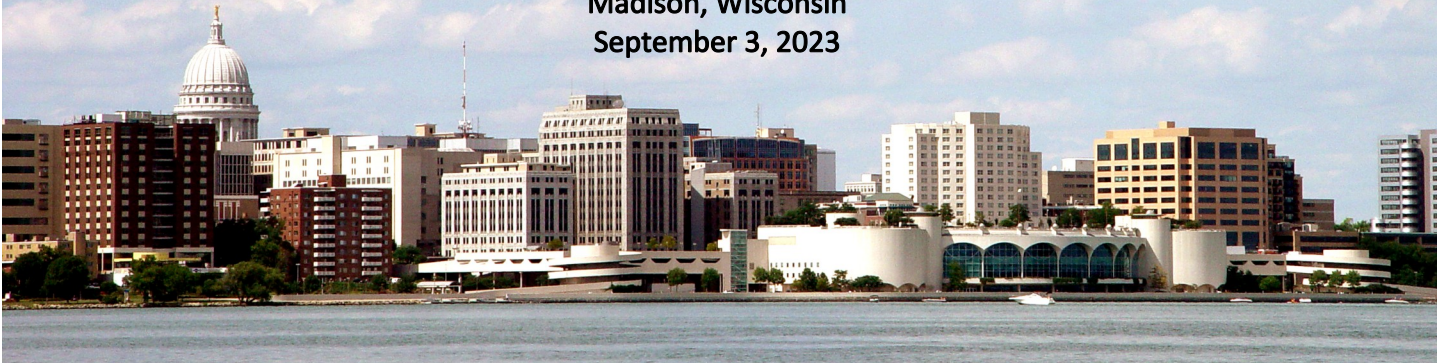


Faith Illustrated: Moses

Hebrews 11:23-28

Baxter T. Exum (#1704)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
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It is good to be together this morning, and if you are visiting with us today, we are glad to have you with us. We'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card online if you can (using the QR code up here or on the front of today's bulletin), or you can use one of the cards from the pew in front of you. Whatever works for you, we would love to hear from you, and we invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns.

And speaking of prayer concerns, thank you so much for continuing to remember our family in your prayers. Thank you for the cards and messages; thank you for checking in on us. Aaron called to check in on us a few days ago and asked if he needed to fill in this morning. John Long, one of our former elders checked in earlier in the week, still serving with the heart of a shepherd, even from afar. I even ran into a guy at Costco on Friday who asked how my wife and father-in-law were doing! God's people are the best people on earth, and we truly appreciate your outpouring of support over the past month or so. We plan on having a memorial service next summer on the beach on the west coast of Oahu. If any of you are up to it, we would love to meet you there!

We are here this morning to share the good news that God loves us and that he sent his only Son to save us. He died in our place, he was buried, but he was raised up on the first day of the week. This is the gospel, or the good news, and we respond to this good news through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (a burial in water for the forgiveness of sins). And we have an example to share this morning, coming to us from the Karns congregation down in Knoxville, Tennessee. Their preacher, Steve Higginbotham, posted online earlier this week, "Yesterday, I baptized a 95-year-old man into Christ. He told me he wanted to spend the rest of his life to the glory of God. Yet, another reminder of God's graciousness." So good to see this, but speaking of God's graciousness, God has also shown grace to Steve (the preacher in this picture). Some of you might know that three years ago Steve was diagnosed with Stage IV melanoma. His doctors there in Tennessee basically said that there is nothing we can do, you have about three months left to live. Somehow, they heard about a doctor at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas, they traveled to Texas, staying with a Christian family in the area, and to make a long story short, thanks to immunotherapy and the grace of God, Steve is now completely in remission. So, when this picture popped up on my screen this week, I was especially thankful – not only for the elderly man being immersed, but also for the fact that Steve was still around to make that connection. But we share this by way of encouragement. What this man has done, you can do today. Let me know if we can help in any way.

This morning, we return to our study of Hebrews – a message addressed to some early disciples who were having a hard time listening to Jesus, and this message is encouraging them to keep on keeping on, to live by faith, to endure. And we are now working our way through Hebrews 11, a chapter dedicated to FAITH. In the opening verses we've seen faith defined as *"the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,"* and we are now looking at some examples of living by faith. This is what it looks like! We've looked at Abel, Enoch, and Noah, we've looked at Abraham, and today we come to Moses.

