

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

The Characters of Faith (Moses – Part 5b) Hebrews 11:23-29

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. 29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

What is it that defines you? What is or are the defining characteristic(s) of your life? When people stop to consider you, as they think about your personality, as they contemplate who you are, what thing or things would come to their minds? If you were to die today and I as your pastor gave the eulogy, what would be the words you would hope I would use to characterize your life? What is it that defines you?

For many, that which defines, explains, or summarizes a person's life is wrapped up in a job, a relationship, a pursuit, or even a hobby. While many of you know that I enjoy photography and I pursue it, I hope that such is not perceived as that which ultimately defines me. Such an activity is secondary at best to that which I hold as my highest quest, which is becoming like Christ, speaking of the things of God, pointing people to the purpose of the Almighty who is full of grace. I would hope that what defines me is nothing less than this, that I am a man of faith; one who displays a trust in the purposes, provisions and promises of God through Jesus Christ, a trust that regularly affects my behavior, being in conformity to the Word of God.

In Hebrews 11:24-26 we find yet another characteristic of faith, demonstrated in the life of Moses, which, along with the other characteristics of faith, help us define the man Moses as a man of faith. Last week we noted the faith of the parents of Moses, a faith that was active, a faith that chose to act in accordance and in conjunction with the revelation of God. This morning we see the first description of the faith of Moses himself, certainly an active faith like that of his parents, but also a faith that refused certain things of this life in light of the revelation and the reward of God. If we were to ask the question of Moses, "what defined him?" We might rightly answer that he was a man of faith, a man of great conviction, who, because of his trust in the person, provisions and promises of God, refused to let things of this world get in the way of his devotion to God. I propose to you then that what we are to learn from this passage is that genuine, saving faith will demonstrate a willingness to refuse things of this world, particularly when those things get in the way of one's devotion to God. We will see this in the life of Moses revealed in three ways – that faith like Moses refuses the world's –

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

- I. Positions (24b)
- II. Prestige (25)
- III. Prosperity (26)

Let us then note these characteristics of the faith of Moses from the text and as we do, let us also consider how these apply to our lives, that such things might become that which define our own faith as much as it has defined the faith of Moses.

I. Faith refuses the world's positions (11:24)

Once again our text begins with the motivating factor behind each of the characters described in this chapter. The motivation for Moses, as we see at the start of verse 24, was faith – **“by faith”** – as opposed to “by sight”; by faith in God and His revelation rather than by dependence upon man and his reason; by faith, sometimes, oftentimes in stark contrast to the ways of the world rather than capitulation or compromise with the world.

As we continue along in Hebrews 11:24 we read, **“by faith Moses, when he had grown up...”** What does this mean? When did Moses “grow up”? The NKJV reads, “when he became of age...” What this refers to is not when he became a teenager, or even when he turned 18, but seems to best speak of a crisis that happened to him when he was 40 years old. What happened to him when he was 40 years old? Up to this point, Moses had been a prince of Egypt, perhaps the richest and most cultured nation of its time. Having had the best education possible, Moses had been trained to become a part of the royal court and perhaps even the next in line to be Pharaoh.

But now he was faced with having to make a decision, a choice; we might say this was a defining moment in the life of Moses. Upon seeing the hardship and suffering of his native people and their plight; along with having lived in the lap of the luxury and power of the ruling class of Egypt, he had to decide who he was; what defined him. Would he turn his back on his native people and become forever devoted to the purposes and plans of Egypt, which included the harsh treatment of the Israelite slaves, or would he embrace his heritage and be faithful to the call of the one true God who had appointed him as the leader and deliverer of Israel. From Acts 7:25 it seems clear that Moses was well aware of God’s purpose and call on his life. For in that text, as Stephen recounts the events of Moses’ life, we read,

And he [Moses] supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.

So then, in this defining moment, Moses had to choose between the grand position he had as an Egyptian and becoming a participant in the apparent poverty of Israel. And what says the inspired account? It says, **“By faith”** - because of his trust and devotion to God – **“Moses, when he had grown up”** – when he had to choose what would define him as a man – **“refused to be called as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.”**

Beloved, this was an act of faith. For every physical blessing, the prosperity, the power, and the position may have been looked upon by some as the “open door” from God to serve God from that position. But again, Moses knew what God’s word said concerning him and he discerned that the position of the world was not the position God had for him. By faith, Moses

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

“refused” – literally this means he spoke against; he renounced or disavowed this privileged position to ultimately, as we will see in a moment, associate with the people of God.

Moses refused a position of sovereignty, as a lord of Egypt, to become a servant of God and of God’s people. Moses denied himself that he might rightly pursue the purpose of God. In fact, this word **“refused”** here is the same word we read in Luke 9:23 that says, **“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must “deny” [refuse, disavow, reject] himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”** In the life of Moses we see then not only that faith refuses the positions of the world if those positions get in the way of devotion to God, but we also see a picture then of Christ Himself, who gave up paradise for poverty, who gave up his position as sovereign in heaven to be a servant on earth. Turn with me to Mark 10:42. Here we see this principle in action, this principle of giving up or refusing positions of power in order to pursue the higher purpose of God.

