

TREASURE

THAT LASTS

TRADING PRIVILEGE, PLEASURE, AND POWER

— FOR WHAT REALLY MATTERS —

MICHAEL
YOUSSEF



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With deep gratitude to the Lord for
Dave and Sally Hangsleben,
a very special couple who have proven
and are continuously pursuing the title of this book—
treasure that lasts.

Contents

Introduction 11

The Choice before Us

1. Complete Surrender 15

Overview

2. Heir to Power—and Poverty 28

Exodus 1:1–2:10

3. Stepping-Stones to Leadership 41

Exodus 2:11–25

4. Hitting Bottom 54

Exodus 3–4

5. Confronting the Lie 69

Exodus 5

6. Manifested Power 83

Exodus 7–10

7. The Firstborn and the Lamb 98

Exodus 11:1–12:42

Contents

8. Faith—or Fear? 112
Exodus 14:1–18
 9. Wandering from the Truth 124
Exodus 14:19–31
 10. The Danger of Discontentment 136
Exodus 15:22–16:10
 11. Victory through Surrender 149
Exodus 17:8–16
 12. Tempted to Compromise 162
Exodus 32
 13. The Envy of Critics 175
Numbers 12
 14. Lord of the Impossible 188
Numbers 13–14
 15. Wrongful Wrath 203
Numbers 20:1–13
 16. Trading Gold for Glory 215
Exodus 35:4–9; 36:6–7
- Notes 229

Introduction

The Choice before Us

You have probably never heard of Baron Justinian von Weltz, a Dutch nobleman of the seventeenth century. He had a passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Though his story is rarely told today, his zeal for spreading the gospel influenced generations of pastors, teachers, and missionaries.

The first-century church sent out thousands of missionaries from Judea to Europe, Africa, and Asia. But by the seventeenth century, the church had become stagnant. Baron von Weltz, a Lutheran layman, was heartbroken that he and his fellow Lutherans were doing nothing to reach the lost. Like most European nations, Holland had established colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Yet the Dutch Lutheran church made no effort to reach those lands with the gospel.

Baron von Weltz wrote pamphlets and preached about the need to evangelize the world—but church leaders responded with mockery. He proposed a missionary society

called “The Jesus Society” for world evangelism. Eminent Lutheran scholar Johannes Heinrich Ursinus scoffed at the idea, saying that by taking the gospel into godless lands, the Society would draw children of the devil to the church. That, of course, was von Weltz’s goal—to draw children of the devil to the gospel and convert them to children of God as Jesus commanded.

In 1664, von Weltz journeyed to Regensburg, Bavaria, to address the Imperial Diet (the ruling council) of the Holy Roman Empire. Once again, he was mocked, as he put it, with “haughty condescension.” He added, “I thought the heathen were in far distant lands, and lo, I found myself in the midst of them.”

After failing to persuade church leaders to take up the cause of evangelism, von Weltz renounced his title as a baron. With the support of a few close friends, he committed himself to becoming a missionary. In his final sermon before leaving on his missionary journey, he said:

What is it to me to bear the title “well-born,” when I am born again to Christ? What is it to me to have the title “lord,” when I desire to be servant of Christ? What is it to me to be called “your grace” when I have need of God’s grace? All these vanities I will away with and all else I lay at the feet of my dear Lord Jesus.¹

Justinian von Weltz set sail for Surinam, a Dutch colony in South America. He arrived in 1666 and died there in 1668. There is no account of von Weltz making a single convert. He lived a lonely life and was buried in a forgotten grave.

Did von Weltz die a failure? Not at all. No one who lives faithfully for God is ever a failure. Though forgotten by the

world, Justinian von Weltz was crowned by God with success. God raised up a new generation of believers who read his writings and were inspired to take the gospel to distant corners of the earth. Even in death, his influence ignited a missionary movement that continued expanding long after his death.