Moses is one of the greatest men in Scripture. He leads God's people out of Egypt, he receives the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, and he ends up writing the first five books of the Bible as well as at least one of the Psalms (Psalm 90). Moses was certainly not perfect by any means, but he was faithful; so faithful, in fact, that he's featured in the "Hall of Fame of God's Faithful" in Hebrews 11. The passage is found in Hebrews 11:23-28. And as we look at this passage, I think we will quickly realize that Moses' life was punctuated and defined by a series of incredibly stressful events, even life-or-death events, we might say. But each event was handled *"by faith."* In fact, that little phrase *"by faith"* is found four times in this passage. So, let's keep an eye out for it as we read, and then we'll go back and look at each of these events in greater detail. But heading into it, let's just be aware that faith makes a difference as we make decisions in a time of crisis. Let's look together, then, at Hebrews 11:23-28,

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. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

- I. **As we take a look at faith in the life of Moses, let's start in verse 23, where we find that FAITH GAVE MOSES' PARENTS THE COURAGE THEY NEEDED TO DEFY THE KING.**

Of course, we just studied this in our Wednesday evening class as we've been working our way through Exodus. But this was an incredibly tense time in the history of Israel. Four hundred years earlier, God used Joseph to save the nation through a terrible famine, but then a new pharaoh came on the scene, a man who didn't really appreciate what Joseph had done. The Israelites grew and multiplied, so this new Pharaoh decided to enslave the people and to treat them harshly. He was scared that they might leave or perhaps join up with Egypt's enemies. But when the slavery and harsh treatment didn't work, Pharaoh gave the command that all male children who were born were to be thrown into the Nile River to drown. That way, the Israelites would only have girls, those girls would grow up to bear Egyptian children, and Israel would slowly disappear.

Well, during this time, an Israelite couple (Amram and Jochebed) bore a son, and they faced a dilemma. On one hand, they could throw their son in the Nile as Pharaoh had commanded (ignoring God's promise to Abraham to make Israel a great nation), or they could defy the king's command and put their own lives in danger. What a terrible choice to make! Well, the text tells us that instead of killing their son, they decide to hide him for the first three months of his life, *"because they saw he was a beautiful child."* We thank God, then, that Moses was not an ugly baby! "Oh, look at the chubby cheeks on that kid! Let's not throw him in the Nile!" Of course, I say this jokingly, because I'm pretty sure that all babies are beautiful to their own parents! The other part of this is that Moses' parents save him *"by faith."* Several weeks ago, we learned that faith

comes from hearing the word of God (going back to Romans 10:17), so there's also a chance that God spoke to Amram and Jochebed in some way. And we think back to the definition of faith as being ***“the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*** By faith, Moses' parents could see the unseen in this child, and in keeping with faith being an action throughout Hebrews 11, they do something. Their faith causes them to hide the baby. And by the way, they hide him in the Nile, the very place where he was supposed to be drowned!

Moses' parents, then, by faith and not fearing the king, defy the king's command. Some might see a problem here in that if they truly did not fear the king, these two would have continued on as if there were no threat. In other words, if they were truly unafraid, why hide the baby? But remember, there are two threats here: One to Moses (if they obey the king's command) and one threat to them (if they disobey the king's command). Well, these two fear God more than they fear the king, so they disobey the king and obey God. In this sense, they are unafraid of the king's edict. They see their child as more than a piece of trash to be thrown away to avoid the wrath of Pharaoh.

So the question is: Who do we fear more? When we're in some stressful situation, when we face a crisis, do we fear disappointing the world, do we fear offending the world, or do we fear disobeying the Lord? In fact, when was the last time we took a risk and acted in faith? When was the last time we acted by faith, not by sight? Someone has said that being afraid is not a reason not to do something, but because it's the right thing to do, do it scared! By faith, we fear God far more than we fear anything else, because by faith we can see what others cannot see. The author of Hebrews, then, is encouraging his first readers: Do not fear the king! Do not fear being different from the world. But instead, fear God, and by faith live for him.

II. As we continue, we find (in verses 24-26) that Moses, by faith, MAKES A DIFFICULT CHOICE, CHOOSING GOD OVER THIS WORLD AT GREAT PERSONAL EXPENSE.

Just following up from verse 23 where Moses is hidden by his parents, we know from Exodus that they eventually launch him out into the Nile in a waterproof basket. He's looked after by his older sister, and he is eventually found by Pharaoh's daughter who is there to bathe. His sister basically arranges for Moses to be nursed by his own mother (and she is paid for this), which is amazingly awesome, and after his is weaned, Moses is then raised in Pharaoh's palace. Over in Acts 7:21-22, Stephen is reviewing the history of Israel, and he says that ***“...Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son,”*** and that ***“Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.”*** Moses, then, is basically royalty. He would have learned hieroglyphics, he would have studied science, and math, and astronomy, and chemistry, and philosophy, and law. He would have studied the arts – sculpture, and music, and painting. He would have studied military history and tactics and leadership. We look back in history, and we find that Egypt was pretty much loaded in those days – the stuff we find from back then, everything related to the Pharaohs is covered in gold. The wealth in Egypt at that point is almost hard for us to imagine, but Moses is raised in this. Moses had it all, and who knows, it seems as if he's being trained to take a leading role. Like Joseph, he might have ended up ruling in Egypt.

