

Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

XX

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THE FAITH OF MOSES AND THE FAITH OF US

By

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Moses was a human being who made mistakes in his life. Yet, Moses was a great man of faith, not because of his mistakes, but because of his many accomplishments through faith. That Moses was a great man of faith is evident from the amount of space that is given to him in Hebrews 11, often referred to as "Faith's Hall of Fame." In fact, Abraham is the only person who is mentioned more than Moses in Hebrews 11.

The Exodus held a prominent place in the Jewish mind because it was the one event that gave Israel its identity (cf. Josh. 2:9-11). Due to the greatness of this event to the history of Israel, Moses, God's chosen leader throughout this time, was held in high esteem. Hebrews 11:23-29 reveals four truths about faith as it related to Moses, which if applied by God's people today, would make them the kind of Christians God wants.

Moses Was Influenced By Faithful People

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of

his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Heb. 11:23). Obviously, at this stage in Moses' life, he had no choice in this matter. Moses was saved by the faith of his godly parents (especially his mother). It was at great personal risk that Moses' parents disobeyed Pharaoh (cf. Ex. 1:22). One thing that kept his parents from allowing their child to be killed was that they considered him a "beautiful" child. The word "beautiful" (from ἄσπεῖς) means to be "pleasing; beautiful."¹ The Greek word occurs in the New Testament only here and in Acts 7:20 (cf. Ex. 2:2). Physically, there was something about Moses' appearance that left an impression on Pharaoh's daughter. However, the word seems to indicate much more than physical appearance. "Beautiful" may indicate that Moses' parents

understood that God had a special purpose for their son (cf. Acts 7:17-22). Whether or not this purpose was revealed to them personally, the text does not say, but what faithful parent is there who does not believe God has a purpose for his or her child? Although parents may not know precisely what purpose God may have for their child, they do know that God can (and will) use their child in His service if their child is usable (i.e. properly reared and trained). In any case, Moses' mother's faith was rewarded by God, for she was able to be his nurse (cf. Ex. 2:8-10).

Unlike Moses as an infant, we do have a choice as to with whom we surround our children and ourselves (cf. Dt. 30:19). Do parents today see their children as "beautiful" enough to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4)? Do parents today value the will of God more than worldly edicts? Do parents today do their best to make sure that they are the kind of people with whom children need to be associated? As individuals, do we choose the right companions (cf. 1 Cor. 15:33)?

¹Barclay M. Newman, Jr., "A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament," in The Greek New Testament, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Society, 1993) 27.

Moses Made Correct Choices

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Heb. 11:24-26). Note three factors that were involved in Moses’ decision. First, Moses based his choice upon God’s plan for him, not upon a life of luxury (Heb. 11:24). “When he was come to years [grown up ASV; became of age NKJ; literally, ‘became big’]” points to a time when Moses exercised faith in his own behalf. Moses was forty years old at this incident (Acts 7:23 cf. Ex. 2:11). Notice that Moses exercised his faith by refusing! Moses refused what most people would have loved — to be known as Pharaoh’s daughter’s son! The first aorist tense of “refused” (from ἀρνέομαι) points to a specific act of choice in the past. Moses’ faith here presupposes a conviction in God’s purpose for him, even in difficult circumstances.

Likewise, we must base our decisions on “What is God’s will for me?” Moses’ faith enabled him to deny self (cf. Mt. 16:24-26). What is God’s will for us at our stage in life? As children, we must “obey parents...” (Eph. 6:1). As husbands and wives, we have God-given responsibilities (Eph. 5:23f; 1 Cor. 7:1-5; 1 Pet. 3:7). As Christians, we have responsibilities (Mt. 6:33; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17). In whatever

stage of life we find ourselves, we must place God’s will above our own will (cf. Gal. 2:20).