Missionary leader Arthur Tappan Pierson said that von Weltz recognized that evangelism is “a Christian duty not to be set aside. For this conviction he surrendered everything—rank, honor, wealth, all the conveniences of life, and, finally, life itself. In his faithfulness to his convictions, he remains a shining example for all times.”²

Every day, and throughout our lives, we are offered the choice: the world’s gold—or God’s glory? Justinian von Weltz gave up the world’s gold for God’s glory. Are you and I willing to do the same?

You’ve seen the commercials countless times: “Buy gold!” “Invest in gold!” It’s no sin to invest for the future. But it is a deadly mistake to choose the world’s gold over God’s glory.

When I refer to gold, I don’t necessarily mean that dense yellow metal whose element symbol is Au and whose atomic number is 79. Our “gold” is anything we treasure, anything that competes with our affection for Jesus Christ. Whatever you value more than God is your “gold.” To invest in things that eternally matter, you must turn your back on your “gold,” as Justinian von Weltz did—and as Moses did. The Bible tells us, “He [Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward” (Heb. 11:26).

By faith, Moses turned his back on the gold of a privileged life in Egypt as the adopted son of Pharaoh. By faith,

he chose to become a symbolic Old Testament type of Christ and to be the deliverer of his people. In the coming chapters, we will explore the life of Moses and discover what it means to exchange the world's gold for God's glory. Baron von Wetz chose God's glory over gold—and he began the modern missionary movement. Moses chose God's glory over gold—and he delivered a nation.

As I write these words, the world is in the grip of a global pandemic and a worldwide economic crisis. This crisis did not catch God by surprise. He is using this trial to get the attention of every human being in the world, including the people of his church. Are we listening? Are we turning our hearts toward God? Are we choosing his glory over the gold of this dying world?

In these times that try our souls, we must say to him, “Lord, send me, use me, give me your words to speak. Lord, give me a willing spirit so that I may glorify you in this time of worldwide crisis.”

God has set that choice before you and me today—the world's gold or God's glory? What will God accomplish through us if we choose his glory?



Complete Surrender

Overview

Dwight D. Eisenhower was supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe during World War II and president of the United States from 1953 to 1961. As a young cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point, he faced a difficult decision: Would he live by the world’s values or stay true to his Christian values?

During the fall of 1912 at the beginning of his third year at West Point, Eisenhower was expected to participate in the tradition called “Beast Barracks.” During the first six weeks, freshman cadets (called “plebes”) were “crawled” (hazed) to reshape them from civilians to cadets. Upperclassmen were expected to make life miserable for the plebes.

One day, Eisenhower saw a plebe running down the hall, so he shouted, “Mr. Dumgard!”—the insulting name applied to all lowly plebes.

The young cadet stopped and stood at attention.

Eisenhower asked what the plebe’s PCS (“previous condition of servitude”) was, then he added, “You look like a barber.”

In a low voice, the plebe said, “I was a barber, sir.”

Feeling sick, Eisenhower told the plebe to go on about his business. He went to his barracks and told his roommate, “I’m never going to crawl another plebe as long as I live. . . . I’ve just done something that was stupid and unforgivable. I managed to make a man ashamed of the work he did to earn a living.”¹

Eisenhower never hazed another incoming cadet. He realized that making young cadets feel ashamed violated his Christian values. He made a decision to forsake the “gold” of West Point tradition in order to glorify God with his life.

The Decisions of Moses

Decision is an interesting word. It comes from a Latin word that literally means “to cut off.” That Latin word also gives us the English words *incision* (a surgical cut) and *scissors* (a cutting implement). When we make a decision, we cut off all other courses of action.

The story of Moses is the story of a man who made decisions—a man who chose one course of action and cut off all other options and possibilities. In Acts 7, Stephen, the

first Christian martyr, stood before the Sanhedrin—the same ruling council that had condemned Jesus to death—and recounted the story of Moses. He divided the life of Moses into three segments of forty years. Each of those forty-year points was marked by a major decision.

Moses spent the first forty years in the palace of the Pharaoh, learning that he was something and somebody. He spent the second forty years in the desert, learning that he was nothing and nobody. He spent the final forty years leading the Israelites out of Egypt and through the desert, learning that God is everything.

