

Hebrews 11:23-29
July 24, 2016

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

I remember a conversation I had with my brother Gene years ago about becoming a Christian. One of the things he said was that he didn't want to be required to go to church every Sunday. Obviously, he was nowhere close to seriously looking at a decision for Christ. But his comment has stuck with me because he highlights one of the perceptions of Christianity: Christianity is filled with rules to follow and he doesn't get to be his own boss. It's as if serving God is not an enjoyable journey.

Q: Have you run into this line of thinking that perhaps following God is not fun?

I have always admired Christians who are willing to sacrifice their comfortable life and spend their lives serving others – even risking their own lives to do so. I think of missionaries who choose to serve God in Sudan, knowing full well that Sudan is hostile toward Christians. Think of pastors who have been imprisoned in Iran. I think of Mother Teresa who spent her life serving in India to those who were left on the streets to die. These are current day heroes of the faith.

Transition: Today's study shines the light on Moses. He had a choice to make while serving God. Does he stick around in Pharaoh's palace, or does he choose to follow God, even if it costs him a comfortable life. As we continue our study of the inductees of the Hall of Faith, today's lesson will force us to reflect on our own willingness to forfeit the easy road in order to do extraordinary things for God. I still believe that all of us can improve living by faith by following the EXAMPLES of those whom God commended. More specifically, perhaps we can improve living by faith by risking more when God invites us to join Him to do His work. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Heb 11:23-29]

V.23:

- By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

V.24:

- By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

V.25:

- He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.

V.26:

- He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. (Modified martyrdom?)

V.27:

- By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

V.28:

- By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

V.29:

- By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. (The people were too many to name, but they are considered inductees of the Hall of Faith!)

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.23: [X-Ref Ex 1:6-22] Why did the king want all boys born to be killed? [The Israelites had become exceedingly numerous so that Egypt was filled with them. The new Pharaoh worried about them joining forces with their enemy and leaving the country.]

Q: What act of faith do you see by the parents of Moses? [They could discern that Moses was no ordinary infant, and they went against Pharaoh’s edict to protect Moses.]

Q: What does the writer mean when he says, “Moses was no ordinary infant?” [A better translation is that he was a “beautiful child.” In Exodus, it says he was a “fine” child. The parents reasoned and were delighted by such a precious gift of a son that they evidently believed God had something better for this lovely baby than death!]

Q v.24: What verb jumps out at you in this verse? [“Refused”]

Q: “Refused” implies that Moses felt some intensity about this. Why? After all, an Egyptian princess adopted Moses and cared for him? Was he embarrassed? Ashamed? [Perhaps he felt resolute in that he didn’t want to forsake his real heritage and identity as a Hebrew.]

Q v.24-25: What do you see as Moses’s act of faith? [He could have taken the path of least resistance and lead an easy life in Pharaoh’s palace. Instead, Moses chose to identify with God’s suffering people.]

Q v.25: What verb/phrase jumps out at you in this verse? [“Chose to be mistreated”]

Q: What do you think the writer meant by “enjoying the pleasures of sin for a short time?” [The phrase “pleasures of sin” does not refer only to lust and other gross sins. The phrase describes a way of life that we today would call “successful”—position, prestige, power, wealth, and freedom from problems.]

Q: How easy would it be for you to be mistreated on purpose by giving up the creature comforts of life? [Not easy at all]

Q v.26-29: So what was the motivating factor for Moses to “choose to be mistreated?” [Experiencing disgrace for the sake of Christ was of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.]

Q: How many decisions do we make that are driven by “looking ahead to our reward?” [This is a reflection question that I want you sit with even after this hour is over. It forces us to process

how often we make decisions for immediate gratification vs trusting God for the long term promises He's made for us.]

Q v.27: Read to yourself verses 23 and 27 and tell me what you see that is in common? [Moses and Moses's parents exercised faith without fear! That's powerful to me.

Q: What does that imply when we're exercising faith? [We should not be fearful following God and obeying His commands.]

Q v.27: This verse tells us that Moses "persevered" without fearing the king's anger because he saw what? [He saw God who was invisible.]

Q: How did he "see" the "invisible God?" [Just look at all the miracles God wrought when Pharaoh kept trying to hold onto the Israelite people and wouldn't let them go!]

Q: In light of the many "fear not" commands throughout the Bible, should we be like Moses and others who obeyed God without fearing authority? And haven't we seen God's "invisible Hand" in our own lives? [Let people wrestle with this.]

Q v.29: Look who else is included as inductees of the Hall of Faith?! [The Israelite people who passed through the Red Sea on dry land! That means ordinary folks like us can be included for exercising our faith when God calls us to obey Him.]

Observation: Let's hit the "pause" button at this point. You can agree/disagree, or enhance this. When I look at all of these acts of faith and look for a common thread, here's what I see: they obeyed God regardless of the cost!]

