



*Priscilla Hochhalter*

This is me with my husband (Dan) and my folks (Wayne and Bertie Roberts). Dan and I live, work, and attend church in Portland, Oregon.

I'm a late bloomer. I got married late, started my career late, moved into a house late. Many times, as I waited and prayed about those things, I wondered if it was too late for me to do any of them. By God's grace, it wasn't. But I still desire other, more significant changes—if only I didn't have certain obstacles in my life; if only I hadn't wasted so much time already; if only I weren't so chicken.

That's why I love Moses! He did his best work after age 80. And all those years he thought were wasted—well, they weren't.

It's not too late for you either. God is bigger than any obstacle, mistake, or fear. That's what this week's writings are about.

*BIBLE READING: Exodus 2:1-9*

Have you heard the cry of a baby abandoned, however briefly, by its mother? The sound may be loud and desperate or quiet and fretful, but at the heart of that cry is every human's concern for the future: *Uh-oh...I'm alone! Who'll take care of me?*

That's the sound Pharaoh's daughter heard when she found baby Moses in the Nile. Moses' mother had hidden him there to spare him from Pharaoh's orders to kill all the male Hebrew babies—but Moses didn't know that. As a baby, all he knew was that his mother was gone; he couldn't have understood that this apparent misfortune was God's provision to save his life.

And how creatively God provided! Not only did Moses' mother get her baby back, but she actually got paid to nurse him. God met her needs too.

Awhile back, at the start of the recent economic downturn, my husband and I both became unemployed. So I can relate to feeling like a scared child, wondering, "Who'll take care of me?" Unlike baby Moses, however, I'm old enough to have seen God provide again and again. His provision, through intermittent work and other sources, has been enough. And the various difficulties we've experienced have forced us into new directions that, while not always easy, have turned out for our good. While God does not promise that his children will never experience hardship or need, he does promise that he will take care of us.

*SONG: Jehovah Jireh—My Provider*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, when I wonder, "Who'll take care of me?" help me to pour out my concerns to you, and then ask you in faith to provide for me, as you did for Moses.*

—Priscilla Hochhalter

*BIBLE READING: Exodus 2:11-15*

Pharaoh's daughter raised Moses as her son, so Moses led a life of privilege. But when he grew up, he wanted more. His heart was with his own people, the Hebrews, who were Pharaoh's slaves. He knew that God desired to see them set free, and he embraced God's desire and made it his own. Some Christians call this kind of deep, godly caring a "burden."

Was Moses right to desire the slaves' freedom? Yes. Did he pursue that desire the right way? No. The result was that he became a murderer and a fugitive, living in Midian, far away from God's eventual destiny for his life.

Have you, like Moses, ever become so "burdened" for a cause—even a worthy one—that you've run roughshod over others, especially those who oppose you, disagree with you, or vote differently than you? Are you ever so single-minded that all you can see is the issue, instead of the people? Have you ever committed well-meaning but misdirected acts that were so unfixable, it seemed all you could do was run away from the whole situation? I know I have. It's the moment when I ask myself, *How did I get here?*—the same question I'm sure Moses asked when he sat down by the well.

So what did Moses do? Stop caring? No—his burden was from the Lord, so it wouldn't go away. But it had to be tempered and redirected by God. Much later, Moses faced up to his past by returning to Egypt and proceeding to free the Hebrews using God's methods, instead of his own.

*SONG: Change My Heart, O God*

*PRAAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, let my burdens match your burdens—and temper me so that those burdens can be addressed your way, not mine.*

—Priscilla Hochhalter

*BIBLE READING: Exodus 3:1-7, 10*

Imagine you're a fugitive, hiding out in the desert. You see a bush on fire, but not burning up. Mystified, you draw closer to check it out. Suddenly you hear a voice with a stunning message: "I'm sending you back to the place where you failed and fled. You're going to face the world's mightiest leader and take his free workforce away from him."

Terrifying! And bewildering. Perhaps Moses thought: *Is this a joke? Where's the hidden camera?* God's message confirmed his burden for the Hebrews, and also offered him a second chance to participate in their deliverance, but only if he had the courage to face, and trust God with, his greatest failure.

Just as Moses tried and initially failed to free the Hebrews, more than once I've pursued a dream and watched it fail. In some cases, God has called me back to the point of my failure, often very much against my will, and brought an outcome that was unexpected and wonderful.

Are you being called back to your burden—a godly desire that you care about deeply, but have failed to realize in the past? Are you willing to give up all of your ideas about what should happen, and how—and let God handle it? If you are, not only will you have God's help along the way, but also you can be certain that he will assure the outcome—an outcome that you could not achieve on your own.

*SONG: He's Still Working on Me*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: God, I give you my greatest failure and all of the painful feelings associated with it. Please redeem it for your purposes—not mine—as you did in Moses' case.*

—Priscilla Hochhalter

*BIBLE READING: Exodus 4:10-16*

*Who, me? Send someone else.* How often do we say that to God? Moses felt unqualified to do God's work, even though he'd been educated in Pharaoh's court. He had enough brains, preparation, and passion to fulfill God's purpose, but he lacked courage.

