

Hebrews 3:1-6

The Superior Faithfulness of Christ

And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant ... But Christ as a son over his own house – vv. 5,6

The practice of making comparisons is both a beneficial practice as well as a very unwise practice depending on the things that are being compared. For example the Holy Spirit's ministry to our hearts teaches us to compare spiritual things with spiritual (1Cor. 2:13). This ministry of the Spirit that so teaches us to compare spiritual things takes us beyond the bounds of man's wisdom and places us in a realm that man's wisdom cannot touch.

On the other hand Paul writes to the Corinthians in 2Cor. 10:12 that *we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.* Here is an example of comparison that springs from pride and only serves to foster pride and self-deception. Christ's own disciples were, at times, caught up in this practice as they strove among themselves on the topic of who, among them, was the greatest.

Now anyone who is the least bit familiar with this epistle to the Hebrews knows that this book contains many comparisons – and they are valid comparisons. These comparisons are intended to teach us and lead us to appreciate the greatness of Christ. We've already seen Christ compared to the angels and the author concludes that He's better than the angels. It could be argued also from chp. 1 that Christ is better than the prophets that spoke in diverse ways in times past. None of them are seated at the right hand of God – none of them are worthy of the Divine prerogative of receiving worship. None of them could atone for our sins.

Christ alone, is the only begotten Son of the Father – Christ alone is the brightness of His Father's glory and express image of His person. Christ alone has the power to uphold all things by the word of His power – therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard – especially those things that have been taught by Christ.

And in our last study we noted how we must go even further than giving earnest heed to the things we have heard. We should also devote ourselves to considering Christ who is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. This means we are to think upon Christ, contemplate Christ, meditate on His person and work. You may recall that I said early on in our studies that this epistle to the Hebrews aligns itself well with our time around the Lord's table because the elements that we will soon partake of also call for us to do the same thing. They call on us to affectionately meditate on the sufferings of Christ.

Now when we come to chapter 3 we are called on again to make a comparison with regard to Christ. We're to compare Him to Moses who, according to v. 5 was faithful in all his house, as a servant. Moses, I'm sure many of you know, was the primary hero of the Jews. He was the one that they loved to identify with. When Christ healed a blind man in

Jn. 9 and the Jews interrogated that blind man whose sight had been restored at one point in the interrogation the healed blind man asked them *will ye also be his disciples?* It's not hard to picture them lifting their heads high and beating on their chests when they revile the healed blind man and say to him *Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples* (Jn. 9:28).

So Paul is going right to the heart of the Jewish religion by introducing us now to this comparison between Moses and Christ. And in the course of this comparison Paul makes it plain that there was and is an essential difference between the two. Moses was a servant, Christ is the Son. Moses as well as all believers was a part of the house. Christ is the ultimate builder of the house.

Now in making this comparison between Christ and Moses Paul goes right to the heart of matter by raising the issue of what could be called the greatest virtue of Moses. And what was that virtue? It's given to us in v. 2 and again in v. 5. Notice the second half of v. 2 which tells us that *Moses was faithful in all his house*. And in v. 5 he states it again and emphasizes the truth of it with the word *verily*. *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house*.

This is a virtue that God expects you and me to manifest. So we read in 1Cor. 4:2 *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*. And there are a number of ways in which this virtue is to be manifested. We're to be faithful to our God – we're to be faithful to our spouses – we're to be faithful to our children and to our church and to our country.

The call to be faithful, as we'll see in the course of our study, is the call to be Christ-like. For it's Christ, according to v. 2 that was faithful to him that appointed him and it's Christ, in v. 5 who is faithful as a son over his own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end – which is tantamount to saying that Christ is faithful to us. We're His house – we're the ones that are being built up by Him – Christ is faithful to you and to me.

Now one of the best ways of cultivating this virtue of faithfulness is to contemplate the faithfulness of Christ to us. I believe that this comparison between the faithfulness of Moses and the faithfulness of Christ is designed by God to increase our appreciation for the faithfulness of Christ so that we in turn will be faithful to Him.

