

“Faith Demonstrated in Decision-Making”

(Part 2)

Heb. 11:23-29

- INTRO. - Faith can be defined in a number of different ways. As we have seen, the Book of Hebrews defines faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”
 - The great theologian Augustine once said, “Faith is to believe what we do not see and the reward of that faith is to see what we believe.”
 - Of course, Augustine was speaking of genuine biblical faith – *not* the generic kind of faith our world speaks of. His understanding of faith was *not* some sort of “name it and claim it” hocus pocus, where there is the idea that you can create your own reality by believing something into existence.
 - No, he understood genuine biblical faith as fully trusting God when you cannot see how His promises can possibly come to pass. This is faith in God, *not* faith in faith.
 - And we have seen how genuine biblical faith can be demonstrated in a number of different ways. It can be demonstrated through proper worship. It can be demonstrated through walking with God. It can be demonstrated through obedience to God. It can be demonstrated through believing God in the midst of testing. It can be demonstrated through believing God at the point of one’s death.
- Oswald Chambers wrote, “Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading.” That kind of faith is ultimately demonstrated at the point of one’s death.
 - But in our present passage we see that faith can also be demonstrated through our decision making. In a very real way, you could say that “your life consists of the decisions you make.”
 - Our lives are made up of a series of decisions. Most of those decisions are simple and unimportant, but *many* of them are significant and extremely important.
 - Most of our decisions we make without really thinking about them, but there are *some* that we think about for a long time. And (of course) there are *some* decisions we make by default. When we fail to decide, our decision may be made for us, but it is still our decision (because we decided *not* to decide). So decision-making is a key element in the Christian life.
 - And here in Heb. 11:23-29 we see an example of *good* decision-making. We see Moses making the right decisions – and doing that “by faith.”

- His decision-making was right because his faith was right. His unwavering faith in God led to the monumental decisions he made – that *not only* changed his own life in a radical way, but also changed the course of a nation.
- So let's move back into this passage of Scripture. We got about halfway through it last time, but we need to go back and finish it today. We're taking it in three main divisions: the vision of faith, the values of faith, and the victory of faith (with a few sub-points). Let's review quickly. We began with:

I. THE VISION OF FAITH (v. 23)

- Look with me (again) at v. 23, “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.”
- This first aspect of Moses' life was more the faith of his *parents*, but this faith was passed down to Moses. Herschel Hobbs calls this the faith of “daring love.” Moses' parents feared God more than they did the king of Egypt.
- As I'm sure you know, the Egyptian Pharaoh was becoming concerned about how large the population of the Israelites had grown, so he commanded all the Hebrews to throw their baby boys into the Nile River.

- And (of course) the assumption is, that if they did *not* do that, they *themselves* would be put to death – but Moses' parents (Amram and Jochebed) were *not* afraid of this edict. They saw that there was something special about this baby boy, so they hid him for three months.

- And (of course) when they could no longer hide him, they made a waterproof basket for him and put him in the river – later to be found by Pharaoh's daughter. We looked at all this last time.

- But the point (here) is that Moses' parents did *not* give in to the pressures of their day. Even at the threat of their lives, they chose to do things God's way. They chose to live by faith and to trust God instead of conforming to the demands of the world.

- They were *not* afraid to risk their own lives to save the life of their son. They disregarded the king's command. They violated human authority because they believed in a higher authority – the authority of Almighty God. They believed God and by faith they witnessed the amazing protection of their son.

- From a human perspective, they had no way of knowing that his life would even be spared – much less that he would grow up and become the deliverer of the Jewish nation. But they trusted him to God. (Pause) Secondly we saw:

II. THE VALUES OF FAITH (vv. 24-27)

- In vv. 24-27 we see the values Moses exhibited in his later life. Most of this is communicated from a negative perspective – in regard to what he later *rejected*. In order to say “yes” to God’s will, he first had to say “no” to some very enticing things. *Not only* did Moses’ parents demonstrate faith in God – Moses himself did as well. And what we see in this, is that genuine, biblical faith rejects four aspects of worldliness. We got to the first two last time. The first thing we saw was that:

A. It Rejects Worldly Prestige (v. 24)

- Look with me at v. 24, “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter...”