However, we learn here in Hebrews 11 that when Moses had grown up, he ***“refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.”*** To ***“refuse”*** to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter is to reject or turn away from it, to reject a life of wealth and power. On the other hand, he ***“chose rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God.”*** To ***“choose”*** is to select or decide, it refers to weighing the options and coming down on one side as opposed to the other. He could identify with Pharaoh's household and have everything this world has to offer, or he could identify with the Israelites and live the life of a slave. And he could have rationalized some things

here. He could said to himself that if he stayed in Pharaoh's household, perhaps he could change things from the inside out, "Maybe I can have the straw delivered again. Maybe I can get these people a proper lunch break," and so on. Moses, though, chooses to reject Pharaoh's house, and he chooses to go with God and his people, the decision of the Sons of Korah in Psalm 84:10 when they said, ***"For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."*** This is the choice of Moses.

And this decision will change the course of his life over the next 80 years. Moses makes the choice that Ruth will make several hundred years later, ***"Your people shall be my people, and your God my God"*** (Ruth 1:16). And Moses does this when he had ***"grown up."*** Making a choice like this is a sign of maturity. Moses does this on his own; he's old enough to make a decision like this without his parents now. When we grow up, we make choices, and we don't blame others for what happens to us. And if we don't make choices, sometimes others will make those decisions for us. Not choosing is a choice!

Lot's wife chose Sodom. Esau chose a cup of soup. Achan chose some silver and gold and fancy clothing. The Rich Young Ruler chose to keep his wealth. Judas chose 30 pieces of silver. Demas chose the present world. The choices we make are important, and it's important that we choose ***"by faith,"*** just as Moses did.

By faith, Moses could see things that others could not see. I know we've talked about the treasures of Egypt, but don't we remember what would happen not too long after this? The plagues? If Moses had put his faith in cattle, and crops, and land, and those other signs of wealth in Egypt, all of that might have very well been destroyed. Wealth is temporary! Besides, how could Moses benefit from the wealth that was built off the backs of his own people who were slaves? Moses wanted no part of that. Moses, then, made a decision to stand with God and his people, even though they were oppressed. Oh, and by the way, the story of Moses is pretty much the opposite of the story of Joseph. Joseph goes from being a slave to being a ruler. Moses basically goes from being a ruler to being a slave. But both men make those decisions by faith.

But what does this have to do with us? We also face choices, sometimes every day. On one hand, we have the choice of rather short-term pleasure, and by faith we weigh that against pleasing God over the long term. On one hand, we have the choice of a rather short-term relationship, moving in with somebody without getting married, living the party life, making as much money as possible with no regard for who gets hurt in the process, any number of temporary pleasures. But if we see the unseen, we look ahead by faith and we see that obeying God is so much better over the long run. Remember: Hebrews is written to those who were perhaps tired of the shame of living for Jesus, and they were thinking about turning back. The author, though, encourages them to make the choice that Moses made: Give up the pleasure of sin and live for Jesus, and certainly do not go back. And I would also add that Moses makes this decision at the age of 40; so, if you're thinking that it's too late for you to make a change like that, it's not. We can make this decision at any stage of life. The right way is not always the easy way. By faith, Moses made a choice.

III. **As we continue in Hebrews 11, we find in verse 27 that BY FAITH MOSES LEAVES EGYPT, NOT FEARING THE WRATH OF THE KING.**

There's some discussion as to what this verse is referring to: Is this the time Moses leaves after killing the Egyptian, or is this when he leaves after the Ten Plagues? There are arguments to be made on both sides of this, but I would lean toward this being a reference to Moses leaving the first time, after killing the Egyptian. One problem with this is that back in Exodus 2, the text clearly tells us that when he kills the Egyptian, Moses was ***"afraid"*** that the matter had become known. But I would compare it to Moses' parents not being afraid of the king's edict. In a sense, they were obviously afraid of being killed, but they were unafraid in the sense that

their fear did not keep them from doing what was right. In the same way, Moses doesn't flee in fear, but he leaves, he moves to Midian, and he endures for the next forty years, by ***"seeing Him who is unseen."***

So, when Moses takes matters into his own hands and kills the Egyptian who is beating the Hebrew slave, why doesn't Moses just stay and fight? Why doesn't he just lead the people out right then and there? One reason is that the people themselves weren't ready for that. Thinking back to Exodus 2, the people said, ***"Who made you a prince or a judge over us?"*** The people weren't ready to follow where Moses was leading! But another part of this is that Moses wasn't ready. Moses had a temper. At the age of forty, Moses still needed to learn some self-control. To truly lead the people effectively, Moses needed the lessons that he would learn by tending sheep in the wilderness over the next forty years. Someone has said that the worst thing that can happen to a man is to have success before he is ready. So, over the next forty years, Moses ***"endured,"*** he matured to be the kind of leader the people needed. And he does this ***"by faith."*** There is a place for preparation.