And so what I'd like to do this morning in preparation for our time around the Lord's table is to focus on those areas in the life of Moses where he stands out as being faithful and then show by comparison:

The Superior Faithfulness of Christ

I. The Faithfulness of Moses in His Prophetic Ministry

Some commentators feel that the prophetic office of Moses is what the author of Hebrews has primarily in view since we are called upon in v. 1 to consider Christ as the *Apostle* of our profession. An Apostle who one who is sent by God and there can be no doubt that Moses was called of God and sent by God to the Israelites. An apostle was also one who declared the will of God or in other words an apostle preached the word of God.

It's no wonder, then, that Paul would make reference to Moses when it came to considering Christ as the Apostle of our profession. Moses provides for us a clear picture of a mediator – one who would receive from God all that God would say to His people and then faithfully reveal what God had said.

In the book of Deuteronomy Moses recalls the time when the Lord drew near to His people on Mt. Sinai and in 5:23ff Moses describes the effect that revelation had on the people and what specific request the people had of Moses at that time {**Deut. 5:23-28**}.

Later on Moses would be called up to the mount of God and would spend 40 days and 40 nights in God's presence and would receive from God the pattern of the tabernacle and the specific form that would govern their worship throughout the period of the Old Testament economy. You may recall that when Moses descended from the mount following that 40 day period his face glowed with the radiance of God's splendor so much so that the Israelites were initially afraid to approach him (Exod. 34:29,30).

We can draw a practical lesson from that experience of Moses that when we spend time in the presence of God with our minds and hearts open to the word of God it will certainly effect our countenances in such a way that the joy and peace that we enjoy with God through Christ will be evident to all who behold us by our countenances and demeanors. Oh that we would leave the Lord's house today with our countenances shining more brightly than when we came into the Lord's house. This is what the world needs to see in us – not that we're troubled and disturbed by so many of the troubles that disturb them on account of the uncertainties and perplexities of life – but that our peace is firmly grounded in the One who controls all things because we've been reconciled to Him through Christ.

But we come now to consider Christ as superior in His faithfulness to His prophetic office and the thing we must be impressed with concerning Christ is that like Moses He too conveyed not His own words but the words which His Father gave Him. *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me* Christ would pray to His Father in Jn. 17:8.

But above simply giving the words that He received from His Father, Christ Himself in all that He spoke and in all that He did represented the fullest expression of His Father's will. This is the meaning of John when he writes in his gospel that *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn. 1:1). And later in the chapter in v. 14 we read *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.*

And in this last phrase *full of grace and truth* John sees fit to point out the superior ministry of Christ in comparison to the ministry of Moses as he states in v. 17 *For the law*

was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. This is not to say that there was no grace revealed by Moses – arguably there was great grace revealed by Moses through the sacrificial laws of the Old Testament economy. But in terms of emphasis, looking over their entire prophetic ministries it can be said that the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

And what words of grace we have received from Christ! He's the One that tells us *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* He's the One that graciously invites us to *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Mt. 11:28). And again in Jn. 7:37,38 *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

What gracious words our Savior conveys to us! – words of peace, words of life, words that penetrate deep to our hearts and meet us in our deepest needs. I'm often struck by the scene in Jn. 7 where the Chief priests and Pharisees have sent their officers to apprehend Christ and when the officers return the priests empty handed they're asked – *why have ye not brought him?* – to which they are compelled to answer – *Never man spake like this man.* They were sent to arrest Christ but instead found themselves arrested by the words of Christ.

Have you been arrested by His words? Have His promises of life and joy and peace and satisfaction found their way into your heart? Are you able to say from your own experience of Him *never man spake like this man.* If His words of grace and truth have captured your soul then you'll certainly have cause for praise and thanksgiving as you remember Him this morning.

But let me hasten on to our next point of comparison between Moses and Christ for not only can we say of Moses that He was faithful in His prophetic ministry but we should note:

II. The Faithfulness of Moses in His Ministry of Intercession

I've stopped short of saying the faithfulness of Moses in his priestly ministry because we usually think of Aaron and his sons as being associated with the Levitical priesthood and later in this epistle Paul will compare the order of Christ's priesthood to the order of the Levitical priesthood.

Be that as it may, who can deny that Moses faithfully served like no one else when it came to the priestly function of making intercession for the people? More than once the Lord said to Moses *Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they* (Deut. 9:14). And more than once Moses would fall on his face and plead with God to be merciful. He would be jealous for the honor of God and would plead the covenant promises that God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and Moses' intercession would prevail with God and the unworthy nation would be spared.

