



Living a Life of Faith

An ABF Series on Hebrews 11

Moses: A Life that Waits for the Greater Pleasure

Where we've been (vv. 1-23)

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 (Patriarchs vv. 17-22)
- Submits to God First (Moses' Parents v. 23)

Get Rich Quick?

Suppose I hire you to work for me for one month (31 days). I offer you to either pay you half a million dollars up front, or give you a penny

for the first day you work for me and then double how much I pay you every day after that.

Which would you choose?

If you chose the first option, you would have made a very foolish decision. The payout from one penny doubled for 31 days would have given you \$21,474,836.47.

This interesting little riddle teaches us a critically important lesson: *careful calculation often reveals short term gains mean long term loss.* This may not always be true on a financial level, but it's certainly true on a spiritual level. Indulging in the present often means missing out on far greater blessings in the future. To quote today's passage: Sin is fun, but only for a season. Few people exemplify this principle as well as Moses, in part because few people have as much to lose. Abel, Enoch, Abraham, and Noah, though blessed by God, didn't start their lives living in the palace of the most powerful nation on earth. They gave up much: families, friendships, familiarity, but none of them gave up fortune, not to the extent Moses did.

How was Moses able to do all of this? Careful calculation. He realized that while he would need to make short term sacrifices, those sacrifices would pay huge dividends down the road. Through this lesson, we will see that the life of faith is not a life that forsakes pleasure, but rather a life that waits for a greater pleasure.

What do you think is the typical Christian attitude toward pleasure? Why is this? What is right about this, and what is wrong about it?

How do we reconcile passages such as Proverbs 21:17 and Psalm 16:11?

Moses All Grown Up

Moses' Coming of Age (cf Exodus 2:11-15)

Hebrews points out what Exodus clearly states – Moses made a choice when he was grown up. His entire life until this point had been following what he had been taught by his Egyptian parents. Acts 7:22 tells us that Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Yet after having studied under and being raised by those in Egypt, Moses made the intentional choice to put that life behind him.

Adulthood is the point when people must decide whether what they have been taught all their life is right or not. It's no secret that many young adults today are turning their back on their faith. While Moses was also turning his back on his heritage, he did so at great personal cost.

Why do you think Moses made the decision he did? Why do many Christian young adults make the decision to forsake the faith? In what ways are these decisions similar? In what ways are they different?

Understanding Moses' Deliberate Choice

Moses' actions were intentional. *The Prince of Egypt*, while it had some great music, really missed it on this point. In the movie Moses accidentally kills someone and then runs away out of a misguided guilt. The whole time, the future Pharaoh was begging him to stay. Reading the book of Exodus, however, gives us the exact opposite impression.

He betrayed the Egyptians to go in league with the Israelites, and had to flee for his life. Moses was not having an identity crisis and he didn't make a mistake. He was not misunderstood. He knew exactly what he was doing when he chose Israel over Egypt.

How should we think about Moses killing the guard? What is good about that choice? What is bad?

How Did He Know about God?

Moses was a brilliant man and a capable leader (and he clearly knew it). No doubt, as an Israelite, he had studied the people he had actually been born to. He would have learned of Joseph, and Jacob, and Abraham. While we don't know what exactly was available to Moses at this time, it's plausible that there were oral traditions carried down by the Hebrews, or perhaps even some written history. As he learned more about his people, he learned of this powerful God they served, and the incredible promises that he had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And it was then that Moses was faced with a choice. Would he continue to live as Egyptian royalty? Or did he actually believe these legends about a God making big promises to his birth race? Would he be a Hebrew, or an Egyptian? Through the work of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, Moses came to believe everything he had learned about God, and he threw his hat in with the Israelites. How exactly Moses came to his decision we are not told, but it is no doubt an exciting story that we will hopefully learn one day.

On a side note, it's interesting to see God prepare both Moses' abilities and character. For forty years Moses learned how to lead, for forty years he learned humility and dependence. When Moses struck out to lead on his own, God made sure he fell on his face. Once he realized he wasn't up to the challenge, God decided he was ready.

