

Hebrews 11:23-29

Developing Endurance

By faith...he endured, as seeing him who is invisible – v. 27

Paul was anxious for his fellow believing Hebrews to endure in the faith. I think that is the primary aim behind this epistle to the Hebrews to exhort them to endure in the faith. Such endurance was always a matter of great concern to Paul and that concern is shown in other of his epistles also:

1Thess. 3:5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. You see the concern Paul shows in this verse? He knew that the Gentiles in Thessalonica were being sorely tried. He undoubtedly recalled how he himself had to flee from that city. What would become of the converts he left behind? He had to know – he had to find out. And when at last Timothy brought a report to Paul that the Christians in Thessalonica were enduring, he would write in *1Thess. 3:8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.* The implication is, of course, that had they not endured in the faith it would have robbed Paul of his own life – it would have killed him, so to speak.

That same concern existed, I believe, toward all that Paul ministered to. And especially would this be the case for his kinsmen according to the flesh. He had a great burden for their salvation. He had gone back to Jerusalem, against the advice of his friends and even against the cautions that the Holy Ghost gave him because his desire for the salvation of his fellow-countrymen was so strong on his heart. In Christ-like fashion he says in *Rom. 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* And in *10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

Oh that the Lord would give us such a burden for souls. I'm afraid that in our day and in our spiritually apathetic culture we've found it entirely too easy to accept the lost condition of those around us. Paul was driven by the intense desire that his countrymen find Christ and not only that they find him but that they continue with him in the faith. And so Paul utilizes the strongest arguments he can to encourage the Hebrews to continue in the faith. And the strength of his argument rests in the superiority of Christ.

After devoting, really, the first 10 chapters of this epistle to that theme of Christ's superiority, the focus in Hebrews has shifted and the emphasis now is – walking by faith. *For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry (Heb. 10:37) Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him (10:38).*

And then Paul defines faith – *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* And after defining faith, Paul then lists a number of instances in which we find Old Testament saints who lived by faith. What we've been doing in our studies of this 11th chapter of Hebrews is drawing from these examples the lessons they teach us on living

by faith. I would hope that by this time in our studies you would be saying to yourselves – *I certainly see the need to live by faith. And I see the need to persevere in the faith.* Our forefathers faced challenges that were certainly as difficult as the challenges we face in our day and age. Indeed, I think we could say that in many and even in most instances the challenges they faced exceed most challenges that we've had to face. This point will be all the more magnified when we come to vv. 35ff which will make general statements about what the saints of Christ had to endure.

They were tortured, v. 35 tells us. *They had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment* we go on to read. And yet they endured. That's the point of this chapter – the saints of God from the past endured in their faith and so should we. And if you are in agreement with the proposition that we, like the saints of old, should endure, then a question should come to mind which is the question of how to do it. How can I endure, as they endured? Is there anything from the lives of the men and women listed in this chapter that can help me to fortify myself in such a way that I too may more effectively develop this endurance?

Enter – Moses in vv. 24-29. And notice the verbs in these verses that tell us what Moses did and what Moses did not do:

He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter – v. 24; He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God – v. 25; And he chose not to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; He esteemed the reproach of Christ – v. 26; He had respect unto the recompense of reward – v. 26; He forsook Egypt – v. 27; And then comes the key to the whole matter – the thing that was most applicable to the Hebrews and is most applicable to you and me this morning, look at what it says at the end of v. 27 – *he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.*

When we look at and analyze these things that Moses did and didn't do, the choices he made, the things he identified with and the motivational forces behind his actions, I think we find very useful instruction that will serve to help us fortify ourselves in God's grace in such a way that we, too, will develop endurance. And so this is what I want to bring to your attention and consideration today – this matter of developing endurance. If you would develop the endurance you need to go on with God and avoid drawing back from God, then:

<p>You Must Know the Factors that Contribute to the Development of that Endurance.</p>

And I want to bring some of these factors to your attention this morning. Notice with me first of all that there is:

I. A Parental Factor

Heb 11:23 *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw [he was] a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.*

I want to address this point to those who are parents as well as to those who have been the beneficiaries of Christian parents. We don't find very much about Moses' parents in the Bible. We are given the account in Exodus 2 of how he was hidden for 3 months by his parents. Evidently the order of Pharaoh that male children be executed was enforced pretty thoroughly because the time came when it was no longer safe to hide the baby in their home and so Moses' mother built an ark of bulrushes and hid him in the flags by the river's brink (Exod. 2:3).

