

Holy, Responsible Life

‘There was a young man who took a shortcut home late one night through the cemetery. And he fell into an open grave. He called, and he tried to climb out. To no avail. There was no one around to hear his cries or lend a hand. So he settled down for the night in a corner of the darkened grave to await morning. A little while later another person came the same route through the cemetery, taking the same shortcut home and fell in to the same grave, and started clawing and shouting and trying to get out just as the first had done. Suddenly, the second fellow heard a voice out of the dark corner of the grave saying, “You can’t get out of here”. But he did!’ The moral of the story? Don’t walk in the dark!! Or, Always carry a flashlight!! Or, Don’t take shortcuts!!

Actually, any one of those “morals” could well serve as very good life lessons. But isn’t, “Don’t walk in the dark” the best one? Particularly when thought of as the Bible teaches. For the Bible says precisely that in the very psalm we’ve been reading. We won’t get to this verse for a while yet, but Psalm 119:105 declares unequivocally: “Truth’s shining light guides me in my choices and decisions; the revelation of your Word makes my pathway clear”. Or in the more familiar New Living Translation: “Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path”. From just this

verse alone, there should be no doubt in any person's mind that the words of this Holy Bible are of supreme importance, taking precedence over all other books of the world, including and especially all other so-called sacred texts. This Book is the greatest and most vital book ever written, and it not only should be a required subject in every school on the globe, but rather should be the one, indispensable subject that every person everywhere is taught. And yet, here we are in America, where "allowing the Bible in schools", carried in by children of their own accord, is seemingly everywhere controversial, and in most states, illegal!! This Book is the key to right and healthy life, in every way, in every place, for every human being. For by it, we learn the Truth. And when we know Truth, knowing right from wrong, when we come to the know the Author of all these words, of all this Truth, then we know what we're doing when we go about living this life!

Our Old Testament lesson this morning was from Leviticus, the third book in the Old Testament, the third book of the five-book Torah, dictated to Moses from the very mouth of God Himself on Mt. Sinai. Communing with the Lord God Almighty on the top of Sinai changed Moses forever. He was already quite changed before he climbed this mountain in the desert wilderness. Remember that though he was a Hebrew boy, when it was Egyptian law that all Hebrew boy babies were to be drowned in the Nile, God providentially, in miracle after miracle after miracle, arranged for the little baby Moses to be discovered floating by the bank of the

river, by a daughter of Pharaoh himself, a princess of Egypt. We all know how all princesses always tend to get their way!! Anyway, for some supernatural reason, though it was obvious that this baby was an illegal Hebrew boy baby, destined for immediate extermination, the princess was “smitten” with him. Moses’ older sister, Miriam (Mary in English), just so happened to be watching to see what would happen to Moses. When the princess took a shine to him and decided to adopt him, after all princesses always get what they want, she needed someone to nurse him. He was only three months old. So, Miriam, Moses’ sister, approached the princess offering to find a nursemaid for this baby. And so she gave the baby to the baby’s actual mother, Jochebed. So now the mother was reunited with her baby. Oh, joy!! And was undoubtedly given a stipend from the royal house for her “services”. How about that? Getting paid to nurse one’s own baby!! But of course, once he was weaned, she had to give him back into the care of the princess. However, it is entirely possible that even then, she still was allowed some input into young Moses’ care, training and education. God just does things so marvelously!! One just has to take a look and see the wonders!

So Moses was raised as a prince of Egypt. The finest education. The finest diet. The finest of everything surrounded him and luxuriated him. A pampered, rich playboy he was. Used to getting whatever he wanted whenever he wanted. Such people need no patience. When they speak, everyone around jumps!!

Still, he knew he was Hebrew. Surely his mother had told him the truth at some point. So when he happened to see a fellow Hebrew slave being beaten by an Egyptian taskmaster, making sure no one could see him, he struck down the Egyptian, hiding the body in the sand. Moses, now a cold-blooded murderer!! The authorities were soon on his tail. So he fled to “Mexico”, well, to a distant land. There he lived for a long time. Forty years long!! For it took that long for the Lord to smooth out Moses’ many “rough edges”. Far from the rich playboy lifestyle he had known, he now found work as a shepherd, one of the lowest and most pitiful occupations at the time. It’s not on the best jobs list today either! But it was necessary for him to learn, for in due time, he would become *the* shepherd of the new nation of Israel.

All of this shows just how ill suited this man was to become the greatest prophet and founding father of the nation of Israel. And here, in Leviticus, we read some of the words he wrote down from God’s dictation. Not just Leviticus, but Genesis, Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, too. It took a long time! On Sinai for forty days, he then brought down the Ten Commandments. On seeing the people rioting, having spent all the gold and silver God provided for their comfortable living before entering the Promised Land, squandering it on a golden calf deity statue, how fitting it was that once they ground it down, Moses made them drink it! The Ten Commandments were smashed, literally and figuratively. So back up the mountain he went, taking his deputy, Joshua

along with. Another forty days and nights. Fasting. And he comes down again with new tablets, and the whole Torah!

The Torah has been misleadingly translated into English as the “Law”, when it’s more accurately rendered as the “Teaching”. It’s not so much a book of laws, but rather a series of textbooks on how to live life. Not just to survive. But to thrive. Consider Leviticus 19:1-2: ‘The Lord also said to Moses, “Give the following instructions to the entire community of Israel. You must be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy”.’ And then, without missing a beat, the Lord goes into the commandments of how to live, “holily”. For to obey these really, simple commands, statutes, ordinances, and rules, constitutes a holy life! Living by these rules enables us to live responsibly, in accordance with God’s ways, enabling Him to bless us! Things just go easier when we obey God’s rules. He designed us. He knows what’s good for us, and what’s not. He wants us to thrive, not just get by. And He’s written down for us exactly how to align ourselves with the way He created this planet and us to live in it. When we follow the instructions, it goes so much easier. Well, as far as we ourselves are concerned. The problem is other people. “Watch out for the other guy”, the old driving adage says. It’s the same for all of life itself. Other people don’t follow God, want to go their own way, and do their own thing, who like to “do it my way” as Frank Sinatra famously crooned. The song came in the late 1960s when the “Me Generation” was in full swing. Indeed, a lot of those folks and

later people influenced by that still, well-known song, remain stuck in the “Me” generation. They’re called liberals today, the woke generation, the insane generation. They threw away this Book, and so, lost their way, fell into a ditch, er, grave, while wandering confidently in sin’s darkness, and have yet to find their way out!!

Today’s reading from Leviticus encapsulates the main points of God’s Instructions for Holy Living. We read these words, and we should be able to heartily agree with each and every point. We share these words because they were given to us by the most vilified people group on the planet, the Jews. We “inherited” them and share them with the Jews. And it was the Jewish Messiah Who blasted the prison walls of lawlessness, of sin, freeing us from the grave, and lifting us up into the Light of Truth of the Glory of God. Thus, Jews and Christians are literally joined at the hip. Though most Jews still won’t admit it, having been convinced by millennia of false teaching and the all-too-frequent sin of “Christian” racists and bigots, Lord Jesus *is* both ours and their Savior. And He’s already come once, and will very soon come again. As they were instructed to be holy, so too are we, from the exact same Book! But with further explanation by another great teacher who probably spent his own forty days and nights on the same mountaintop, the Apostle Paul. It’s not hard to live holy. By ourselves it’s impossible. But Christ gave us Holy Spirit. And with Him, it’s no turning back! Despite potholes and sin detours, we’re guaranteed to make it. Just keep swimming in His Word!

