

## **Intro, scripture, and prayer**

Hebrews 11 is giving us a serious education on faith. But it's more than just some book knowledge or information on what faith is. We are taken on a field trip, where we get glimpses of the great host of witnesses.

And this is important, because God wants us to endure for Jesus, to cling to Jesus, and to encourage others to do the same. So we are going to take a look at one verse which tells us about the supernatural nature of faith. And it is supernatural. Faith is not something you conjure up within yourself. It is not like priming a pump. That is not to say you do NOTHING to strengthen it. Of course you do. But real faith is a gift from God and is truly supernatural because it comes down as a divine gift from above. Why would we want anything less?

This one verse about Moses shows us three byproducts of faith and the one thing that fuels true faith. So what are the byproducts or results of faith?

## **First, we see the conflict of faith - conflict that comes from faith**

*By faith, [Moses] left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king...*

Moses left Egypt twice. The first time, as a prince because he had killed an Egyptian and the second time as God's man leading the Israelites out. This verse is talking about the second time Moses left, because the first time, Moses left because of fear. The second time, he left unafraid

Moses' faith brought him into conflict. Faith does not spare us from trouble. True faith will not lead to a quiet life on the beach or a hermitage in the mountains or a recluse life of fishing... it will lead into direct conflict with forces of evil in this world.

Sometimes we wrongly think that faith keeps us from trouble. But the overwhelming evidence in the bible - new and old testaments - is that it often leads into trouble. True faith in Christ while living in an evil world, will lead into conflict. Think of all the examples of Hebrews 11. Think of the early church in the book of Acts. Think of the apostle Paul in particular and all the troubles his faith in Christ led to (2 Corinthians 11-12). Their faith in Christ put them on a collision course. This is how it was with Moses. His faith in God led to conflict with the premier civilization in the Mediterranean world and one of the great ancient civilizations.

Remember when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and spoke to him and commissioned him? In Exodus 3:7 God says to Moses, *“I have seen the affliction of my people and heard their cry.”* Verse 10 he says, *“Come, I am sending you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people out of Egypt.”* But he makes it clear to Moses that this is not going to be a cakewalk. 3:19-20 (READ). Moses is to bring the people out, but Pharaoh will not let them go easily. So God says he is going to have to compel him with a strong hand... Moses is the spokesman for God. Wow!

Here’s an amazing thing. First Peter 1:7 tells us the kind of faith that is tested and proven through difficulty, suffering, and trial that is precious in the sight of God, and it should be to us as well.

If we want our faith to lead us into an existence free from trouble, we are asking for something God does not intend to give us now - eternally yes, but not in this life. Cotton Mather said, *“For the faithful, wars never cease.”* And John Calvin wrote in his commentary on Hebrews, *“God intends to represent all of his servants in this world as wrestlers.”*

So if you are looking for a walk with Jesus that will be absent of battle, wrestling, conflict, you may be looking for a different, false Jesus. Jesus made it clear that to follow Him will lead to conflict. For Moses, faith in God led to direct conflict with a superpower. Probably won’t be the case for us. But faith in Christ will sometimes lead to conflict in families (Matthew 11:34-39): *“I did not come to bring peace on the earth...”* There will be conflict with the world (John 15:18-19): *“If the world hates you, know that it hated me first...”* There will be conflict with sin (Matthew 5:29-30): *“If your right eye/hand causes you to sin, gouge it out/cut it off...”* There will be conflict with the devil (1 Peter 5:8-9): *“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your **faith...**”*

This is the conflict of faith. But then there is also the courage of faith - courage that comes from faith.

## **Second, we see the Courage of Faith - or courage that comes from faith**

*By faith [Moses left] Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king*

It wasn’t just that Moses found himself in conflict with Pharaoh. He was in the fray and unafraid. Real faith is pregnant with courage to do the right thing. Moses was a thorn in the side of Pharaoh. He would have loved for nothing more than for Moses to have one of those giant hailstones to fall on his head. But Moses was not

afraid. By faith he was not afraid of Pharaoh's wrath and anger. But Moses some macho man either, full of bluster and bravado. He had a battle believing. Remember when God called him to be the one who would deliver the people? We find Moses full of unbelief and fear.

When God called Moses to this momentous task, he responded by saying, "*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt*" (Exodus 3:11). Later in chapter 4 we see Moses appealing to God to not choose him. In Exodus 4:10 he says, "*O, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech.*"

Do you hear what Moses is saying? "I am a bumbling nobody. Don't send me!" At first, Moses was reluctant, unbelieving, and fearful. But later, we find a believing Moses is more than up for the task God had assigned him. Daniel 11:32 says, "*The people who know their God will be strong and take action.*"

From the beginning, we have a myriad of examples of men and women who knew their God and took courageous action. Daniel knew this well. So did he friends Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednigo. Athanasius - "Well, Athanasius is against the world."