You know the story – Pharaoh's daughter discovered the child and had mercy on the child and in the providence of God the child ended up with his natural mother until the day came that she presented her child to Pharaoh's daughter. We are told in Heb. 11:23 that this was an act of faith on the part of Moses' parents. And we're given two things in the verse that contributed to their faith. It says that *they saw he was a proper child*. In the narrative in Exod. 2 it says that he was a *goodly child* and the margin reads that he was a *beautiful child*.

I think it would be fair to say that Moses' parents were pro-life parents and their faith functioned as a restraining force keeping them from (could we call it) court ordered infanticide. The thing to keep in mind about Moses' parents is that they were slaves. The Israelites had been slaves for generations. This was a risky venture on their part. The consequences of a slave family defying the king's order in all likelihood would have been severe. I dare say that it was in peril of their own lives that they kept the child and hid the child and did all they could to preserve the life of the child. So that's the first contributing factor to their faith – or the thing that gave rise to their acts of faith.

Verse 23 gives us the second factor that demonstrated their faith – it tells us that *they were not afraid of the king's commandment*. That's a rather remarkable statement when you stop and think about it. Pharaoh was undoubtedly the most powerful man in the world. He had subjected the entire Hebrew race to his power. And yet interestingly enough the narrative in Exodus indicates to us quite clearly that the thing that led to the enslavement of the Israelites was the fact that the Egyptians came to fear the Israelites. They grew afraid of them because of how greatly they were multiplying and the more they tried to suppress them the more they increased.

One can only imagine the dread that would fall on the world today if, in this country especially, the unbelievers came to fear Christianity because while the world of unbelief destroys their own upcoming generation through abortion, the generation of Christians multiplies.

So this was an act of faith on the part of Moses' parents. The thing I want you to see now is what Moses inherited from his parents faith. Notice the words of v. 27 which, referring to Moses says: *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king*. You see what

he gained from his parents faith? His parents were not afraid of the king's commandment and Moses himself did not fear the wrath of the king. What a blessed heritage Moses' parents handed down to him. It would seem, wouldn't it, that he inherited the courage of his parents faith.

Our faith in Christ is the greatest legacy we can leave to our children. And I can hardly over emphasize the need for our children to see that we have faith in Christ. I believe that it is this faith as its demonstrated by parents through the ministry of the word and the example of their worship and living that is ultimately sealed to the lives of our children. The very sacraments that we administer are ineffectual apart from the examples we set for our children of living by faith.

I can remember when I was very young in the Lord I worked in a silk-screening plant. There was a man, there, who was an unbeliever in every respect. He never went to church. His language was laced with profanity. He indulged in the world's vices and lived the typical life of a sinner. Perhaps I should say, to his credit, that he was a married man. He didn't simply have a live-in partner. And then one day this man approached me at work. His wife had borne a child and now this unbelieving un-churched pagan wanted to know from me whether or not he should have his baby baptized.

Like I said – I was young in the Lord. I had not, at that early period of my Christian life, explored the issue of baptism. But the answer I gave to that man, then, I believe, would be the same answer I would give a man today if I were approached by the same kind of person under similar circumstances. I said to that man – whether you baptize that child or not, the likelihood is strong that your child will follow you. If you don't believe in Christ, neither will your child. If you don't worship Christ, neither will your child. If you indulge in sin, so will your child. If you pursue the pathway to hell, then apart from God's intervention, so will your child – baptism, notwithstanding.

By way of contrast, I remember a man, a Baptist Pastor from the former Soviet Union who had been arrested and was imprisoned for many years. This man, somehow, became a bargaining chip in a spy-swap deal that was made with the Soviet Union back in the days of President Carter. He established a ministry in Northern Indiana through which he made known to the Western world what was taking place in the Soviet Union with regard to Christians. This pastor told the story of how he, along with 4 of his colleagues, had been arrested and the group of 5 had spent some 12 years in prison for their faith in Jesus Christ. This, of course, posed great hardship on their families and robbed them to a large degree of their spiritual ministries in their own homes.

