- Now he was a meddler!5

But then the Hebrew said something that struck at the very heart of Moses
- The Hebrew asked, “Are you intending to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian?”

No longer was Moses’ little secret a secret
   - It was common knowledge

But who would have possibly seen Moses’ act of murder?
   - Besides God, just one
   - The Hebrew man who was being beaten by the Egyptian

Perhaps the Hebrew man told others out of shock that Moses would actually intervene
   - But this news backfired on Moses

Then Moses was afraid, and said, “Surely the matter has become known.”

Moses’ emotions are now on overdrive
   - Fear grips his heart

Moses knows that “the matter has become known”
   - There’s no hiding it now

15 When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.

To compound matters, we are told that Pharaoh hears of the matter
   - After all, Moses wasn’t exactly a low-key individual
   - He was raised by the daughter of Pharaoh!

When Pharaoh heard this news, “he tried to kill Moses”
   - There’s a lot of murder going on
      o Actual murder
      o Attempted murder

Moses does the only thing that he knows to do
   - He flees!

Now we have a real problem
   - The future deliverer of Israel is now leaving Egypt
   - In leaving Egypt, he is also leaving the place where the Hebrews are still in bondage

But why Midian?
   - What is significant about this place?

Midian was located in southeastern Sinai and west central Arabia
   - East of Egypt

The Midianites were originally descendants of Abraham
   - So there were some similarities between the Midianites and the Israelites
   - Perhaps they worshipped the same God

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Another significant detail needs to be added here
- About 40 years in the future, Moses would lead the people of Israel out of Egypt

Do you know the path they would choose?
- A path very similar to the one that Moses took here

Let’s return to that question that I asked at the beginning of this sermon
- Have you ever made a big mistake?

Compared to Moses, perhaps your mistake isn’t that bad
- But we need to understand that all sin is big
- It is an offense against God’s holy character

Ever since the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden, mankind has tried to cover up their mistakes
- We don’t like others knowing our sins

But we must realize that God demands open and honest confession of sin for our mistakes
- There is no forgiveness without confession

That’s an amazing truth that we can be reminded of this morning
- There is forgiveness with God!
- Even for those who make big mistakes!

For Moses, part of his preparation for leading the nation Israel was for him to control his emotions
- He couldn’t be overcome with anger
- He couldn’t be overcome with fear
- He couldn’t be overcome with guilt

Moses needed to learn how to trust God fully
- And what better place to do that than the wilderness of Midian!

- Moses must control his emotions (2:11-15)

II. Moses must defend the weak (2:16-22)

16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came to draw water, and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock.

We are introduced to some information that will help us interpret the next few verses
- We are told some information about “the priest of Midian”

First, we learn that he is “the priest” of Midian
- He could have been the spiritual leader or advisor for this group of people
- He obviously played a pivotal role in the life of the community

This man goes by two different names
- Reuel in verse 18
- Jethro in 3:1

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7 Michael Bentley, Travelling Homeward, 48.
Second, we learn that this man has “seven daughters”
   - No mention is made of sons

The focal point is on the fact that this man has seven daughters
   - Daughters reminds us that Moses is single and perhaps one of these will become his wife

It was typically the job of women to draw water for the animals\(^8\)
   - We see that these daughters came “to draw water”

In ancient days, the well was a very important part of society
   - Without water, people would die

The Midianites were nomads, constantly traveling to find water and land for their animals
   - So the well would not be far from their homes

It is at this well that Moses sits down as he enters into this new area
   - Undoubtedly, he knew that the well would be an important meeting place

17 Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

The daughters of Jethro had already drew out the water needed to water their father’s animals
   - They had filled the troughs

But then we are introduced to “the shepherds”
   - This group of individuals drove the daughters of Reuel away

Moses is yet again witness to a case of injustice
   - These daughters are being taken advantage of!

The shepherds were waiting until the ladies did the hard work of pulling water up from the well
   - Then they would run the daughters off
   - The shepherds wouldn’t have to work that hard

But Moses wasn’t about to allow this to happen
   - Moses has a big heart for those who are helpless
     - He has already helped the one Hebrew man, preventing him from being beaten
     - Now he has wants to help these women, who are complete strangers to him

When the shepherds tried to run the women off, Moses “stood up and helped them, and watered their flock”
   - Moses is seen to be the human deliverer
   - A human savior, if you want to go that far

Again, we are spoiled in that we know “the rest of the story”
   - As Paul Harvey would say

Moses is intentionally showing his ability to lead
- To care for people
- To reach out to those who are helpless

Moses seems to go above the call of duty in helping these ladies
- He runs off the shepherds
- He guards them while they finish drawing water
- And he even waters the flock for them!

18 When they came to Reuel their father, he said, “Why have you come back so soon today?”

Verse 18 fast-forwards us to the scene in which the daughters arrive home
- Their father, Reuel, asks them, “Why have you come back so soon today?”

Don’t skip over important details!
- Why did he say “so soon”?

Again, we can only guess that it was a continual struggle that these daughters had with the shepherds
- It wasn’t the first time they had encountered them
- They struggled with them quite often

19 So they said, “An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds; and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock.”

Now we hear from the daughters
- We hear their first-hand account of what Moses did for them

Notice that they think Moses is “an Egyptian”
- How did they know that?

We are not told
- It could have been Moses’ clothing
- It could have been Moses’ dialect

The daughters tell their father how Moses
- Delivered them from the shepherds
- Drew the water
- Watered the flocks

20 And he said to his daughters, “Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat.”

The father is amazed that his daughters didn’t invite Moses home for something to eat
- Especially after helping them so much!
Hospitality was one of the unwritten laws of the Ancient Near East; even today, the Bedouins highly value hospitality to strangers.

It shouldn’t be surprising that Christians are called to be hospitable; we are to be lovers of strangers.