Mark 10:42-45

42 Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. 43 But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

This is the example of Christ and by faith, because we trust God for better things, we may be called upon to refuse the positions of this world, particularly when they interfere with what we know is God’s purpose for us. Let me be clear – let us not infer from this verse that it is always wrong to have a position of power in the world, for let us consider Joseph or Daniel, certainly men of faith, and men who held positions the world considered great, but in their cases, God had called them to serve Him through these; in the case of Moses, God called him to serve apart from such a position. The point is that the things that the world often counts as great, God counts as nothing.

In the mid 1600’s, a Baron known as Justinian Von Weltz, renounced his title, estates, and income to become a missionary to what was then known as Dutch Guiana. Today his body lies there in a lonely grave, and he is forgotten by the world. But we can be sure that he is not forgotten by God. AS he was preparing to go into missionary service he said, “What is it to me to bear the title ‘well-born’, when I am born again to Christ? What is it to me to have the title ‘lord’, when I desire to be the servant of Christ? What is it to be called, ‘your grace’, when I have need of God’s grace? All of these vanities I will away with and all else I will lay at the feet of my dear Lord Jesus.”¹

How much stock do we put into our positions, our titles and our accomplishments? Be careful not to long for the positions and accolades of the world to the detriment of devotion to God’s purpose for you, that you would be an ambassador, a spokesman for Him. By faith, let us refuse the world’s positions when they would interfere with our service to Christ.

¹ Adapted from John MacArthur’s, “The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Hebrews” pp. 350-351

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

II. Faith refuses the world's prestige (11:25)

This brings us to our second point regarding the faith that defined the life of Moses, namely that faith refuses the world's prestige. Let us read verse 25 again - ***choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin...***

What I would have you see here is that simply denying the world's positions is not the fullness of faith. It is one thing not to identify with the world, but it quite another thing to then turn and identify with the people of God. In other words, do not assume that simply because you don't want or care about the positions and power of the world that you are then following after God. There are many unbelievers who see the corruption of the world's power and positions, who remove and separate themselves, as best they can, from such things, but who never embrace God or the people of God.

Genuine faith refuses one thing in order to embrace another and this is just what we see in verse 25 – the faith of Moses chose to endure ill-treatment with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures that come with the prestige of the world. In short, faith prefers identification with the people of God, regardless of what hardship that brings, than forsaking the people of God to live a life of pleasure. Let me explain of couple of things here.

First, I would have you note that genuine faith prefers associating with the people of God, even if under persecution or “ill-treatment” than associating with those of the world whose lives pursue personal pleasure or satisfaction rather than the pleasure or glory of God. To put this in the form of a question, “who do you want to be associated with?” In general, do we not typically like to be associated with the winning time, the successful business, the “right” people (whoever you see as the “right”) people? For some it seems easier to associate with people of the world, because of what they might do for you, rather than to associate with the people of God. Isn't it interesting then to note that Moses' association with the people of God is said to be “by faith?” It may not be easy at times to associate with other believers and members of the church. It may be that you feel you don't have anything in common with them apart from church. It may be that it is simply difficult because of busyness and schedules to get together. It may be that some in the church are just quite different from you. But I say to you that if you have the faith of Moses, you will prefer to associate with the people of God than with others. Let us see this aspect of faith developed more and more in this body of believers.

A second observation I would make is that Moses chose, so it says, ***“the people of God”*** not “the people of Israel.” Moses' association was not based upon national heritage necessarily, but rather upon spiritual identification. Election, not ethnicity was the motivating factor. This reminds me of the exhortation of Galatians 6:10 – if you would turn there, an exhortation that calls us to have a special affinity to those of faith. We read –

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

Do you have such an affinity, such a desire to minister, to serve especially and meaningfully to those who are of the household of the faith, those who are the people of God? For such is a defining mark of faith and for those who practice such things, their lives become defined as lives of faith as they serve God's people.

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

The third and final observation I would make from this verse has to do with the last statement, that by faith Moses chose to endure, suffering, associate with the ill-treatment of the people of God rather **“than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.”** When Moses was determining once and for all whether or not to refuse the position and prestige of Egypt, it was not a matter of him necessarily saying, if I stay in Egypt, I get to sin and be immoral; and if I go with Israel, I won't get to sin. That is not the sense of the statement. The sin that Moses would be guilty of had he remained in Egypt was not a sin of self-indulgence per se, but rather the sin would have been his abandoning the people of God in order to enjoy the “passing” or temporary pleasures or advantages his prestigious position afforded him. Let me give you a simply example. Would anyone here consider it sinful for me to take my wife out to dinner at a nice restaurant for (of course) prime rib? No, there is nothing inherently evil in partaking of such a passing pleasure. However, what if I, having been called by God to be a Pastor/shepherd, received a call from a family in the church, who was in the middle of a truly horrible crisis, who needed my attention, my direction, my participation in their trouble, my support in their difficulty and I said, “Not now, for I am partaking of my prime rib” – now I have turned the passing pleasure of the world into a grievous sin against God's call and God's people.