In the providence of God each of these 5 ministers oldest sons followed the footsteps of their fathers and entered into the ministry of the gospel. Their sons, like Moses, inherited the courage of their father's faith. What a challenge this should pose to parents. What do your children see in you? Do they see that you live by faith? Do they see that you believe in Christ. Can they tell – or perhaps I should rephrase that by saying – they can tell what kind of value you place on the worship of Christ. They can tell what kind of value you

place on prayer and the ministry of the word. The truth of this phenomenon I'm describing has the potential to be most discouraging to parents. For you are all aware, I'm sure, or at least I hope, that just as surely as we have sin natures within us that we still must fight against, our children are not going to see in us perfect sanctification. What I hope they can see is that you endure in the faith.

So when you grow careless in the things of God, you eventually catch yourself and plead the blood of Christ over your inconsistencies and carelessness and you continue with God, believing in accordance with the gospel that his grace is greater than all our sin. May our children learn to endure in the faith, then, as they behold their parents enduring in the faith. There is a parental factor behind this endurance.

And before I leave this point I think it would be proper for me to exhort those of you who have had a good example set before you by your parents to be sure to acknowledge the debt of gratitude that you owe your parents. They may not have demonstrated to you perfect sainthood, but I'm confident that they have pointed you to a perfect Savior. So there is this parental factor that contributes to the development of our endurance in the faith. Consider with me next that there's also:

II. A Theological Factor

Notice again the words of v. 27 *he endured, as seeing him who is invisible*. Why was it, do you suppose, that Moses' parents were not afraid of the king's commandment and Moses himself was not afraid of the king's wrath? I believe the truth of our text supplies the reason – they saw by faith what was not visible to the fleshly eye.

They knew, in other words, that God was greater. They saw a greater authority than the authority of Pharaoh's throne. And they saw greater might than all the chariots of Pharaoh. They certainly saw a greater purpose than Pharaoh's purpose for them and greater freedom than Pharaoh's slavery.

You begin to see, I trust, the importance of good theology when it comes to developing faith that will endure. If I thought for a moment that this world was really in the hands of the politicians and the rulers and the conspirators against Christ I would find it hard to get out of bed in the morning. I would be looking for a place to hide and would hope I could go unnoticed.

But when we see by faith him who is invisible then we gain the courage to defy the forces of darkness and we gain the desire to honor and please him. This is why Christ said to his disciples *fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell* (Mt. 10:28).

It was because of his theology that the boy, David, could confront the giant, Goliath, and prevail. It was because of his theology that Paul, as a prisoner, could move Felix to tremble when he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. It was because of his theology that he could say before Festus and king Agrippa, *I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether*

such as I am, except these bonds (Acts 26:29). Paul was more free than they were because his conscience had been purged by the blood of Christ and he had been set free from sin's dominion.

At the end of the day it will be our view of God and Christ that will determine how well we endure in our faith. That makes theology pretty important, doesn't it? It makes theology something more than an abstract realm of speculation. To those whose theology is weak, their fear of man will be great but to those who strive to gain higher estimates of God's greatness – they will not fear the king's commandment and they will not fear the king's wrath.

They will fear God, instead, not only because of the authority and power of him who is a Spirit and is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, but also because of the wonderful provision God has made for their salvation. Moses, theology, you see, was the theology of the Passover. Notice the words of v. 28 *Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.*

Here is the theology of judgment and wrath but here also is the theology of grace and love and salvation. Here is the theology of Christ for he is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world and he is our Passover. We sing this theology when we sing:

Would you be free from your burden of sin? There's power in the blood, power in the blood; Would you o'er evil a victory win? There's wonderful power in the blood.

And there is power in the blood to save us from sin's defilement and sin's dominion. There's power in the blood to redeem us. There's power in the blood to appease God's wrath against us. There's power in the blood to reconcile us to God and to bring us into the family of God. There's power in the blood to set us free and to bring to our hearts God's peace and God's joy.

