

EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS

Message #29

Hebrews 11:23-29

Most people if given a choice to enjoy an elite life of the rich and famous or to live a life of adversity and hardship would clearly choose the good life. There was a major lottery this week and one man said, if he had won, he wouldn't be working anymore but just enjoying life. Of course, he didn't win and he never had a chance to choose what to do with his life. But there was a man who did have that choice. His name was Moses. Moses actually had that choice. He deliberately chose to take the hard road rather than the high road.

As we come to this part of Hebrews, we move out of the book of Genesis and into the book of Exodus. When you move into the book of Exodus you move into the life of Moses. As we have said, **faith that pleases God believes the Word of God literally from Genesis to Revelation.** Faith that pleases God takes God at His Word. It believes the Scriptures literally.

The main point of this text is this:

FAITH THAT PLEASURES GOD IS THE KIND OF FAITH DEMONSTRATED BY MOSES' PARENTS AND BY MOSES HIMSELF, AND IT IS A FAITH THAT LITERALLY BELIEVES THE WORD OF GOD SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE FUTURE.

When you look down through these verses, there are five main heroic faith events that surround the life of Moses:

HEROIC FAITH EVENT #1 – By faith the parents of Moses hid Moses. **11:23**

Moses was born at a time when Pharaoh had ordered that male Hebrew babies be killed. Many baby boys were being tossed into the Nile River to be food for crocodiles (Exodus 1:15-22). But Moses' parents decided that would not happen to him.

Most people don't know the name of Moses' parents. All we learn from Exodus 2:1 is that both parents were connected to Levi. They are not named in the New Testament and you have to actually search through the book of Numbers to even find them. **Moses' father's name was Amram and his mother's name was Jochebed (Numbers 26:59).** It is quite apparent from what is revealed in this verse that Moses' parents were parents who had faith in God and were faithful to God. Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived in the first century A.D., claims that Amram was praying and received direct revelation from God concerning their son's destiny. He said he woke up his wife Jochebed and told her what God revealed to him. Josephus also said that when Jochebed went into labor, she did not have a lot of pain, which enabled her to quietly give birth to Moses (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 56). Although these events are not specifically stated in Scripture, it is very possible that the account is true.

When Moses was born they apparently saw something in him, which God obviously allowed them to see, that prompted them to risk their lives and go against the edict of the Egyptian king and hide their baby. Stephen says that Moses “was lovely in the sight of God” (Acts 7:20).

The text says “they saw he was a beautiful child.” Most serious Bible students believe that there was something about Moses as a baby that indicated God had providentially chosen Moses. The Greek word “beautiful” (αστειος) indicates that there was a very unique elegance and beauty to Moses (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 65). John Calvin thought there was something about his look that suggested to the parents that God’s extraordinary favor was on him and that prompted them to hide him for three months (*Hebrews*, Vol. 22, p. 292).

Now most parents, especially mothers, think their baby is beautiful and they see the baby as beautiful. Most parents think their children are gorgeous, especially if we can see anything that makes us think they look like us. Truth is some babies are not beautiful; they are downright ugly. Oftentimes someone will present to you their baby and say, “Isn’t my baby beautiful?” You look at the baby and apparently don’t see what the mother or father sees. Now being in church as a minister you have to be careful about what you say. People who have newborn babies want you to say, “Your baby is beautiful,” but the truth is not all babies are. One good way to avoid admitting this is to say, “My, your baby is something.”

I have seen some baby pictures of some famous people who now do look beautiful or handsome and when they were babies you would have never guessed they would end up so good looking. But in this case the Scriptures actually reveal that there was really something about Moses as a baby that stood out, and Amram and Jochebed saw it and they hid their baby.

HEROIC FAITH EVENT #2 – By faith Moses refused to pursue an Egyptian lifestyle.
11:24-26

The next bit of information we get about Moses is when “he had grown up.” Actually the Greek text reads when Moses “had become great” (μεγας) not just grown.

Stephen says that Moses was a highly educated man who “was a man of power in words and deeds” (Acts 7:22). So now we switch from the parents’ faith concerning Moses to Moses’ own faith.

There are four faith actions mentioned here to Moses’ grown up faith:

(Faith Action #1) - He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. **11:24**

We may recall that Moses’ parents put Moses in a wicker basket and hid him to where the Pharaoh’s daughter typically took a bath in the Nile river (Exodus 2:3-9). Josephus said the woman’s name was Thermuthis and when she saw the baby, God turned her mind to love him (*Ibid.*, p. 56). She was the one who named this baby “Moses” (Exodus 2:10).