I say to you that we are often faced with choices by which we must choose between the pleasures and advantages culture and prestige has afforded us against what we know is God's call for us. Our culture affords us many secular blessings, none of which are necessarily sinful in themselves, unless they become our focus and pursuit rather than God. In the case of Moses, he could have chosen to remain in his position and enjoy the blessings of his prestige, but he would have been abandoning the people of God and forsaking God's revealed purpose for him. Let us remember, beloved, that we have been called to assemble, and when we assemble, let us be careful not to “forsake” such a gathering, for we have been exhorted to meet, to encourage and to build up one another in the faith. Sometimes then, faith must simply refuse the blessings and opportunities of the world in order to “endure ill-treatment” with the people of God.

III. Faith refuses the world's prosperity (11:26)

Now we come to our final point this morning, seeing from verse 26 that faith refuses the world's prosperity. We read in verse 26 that “by faith Moses [was] **considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.** From this verse we must first see that Moses, by faith, understood that the “reproach of Christ” was more valuable than all the treasures of this world. Moses was “considering” – that is, he was esteeming, regarding or taking account of this truth, that the “reproach of Christ” which includes the insults, revilings, cursings, complainings against and defamation of Christ and following Him is more valuable than the vast, beautiful and seemingly immeasurable prosperity of Egypt. And so, having already refused the position and the prestige of the world, by faith Moses, because he understood there was a better or greater reward awaiting him by faith, also refused the prosperity of the world.

Beloved, do we have this faith of Moses? Are we to have the faith of Moses? Look with me at Matthew 5:11-12. This statement of Christ seems to aptly parallel what we have read in Hebrews 11:24-26. Here we read,

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

11 Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

When is the believer to consider himself happy or blessed? When he is insulted, persecuted, falsely accused and spoken evil against because of his association with Christ. This is the reproach of Christ. Moses decided to speak out about Christ and regarded that any ill-treatment along with any ill-spoken words. To Moses, these became a badge of honor and an assurance of his commitment to Christ. How about you – do you consider insults against you because of your faith as being better and more valuable than any position, any power, and prosperity you could have if you otherwise hid your association with Christ? The issue here is not that prosperity in and of itself is evil, but rather the pursuit of prosperity as a life goal or end. May we heed the words of Solomon who said in Proverbs 15:16;

Better is a little with the fear of the LORD Than great treasure and turmoil with it.

And also, Proverbs 16:8, 19 which says, ***“Better is a little with righteousness Than great income with injustice...It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly Than to divide the spoil with the proud.”***

Rather than looking to such prosperity as an end in itself, the faith of Moses had him ***“looking to the reward”*** that God would provide, which is total, final deliverance through Jesus Christ into the glories of Heaven in the presence of God. The idea of “looking” is an intense anticipation, an earnest expectation. What is it that you are looking for, intensely anticipating? Are your expectations found in this world? The faith of Moses caused him to practice the principle of Colossians 3:2,

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

Now for those of you concerned with the statement that Moses had considered the “reproach of Christ” – wondering what Moses knew about Christ, let me just say this. We know from Deuteronomy 18:15 that God already revealed to Moses a greater prophet and deliverer than himself. And, if Abraham could see the day of Christ and rejoice as Jesus said in John 8:??, then I believe we can safely assume that God revealed aspects of the coming of Christ to Moses as well. The point of all this is that Moses was looking ahead, looking past and beyond the things of this world, believing that God was calling him to something more and something better. Indeed, the faith of Moses was, as Hebrews 11:1 says, ***“the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”***

How about you, are you really hoping for the promises of God? There is a promise of coming wrath against sin and all those who apart from faith refuse Christ as Savior and Lord. There is also the promise of eternal life and bliss in the presence of God to those who by faith refuse to have as their aim or life’s ambition the positions, the prestige and the prosperity of the world. There is a simple old gospel song that summarizes the sentiment of this passage so well that if I didn’t know better, I would say that Hebrews 11:24-26 was the inspiration for it

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

– and so I close with these words, asking you to ask yourself, “Do these words express the sentiment of my heart, the faith of my life?” In other words, do these things define who I am, and what I believe.

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather have Him than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands;
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand

Than to be the king of a vast domain,
Or be held in sin's dread sway;
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.

I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause;
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I'd rather have Jesus than fortune or fame;
I'd rather be true to His holy name

He's fairer than lilies of rarest bloom;
He's sweeter than honey from out the comb;
He's all that my hungering spirit needs;
I'd rather have Jesus and let Him lead

Soli Deo Gloria

Copyright © 2007 Edward K. Godfrey. *This message is the sole property of the copyright holder and may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this message must contain the above copyright notice. This message may not be copied in part (except for small quotations used with citation of source), edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of the copyright holder. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Edward K. Godfrey, Pastor, Hope Community Bible Church, 2300 South 13th Street Rogers, AR 72758.*