Moses could have remained in the palace, living in the lap of luxury. But, as Stephen told the Sanhedrin, Moses had a decision to make: cling to the gold and treasures of Egypt, or identify with God’s people. Stephen said, “When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites” (v. 23).

This decision set in motion a chain of events that would shape the course of his life. Moses saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite, so he stepped in and killed the Egyptian. He thought the Israelites would be grateful he had taken their side—but the Israelites accused him of murdering the Egyptian. So Moses fled and hid in the desert.

Had Moses not made that crucial decision to visit his people, had he chosen to remain in the palace, we would never have read his story in the Bible. Instead, we would have read about him in the secular history books about ancient Egypt. His whole life would barely have rated a single paragraph—the only Hebrew slave to become a Pharaoh. The entire history of Israel might never have happened if Moses had not made that fateful decision. Because of that

decision, he killed an Egyptian, then fled into the wilderness. Forty years after that first decision, God confronted Moses with another life-altering decision:

After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to get a closer look, he heard the Lord say: “I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

Then the Lord said to him, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.” (vv. 30–34)

Moses decided to spend the rest of his life seeking not gold but the glory of God. He was fearful, he was reluctant, yet he made a decision that cut off all other options. He decided to follow the Lord.

The Man Who Had Everything

Moses was a man on a mission. He obeyed God’s commands at great personal risk. How many people today would willingly give up wealth and power for a life of hardship and servanthood? Fame and position produce honor. Powerful political families often set themselves up as dynasties, trading on their fame, acquiring wealth and power that often lead to greed, corruption, and the abuse of power. That’s why

God values and approves of those who choose his glory over the world's gold.

God presented Moses with a choice, and Moses chose obedience. Every one of us has been invited and called by God. We have a choice to obey him or rebel against him, to receive him or reject him, to choose his glory or the world's gold. Disobedience may offer short-term gratification, but it always leads to destruction. Solomon wrote:

There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death. (Prov. 14:12)

You've heard about "the man who has everything," and that describes Moses. People waited on Moses hand and foot. He could spend every morning on the golf course and every afternoon in the palace Jacuzzi. He could order the best foods, wear the best clothes, and enjoy the best recreational pastimes. Luxuries are not sinful per se, but those luxuries would have been sin for Moses because God had called him out of the palace and into the adventure of faith.

God's Word commends Moses because he gave up the world's gold for God's glory. He gave up everything that stood in the way of perfect obedience. Is God calling you from the burning bush? What is the choice he has set before you? Have you made the decision to cut off all other options to pursue God's will for your life? What is the gold that has you in its grip, keeping you from abandoning yourself to God's will and his glory?

We've read Stephen's biography of Moses. Now let's look at another New Testament commentary on the life of Moses, this time from Hebrews: "He [Moses] regarded disgrace for

the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward” (Heb. 11:26).

Moses considered what it would mean to follow God’s will. He thought carefully about what it would cost him to accept God’s calling. He weighed the pros and the cons. He did a cost-benefit analysis. He knew that he would bring disgrace on himself if he identified with the Israelite slaves—yet he considered that disgrace to be of greater value than all the treasures of the kingdom of Egypt. In the end, Moses decided that the worst this world could do to him would bring him a far greater reward than the best this world could offer him.

It’s fascinating that the writer to the Hebrews phrases it this way: “He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ . . .” How could this be? Moses had never heard of Jesus Christ. In fact, Moses lived more than fifteen hundred years before Christ was born. How, then, could Moses make a decision “for the sake of Christ”?

Every believer who was saved in Old Testament times was saved on the same basis that you and I are saved as Christians: we are all saved by the blood of Jesus the Messiah. In Old Testament times, believers were saved by faith as they looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. In New Testament times and up to the present day, believers are saved by faith as they look backward to the cross.

Moses was saved by grace through faith in Jesus—fifteen hundred years before Jesus was born. Does that mean that Moses lived a perfect life? In the chapters to come, we’ll see Moses stumble and fall. We’ll see him try to accomplish God’s will in his own strength—and he will fail miserably.