Pharaoh’s daughter did not have any children of her own and since she had found Moses floating in a basket in the Nile river and she took him and nurtured him “as her own son” (Acts 7:21).

Being Pharaoh's daughter, Moses was being groomed to be the next Pharaoh and had he permitted himself to be called her son, the Egyptian world would have been his. To be a Pharaoh meant a life of wealth and luxury. All he had to do to have this world as his was to just say he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter. But he would not say it because it was not true. He was the son of Hebrew parents from the line of Levi - Amram and Jochebed. Moses was an Israeli not an Egyptian.

Before we move on, let me say that this act of Moses probably broke the heart of the Egyptian mother who adopted him. She loved him and took care of him and raised him, and any mom who adopts children, love for those children to call her mom. But for Moses it was not simply about an adoption; it was about God.

The reason why Moses was adopted is because his adopted mother's father had issued an edict to kill Hebrew babies and Moses' real mother knew that the only way to save her son's life was by turning him over to Pharaoh's daughter. Moses never forgot this and he refused to be called her son.

(Faith Action #2) - He chose to endure hardships of the Hebrews. 11:25a

This is a very rare Greek word only used here in the New Testament. The word "ill treatment" (συνκακουχθεομαι) is one that means to endure adversity (Smith, p. 430). Moses made a choice among all of his options to align himself with the people of God and it meant life was not smooth sailing.

Now you would think that because Moses made this decision, he would have been the most popular and honored man in Israel. You would think the people would say this guy is the greatest. But that is not how they reacted. The Hebrews were not the most pleasant people at times. They were a bunch of whiners and complainers and there were moments when Moses even asked God to take his own life (Numbers 11:10-15).

In fact, even Miriam and Aaron, his own sister and brother, spoke against Moses (Numbers 12:1-15). When he sent Hebrew spies into the Promised Land to look it over, all except Joshua and Caleb told him they could not possibly take the land and Israel wanted to replace Moses with another leader (Numbers 13:1-14:4).

Truth is, he would have been honored more by the people had he stayed in Egypt, but he would have never been honored by God. So this was not a choice he made on the basis of a life of ease.

Just think of the options Moses actually had. Moses can choose to become the next Egyptian Pharaoh and enjoy all of the pomp and luxury that comes with that lifestyle, or he can decide to become associated with the Hebrews and wander around as a nomad. He chose to endure the hardships of the Hebrews and there were many hardships

How in the world could Moses make such a choice? He made it by faith. He believed that in the end, the Hebrews would be the blessed people of God and he chose to go with them.

(Faith Action #3) - He refused to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. **11:25b**

Three specific things are stated here about what Moses refused to enjoy:

1) He refused to indulge in sinful things; 2) He refused to indulge in sinful pleasurable things; 3) He refused to indulge in sinful fleeting things.

Peter O'Brien said, "Just imagine the sinful opulence that Moses renounced when he joined the Israelites" (*The Letter to the Hebrews*, p. 431). The word "pleasure" (απολαυσις) has to do with sinful pleasures that are enjoyable (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 52). These are real pleasures that are enticing and enjoyable.

If you read the book of Leviticus you will get a glimpse as to some of the sinful pleasures that the Egyptians pursued because Moses says, "You shall not do what was done in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 18:3ff). There was a lot of sexual activity and pleasure that was offered to Moses as the heir-apparent Pharaoh. Moses could have chosen to plunge himself into all the passing pleasures of sin. Any sinful pleasure could have been his in the Egyptian world.

Don't overlook what is said here. Do not be deceived; there is enjoyable pleasure in sin. G. Campbell Morgan said, "I love that passage because it's so true to life. Pleasures of sin. There are such today. What a stupid thing it is that some people say that there is no pleasure in sin. Of course there are pleasures in sin."

Moses saw the Egyptian world and he knew what was going on. He saw the sin and the pleasure and he made a choice; he was not going to spend his life enjoying the "passing pleasures of sin." Pleasures of sin are passing. They will not be around forever. There is no question that there are pleasures to sin, but there is also a deceitfulness to sin.

You and I will never regret making a decision to choose virtue over vice. You and I will never regret keeping our faith focus on pleasing God, not pleasuring ourselves. Those who refuse to give in to transitory pleasures because they want to please God in the future, have a faith as solid as Moses.

(Faith Action #4) - He considered commitment to Jesus Christ greater than any Egyptian treasure. **11:26**

The basis for the choices Moses made was his belief in Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah and Redeemer and King. Moses saw Jesus Christ a greater reward than anything temporal in Egypt. He saw an eternal reward that was eternal. He did not want to be a reproach to Jesus Christ even though he had plenty of opportunities.