The lesson for us may be: By faith, we need to endure as we become the kind of people God wants us to be. And that process or the wait until that happens, is not always quick, and it is not always pleasant. We think of those years Paul spent in Arabia. We think of how Jesus worked as a carpenter from the time he was a boy until the age of 30. So also, Moses spent forty years as a shepherd in Midian. He ***"endured,"*** and those years were not wasted, although it might have seemed like it to Moses at the time, "Why am I over here in the middle of nowhere when my people (God's people) are suffering over there in Egypt?" But God had a plan. And Moses endured by ***"seeing Him who is unseen."***

As John read from us earlier from Philippians 3, the apostle Paul also left behind his past life of accomplishments and the respect of his peers and counted all of that as loss, ***"in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."*** Like Paul, Moses could also endure by ***"seeing Him who is unseen."*** Moses, then, left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.

IV. As we conclude our study of this passage, we come to verse 28, where we find BY FAITH MOSES TRUSTED GOD FOR SALVATION.

Earlier in the week, I had the slide saying that Moses ***"obeyed the Lord's command,"*** and that's part of it, but what's really going on is that Moses, by celebrating the Passover, was really trusting God for his salvation – and that's what obedience is. We won't spend too much time on this (since we are studying Exodus 12 and the Passover this coming Wednesday evening in our online class), but this goes back to the tenth and final plague. God threatens to kill all of the firstborn, except in those homes where the people take a lamb into their home for a few days, and kill it, and spread the blood all around the front door. That's weird, isn't it! That makes no earthly sense at all, but it's the only thing keeping the firstborn alive when the angel of the Lord passes through at midnight. And we find here that Moses obeys.

Now remember: Moses is one of the most highly-educated people anywhere in Egypt. Putting the blood of a lamb on your doorposts makes no sense whatsoever. And yet, Moses keeps the Passover along with the sprinkling of the blood. And I love the emphasis on Moses here. Yes, the nation does this, but this is a reference to Moses personally. Even as the leader of a nation, as a man of God, as a prophet, as a performer of miracles, Moses admits and shows by his actions that he also needs to obey the Lord's commands, resulting in salvation. There is no other way. He stands before the most powerful man on earth and tells him that God will kill his firstborn son if he doesn't submit, and then Moses goes out and submits himself.

Do we see some foreshadowing here? In John 1:29, John looks at Jesus and says, ***“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*** And then, over in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul refers to Jesus as ***“our Passover.”*** Jesus is the Passover lamb. And like Moses, we must also put our trust in him completely. Today, we are also saved by his blood.

Conclusion:

And this brings us to the end of our study of Moses as an illustration of faith. Just yesterday, I realized that if Moses or his parents had failed to act on their faith in any of these scenarios, we wouldn't be reading about Moses this morning. At any point, Moses or his parents could have taken the easy way out, and that would have been the end of it. Either he would have died as a child or perhaps he'd be embalmed and buried in a pyramid in Egypt somewhere. But thankfully, Moses and his parents acted ***“by faith,”*** just as we can today. Moses, just like everybody else in Hebrews 11, was a regular person. But he's considered by God to be a hero of faith, an example for the rest of us. We also can live by faith, just as he did. Let me know if there's anything I can do encourage you to take the next step of faith, whatever that might be.

Next week, Lord willing, we will take a look at the faith of the rest of these people in the remaining verses of Hebrews 11.

Before we get ready to partake of the Lord's Supper, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

All of us here this morning face decisions – all day long, every day – some of these decisions may seem small, and others may be more significant, but this morning we pray for greater faith as we make our way through this life. We pray for wisdom as we wrestle with sins that may seem too hard to give up. We pray for courage as we face sacrifices that may seem too hard to make. We pray for discernment when we start to worry that the cost of following you seems like it might be a price that is too much to pay. And in all of these scenarios, we pray for a faith like Moses. He was by no means perfect, but he was a man of faith, and we pray for faith like his. Help us to always remember, Father, that the pleasure of this world is only temporary. And as we make our way through this world, we pray for eyes of faith to see you right beside us.

We need you to save us. Thank you, Father, for Jesus, our Passover. We come to you in his name. AMEN.

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