He will try to take God's purposes into his own hands—and he'll make a complete mess of things. God will have to tear Moses down, then build him up again before Moses can be a true instrument of God.

Yet through it all, Moses stood firm on his decision to give up the world's gold for God's glory. That decision, made in the presence of God at the burning bush, will sustain him, keep him focused, and empower him so that God can use him in a mighty way as Israel's deliverer and lawgiver.

I once heard someone say, "If it's a contest between Egypt and Moses, pity Moses. But if it's a contest between Egypt and God, pity Egypt." God promises that the moment you turn your back on this world's gold in order to pursue God's glory, he will accomplish great things through you. Trading gold for glory produces incalculable rewards.

By Faith . . .

Exodus 12:40 tells us that from the time Joseph entered Egypt until Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt was a span of 430 years. In Genesis 15:13–14, God told Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land for four centuries, after which God would rescue them. Just as God had said, Abraham's great-grandson, Joseph, was sold into slavery in Egypt by his envious brothers, but Joseph rose to power and brought his family to Egypt, where they became very numerous. A new Pharaoh looked at all the Israelites in his borders and saw them as a threat, feeling their numbers would overwhelm the Egyptian population. So Pharaoh

oppressed the Israelites, forcing them to make bricks for Egypt's many construction projects.

But at the right moment in history, God raised up Moses to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. God had prepared Moses for this role—first by raising him in Pharaoh's household for forty years, then by refining him in the wilderness for another forty years. In the palace, Moses learned the inner workings of leadership and the Egyptian government. In the wilderness, he learned character, faith, endurance, perseverance, and humility.

Moses had everything he could have wanted in Pharaoh's palace, yet he surrendered it all to become Israel's deliverer. Does Moses remind you of anyone? Does this description of Moses resonate in your mind? Does Moses seem to be a type or symbol of someone else in the Bible—someone you are well acquainted with? Of course, he does.

Jesus, the Son of God, gave up every privilege and benefit of being one with the Father in heaven. He came to earth as humanity's deliverer. He gave up the riches of heaven for the sake of God's glory. Moses foreshadowed the coming of Jesus the Messiah.

Hebrews 11 is known as the "Hall of Faith." It's a list of great Old Testament role models of faith—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and on and on. Again and again, the writer of the book of Hebrews tells us, "By faith Abel brought God a better offering; by faith Noah . . . built an ark; by faith . . . Abraham obeyed and went" (vv. 4, 7, 8). All the heroes listed in Hebrews 11 have one thing in common: faith.

Throughout the Bible, the word *faith* is interchangeable with the word *obedience*. You cannot have one without

the other. Faith requires obedience and obedience requires faith.

Read through the four Gospels, and you will never see Jesus commending his disciples for their intelligence, their wisdom, their zeal, or their strategic thinking. What does he continually, pointedly talk about? Faith. Faith like a mustard seed can uproot a sycamore tree or cast a mountain into the sea. Faith casts out demons. Faith manifests the power of God in the darkest circumstances.

We hear a lot about faith these days—but much of what preachers (especially TV preachers) say about faith is unbiblical nonsense. They tell you that you should have faith to be wealthy, faith to be healthy, faith to “name it and claim it,” faith to drive a Cadillac and own a private jet and live in a hilltop mansion.

The kind of faith these preachers sell is not what the Bible calls faith. It’s not obedience. It’s what is called (in secular circles) “the power of positive thinking.” It’s a worldly and self-centered kind of faith. It’s the false faith of what is known as the prosperity gospel. Moses was a man of faith—but not the faith of the prosperity gospel. He already possessed more prosperity than you and I could imagine—but he turned his back on it all to pursue God’s glory.

According to the Word of God, faith is the willingness to let God rule supreme in every situation. Authentic faith says, “Have thine own way, Lord.” Authentic faith agrees with John the Baptist, who said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30 KJV).