As Moses was living out the days of his life, he was focused on God's future pertaining to Jesus Christ. He did not want to be identified as an Egyptian, but as a Hebrew. He was focused on the rich future and he wanted to be identified with Jesus Christ.

Certainly we all know now that archeology has discovered that Pharaohs were rich. They were extremely rich. They had big riches in every way. They had huge sums of money at their disposal and even their tombs, pyramids, cost a fortune. Moses could have had all of it. But by faith he didn't want it.

He wanted to be known as one who was connected to Jesus Christ.

HEROIC FAITH EVENT #3 – By faith Moses left Egypt. 11:27

Moses' faith was a faith that looked forward. He walked away from a visible Egyptian king because he believed in the Eternal invisible King. He "left" Egypt twice. The first time was when he got in a fight with an Egyptian who was beating up a Hebrew and he killed the Egyptian (Exodus 2:14-15). The second time was when he led the entire nation Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 14:13-20). Moses didn't care if his defection made the king mad; he defected anyway. The reason he did it was because he realized that the Jews were the special people of God. He left his potential life of luxury.

It is interesting that the participle "seeing" in this verse is present tense. What this means is that by faith Moses kept continually seeing and continually believing in the invisible, unseen God. As the hours of the life of Moses ticked away, Moses just kept on believing and he kept on living his life in his faith. By faith he left Egypt.

Now the rationalists of Moses' day would say, well Moses, don't you think you could make a greater impact if you had your faith and stayed in Egypt? Don't you think you could really make a difference if you just stay and not leave? The education is here; the power is here; the money is here; the opportunities are here. Moses, don't leave, stay here and work from the inside.

I get sick of this argument and it is the same today. I believe that there are many people who are in churches where they are not being taught the truth of God and they, like Moses, need the faith to leave them. They need to get out of Egypt. Perhaps some are here tonight. I wish I had a nickel for every person I have heard say - "Well this is our church and we'll just stay here and maybe we can influence it." No you cannot. You need the faith of Moses to leave it.

You mean, Moses, you are going to leave all of the luxury and the security of your Egyptian world to identify with a bunch of miserly Hebrews who are a bunch of slaves? Moses answer is, yes, that is exactly what by faith I am going to do.

If we are to have a faith that pleases God, we will have to make concrete choices to leave certain places, people, and things.

HEROIC FAITH EVENT #4 – By faith Moses kept the Passover. **11:28**

Not only did Moses make choices to leave things, but he also made choices to carefully understand and literally apply God’s Word. Do not miss this point; when God’s Word said something, Moses applied it literally to himself and the whole nation.

A tremendous example of this is the Passover. God told Moses that he was to keep the Passover and by faith Moses did it. This is what faith is; it is believing the Word of God literally. God told Moses He would slay the firstborn unless the blood of the lamb was put on the doorposts. By faith Moses instituted this Passover meal.

Now what I find intriguing about this is that Moses’ name is last mentioned concerning the Passover and not mentioned with crossing the Red Sea. Why is this? Keep in mind what this book of Hebrews is designed to do - exalt Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Passover. When God sees the blood of Jesus Christ applied to us, He will pass over giving us His wrath just as the death angel passed over the death penalty in Egypt.

It would seem to me that Moses had some perspective of the eternal ramifications of the Passover and by faith he believed it and applied it to his own life.

HEROIC FAITH EVENT #5 – By faith Moses led Israel through the Red Sea. **11:29**

Notice the change in the faith pronoun from “by faith he” to “by faith they.” It was Moses who led the way, but all Israel had to literally believe the Word of God to cross that Red Sea.

Moses was a great man of faith but he was not a perfect man. In fact, according to Psalm 106:33, he had a problem of shooting off his mouth in a rash way. Moses certainly wasn’t perfect, but he had a faith in One that was perfect and that is what saved him and motivated him. Moses was not motivated by the glories of Egypt, but by the glory of God.

Our world is rapidly becoming as godless as the Egyptian world. We still kill babies. Oh, we don’t throw them in the Nile; we throw them in dumpsters after they have been aborted. We flaunt immorality and we are a world that promotes pleasure and greed.

In this kind of world, you will never regret choosing to believe in Jesus Christ and trusting totally in His shed blood to save you. You will never regret believing God’s Word literally. You may wander through this wilderness of a world for 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 years; but if you will purpose to believe God and apply His Word literally to your life, then you too have an heroic faith like that of Moses.