- The phrase “when he had grown up” means “when he was fully grown.” According to Stephen’s sermon (in Acts 7) he was “about 40 years old” at this time.

- For 40 years Moses had been a prince in Egypt, which was the wealthiest, most cultured, and advanced society of that day. There is no doubt that Moses had become highly educated, cultured, and skilled (as part of the royal court).

- But he came to a point at which he had to make a critical decision. His decision was to reject all the

prestige of Egypt in order to identify with the people of God.

- And we’re told, he did this “by faith.” The deciding factor was his faith in God. After all these years, his early training kicked in, and he made the right decision.

- The word for “refused” (in Heb. 11:24) means that he took a definite position. There was a line in the sand (as it were) and Moses chose to cross that line. He made a willful and deliberate choice to renounce his status as a prince in Egypt and to publicly identify himself with his suffering people.

- We learn (from the remainder of this passage) that Moses had an eternal perspective that guided his decision-making. He saw God’s Kingdom (and purposes) as eternal – as much greater than the power and prestige of Egypt.

- The eyes of faith can see that there is something much greater than the prestige and fame of this world. Genuine believers know that the prestige of this world is *nothing* in comparison to the eternal glory that awaits those who faithfully follow Christ. But secondly we saw that:

B. It Rejects Worldly Pleasures (v. 25)

- Look at v. 25, "...choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin..."

- The eyes of faith can see through the emptiness and deception of "the passing pleasures of sin" and embrace (even) "ill treatment with the people of God."

- Faith sees beyond the temporal to the eternal. Faith sees beyond the deceptive nature of the "passing pleasures of sin" and embraces that which will last forever.

- We spent a lot of time on this one last week, so I won't go back over all that. But let's go on (now) to a third thing that faith rejects:

C. It Rejects Worldly Possessions (v. 26)

- Look with me at v. 26, "considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward."

- The "treasures of Egypt" were truly great (indeed) for Moses. Living in Pharaoh's palace he would have had every possible luxury available in that day and time. If he had chosen to stay there, he never would have wanted for food, clothing, entertainment, wealth, anything you can name.

- He had everything this world holds dear – but he did *not* cling to it. He gave it all up for something else. He was looking to THE reward – *not* A reward but THE reward. We have to take this as "heaven." He was wise enough to exchange the temporal for the eternal.

- But let's back up and look at v. 26 in more detail. The word for "considering" (there) is a word that means "to carefully think through." This was not a quick, impulsive decision (even though the killing of the Egyptian task master might appear that way). Long before that day, he had been carefully weighing out his decision.

- He likely had gone over the pros and cons a number of times in his mind. He looked at what Egypt had to offer and he looked at what God had to offer, and he compared the two.

- Ultimately he reached the decision that what God had to offer was far superior to what he had in Egypt. And once he came to that conclusion his decision was clear and solid in his mind and heart.

- In fact, he was so resolute about his decision, that he was even willing to suffer "reproach" for the sake of the coming Christ than to continue to enjoy the treasures of Egypt.

- The word for "reproach" means "ridicule and persecution." God's people were suffering under

the Egyptian tyranny, and Moses decided to join them in their suffering. He decided he would rather have *that* (and God's ultimate reward) than to have everything Egypt had to offer.

- Another way to put this, is to say that Moses believed that even the *worst* he could endure for Christ was better than the *best* the world could offer. Genuine biblical faith has a totally different value system. This value system makes no sense to unbelievers, but it makes perfect sense to believers.

- And (of course) it is very interesting that the author of Hebrews speaks of Moses "considering the reproach of Christ" more than 1500 years before Christ came to the earth.

- But the word used there means "Messiah." Moses must have known of God's promise to send the Messiah, His anointed One – and it was on the basis of that promise that Moses responded in faith.

- In a very real way Moses suffered for Christ's sake 1500 years *before* Jesus was born in a manger in Bethlehem. He suffered reproach for the sake of Jesus (the true Messiah) because he identified with Messiah's people at this critical point in their history.

- George Guthrie says, "Moses chose his biological family over his adoptive family at a great personal

cost: loss of wealth, relinquishment of status, and intense mistreatment."

- Oh, but please understand – his decision involved something far greater than merely choosing to side with his biological family. His decision involved choosing to side with the people of God. He chose the eternal reward of the true and living God over the passing, temporary stuff of this world.