By faith, Moses renounced his wealth and position. By faith, he renounced power and prestige. By faith, he identified

with God’s persecuted people, not the ruling class. Pharaoh saw the faith of Moses as folly. The faith of Moses makes no sense in this selfish, greedy, me-first world. The faith of Moses defies the logic of the secular mind.

Moses didn’t have to go out among his people. He could have easily rationalized sitting comfortably in the palace of Pharaoh. He could have told himself, *I can do more for my people from inside the palace than as an outsider*. God does call some Christians to work within the government, the media, academia, or the business world in order to be a witness and an agent of change in those institutions. But for Moses, that would have been disobedience. God called him out of the palace and to a place of godly leadership of the Israelite nation.

By faith, Moses gave up the world’s gold for God’s glory. Does this mean God calls every Christian to a life of hardship and poverty? No, he does not. What God asks of you may not be what he asks of me or of someone else. But each of us has some form of gold in our lives, and that gold tempts us to settle for less than God’s glory in our lives.

“It’s Complete Surrender”

If you have seen the 1981 motion picture *Chariots of Fire*, you know something of the life of Eric Liddell—but you may not know the whole story. Born to a Scottish missionary couple in northern China in 1902, he was educated at a boarding school in south London. He emerged as the fastest runner in Scotland, and his reputation as an athlete gave him

a platform for sharing his Christian testimony at student evangelistic meetings.

In 1923, he set the United Kingdom's record for the 100-yard dash at 9.7 seconds. He was set to compete at the 1924 Paris Olympics, but when the heat for the 100-yard race was scheduled for Sunday, he refused to run. Though it was an agonizing decision, Eric viewed Sunday as the Lord's Day, the Christian Sabbath, a day of rest. He believed his Christian testimony would suffer and that it would be a sin if he ran on the Lord's Day.

Many sports writers and fans criticized Eric Liddell's decision, and some accused him of being unpatriotic. Even the Prince of Wales tried to change his mind. Liddell refused to bow to pressure and compromise his convictions.

Liddell trained for the 400-yard race, even though he was not considered as strong a runner at that distance. On the morning of the Olympic final, Eric's masseur handed him a handwritten note that read, "In the old book it says, 'He that honours me I will honour.' Wishing you the best of success always."²

Inspired by this message, Liddell won the race, set a world record of 47.6 seconds, and won the gold medal. Though he could have gained fame and fortune as a professional athlete, he chose to give up the world's gold—the 100-yard-dash gold medal—for God's glory.

Preaching at an evangelistic rally in Scotland, Eric Liddell summed up his view of life this way: "Many of us are missing something in life because we are after the second-best. . . . We are putting before you the one who is worthy of all of our devotion—Christ. He is the Savior . . . and He is the one who can bring out the best that is in us."³

Liddell went on to devote himself to missionary work in China. There he served the poor and preached the good news of Jesus Christ. In 1943, the Imperial Japanese Army overran the mission station where he served. He and other members of the China Inland Mission were imprisoned. Liddell emerged as a leader who encouraged the morale and faith of his fellow prisoners. Despite the starvation rations, filth, and disease of the prison, Liddell demonstrated kindness, good will, and cheerfulness to everyone.

He became sick, and at first it seemed that his illness was merely the result of overwork and malnutrition. He died on February 21, 1945, five months before the prison was liberated. After his death, an autopsy revealed he had died of a brain tumor, and his death was undoubtedly hastened by the harsh conditions in the prison.

His last words were “It’s complete surrender.”⁴ That’s how Eric Liddell lived and died—surrendering the world’s gold while pursuing God’s glory.

What are you living for? Are you living a life of complete surrender?

■ QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION ■

1. In your understanding of the Bible, how do you define *faith*?
2. Do you sense that God is leading you to a specific calling or mission? Who or what was the “burning bush” God used to get your attention?

3. Have you reached the point in your Christian walk where you view disgrace for the sake of Christ as more valuable than gold? Why or why not?
4. Eric Liddell's last words were "It's complete surrender." On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being completely self-willed and 10 being completely surrendered, how surrendered are you? What is the gold that has you in its grip?