



Living a Life of Faith

An ABF Series on Hebrews 11

Moses' Parents: A Life that Submits to God First

Where we've been (v. 1-16)

The author of Hebrews has been arguing that his listeners must be strong in faith, ***believing who God is, what God says, and what God does even and especially when life doesn't make sense***. He has shown them that faith makes the unseen and hoped for things real for us in the present, so that we can grab onto and claim the promises of God. So far we've seen that faith. . .

- Pleases God (Abel and Enoch vv. 4-6)
- Stands against the corrupt culture (Noah v. 7).
- Doesn't live by sight (Abraham vv. 8-12).
- Lives for eternity (The Patriarchs vv. 13-16)
- Clings to the promises of God (Abraham vv. 17-22)

Today we are going to see that faith obeys God above any other human authority, even the government.

Burned at the Stake

Believe it or not, it was once illegal to translate the Bible into English. The Catholic church feared that if the people got the Bible in their own language, they wouldn't be able to understand it properly (i.e. they would understand that the Catholic church was lying to them). Men like Wycliffe and Tyndale translated it anyway. Once a priest

challenged Tyndale's efforts, to which he responded, "If God spare my life, before very long I shall cause a plough boy to know the scriptures better than you do!" Both Wycliffe and Tyndale were burned at the stake for their faith. How do we find the strength to take a stand for our faith, even when that stand costs us? And how do we know when to take a stand, and when to fall in line?

Moses' Parents

The Action - They Hid Moses for Three Months (Ex 2:1-10)

Why would hiding Moses' have been a difficult decision? What could the consequences have been for being found out?

The choice to hide Moses was not an easy one nor a foregone conclusion. They were rebelling against the Pharaoh's edict and quite possibly risking their very lives. Moses' parents were, however, people of faith who chose to trust God rather than fear man.

A careful reading of the Exodus account will show that the primary actor was Moses' mother, while the Hebrews account gives credit to both parents. This is not a contradiction. It would be impossible for Moses' mother to have hidden her baby without her husband's knowledge or approval. Yet as a slave, no doubt he was not home during the day and thus his mother was the one tasked with the greater burden of hiding Moses. While Scripture is often accused of not giving a very high place to women, this story shows a very strong and brave woman protecting her son from a wicked ruler.

So the question becomes "How could this couple have the boldness to take such a dangerous stand?" The author of Hebrews will give us two reasons why they were able to do this.

The First Reason - They Saw That He was a Good Child

The author of Hebrews points out the fact that Moses' parents (Exodus clarifies that this was his mother in particular) saw that he

was a “beautiful child.” This probably meant simply that they looked at their child and like any other parent, they liked what they saw. While some argue that this means that Moses had some sort of “touch of destiny” about him, more likely it simply means that they loved their child just as any parent would love their child.

God can sometimes use our own natural, God-given impulses and human nature to accomplish his purposes. God kicked off his plan to deliver his people out of Egypt into motion by allowing two parents to look down on their child and love him so much that they decided they were going to keep him. But there was a problem that needed to be overcome. No matter how much Moses’ parents might love him, they needed to rebel against the law of the land and perhaps face dire consequences if they were caught. So how were they able to do this?

The Second Reason - They Weren’t Afraid of Pharaoh’s Command

Moses’ parents were able to hide him, violating the law to do so, because they didn’t fear the law. Again, remembering that these are slaves under the hand of a dictator who can do what he wants with no one checking up on human rights violations, this is a surprising statement. Although the passage in Hebrews doesn’t tell us specifically why his parents weren’t afraid of the king’s edict, we can figure out from the context of the story in Genesis why this was the case.

In Genesis we read of midwives who also disobeyed the Pharaoh’s commands, and this time the reason is given explicitly: they feared God more (Exodus 1:17-21). Their fear of God allowed them to directly disobey Pharaoh even though doing so was probably more dangerous for them than for any parent! This reminds us of the story of Noah earlier on the passage, who built an ark in the face of much peer pressure because, we are told, he had a reverent fear of God (cf. Hebrews 11:7). A healthy fear of God is powerful enough to push out a fear of any puny dictator.

Review question: what does it look like to fear God in this instance? How can a believer who knows he is not going to hell still fear God?

