

HEBREWS VERSE BY VERSE - The New and Living Way - Part forty-seven

Sunday, March 25th, 2018 - 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2037

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THE CHOICES OF FAITH WHEN IT HAS TO GROW UP

Hebrews 11:23-28 - "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. [24] By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, [25] choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. [26] He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward."

When I say the name, **Moses**, what's the first thing you think about. It probably isn't his **faith**. When you think of **Moses** you think of **law**. Moses is the channel for the strongest statement of divine law in the Old Testament - the **ten commandments**.

And our writer's point is to **restate** one of his foundational principles - "**Without faith it is impossible to please him (God)....**" (**Hebrews 11:6**). That principle **includes** Moses. God never ordained **law** as the means of pleasing Him. Even those **under** the law can't please God merely by **law-keeping**. God never imagined a pathway into His presence by **law**. Everything God does and says - **including the law** - must find its termination in the finished work of God the Son - the Christ - dying on the cross for our sins.

So as our writer continues to reason with these Hebrew Christians who are being pressed by their Jewish peers to come back under the law it is brilliant to bring up the person of **Moses** and link him to his **faith**. It was his **faith** that pleased God. So the faith of these Hebrew Christians isn't a new concept. And it isn't a break with either **Abraham** or **Moses**. These great patriarchs of Israel would be **pleased** with these Jewish believers for their **faith in Christ**.

1) THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE BIRTH OF MOSES WERE AN APPROPRIATE PICTURE OF THE CALLING OF MOSES

Hebrews 11:23 - "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict."

Consider this. Moses will be **called** by God to bring **deliverance** to Israel from Egypt at a time when the persecution against Israel was particularly severe. And Moses was **born** in Egypt precisely at the moment when the persecution against Jewish infants was particularly extreme and violent.

Moses is **delivered** to become a **deliverer**. Here's the background. Our **twenty-third verse** speaks of the "**king's edict.**" But this edict was really the **second phase** of the king's plan. The first plan was to have the **mid-wives kill all the male children as they were born**. But they were afraid to do this. They feared God's judgment. The king's **second plan** was a command to "**all his people**" (**Exodus 1:22**) to throw every son "**into the Nile.**" And **all the king's people** means all his soldiers and enforcers.

Moses comes on to the scene at the highest point of Egypt's wrath against male infants in history. So what is wrong with God's timing? How can it be so off? Or is it **perfect**?

There are several faith lessons here:

- a) **For Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt he will be greatly helped by knowing the language and customs of Egypt.** God sets it up so Moses will know the power structures and educational systems of Egypt from the inside out. Moses will grow up with **access** to virtually everything in Egypt.

Consider this. It is not an accident. It's the brutal edict of the king that accomplishes God's will for Moses. There was not a Hebrew man on earth who knew more about Egypt than Moses. God knew what He was doing.

- b) **There was no edict of the king that could stamp out God's intended purpose through the birth of Moses.** This is surely God's method and timing. He activates His delivering work when opposition to it couldn't be stronger.

How many times do you see laws being implemented - practices being legalized - statutes being enforced - that make the righteous kingdom of God seem impossible?

There have always been, and always will be **unrighteous laws**. They are not a **new threat** to the kingdom of God. How many times have you looked at the laws regarding abortion and same-sex relations and the blatant promotion of trans-genderism through tax dollar funding and the de-emphasizing of Christian values in education and a host of other things and wondered if the future of Christendom on earth isn't becoming impossible?

Remember the birth of Moses. Remember his deliverance from the king's edict. Remember the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. And remember the way God raised up His strong arm precisely when it was, by all appearances, the least likely to succeed. He did that **on purpose**.

There's a reason we close every Lord's Day together saying, **"Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever, and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever! Amen!"**

2) THERE ARE TIMES WHEN FAITH RESTS IN A PROMISE THAT SEEMS FAR AWAY

Hebrews 11:23 - "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict."

The faith described in this verse **isn't** Moses' faith at all. It's his **parent's** faith. But that raises a tricky question. What was their faith **in**? Upon what foundation was their faith established?

There's only one good answer to that question. We know of no direct revelation from the Lord as to the protection of Moses. They knew the king was out to make the people of God **extinct**. Take away all the male babies born and, in time, there will be no genetic tree left.

And yet our text still says Moses' parents weren't **"afraid of the king's edict"**(23). Why was that? Moses' parents would likely have known of the promise to their father **Abraham**. They would have known of God's promise both to **deliver** Israel and that **Abraham's offspring, far from becoming extinct, would number as the sands on the seashore**.

They may have even heard of **Joseph's request** to have his bones taken along as the rest of Jacob's descendants left Egypt - **Hebrews 11:22** - "By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and **gave directions concerning his bones.**"

So they hid baby Moses in faith. They had faith - at least faith in this - that the king couldn't possibly succeed in his diabolical plan. God had made a promise long ago and it was still a **standing** promise. The **circumstances** had changed radically. God's **promise** hadn't.

The passing of time doesn't change the power of divine promise. But it **can** diminish the warmth of faith. Take heart around the Biblical reminder that our eternal God doesn't feel the weakening of His word over vast periods of time in the same way we may feel a weakening of our own confidence in receiving it.

Consider the vast gap between the promise to the serpent in the garden that an offspring of Eve would one day strike a fatal blow to his head - **Genesis 3:14-15** - "The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. [15] **I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**"

Then thousands of years roll by. Satan flourishes. Most of the created order wasn't even expecting the coming of the Messiah who would **"destroy the works of the Devil."** The passing of time - even **much** time - does nothing to weaken divine promise. This was the invisible anchor to the faithful actions of Moses' parents.