Second, Moses chose to take his stand with God’s people (Heb. 11:25). The Hebrews writer portrays the contrast between the alternatives facing Moses—“suffer affliction” versus “enjoy the pleasures.” Which would we have chosen? “Suffer affliction [share ill-treatment ASV; be mistreated NIV] with” (from συγκακουχέομαι) means to suffer or be mistreated with someone else.² This Greek word occurs only here in the New Testament. “Enjoy the [passing NKJ] pleasures of sin for a season [short time NIV]” is reminiscent of the disappointment in which sin always results (cf. Gen 3:1-13, especially verses 5-7). Sin can look so good at first, and even be enjoyable for a time, but one day (if not in this life, surely in the next), the tragic reality of sin will present itself. However, Moses chose to suffer with his people rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. In Hebrews 11:25, “suffering” is given no time restriction in this life. As long as a Christian lives, there is the potential of suffering for righteousness’ sake (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12). But note this paradox: suffering ill-treatment with God’s people actually results in pleasure, not for a season, but for eternity (cf. Mt. 5:10-12)! Compared to eternity, suffering

²Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 2nd ed. revised by William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 773.

here is but for “a season” (cf. 2 Cor. 4:17-18).

For Moses to stay in Pharaoh’s court would have meant the enjoyment of sin-pleasures (i.e. immediate gratification). Thus, it would have been sin for Moses to remain in Pharaoh’s court. He would have been turning his back on the needs of God’s people. He would have been abandoning the task God had for him in delivering His people. This is in contrast to Joseph, whose plan from God was to remain in Pharaoh’s palace so he could help his brethren, the sons of Israel (cf. Gen. 43-50). Are we willing to take our stand with the people of God? Moses had much to lose in the eyes of the world, but the world was not his goal. He wanted to take his stand with the people of God!

Third, Moses based his choice upon the reward (Heb. 11:26). Moses considered the “reproach [disgrace for the sake NIV] of Christ” to be of more value than the treasures of Egypt. Suffering abuse for Christ’s sake is superior than any amount of worldly treasures (cf. Rom. 8:18). Moses recognized that there were some things more valuable than material wealth (cf. Mt. 6:19-21).

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TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

How can it be said that Moses valued the “reproach of Christ” when Moses lived about 1450 years before Christ? The answer is two-fold: (1) The use of the “reproach of Christ” in reference to Moses’ day implies that all of God’s faithful who suffer for God are people who are linked with sufferings on behalf of Christ. All that Moses suffered in this context was because he stood faithful to God’s plan. God’s plan always involved Christ, even before the world began (Eph. 1:4-5; Tit. 1:2). Therefore, every person throughout the history of humanity who has suffered reproach for God’s cause has suffered the “reproach of Christ.” (2) The use of the “reproach of Christ” in reference to Moses’ day encourages the first readers of Hebrews to keep the faith in spite of suffering. “Reproach” occurs again in Hebrews 13:13, where Christians are encouraged to “go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach” (cf. 12:1-3).

Moses knew God’s law of sowing and reaping (cf. Gal. 6:7). “He had respect [looked ASV; was looking ahead NIV]” is from a Greek word (ἀποβλέπω) which means “to look, to keep one’s eyes on, to give one’s attention to.”³ The word, as used here, implies a deliberate turning from one object to another⁴ — turning from the treasures in Egypt to the much more valuable “reproach of

Christ.” Moses put his attention on the reward! “Recompense of reward” (NKJ and NIV omit “recompense”) (from μισθαποδοσία) literally refers to the payment of wages.⁵ The Greek word only occurs three times in the New Testament. The “recompense of reward” is a good thing in Hebrews 10:35, which they are urged not to “cast away,” but in Hebrews 2:2, it refers to the undesirable payment which is from “transgression and disobedience” (cf. Rom. 6:23). If we are to possess the saving faith of Moses, we must base our choices on the “recompense of reward”!

Moses Accomplished His God-Given Tasks

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (Heb. 11:27-28). The faith of Moses allowed him to accomplish God’s plan. The overriding factor in these verses is that Moses acted as if he saw God. While it is true that Moses literally saw many manifestations of deity throughout the Exodus events (cf. Ex. 19-20 et al.), the emphasis here is on the “eyes of faith” (cf. 2 Cor. 5:7). True faith is oriented toward the unseen, which of course includes the reality of God (cf. 1 Tim. 6:16). Notice the references where faith is explicitly related to the unseen in Hebrews 11:1, 3, 7.