God continues to prepare people by shaping their skills and their character. In what ways can you see God using your skills in his work? In what ways can you see him developing your character?

Moses' Three Choices

Moses Refused to be Called the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter

We are not given much of an explanation of all that this would entail. This is the interpretation of the author, and nothing explicit is said about it in the Old Testament. This probably meant he gave up the position and all the privileges that came with it.

Moses Chose Suffering and Disgrace

Moses suffered with his people and endured the reproach of Christ. Thanks to the Nile River and the Delta region, Egypt was a breadbasket, making the nation very wealthy. Yet Moses gave up these riches. As a member of the royal family, Moses no doubt had access to whatever carnal pleasures he wanted, but he gave these up. Instead he chose to associate with the slaves, who were viewed as scum and vermin. This would be like someone leaving the White House for the ghetto, or Buckingham for the slums of London.

Moses Chose to Forsake Egypt

Finally, Moses left his very home. He left civilization for the desert. He gave up on his family, his friends, and all that he had to throw his lot in with God and His people.

We may not have to make such drastic choices as Moses did, but what pleasures do we have to forgo if we want to live lives of faith in 21st century America?

The Logic of Faith

When we talked about Abraham, we mentioned this idea of the logic of faith. Abraham did what God asked because he simply believed that God would do the impossible if need be to accomplish his Word. Moses also had his thinking drastically changed by his faith in God, so

that he was able to look ahead, do the calculation, and realize that while living for sin and self was easier, it was a whole lot costlier.

Moses' Motivation

Moses didn't hate pleasure or wealth. Rather, he did the math and realized that while at first one might not see it, there was more wealth and pleasure to be found by following God than by living for self. We might call this sanctified self-interest. Moses chose God because he wanted the greater treasures and the greater pleasure.

What riches was Moses looking forward to?

While it is true that there are ministries that wrongfully make a fortune exploiting the goodness of God, we need to be careful not to overreact to this. While it should not be our only motivation, God promises pleasure, joy, and happiness for those who follow him (Psalm 37:4, Matthew 19:27-30, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, Revelation 21-22). If God didn't want us to live for rewards, why would he tell us about them?

Can a desire for eternal reward get out of hand? How would a desire for reward be kept in check in a Christian's life?

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis describes the training of a young demon by his older, wiser master. Lewis uses this format to share his observations about the Christian life in a very interesting way. On one occasion, the older demon tells his young ward how to think rightly about pleasure, and his instructions are profound.

“Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's [God's] ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He

has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent of its Maker, and least pleasurable. An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula.”

How does Satan misuse pleasure? How can the knowledge of this keep a Christian from sinning, and what part does faith play in this equation?

Moses’ Focus

Like his parents, Moses is described as unafraid of the king of Egypt. When he led his people out of Egypt, he showed tremendous courage and consistency. How? We are given a wonderful paradox to describe Moses’ focus here. He endured by looking on the One who cannot be seen. Like the others in this chapter, Moses was able to keep going on in difficult circumstances, because his gaze was on this life but on the one to come. Specifically, on the God who had promised so much to those who made the sacrifice to follow Him.

What does it mean to “see him who is invisible?” How is this similar to a believer looking to Christ (cf Heb 12:2-3)? How was Moses’ able to do that before he had Christ’s example?

Application

Perhaps C.S. Lewis put it best when describing our foolish pursuit of sin over God: “If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

Some have described what is called the “pleasure paradox.” The pleasure paradox states that when pleasure is pursued as an end in

and of itself, pleasure disappears. But when we pursue God first and seek to obey and serve him, pleasure is the reward. How do you get pleasure? Not by seeking it, but by seeking Christ. And as you choose to suffer with and be treated shamefully as Christ was, you put yourself in a position to enjoy the presence of him who has pleasures at his right hand evermore.