Some of you may recall the petition of Moses in the mount following the idolatry of the Israelites – how Moses was so burdened for the people that he would say to God in Ex 32:32 *Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*

This is the same heart burden that Paul himself would express in Rom. 9:3 where he writes *For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

And it is precisely here that we may see the superior faithfulness of Christ in His ministry of intercession. Paul could wish himself accursed from Christ and Moses may request to be blotted out of God's book but only Christ could actually be accursed and only Christ could actually die in the place of those that deserved to be accursed. So we're told in Gal. 3:13 *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that hangeth on a tree.*

And if you have attended our communion services here at the church for any period of time at all then you will recall the many times I've pointed out that during Christ's passion – during the time He hung suspended between heaven and earth being nailed to a cross Christ was not merely engaged in passively enduring the pain and the shame and scoffing rude – He was at the same time busily engaged in His priestly function of making intercession for His people.

Father forgive them would be His cry not only for the Roman soldiers who drove the nails into His hands and feet and then parted His garments – but that plea for forgiveness of sins would be made for all those that would put their trust in Him. And it would be a plea that would prevail and continues to prevail to this very day because it would be a plea grounded in the atoning sacrifice He was making at the very time He was making His plea.

Many of you know that familiar promise in 1Jn. 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* He is faithful to forgive us, you might argue, because He is just because His justice has been satisfied by the shedding of His blood from Calvary's cross.

Do you begin to see and appreciate how faithful Christ is as our Mediator? He is faithful to extend to us the promises that pertain to life and He is faithful to forgive us our sins because His plea for our forgiveness is grounded in the value of shed blood.

Would you consider finally in our comparison of Moses and Christ that:

III. The Faithfulness of Moses in His Pastoral Ministry

The faithfulness of Moses in his pastoral ministry has always been a source of amazement to me and I think it's an aspect of Moses' life that ought to be carefully studied and emulated by those that enter into the ministry.

Certainly the virtue of being patient or longsuffering stands out in Moses when he consider him as a pastor. What a challenge he faced! It was his task to bring the Israelites

out of Egypt and lead them into the land of Canaan. And from the moment he initially appeared to the Israelites in order to embark on this course it seems that he routinely met with resistance from them.

Imagine the challenge of trying to lead a very large congregation into the promised land when that grumbling congregation was so bent on returning to Egypt. *We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely they say in Num. 11:5 the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick. Life was good when were slaves – that’s what they’re saying. And even though we were commanded to kill all our male children and even though we were whipped and forced to serve with rigor and even though our existence was reduced to slavery and bondage yet life was pretty good.*

How do you begin to lead a people that think that way? And why would you continue to even try to lead them when their desire to return to Egypt became so strong that they spoke of executing Moses and they spoke of appointing a new leader who would bring them back to the land of slavery and bondage? Through it all Moses would not waver. He would continue to lead them, he would continue to pray for them and he would never give a thought to forsaking them. It’s no wonder our text says in Heb. 3 that *Moses was faithful in all his house.*

He certainly resembles the One who is superior in His faithfulness to His people – even Christ the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. Eventually the Israelites would succeed in provoking Moses to lose his patience and as a result he would forfeit his own entrance into the promised land.

Christ has never so been provoked by us that He could forfeit anything. He continues to be longsuffering with us when our faith in Him at times is barely detectable. He continues to own us as His people even when we grumble and complain about the dealings He takes with us. His faithfulness to us you see is in a manner of speaking tied to His faithfulness to Himself. So we read in 2Tim. 2:13 *If we believe not, [yet] he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*

This verse can be applied I think in 2 ways. If we ultimately prove to be unbelievers by denying Him then He surely will deny us. It says as much in the previous verse in 2Tim. 2:12. But if our faith be weak and wavering and our doubts seem at times to gain the upper hand in our lives, He, nevertheless, will not deny Himself. He will still be faithful to tend to us and to deal with us, to chastise us, even, that our faith in Him may in the end become stronger and our doubts may be overcome.

I think the same truth is conveyed in that very familiar Psalm – Psalm 23 where it says in vv. 2,3 *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. For His name’s sake! – isn’t that tantamount to saying because He is faithful to Himself?*

So we serve and worship a Savior this morning who is faithful – more faithful than even Moses, who was faithful in all his house. Let’s bask in the faithfulness of His love and grace this morning as we remember Him around His table.