3) HOW FAITH BEHAVES WHEN IT COMES OF AGE

Hebrews 11:24-27 - "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, [25] **choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.** [26] He considered the **reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt**, for he was looking to the reward. [27] By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible."

“By faith....when he was grown up....”(24). You can see where our writer is going with this. Having shown the **background** of Moses’ faith - the faith of his parents and environment - our writer is anxious to compare that with what Moses’ faith looked like when it wasn’t **Moses’ parents’** faith. Here’s what **Moses’** faith looked like when he had to express it on his own. Here’s what his faith looked like when he **owned the faith his parents had raised him in.**

Every professing Christian - especially those **raised** in the Christian faith - every professing Christian needs to own his or her faith personally. You have to **use** your faith on your own. You have to discover for yourself what **difference** your faith is going to make in the way you evaluate and navigate your own life.

The issue of these verses is **what does grown up faith look like?** What kind of mental calculations does faith make? How does mature faith **process** daily events and daily priorities?

These four verses describe a **choice** grown up faith makes and an **evaluation** grown up faith calculates. The **choice** is in **verse 25** - ***“...choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”*** The **evaluation** is described in **verse 26** - ***“...He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.”***

- a) ***The choice of grown-up faith*** - The first outward expression of grown-up faith is the **outward refusal of conformity** - **Hebrews 11:24** - ***“By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter....”***

The Biblical account makes it clear that Moses **was** the son of Pharaoh’s daughter - **Exodus 2:10** - ***“When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, ‘Because,’ she said, ‘I drew him out of the water.’”***

This was the adoption of Moses. Whenever you hear the name, **“Moses,** remember he got that name, not from his Jewish mother, but from the class and might of his Egyptian upbringing. And the reason this matters is it proves the power of the **cultural counterweight** of Moses’ faith.

His faith was not a **theoretical** refusal of the cultural attractions and pressures of Egypt. He possessed and held as his **legitimate heritage** all the power and prestige and wealth of the Pharaoh’s household. His was not a refusal **“as if”** he had all these things to treasure. He **had** them.

We all dream of the things we’d deny for our Lord if we had them or if we were in a position where our compromise would actually make a visible difference. This is **pretend faith.** Mature faith **begins** with outward resistance to compromise. Its first outward manifestation is **refusal.** It’s refusal to be conditioned by the surrounding culture **before** it is anything else.

One can hardly miss the way Jesus placed this very same choice **right at the beginning** of the life of discipleship - **Luke 9:23** - ***“And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”***

“If anyone would come after me....” That word **“would”** is so important. It means this great **refusal** of self-denial is to be calculated **even as one is considering following Christ.** This is not a later faith choice. This is the **first** faith choice. It’s the **introductory condition.** And it’s a **real** choice, not a **theoretical** one.

- b) ***The ongoing consideration of grown-up faith*** - **Hebrews 11:25-26** - ***“...choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. [26] He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.”***

The great handicap of much of the church is the **limiting of the discussing of faith to the things believed.** In other words, faith is discussed and even **defined** merely in terms of the things we say we **believe** in our heads - the **content** of our faith rather than the ongoing **expression** of that faith.

This classic faith text deals with how Moses **flexed his faith in the exercise of it.** Moses’ faith wasn’t just an **accurate** faith. It was a **choosing and resisting** faith.

Moses **computed** with his faith, and here’s how he did it. Moses’ faith was constantly **comparing two things.** - **not just believing things, but comparing them.** Here are the details. He compared being

“mistreated with the people of God” with the ***“fleeting pleasures of sin”(11:25)***. And he compared ***“reproach of Christ”*** with the ***“treasures of Egypt”(11:26)***.

What is fascinating when you look closely at this is in each couplet the assessment of the spiritual side of the comparison is looked at in its ***worst possible manifestation***. It's the ***“mistreatment”*** with the people of God and it's the ***“reproach”*** of Christ. Faith begins by calculating the ***harshes*** possibilities of a faith profession in this culture. Grown up faith is highly realistic. It ***assumes*** cultural mistreatment.

Why does our writer take all the glamor out of devotion to Christ? Why not talk about streets of gold and the blessing of the Lord? Why not just contemplate miracles?

And certainly all of those could be accurately offered. But our writer has a specific goal in mind. Remember the first ***choice*** of Moses' faith. His first choice is ***“refusing to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter”(11:24)***. He has rejected Egypt and all it stands for. And there will be nothing pleasant arising from that choice. He has nothing to look forward to but ***“mistreatment”*** and ***“reproach.”***

So what is faith to do with that future? How is faith to plan and calculate? Our writer says faith ***begins*** with this expectation. Faith ***launches*** facing rejection for Christ. That is all ***Egypt*** can do with Moses' choice and it's all ***our culture*** can do with ***your*** choice to publicly follow Jesus. This is the way faith ***begins it's calculations about life in this world.***

One more thing. Faith zeros in on facts missed by a culture blinded by sin and self. One of these calculations is made conspicuous by our writer in ***verse 25*** - ***“...choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”***

Your faith calculations must include all the facts. Our culture doesn't. It can't afford such honesty. The best that can be had apart from loyalty to Christ can't be kept. It's a mirage. It will deceive and leave us empty. Our text bluntly reminds us it is ***“fleeting.”***

Make sure you have thoroughly considered the shallowness of the things competing with your faith. Don't allow them more substance and security than they can possibly give. And when you use your grown-up faith accurately you will understand more deeply the true meaning of the Apostle John's words in this great verse:

1 John 5:4 - “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And *this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*”

It is easier for faith to conquer the pull of culture when it has established it ***fleeting*** nature. Faith will always struggle and lose to cultural accommodation when we invest what our world can give with a security and satisfaction it doesn't and can't possess. Keep your mind in a transformed state and your faith will follow by overcoming the world.