

## **A Study of the Book of Hebrews**

### ***Jesus is Better***

#### **Sermon # 20**

#### **“Moses: Man of Faith”**

#### **Hebrews 11:23-29**

To the Jews Moses is the most important figure in history. The book of Deuteronomy ends with Moses unparalleled epitaph (Deut. 34:10-12) *“But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, (11) in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, (12) and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.”* To Israel Moses was the greatest prophet. He was the great lawgiver. He was Israel’s greatest historian (authoring everything from Genesis to Deuteronomy). He was considered Israel’s greatest saint, being revealed by God’s word as the humblest of the entire human race (Numbers 12:3). He was also Israel’s greatest deliverer, delivering Israel from 400 years of slavery in Egypt. Because Moses ranks so highly among the Old Testament figures, to show that he lived by faith and not adherence to the Law was a powerful argument to convince the Jews that God’s way had always been the way of faith.

First, Moses Had a Heritage of Faith (vv. 23-24)

*“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.”*

The faith of Moses begins with the faith of his parents. Verse twenty-three says that the parents of Moses saw that he was a "*beautiful child*" - implies not merely a handsome or beautiful child - literally they saw that he was no ordinary child. All normal parents feel that their child is beautiful, even when the truth may be that it is "*A face that only a mother could love!*" He was not only handsome but was a gifted and unusually promising one. John Calvin remarks, "*...but there was some sort of mark of excellence to come, engraved on the boy which gave promise of something out of the ordinary for him.*" [W. B. Johnson. trans. Calvin's Commentary: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and First and Second Epistle of St. Peter. (Grand Rapids: Erdman's, 1963) pp. 175-6 ]

To stem the population explosion among the Hebrew slaves in Egypt the Pharaoh gave an edict that all male babies were to be drowned in the Nile. To protect their newborn child Amram and Jochebed (Ex 6:20) first hid him for three months, and then put him in a water-proofed basket and placed him in the Nile near the place where the Pharaoh's daughter bathed.

The parents of Moses were willing to risk their lives to follow God's will. Their decision was clear: save the child, whatever the consequences. It was no light thing to defy the royal decree, but faith drove out fear.

The great risk that Amram and Jochebed took in secretly keeping their son in spite of the command of Pharaoh was evidence of their faith. Yet their faith was even more severely tested when it became impossible to conceal him any longer. They placed him in a specially prepared basket and place him in the reeds by the bank of the river.

From a human perspective, his parents had no way of knowing even that his life would be spared, much less that, for all purposes, he would be given back to them. Yet they willingly let him go, entrusting him to God.

Jochebed put the baby Moses in a woven basket and placed the basket in a certain place among the reeds...a place where she knew the princess came to bathe. Then she sent Moses's pre-teen sister, Miriam, to watch. I think they must have rehearsed the whole carefully thought out plan over and over again, watching every day and timing the princess' arrival, helping Miriam memorize her lines so she sounded convincing. And, the plan went flawlessly. As you know, the daughter of the Pharaoh "found" the baby Moses, adopted him as her own son, and without realizing it even hired his own mother, Jochebed, to nurse and raise him. Scripture infers that she and Amram took care of him well past the age of weaning. They probably had him into the mid-childhood years -- certainly long enough to firmly establish his Hebrew roots and teach him of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. For, when Moses became old enough -- when he reached the age of accountability -- he decided to follow his parent's example and place his faith in the one true God.

You know six million Americans – a significant number of them right here at FBC - will take a life-changing step this year.... they will have children. And HOW they raise these youngsters will have a greater impact on our society than anything else they do in life. In the next 12 months, six million new Americans will become a part of

our culture and, depending on how they are raised, will either become a part of the solution or a part of the problem.

The words of Proverbs 22:6 offer hope, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it."* But what do these oft-quoted words really mean? Is it some sort of guarantee against failure?

Well, the first word, *"train,"* comes from a Hebrew word that was used to describe the action of a midwife, who, soon after helping deliver a child, would dip her finger into the juice of a chewed or crushed dates. Then she would reach into the mouth of the newborn infant, and massage the gums and the palate with this burst of flavor so the baby would be motivated to learn to nurse.

So the word *"train"* here literally means to *"create a thirst in"* The next phrase of that verse, *"in the way he should go,"* literally means *"in keeping with his bent - in line with his unique God-given characteristics"* You see every one of those 6 million new humans that will be born this year are different.

No two are alike. They are unique. God has "bent" them... "molded" them in different ways.

So this scripture is saying, if you want to increase the chances that your child will grow up and decide to embrace a faith in God, create in him a thirst to use his unique talents for God's purposes. made both of them."

Although godly parents cannot pass on their faith like they do family traits they can create an atmosphere of faith in their homes and be examples to their children. Jochebed trained him and taught

him of God's promises to Israel - that they were to inherit the land of Canaan and be a great nation and bless the world. She instilled in him God's promise of a future redeemer. His mother helped build in him the faith that was to become characteristic of his life.

Her teaching would make him a man of faith. He would choose to serve God. Her patient instruction built a faithful son. The best thing in life that you can give your children is not possessions, not even an education, but faith...a faith that leads them to thirst to use their uniqueness to serve God.

Moses Not Only Had a Heritage of Faith ... but

Secondly, Moses, Had The Faith to Make A Hard Choice (vv. 24-26)

*"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, (26) esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."*

There are three words in these verses that I want to pay special attention to, in verse twenty-four circle the word *"refused."* The word literally means *"to reject, to deny or to totally disown."* Next in verse twenty-five circle the word *"choosing"* this word literally means *"to select or decide."* And the final word that I want you to circle is *"esteeming"* in verse twenty-six, this word literally means *"to weigh in the balance, to evaluate the worth or to consider the value."*

When Moses reached the age of forty he faced a crucial decision. He had to decide whether to identify himself completely as an Egyptian with absolute loyalty and without any reservation or join

himself with his people, the children of God. The deciding factor was his faith in God.