- I love the way Ron Phillips puts it. He says, "He chose an eternal position over temporary pleasure. He chose the imperishable riches of Christ over the wealth of this world. [He] looked ahead and saw eternal glory! The tinsel and glitter of this world looked cheap and tawdry from that point onward."

- And we (as people of faith) need to have the same kind of perspective. Like Moses, we should be singing that old song by George Beverly Shea, "I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold. I'd rather be His than have riches untold. I'd rather have Jesus than houses or land. I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand."

- Men and women of faith throughout history have had enough sense to weigh the short term over against the long term – to choose the eternal over the temporal. God's eternal "reward" is always far superior to all the treasures of this world – even if it means we have to suffer temporarily to obtain it.

- Paul put it this way (in Rom. 8:18), “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” There’s no comparison. The future glory of God’s “reward” is so far beyond any amount of suffering in this world that it should not even be mentioned in comparison.

- Moses understood this. He had lived in the luxury of the Egyptian court for 40 years. It wasn’t that he didn’t know what he was talking about. He had experienced it firsthand. But he gave it all up for that which he saw (by faith) as being infinitely more valuable.

- And the question for us is, “Will we do the same? Will we see through the eyes of faith and understand the infinite reward of God as far greater than all this wealth of this world?” Well, there is one more aspect of what faith rejects, and that is:

D. It Rejects Worldly Pressures (v. 27)

- Verse 27, “By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.”

- Of course, we know (from Exodus 2:15) that the *first* time Moses left Egypt he was fleeing from Pharaoh who wanted to kill him for slaying the Egyptian task master.

- The *second* time he left Egypt there was a different Pharaoh who wanted to prevent him from taking the people of God out of Egypt. I think v. 27 fits this second time better than the first. And the point is, that he did *not* buckle under the pressure that was put on him to back down.

- When Moses was leading the people out of Egypt, there was tremendous pressure, *not only* from Pharaoh, but also even from his own people. It would have been easy for him to just give up and give in. But he “endured” and he did *not* give in to the pressure that was put on him.

- He chose *not* to give in to fear. He chose *not* to fear “the wrath of the king.” Even though Egypt had the most advanced army of that day (with chariots and horses, etc.) he chose to trust the “unseen God.”

- In the same way, you and I have many things to fear in our day and time. We may fear the rejection of men (including our own families at times). We may fear literal persecution, perhaps the loss of a job or our reputation, etc.

- For some other Christians in other parts of the world, there might be physical suffering and even loss of life – but it is still worth it. The pressure to conform may be enormous at times, but we must *not* fall to fear.

- And (by the way) there are *some* who cannot even handle the slightest bit of criticism – and it’s interesting, that the people we often fear are people we don’t even respect. Many times they’re *not* godly people who are doing the will of the Lord – they are godless people who want us to conform to their sinful lifestyle.

- But Moses (by faith) made the right choice. He chose *not* to fear “the wrath of the king.” The Bible says “The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.” (Prov. 29:25) Moses understood this.

- There is no doubt he was *tempted* to fear, but he did *not*. He had to stand before the most powerful man on earth and say, “Let my people go!” This took a lot of courage.

- He did *not* give in to the pressure. He chose to do the right thing no matter what it cost him. And he intentionally chose to leave Egypt to follow a better way.

- We don’t see this as clearly in the NASB, but the KJV says, “He forsook Egypt.” As John MacArthur explains, “He did more than simply leave; he turned his back on Egypt and all that it represented.” This is the faith of a deliberate choice.

- He left Egypt in such a way that he could never return. He burned all his bridges behind him. He renounced it permanently and decisively – and that is a picture *for us* of how we are to leave our old life to pursue a new life in Christ.

- In the NT we see where Peter, James and John left their nets to follow Christ, and we must do the same. We need to follow that example of true biblical faith. Listen my friend, there is absolutely *nothing* in this world that is worth hanging on to if it keeps you from following Christ! Jesus asked, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?” (Mark 8:36)

- Moses had eyes of faith that enabled him to see this. He was willing to forsake everything to follow Christ. He put his hand to the plow and did *not* look back.