Application: Based on these examples, what do we need to do to improve living by faith in our own lives? [Obey Him!]

LOOK:

Q: What is your takeaway today that helps you increase your living by faith?

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 319–320). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Moses—faith warring (vv. 23–29). Moses was fortunate to have believing parents. For them to hide their baby son from the authorities was certainly an act of faith. The account is given in Exodus 2:1–10. Moses' parents were named Amram and Jochebed (Ex. 6:20). Though godly parents cannot pass on their faith as they do family traits, they can certainly create an atmosphere of faith at home and be examples to their children. A home should be the first school of faith for a child.

Three great themes relating to faith are seen in the life of Moses. First, *the refusal of faith* (Heb. 11:24–25). As the adopted son of the Egyptian princess, Moses could have led an easy life in the palace. But his faith moved him to refuse that kind of life. He chose to identify with God's suffering people. True faith causes a believer to hold the right values and make the right decisions. The phrase "pleasures of sin" does not refer only to lust and other gross sins. The phrase describes a way of life that we today would call "successful"—position, prestige, power, wealth, and freedom from problems.

Moses' refusal of faith led to *the reproach of faith* (Heb. 11:26a). The mayor of a large American city moved into a dangerous and decayed housing project to demonstrate the problems and needs of the minorities. But she also kept her fashionable apartment and eventually moved out of the slum. We commend her for her courage but we have to admire Moses even more. He left the palace *and never went back to the old life!* He identified with the Jewish slaves! Men and women of faith often have to bear reproach and suffering. The Apostles suffered for their faith. Believers today behind the Iron Curtain know what it is to bear reproach. If reproach is an evidence of true faith, we wonder how much true faith there is in our own country today!

Finally, there is *the reward of faith* (Heb. 11:26b–29). God always rewards true faith—if not immediately, at least ultimately. Over against "the treasures in Egypt" Moses saw the "recompense of the reward." As Dr. Vance Havner said, "Moses chose the imperishable, saw the invisible, and did the impossible." Moses' faith enabled him to face Pharaoh unafraid, and to trust God to deal with the enemy. The endurance of Moses was not a natural gift, for by nature Moses was hesitant and retiring. This endurance and courage came as the reward of his faith.

The faith of Moses was rewarded with deliverance for him and his people. (See Ex. 11–13 for the exciting Passover account.) Faith brings us *out* (Heb. 11:28), takes us *through* (Heb. 11:29), and brings us *in* (Heb. 11:30). When we trust God, we get what God can do; but when we trust ourselves, we get only what weak people can do. The experience of Moses is proof that true biblical faith means obeying God in spite of circumstances and in spite of consequences.

If you and I had been writing this chapter, the next section would be *Faith Wandering*—but there is no mention of Israel's failure and forty years of wasted time. Why? Because that was an experience of *unbelief*, not faith! The writer did use this experience in Hebrews 3 and 4 as an illustration of doubting the Word. But nowhere in Hebrews 11 will you find a record of *any* failure because of unbelief. Faith records only the victories.

Pentecost, J. D. (1985). *Daniel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 808-809). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

11:23. With this transition to the life of **Moses**, the writer began to focus on the way faith confronts opposition and hostility, a subject familiar to his readers. It was **by faith** that Moses was hidden by his **parents** and his life was thus preserved. The phrase **because they saw he was no ordinary child** might be better read, “because they saw he was a beautiful child.” (“Beautiful” is the Gr. *asteion*, which occurs in the NT only here and in Acts 7:20, which also refers to Moses.) Delighted by the precious gift of a son which God had given them, they evidently believed God had something better for this lovely baby than death. Not fearing Pharaoh’s **edict**, they kept him alive, and God rewarded their faith by their son’s illustrious career.

11:24–26. In a classic presentation of the way faith chooses between the attractive but temporary **pleasures of sin** and the prospect of **disgrace for the sake of Christ**, the writer showed **Moses** to be a real hero of faith who had an intelligent regard for the eschatological hopes of the nation of Israel. The readers also were to accept “disgrace” and reject “the pleasures of sin,” and they would do so if they, like Moses, anticipated their **reward**.

11:27–28. Moreover, at the time of the Exodus, Moses was undeterred by fear of **the king’s anger**. By keeping **the Passover**, which included **the sprinkling of blood**, the nation avoided God’s judgment. In the same way, the readers should not be afraid of human wrath and should maintain their separateness from the surrounding world. They should persist in the worship experience made possible by the blood of the New Covenant. If they would do so, they would not fall under divine retribution (cf. 10:19–31).

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (p. 1836). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

11:26 Some see a discrepancy in this verse and ask where Moses trusted in Christ. But OT saints looked forward to the messianic hope and believed in the promises that pointed to Christ (v. 13). And, because of his belief in the coming Messiah, Moses experienced the same kind of rejection that Christ would undergo later.