

Hebrews 11:24-28

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. ²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

Living by faith means:

- **Trusting the faithful God**
- **Choosing to live his way**
- **Keeping our eyes on the prize of heaven**

Hebrews chapter 11 is the heroes of faith chapter. It is a Hall of Fame of sorts for OT Testament believers who lived faithful lives of service to God. These were ordinary men who have been immortalized in the pages of Scripture. They were called to faith by a gracious God, lived a life that demonstrated their faith, and received their eternal reward. As you walk through the verses of this chapter it as if you were traveling down a hall with plaques and images depicting the highlights of their lives. As a fellow believer you are inspired to live a similar faithful life. You remember their struggles, you recall the difficult choices that they made to God's glory, and you want to emulate their faith.

The common thing that tied these men together was of course the faith that they shared; a faith in their faithful LORD. Over and over again the words "by faith" are repeated in this chapter. By faith Abel gave an offering which was pleasing to God, even though he was pressured by his own brother not to. By faith Noah, when warned of things not yet seen (a never before heard of worldwide flood) in holy reverence and fear followed God's command and built an ark. By faith Abraham left his home for a far away land and settled where God told him to go. By faith Abraham believed that God would provide a son for him even though he was almost 100 years old. By faith these men were enabled to do God-pleasing things, for after all, without faith it is impossible to please God.

God is to be praised for their faith and for their examples that will live on for all time, for God in his goodness created the faith in their hearts and gave them spiritual life. According to His gracious will, their lives not only serve as an example for us all but even serve as a definition of what faith is. Hebrews chapter 11 starts with this familiar definition of faith: **For faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.** And this is what the Old Testament believers were commended for; trusting

in their faithful God they clung to a promise of a Savior who would still remain unseen for hundreds, in some cases thousands, of years. Their faith was based not on what was seen, but on an invisible and yet faithful God and the promise that he gave of a coming Savior.

By their own admission the faith that these men of faith had made them stand out as foreigners and aliens and strangers on this earth. It was a steadfast faith that set them apart in this sinful and uncertain world. They lived in a way that was in clear contrast to those around them, because they knew that heaven was their home. Even though these men certainly had their own moments of weakness and made their share of mistakes, they were by faith enabled to do some remarkable things in service to their God.

As we walk down the Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11, we pass by a few more figures. From Abraham we move on to Isaac and Jacob, and Joseph, and finally we arrive at Moses. Moses' story was surely an interesting one. It was one that God designed for the good of his people, to demonstrate what it means to live by faith. We learn from the life of Moses that to live by faith means: **trusting the faithful God, choosing to live his way, keeping our eyes on the prize of heaven.**

Our lesson for today touches, ever so quickly, on two major highlights from the life of Moses. Both of these situations describe Moses at a crossroads in his life. He had to make difficult decisions. By faith, each time, he made the more difficult choice. Moses left behind a comfortable life of security, of power, of riches, and luxury, because he could no longer dwell in the house of a Pharaoh who worshiped false gods and oppressed the Israelite people. He had to serve the true God. He had to serve the true God of Israel who had promised to deliver his people from slavery, who had promised to bring them to the promised land, and most importantly who had promised to send the Messiah, the Savior, the Christ.

It must have been a heart wrenching choice to leave and distance himself from Pharaoh's daughter. After all, this was the woman who had took him in as a child floating in a basket and served as a mother figure to him. It must have been difficult to leave all that he knew and put himself at risk not only with the Egyptian king, but at risk of rejection from his own people. Despite the challenges and the uncertainty he chose to leave a comfortable life to join in the suffering of God's people. The writer to the Hebrews puts it this way, ²⁵ **He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.** ²⁶ **He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt...** It was the faith that God gave him that enabled him to make this difficult choice. He trusted in God and chose to live according to God's ways. He knew he would face a difficult road ahead, but his focus was not on the challenges that lay before him, but on the eternal reward given to those who believe.

In the same way when Pharaoh would not budge, and would not let the Israelites go, Moses left Egypt. Leading God's people out of slavery, Moses did not fear the wrath of the Pharaoh, but instead trusted in God and led the people out of Egypt knowing that his LORD would deliver them. God's power had been on display in miraculous and terrifying

ways as God sent nine plagues upon Egypt, and then came the tenth plague. Moses put his faith in the God who had promised to deliver them. Having celebrated the Passover meal, having sprinkled the blood of the lamb on the doorpost of his house, having witnessed how God had wiped out the firstborn of Egypt, spared the firstborn of Israel, and brought the powerful Pharaoh to his knees, Moses knew that God was in control. He knew that God would deliver his people. He knew that his Lord would be faithful with this promise as he was with every promise before and every promise yet to come. By faith he feared nothing, but obeyed his Lord, and trusted in the promise of the Savior of which the Passover pointed. By faith he fixed his eyes on final reward, the eternal deliverance, that God has waiting for all those who believe the Savior.