- Why did he do that? Because he was able to see the One “who is unseen.” Of course, we know from the biblical account that Moses *did* see a tangible representation of Him in the burning bush, and he *did* see His mighty plagues upon the Egyptians – but ultimately he had to exercise faith in a God who is invisible. (We have to do the same...)

- Moses ultimately had to trust in God to *not only* deliver the people from Egypt, but to protect and provide for them in the wilderness. The person of

faith is one who is convinced that, no matter what happens, God will come through.

- This same heart was expressed by David, who said, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?”

- Faith in our great God enables us to reject the fear of men. It enables us to overcome the pressure of the world. It enables us to do what is right no matter who or how many may be against us.

- Well, we need to move on. *Not only* do we see the *vision* of faith and the *values* of faith, but thirdly we see:

III. THE VICTORY OF FAITH (vv. 28-29)

- Some do *not* connect vv. 28-29 to the previous passage, but these verses should be included as part of the victory of faith Moses experienced. The victory of faith is illustrated in two ways here. First:

A. As Illustrated in the Passing Over (v. 28)

- Look at v. 28, “By faith he [still referring to Moses] kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the first-born might not touch them.”

- I’m sure most of you know what this relates to. In Exodus 11-12 we read about the 10th and final plague that God sent upon the Egyptians. It was the death of all the firstborn of Egypt, carried out by the death angel.

- But God made provision for His own people through the shedding of the blood of the Passover lamb and the spreading of that blood upon the doorposts of all the houses of the Israelites. That became a clear picture of our salvation through the shed blood of Christ upon the cross, but the point (here) is that the people applied this blood by faith.

- Obviously the blood itself had no power to stave off the death angel, but the sprinkling of the blood was an act of faith by which God provided protection for His people.

- The people of Israel (including Moses) did *not* fully understand the significance of what they were doing, but they knew this was what God commanded, so they obeyed Him and trusted Him to protect their lives – which He did.

- The salvation of God always requires the shedding of blood, and in this Moses accepted God’s provision. And the application for us is, that genuine faith always accepts God’s way, no matter how strange or pointless it may seem to human understanding.

- The people may have felt a little silly smearing blood on their houses, but this is what God had commanded, so they did it. And when the death angel came, he passed over the homes where the blood was applied.

- Again, this is a great picture of our salvation through faith in Christ. When a believer accepts Jesus Christ by faith, he accepts God's one and only provision of salvation. This is God's way and it is the only way.

- To the world, it seems like there ought to be some other way, but it is God's only provision, through the shed blood of Christ on the cross. The world might think that good works is the way, but God's Word declares that this is the only way.

- The Israelites could have tried some other way to deal with the death angel, but only God's way could provide protection for them. In the same way today, only God's means of salvation through the applied blood of Christ to our hearts through saving faith will result in our salvation. But there is a second aspect of the victory of faith, and that is:

B. As Illustrated in the Passing Through (v. 29)

- Look with me at v. 29, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned."

- You know the story. No sooner had the Israelites gotten out of Egypt and arrived at the Red Sea than they turned around and saw Pharaoh in hot pursuit with his armies. They were trapped with no way out.

- We read about this in Exodus 14, and the first reaction of the people is to lose heart and complain. In Ex. 14:11 it says, "Then they said to Moses, 'Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt?'" They thought they were going to die.

- But Moses told them, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."

- And you know what God did. He parted the waters of the Red Sea, and the people walked over on dry ground. But think about the faith it must have taken for the people to pass through the Red Sea. Surely the water was piled up on both sides, and it must have been frightening for them to trust God in this.

- But again, they trusted God's provision and did as He commanded. Because of that they experienced

God's deliverance, and as soon as the last Israelite was safely across God caused the water to return and drowned all the Egyptians.

- What is the lesson for us? Believe God and do things His way. When all we have is God's promise, that is enough. When we can't see the way through, we trust Him nonetheless. When our faith is tested, and we can't see how God can bring something good out of our circumstances, trust Him because He always does.

- And it's interesting how the NT describes Moses. In Acts 7:36 it says, "This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years."

- Of course, we know that it was GOD who performed the signs and wonders – but He did it through this man of faith. And what is *our* "takeaway"? We too need to be people of faith. We too need to make the right decisions, and take our stand with the people of God, and fully trust Him and His promises.

- MAKE APPEAL

- PRAYER