I “fear” flying bugs, but only when they fly by my ears. I normally spaz out almost uncontrollably when I hear buzzing right next to my ear. Almost uncontrollably, but there is an exception. If I’m driving and I see a bug flying near me, my muscles tense and I steel my nerves. Why? Because I may fear a bug flying in my ear, but I fear a car wreck a whole lot more. A lesser fear is driven out by the greater fear.

A madman with an army at his disposal and no one to hold him in check is a fearful thing, but the Creator God who made you and owns you and determines your eternal destiny is more fearful. As Christ himself once said, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). We too must realize when we are tempted to do wrong that we have a God who expects holiness from us, and he’s a lot more intimidating than your unkind coworker or mocking family member.

Can you think of any specific situations where a fear of God will help motivate you to do the right thing, even when the right thing is scary in and of itself?

God and the Government

This lesson raises the important issue of the believer’s relationship to the government, and to authority in general. We will take some time in this lesson to delve in a little deeper and work through some of these challenging, yet crucial issues to understand. Remember, in all of this we want to believe whatever the Bible says, no matter how unpopular or how costly that might be.

The Basic Bible Command - Submit

Scripture is abundantly clear that normal, general pattern is for His children to submit to any and every legitimate authority over them, including. . .

See how many of these your group are able to guess. Make sure to look up these passages and show the group that these are indeed God's Words. Bonus points if they get scribes and Pharisees.

- Parents (Ephesians 6:1-3)
- Husbands (Ephesians 5:22)
- Masters (Ephesians 6:5)
- Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-3)
- And, of course, political governments (Romans 13)

God's reason for requiring our submission to these authorities is because he personally puts these authorities in place over us (Romans 13:1). Therefore, if we rebel against the government (and by extension any authority), we are rebelling against God Himself (Romans 13:2).

How do most people in America think today? Why is this? How has this thinking infiltrated the church?

As difficult as it might be for us to submit to our corrupt government, the church that Paul was writing to was facing a government far worse. Rome ruled other nations without giving them any representation. They would take their money via taxes and use it to fund campaigns where they took over more countries. Emperors who had illegally seized power held total power over the country, and some of them were nuts. Yet Paul recognized all of this as from God, and therefore binding on those living in the Roman Empire. How much more should we obey those governing over us?

Why do people think that if a government is largely corrupt, they don't have to follow it? How could God claim that the corrupt Romans were set up by him? (hint: see Habakkuk!)

The Only Exception

But there is one exception, and it is an important one. God never expects His children to disobey His Word so that they can obey an authority that He has placed over them. Scripture has several examples of this very thing taking place.

Ask your group if they can think of biblical examples of civil disobedience in Scripture.

- Hebrew midwives/Moses' parents (Exodus 1-2)
- Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (Daniel 3)
- Daniel (Daniel 6)
- Peter and John (Acts 5:27-29)

Whether it's political pressure, a boss at a job, or some other form of authority, whenever a person asks us to do what is wrong we can respond with a clean conscience, "No I will not do that."

What are some instances when an authority might ask a believer to do something that will violate God's Word?

What about a believer's conscience? Is it ever right for a believer to go against their conscience to obey an authority if what the authority asks for does not directly violate Scripture?

Sometimes there may be room to look for creative alternatives, as Daniel did (Daniel 1). Believers should not have an obnoxious attitude about this; they should not be out there looking for a fight. God cares about **how** we obey him, not just **that** we obey him. However if no compromise can be reached, we must decide as Peter did to "obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29).

What are some ways that believers might seek to look for alternatives to try and be a help to an authority?

Taking a Stand by Faith

We don't know for sure, but dark days may be ahead for our nation. Already our culture is becoming increasingly unkind toward those with a "narrow-minded" view of life. The time is coming, and for some no doubt is already here, where we will pay the price of missed promotions, less business, social stigma, or maybe even jail time for obeying God. But we must never forget that no matter how scary taking a stand for God is, having to face our Creator after not taking a stand for Him is even scarier.

God warns us not to fear man (Proverbs 29:25, Isaiah 51:7, Matthew 10:23). And as the title of this series reminds us, all of this requires faith in God. When we take him at his Word and believe in his power and character, we will rightly reverence and fear him, and we will find ourselves able to reject the sinful commands of secondary authorities. May God help us to be people who wisely discern when the Bible is being compromised, and refuse to participate, even when it costs us to do so.