We cannot endure, we will not endure without the right view of God. Paul knew this – this is why he devotes so much time to the theme of Christ's superiority over the angels, and over Moses, and over Aaron and the Levitical priests. His sacrifice was and is a superior sacrifice and if the truth of his person and work will be stamped on our hearts by the Spirit of God then we'll be braced for whatever the world hurls at us. We'll be equipped for the world's scoffing and rejection. Let me but know that God accepts me and it will make no difference whether or not the rulers of this world accept me or my religion.

So we have these factors that contribute to the development of our endurance. There's a parental factor and there's a theological factor. Could I call your attention finally to the fact that there's also:

III. A Motivational Factor

You have, no doubt, heard the expression that life is made up of choices that we make. On the horizontal plane of life in this world that saying could be viewed as true. I say that with the qualification that on an ultimate level which brings us to the vertical plane of heaven and earth things are determined by the choices God makes.

But on the horizontal or human level the statement is true that our successes or failures in this life depends in large measure on the choices we make. When it comes to cultivating our faith or developing our endurance the same thing holds true and Moses stands out as a clear example.

Look at the choice that is attributed to Moses in v. 25 *Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*. Do you see how this verse presents to us two things that Moses could have chosen? He could have chosen the pleasures of sin or he could have chosen to suffer affliction with the people of God. He chose the latter.

In the world's eyes Moses choice would be viewed as very foolish. Why would a person choose affliction over pleasure? Why would a person choose to identify with slaves rather than identify with the palace of Pharaoh? Talk about wasted opportunity – Moses had access to prestige – Moses had access to all the pleasures that royalty could afford him – Moses, you might say, could have had the world at his fingertips – the world waiting for his command to satisfy his every whim and wish.

And yet Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. Did he have some sort of perverted affection for hardship and reproach? There was, in fact, a motivational force behind Moses' choice. Notice what it says in v. 26 - *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward*.

This is closely tied to his knowledge of God and Christ and what the verse plainly indicates to us is that Moses saw greater reward and greater recompense from Christ than anything the world could afford him – whether it be the pleasures of sin or the prestige of Pharaoh's palace or the pleasures of sin that could come on account of Pharaoh's palace.

His choice was based on a calculation of values. And he rightly saw that the value of Christ's reward is infinitely greater than the values of anything or even everything in this world. Christ, after all, can offer a crown of life – what could Pharaoh offer that would even come close to that? Christ can offer perfect righteousness – Pharaoh can only offer sin. Christ can offer heaven – Pharaoh can only offer a portion of Egypt. Christ can offer a reward that is durable for eternity. Would you notice the striking statement of verse 25 that *the pleasures of sin are for a season*.

They're temporal. They don't last – neither do they satisfy. In the end the pleasures of sin bite like a serpent and leave a man plagued with a conscience that tells him he's sinned and he stands condemned and he deserves everlasting condemnation. Oh that young people could see that the pleasures of sin are but for a season. They will bring immediate gratification to the flesh but the gratification is short lived and in the end sin only adds to the weight of the burden of guilt.

We live in a day when there's so much focus on the immediate and there's very little focus on long term matters. This is what has brought our nation to the brink of collapse. There is so much emphasis on what you can have immediately that a person becomes all

too willing to overlook what any long term effects will be. Who cares if government programs bring us into the realm of unsustainable debt – I can have a benefit now. Who cares how much more money I'll spend on an item by utilizing credit – through credit I can have what I want now.

And in the spiritual realm – who cares what sin will cost me for eternity, I want gratification to the flesh now. People that make such choices will have a very tough time enduring in a faith that doesn't bring immediate luxury and ease but may bring instead reproach and hardship.

Moses was motivated by something more valuable and something more durable – so much so that it made the reproach of Christ a badge of honor rather than a sign of ignominy – something to be esteemed rather than something to be ashamed of. What are the factors, then, that contribute to developing our endurance?

There's a parental factor – may our children learn to keep their Father's commandment and forsake not the laws of their mothers (Prov. 6:20). There's a theological factor – May God help us to overcome the sin of underestimating the greatness of our God and Savior. And there's a motivational factor – there is a crown of life that will be rewarded to those who have faith in Christ and don't draw back.

May the Lord help us to esteem that which is truly of value and to reject that which brings pleasure but only before it bites like a snake and leaves us wounded and defiled and at great risk of the everlasting loss of our souls.