**21 And Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses.**

Again, Moses skips over a lot of time in verse 21:
- Moses enters Reuel’s home
- Moses decides to stay with the man
- Moses accepts Zipporah as his wife

Time is meaningless, at least on a micro level:
- Remember, this is the 2nd major stage of Moses’ life which covers 40 years

**22 Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.”**

We are also told that Moses has become a father:
- His son’s name is given, “Gershom”
- This name means “an alien there”

Even as a resident of Midian, Moses still felt like an alien:
- He was separated from his homeland, Egypt
- He was separated from his people, Israel

Although he was a deliverer, he had failed up to this point:
- Failed as a mediator
- Failed as a murderer

Moses has been away from Egypt for 40 years:
- 40 years!
- Some of us – myself included – aren’t even 40 years old!

The details of these 40 years are sparse:
- But again, Moses is fast-forwarding through the commercials!

What’s happening in Egypt?
- What’s happening to Israel?

- Moses must control his emotions (2:11-15)
- Moses must defend the weak (2:16-22)

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9 Houtman, 313.
III. Moses must follow God’s leading (2:23-25)

23 Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died.

We are told that the Pharaoh who wanted to kill Moses is now dead
- This is great news

For Moses, he can now return to Egypt without fearing for his life
- For Israel, this might mean that a new king means a new regime, which would result in a change of policy

In Exodus 1:8, a new king brought in a new regime or policy
- Perhaps things would get better

And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God.

But things aren’t changing for Israel
- “the sons of Israel sighed because of their bondage”
- “they cried out”

You can almost feel the burden that is on the back of Israel
- They desperately want to be out from under the harsh persecution at the hands of the Egyptians
- We are told in verse 23, “their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God”

Up to this point, God has only been mentioned 3 times in chapter 1 (1:17, 20, 21)
- None in chapter 2

But now God will be mentioned five times in the closing three verses (2:23, 24, 25)
- God will soon take action!

As we have discussed already in Exodus, there are times when it seems that God is distant
- That He doesn’t care
- That He won’t intervene

But beloved, God is always there
- The problem is that we don’t understand His timing!

24 So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 And God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.

Verses 24-25 give us four (4) verbs that have God as their subject
- God heard
- God remembered
- God saw
- God took notice
God was not deaf to the groanings of His people, Israel!
- He heard their cry
- He knew their pain

God “remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”
- He was faithful to what He had promised!

What had God told Abraham back in Genesis 15?
- “And God said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions.’” (15:13-14)

The time for deliverance was near
- The people were ready for a deliverer
- God had prepared Moses to be that deliverer

The wheels of action were being set into motion!

Next week, we will see God calling Moses to be the deliverer of Israel
- Will he readily accept the call?

Again, let me point out just a few observations for you

1. **Don’t follow your raw emotions**

   Believers are never to be led by emotions
   - Emotions aren’t trustworthy
   - Emotions aren’t reliable

   We are to be led by the Word of God
   - It is objective, reliable, and dependable

   Murder is simply anger carried out to its logical end
   - This is why Jesus said that heart anger is the same as the act

   James 1:19-20, “But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God”

2. **Remind yourself that suffering won’t last forever**

   “*The righteous* cry and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivers him out of them all.” (Ps 34:17-19)

   We tend to view our circumstances as if they won’t change
   - But there will be no suffering in heaven!
3. Submit to God’s timing and will

For Moses, he needed to understand God’s timing
- He tried to lead Israel, but it failed
- He was 40 years too early!

For Israel, they needed to understand God’s will
- Moses was their deliverer
- But he needed to be prepared

400 years of bondage for the Israelites may sound like a long time to us
- But it is a short time in the mind of God

40 years of desert training for Moses may sound like a long time
- But God was achieving His purposes

4. Embrace the benefits of trials

Never underestimate the advantage of suffering
- God may be preparing you for something bigger than you can imagine

God never sends a trial without a purpose
- That purpose is to conform you to the image of His Son
- God is sanctifying you through trials!

5. Give thanks when things don’t turn out the way that you expect

God knows best
- We don’t

Think of when Lazarus died
- Mary and Martha wanted Jesus there ASAP

But Jesus intentionally delayed in order to show His glory
- Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead!

We sit back and wonder, “Why didn’t God deliver the Israelites earlier?”
- Part of the answer to that question is that Moses wasn’t ready

Can you imagine Israel being led by a leader who was impulsive, selfish, led by emotions, and volatile?
- That’s who Moses was prior to going to Midian

God oftentimes waits to do things in our lives until He can achieve maximum glory and honor
- We oftentimes want to share the glory with God
- But only He is worthy of worship, honor, and glory

God allowed Moses to become a husband and a father in Midian
- Without a doubt, these helped him to become a more effective leader
I can say that being a husband and a father has been one of the greatest tools in the hand of God in my life -
  - To humble me
  - To sanctify me
  - To grow me

God also allowed Moses to serve as a shepherd\(^\text{10}\)
  - In taking care of sheep, Moses learned valuable truths about how to take care of the people of Israel

Moses went from being in the king’s palace to the desert
  - God took Moses through desert seminary in order to teach him valuable lessons!

God delights in using broken vessels
  - He oftentimes waits until we are broken before Him
  - Then He can use us for His own glory

John Wesley once prayed, “I am not longer my own, but Yours. Put me to what You will, rank me with whom You will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for You or laid aside for You, exalted for You or brought low for You; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.”\(^\text{11}\)

Jesus Christ is the Savior of those who believe
  - In the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son (cf. Gal 4:4)

He lived a perfect life
  - He died a substitutionary death
  - He rose victoriously on the third day

Do you truly know the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior?
  - Are you trusting in Him alone?

\(^{10}\) Ryken, 73.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., 74.