What an inspiration to believers today! What an inspiration to you and me! Faced with difficult choices, with the odds stacked against him Moses trusted in God and lived by faith.

Last week we talked about making wiser choices that will benefit our spiritual health. We were reminded to be careful of what we consumed from the sinful culture and world in which we live. We talk primarily about obviously harmful things that we were to choose to avoid. Turn off the immoral television show. Don't reach for those extra drinks. Don't buy into the idea that wild living is the only way to have a full life. Instead pick up something that's good for you. Be in God's Word. Be at worship. Encourage each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. These are all simple things that will help our spiritual health.

Today's lesson really speaks to the decisions in our life with Christ that might be considered choices that put us at believers at a higher risk for suffering at the hands of this world. Today's lesson teaches us about facing the big crossroads in our lives. There will be choices that will be placed before you where you can either remain among the comforts of society or you can chose to live for God, even though that might mean that you will have to challenges, and face scrutiny, even flat out rejection from others.

The temptation is of course to be a social chameleon; to blend in, instead of sticking out; to go with the flow instead of going against the grain. But sometimes that is exactly what we have been called to do. The Christian will clearly stand out from this sinful society which has become okay with dishonest business practices, has legalized certain forms of abortion, and defends profanity and pornography as freedom of expression. Instead of taking the world's view of sexuality and marriage, we stick with God's. Instead of moving in with a boyfriend, the Christian woman honors marriage. Instead of bowing to the pressures of an increased outcry for same sex marriage the Christian man defines marriage as God has: a lifelong union between one man and one woman.

Even if standing up against such things means a tougher path, even if it means missing out on financial gain, or losing friends, or opening ourselves us to ridicule, and maybe even losing our jobs, we simply cannot stand by and pretend the way this world does things is just fine. As those who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ, and set apart by the waters of baptism, we live by faith. We live as strangers and foreigners in this world that is becoming more and more corrupted by sin. We live for our God our faithful

Lord who has saved us and who has called us to be his own. By faith, we are not distracted by a need to be accepted or praised by this world, but instead we fix our eyes on the home in heaven that has been given to us by Christ Jesus. By faith, the Lord enables us trust in him; empowers us to make difficult choices; strengthens us so that we may endure disgrace for the sake of Christ; and then comforts us with the sure and certain hope in heaven.

At times we may feel overwhelmed by the constant outcries of society that tries to pressure us to change our thinking, to join the comforts of the crowd, which hold onto the more popular opinion. However, when we feel like we are outnumbered, as we fight against the influences of this world, the Lord gives us a great cloud of witnesses and examples of those who made difficult choices and lived by faith. Along with Moses the writer to the Hebrews goes on to give several more Old Testament figures and alludes to the many New Testament believers who endured persecution and even death for the name of Christ. What a tremendous cloud of witnesses and examples the Lord has given us, so that may be encouraged to live for God and to stand up for his Word of truth even if that means taking on ridicule and hardship.

I want to share one such instance with you. This past week I received a email that has been circulating for a while now. The email depicted what happened when Minister Joe Wright was asked to open the session of the Kansas State Senate with prayer in 1996. Everyone at the time was expecting the usual generalities that are heard in a prayer in such a setting. They expected a prayer that was safe and politically correct. Instead this is what they heard: *Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, 'Woe to those who call evil good,' but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium, and reversed our values... We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self esteem... We have abused power and called it politics. We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Search us, Oh, God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free.* Several people walked out in protest to his prayer, but his display of faith in God in the face of possible criticism and rejection has also sparked a positive reaction and has inspired many to stick up for what the Bible says.

By faith we know that Christ has indeed cleansed us from our sins, and out of thankfulness to him we are to live for him. We are to make difficult choices and to live for him even if that means enduring disgrace and hardship for his name. May the Lord strengthen our faith and lead us trust in him. May he empower us to choose to live his way. And may he keep us from being distracted by a need to be accepted and praised by this world, but instead may he fix our eyes on the prize of heaven. May he strengthen us so that we may live by faith. Amen.