But we need to understand just what this decision involved. It is hard enough to just make a decision not to seek worldly things. It is even harder to give them up once we have them, and Moses had a great many of time by the time he was forty. Acts 7:22 says that *"Moses was educated in ALL the learning of the Egyptians."* Being part of the Pharaoh's family would have meant that Moses attended a school called, "The Temple of the Sun." -- which is what archeologists and historians refer to as "the Oxford of the ancient world." In this ancient center of learning - probably the best in the world at this time - Moses learned hieroglyphics - he would have also studied sciences, medicine, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy, and law as well as the arts - sculpture, music, and painting. AND....Moses also learned to be a soldier - studying the battles, combat tactics, and foes of that nation's proud military history. In fact extra-biblical historians tell us that by the time he reached 30 Moses had already led the Egyptian army in a powerful victory over the Ethiopians.

The choices that Moses later made can be attributed to the training he received from his godly parents.

In other words he came to a fork in the road of his life and he looked both ways and he calculated which way was best. He considered. He weighed all the world would give him against what God promised and he made a choice. Moses had enough "faith sense" to calculate that doing God's will was of more value than even the riches of Egypt. Faith enabled him to see the sinful pleasures of life

for what they really were: a temporary source of pleasure that separates us from God and eventually leads to pain and death. He saw and understood the temporary nature of sin. He believed that eternal riches in God are to be valued above what the world can offer.

Moses, Had The Faith to Make A Hard Choice and...

*Third, Moses He the Faith to Endure When He Could Not See. (v. 27)*

*"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.*

He did more than simply leave Egypt; "he forsook" it, that is he turned his back on Egypt and all it represented. He renounced it permanently. Like Peter, James and John in the New Testament (Luke 5:11) Moses forsook everything to follow the Lord.

*Moses He the Faith to Endure When He Could Not See and...*

Fourth, Moses Had The Faith To Trust When He Did Not Understand. (v. 28)

*"By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.*

The author skips over the story of the return of Moses to Egypt and his confrontation with the new Pharaoh and plagues that were necessary to convince him to allow the Israelites to go free. Instead we skip to the Israelites last fateful night in Egypt. The tenth and last plague that God sent on the Egyptians was the death of the first-born (Ex 11:5). To protect the Israelites from the plague the Passover was instituted, in which the blood of lamb was to be sprinkled on the doorpost of every Israelite house (Ex 12:7). Now think about it. Here is one of the most educated men of his day, a man with an advanced

degree from The Temple of the Sun. And here he is directed to smear blood on the sides and top of a door. Without a doubt this made absolutely no logical sense to this educated and sophisticated man but he had the faith to do what God instructed. He believed that God's way to avoid death was the only way.

As Raymond Brown observes, *"The instructions were strange, the demands costly (a lamb without blemish) and the ritual unprecedented, but they did precisely as they were told. In simple faith they kept the Passover."* [Raymond Brown. *The Message of Hebrews*. (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1984) p. 218]

Moses Had The Faith To Trust When He Did Not Understand and...

*Fifth, Moses Had The Faith To Stand Still And Let God Work. (v. 29)*  
*"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned."*

The story of the crossing of the Red Sea is told in Exodus 14. The miracle crossing of the Red Sea presents real problems to people who's God is too small to do a thing like that. They are like the little boy reporting on his lesson in Sunday School. *"His mother asked him, "What Did You learn in Sunday School Today?" He said, "Mom, we had a great lesson. The teacher told us how the Jews crossed the Red Sea. They had these big helicopters and they had pontoons that they used to put out on the water. Then they put steel runners on the pontoons and they built this bridge across the Red Sea and all the Jews crossed over to the other side. Then when they got across and they blew up the bridge and all the Egyptians drown and not one of them escaped." The mother had a started look on her face and said,*

*"Son is that really what your teacher taught you this morning?" The little boy said, "No! mom but if I told it way she told it, you would never believe me."*

People who refuse to believe the miracles of the Bible have offered many explanations such as the Red Sea was really the "Reed Sea and was only a few inches deep." But such explanations have their own problems, such as if the Reed Sea was only a few inches deep how did all of Pharaoh's army drown in it? You know I think it is a lot simpler just to believe the Bible.

In Exodus 14:13-16 we read, *"And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. (14) The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."*

Moses gave the people words to believe in. He said, *"Do not be afraid."* But in reality that is harder than in sounds. When you look behind you and the desert looks like a dust storm because the mighty Egyptian army is coming to get you and you look forward and all see is the impassable Red Sea. Next Moses says, *"Stand Still."* Now that is not all the easy either. I can just hear some of the people saying, *"My head heard you say stand still but who is going to convince my feet of that?"*

But through the example of Moses they summoned the courage to stand still and let God protect them. In Exodus 14:21-22 we read, *"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and*

*made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. (22) So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left."*

By faith Moses obeyed and by faith the water was driven back all night long by a powerful East wind. Israel's faith was shown when they believed Moses' promise from God and started walking across the seabed as soon as the water parted. This took considerable faith, since the waters piled up on either side must have been terribly threatening. But they passed through the walls of water and arrived safely on the opposite shore. When the Egyptians tried the same thing, Moses stretched out his staff, the waters returned and Pharaoh's army was drown (Ex 14:26-28).