And true faith will be evidenced by Christian courage. The story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is such a great object lesson for us. Without going into the entire story - while so much of the confessing church in Germany was compromising and capitulating to the Nazis and turning their eyes to the atrocities happening, Bonhoeffer said, "I cannot do that!" He spoke out, acted, and resisted. And it cost him his life. He wrote about the need to act with courage, which I think is very pertinent in every age:

*Silence in the face of evil is itself evil; God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.*

And I would add this. We either speak or act in faith or unbelief. We need this courage of faith. Then there is...

### **Third, we see the Perseverance of Faith**

*By faith [Moses] left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he **endured**...*

If we are not careful, we can read this story of Moses and the Exodus out of Egypt with too much familiarity and not enough good, sanctified imagination. This ordeal required serious endurance. If you have ever been through a really intense ordeal - good or bad - it can be exhausting. Think of Elijah and his on Mt Carmel with the prophets of Baal. Even after such an obvious victory, what did he do? In fear and discouragement he ran for his life.

Well, Moses was tasked with going to the most powerful man around to tell him to do something he did not want to do and would not do easily. He was threatened by Pharaoh. He pronounced judgment on Pharaoh time and time again, calling for the plagues to fall - all 10 of them.

This word endured is a present active verb. The idea is that he endured and kept enduring. Faith does not have a strong, sudden burst of energy only to slide back into passivity. Faith is not easily worn out. It doesn't back down. It has staying power. And the reason for this is because true faith (which we talked about weeks ago at the very beginning of Hebrews 11) is a gift from God. It endures and keeps enduring through difficulty.

### **The Fuel of Faith**

How did Moses face the conflict of his life with courageous, persevering faith? THIS IS THE KEY to this verse, and perhaps the KEY to faith. What fueled this faith of Moses? We see in the last phrase:

*For he endured as seeing him who is invisible...*

He saw God. Faith is more than just a mechanical deduction of truths. Of course, our faith is grounded in truth, but it is fueled by a spiritual sight of the glory of God. Moses saw the invisible God. And the unseen God and his reward were more real, more powerful, and more gripping than all the threats of Pharaoh. There is a play on words here of course. Moses saw him who is invisible. A different kind of seeing. It is the sight of faith. And for the Christian, this is not to be an unusual faith only for the delta force Christians.

*Kent Hughes wrote in his commentary: I personally believe that seeing "him who is invisible" is not extraordinary. Rather, it is ordinary, normal Christianity. In fact, if you do not see the unseen, you are abnormal and below the divinely ordained norm. Christianity is supernatural, and it is to be lived supernaturally.*

And perhaps one of the reasons our faith is not like Moses' - bringing us into conflict with courage and perseverance - is because we do not see the unseen God the way he did. But how does this work? I mean, how do we see someone who is invisible? I hope you feel the awkwardness of that? It's not something we can just decide to do, like turning on a switch. It's something God must enable us to do. We know that it is specifically the Person and work of Christ that we are to fix our eyes on from Hebrews 12:1-2:

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

So we fix our eyes on Christ and his cross work. But how? The Holy Spirit's central ministry is to point to Christ and the way he does this is through **the word of God** and in **answer to prayer. The word of God.** I mean, without the scriptures, we are blind and cannot see Christ. Which is why we are taught to pray, "Open my eyes, that I might see wondrous things out of your law" (Ps. 119:18). Colossians 3:16 describes the scriptures as the "word of Christ" which must dwell in us richly. Romans 10:17 says "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ" and the reason why is because the scriptures show us Christ. The OT points forward to Christ, the gospels reveal him, the epistles explain him, and Revelation unveils the final conquest of Christ.

**But also prayer.** Paul prays in Ephesians 1 for the eyes of their hearts to be enlightened. And so how do we see the Lord? We seek him through the word and prayer. And so Elisha's prayer is just as relevant today for the church as it was when he prayed it over his scared servant when they were surrounded by the Syrians:

*Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. **2 Kings 6:17***

So Lord, open our eyes. We need help to see Christ for who he is. In his power, glory, love, and saving purpose. Jesus said to two blind men "What do you want me to do for you?" Their response was great: "Lord, let our eyes be opened" (Matthew 20:32-33).

Let's **PRAY.**