Like Moses, I'm a late bloomer. For years I had the skills and education needed to do what I truly care about—writing—but I wasn't drawn to journalism. Although it took me awhile to figure it out, I eventually found my ideal work as a professional technical writer. But I have to be honest; my fears still cause me to disqualify myself from other challenging, even exciting work that God may be calling me to do.

One thing that intrigues me about this story is that God allowed for Moses' fears; God sent Aaron to help. Some people imply that due to this concession, Moses missed out on the full glory that could have been his, had he been brave enough to step up to the challenge on his own. But I think God knows our weaknesses, and the addition of Aaron's help does not diminish what Moses accomplished. He still freed his people from the greatest superpower of the ancient world.

Are you shrinking from a challenge God has for you? Maybe you need an Aaron. Don't be afraid to be honest with God about how you feel, fears and all. If the call is from God, he'll provide a way.

*SONG: God Will Make a Way*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, I want to do your work. Help me to be honest with you about my fears, and please provide the help I need to heed and fulfill your call.*

—Priscilla Hochhalter

*BIBLE READING: Exodus 5:1, 6-8, 19-23*

Okay! You're finally ready, willing, and able to answer God's call. You can't wait. You jump in, and...everything falls apart.

That was Moses' situation. His people were so severely oppressed under Pharaoh that he might have thought, *Well, here goes. It can't get worse, right?* But it did. Before Moses' call, the Hebrews just had to make bricks; after the call, they had to make bricks without any supplies—and suffer beatings if they failed. Their despair was so great that they even blamed Moses, their hope of rescue.

And imagine how Moses felt. This wasn't how it was supposed to go! I won't go into details, but I can say I felt that way when my husband and I, trying to follow God's path, experienced a series of crushing setbacks just a few months apart. I'll give you a hint: the loss of both jobs wasn't the worst part.

I'm always tempted to think, *Surely it can't get worse—right?* The truth is, God never promises it won't. In fact, when God is working, the opposition often gets much worse before God breaks through.

As I write this, the setbacks I mentioned are still unresolved. My husband and I have jobs, but not both full time, and there are other factors that have seriously reshaped our future. So we don't know what's ahead. But as the saying goes, God really does care more about our character than our comfort. And like the Hebrews, as God's children we can trust that the worse things get, the harder he's working on our behalf.

*SONG: It Is Well with My Soul*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, thank you that no matter what setbacks we experience, you are always on our side and working for our good.*

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*BIBLE READING: Exodus 12:29, 33-36, 40-41*

The Hebrews' departure from Egypt is a victory beyond all victories. God repays the Egyptians for their ruthlessness by killing all of their firstborn sons. Terrified, the Egyptians not only free the Hebrews, but also load them down with riches before rushing them out of the country. After 430 years of slavery, what a finish!

Perhaps some Hebrews never expected to leave Egypt at all, much less with great wealth. They must have looked at each other in amazement and asked, *Can you believe it?* Their deliverance was a sign to them, once again, that God was concerned about them and would take care of them.

Although I've never experienced what they did, I do know what it's like to feel trapped and enslaved, seemingly unable to make change happen and afraid it never will, and then finally experience a dramatic breakthrough. One such event happened over a single weekend a number of years ago. On Friday night I left work as an entry-level worker, and the following Monday I started my career as a professional writer for a Fortune 500 company. Making a living as a writer was a rare gift I never dreamed I'd receive, but I did. To me, it felt a little like breaking out of Egypt, with lavish riches in hand.

Can you think of an area in which you've been enslaved for a long time—one in which perhaps you can't even imagine being free? Keep asking God for help. Your powerful deliverance, complete with rich and unexpected blessings, may be very close.

*SONG: Victory in Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, I know you see my needs. I trust you and thank you for working for my deliverance, as you did for the Hebrews.*

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*BIBLE READING: Hebrews 11:24-27*

In the New Testament, Moses is recorded as a hero of faith. This man, who once believed himself incapable of facing Pharaoh, not only did so but did it triumphantly. It's important to remember, though, all of the obstacles he faced to get there, and how he overcame them.

He was abandoned at birth, misdirected by murder, derailed in the desert, assisted by Aaron, criticized by his countrymen, vindicated through victory, and finally praised for his perseverance. Perseverance trumped everything else.

What gave Moses the strength to persevere? According to today's Scripture, he "persevered because he saw him who is invisible" (v. 27). Seeing God's kingdom, not earthly ones, gave Moses the courage to confront and overcome one of the strongest—and most oppositional—earthly kingdoms in the history of the world.

Perseverance has never been my strong suit. I can relate to Moses' fears and mistakes much more than to his faith and perseverance. But at some points in my life, I have persevered at something difficult, even when I desperately wanted to quit. And, like Moses, I then experienced the unique rewards of not giving up. One of the best inspirations is to look ahead to our heavenly reward and say, with Moses, *I see it!*

If you are in a situation that requires faith and perseverance, I encourage you to hold on, stay faithful, and wait expectantly for your deliverance. It is often true that the greater the opposition, the greater the victory will be.

*SONG: Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus*

*PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, thank you that you are Lord of all. Keep my eyes focused on heavenly possibilities, not earthly obstacles, so that I can persevere as Moses did.*

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