Because Moses knew God, he could accomplish even

that which seemed impossible. “Endured [persevered NIV]” (from καρτερέω) means to “be strong, be steadfast, hold out, endure.”⁶ Moses persevered as if he saw Him who is invisible. This factor allowed Moses to complete his tasks for God. Moses led his people out of Egyptian bondage (Heb. 11:27). Like his parents, Moses was unafraid of Pharaoh. The secret of Moses’ endurance was a source beyond himself. Throughout the wilderness wanderings, Moses was aware of God’s presence (Ex. 33; Num. 12:7-8). The eyes of faith can see what is invisible to the eyes of the world (cf. Mt. 13:13-16). Moses also instituted the Passover (Heb. 11:28). The “sprinkling of blood” occurred after nine plagues. Moses, his people, and the Egyptians knew the power of God! The death of “the firstborn” was a very dismal option, but without the blood applied, it was a reality (cf. Ex. 12). Not only did Moses and his people survive, they were not even touched by the destroyer (cf. Dan. 3:23-27; 6:19-23). Are we, as the people of God, accomplishing our God-given tasks?

Moses Influenced His People

“By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned” (Heb. 11:29). The people exhibited the same faith that Moses did — by faith **they!** The thought moves from individual faith to national faith. The nation’s faith was inspired by Moses’ faith. At no time was faith needed more

³Newman 20.

⁴Donald Guthrie, The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 15, Leon Morris, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 240.

⁵Bauer 523.

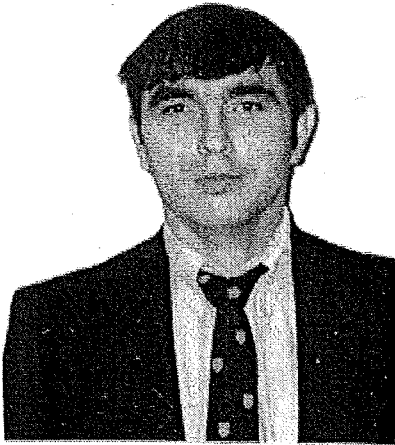
⁶Bauer 405.

urgently than at the banks of the Red Sea with the Egyptians in hot pursuit. The corporate faith of the new nation equaled the sum total of each individual's faith. They were confident that God would deliver them, and thus prove Himself faithful to His promise. The Egyptian pursuers had no faith in God, and thus they perished (cf. Ex. 14:21-29). Unfortunately, for many in Israel, such faith quickly evaporated. How much influence do we wield with our faith? Are people around us more spiritually minded because of our presence, or do they see no difference between us and the world?

Conclusion

Do we have the faith that is pleasing to God? Are we becoming the people God wants us to be? If Inspiration were to write a contemporary "Faith's Hall of Fame," would it include us? It would if we put into practice these truths that are evident in faith as it related to Moses.

Mid Year Graduates



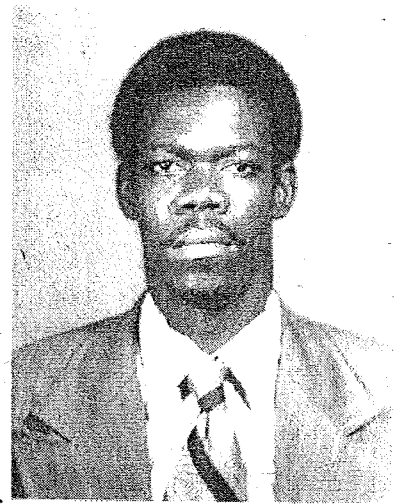
Jerry Hammond

Jerry is a native of the United States. He is seeking a preaching position and hopes possibly to further his education.

At the present time he is communicating with churches in Michigan and Florida in reference to full time positions.

Riviere will return to his native country, Haiti. He will work with the church there and be a part of the school of preaching in Port Au Prince.

Riviere served as a deacon in a congregation of the Lord's church before coming to school here. He is the uncle of Oreste Antone, graduate form FSOP, is directing the School of Preaching in Haiti.



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