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Flawed: Heroes of the Faith / Moses; Faith / Hebrews 11:23–29

Faith makes itself known through its choices.

Introduction

Two weeks ago, I started a sermon series from [Hebrews 11](#) that I am calling, “Flawed: Heroes of the Faith.” This five-week sermon series explores the lives and flaws of some of the believers listed in [Hebrews 11](#). Last week, we studied Sarah, a flawed heroine of the faith. Today, we are going to study Moses, a flawed hero of the faith.

Moses, along with Abraham and David, was one of the greatest men of the ancient people of God. Jews today, along with Christians, still revere him for his great faith, and rightly so. Yes, Moses had his flaws. But Moses also had great faith.

Not many years ago, a nationwide poll was taken in the United States on religious questions. People were asked whether they believed in God. 95 percent of those polled answered “yes.” When asked whether religion in any way affected their politics and their business, 54 percent said “no.”

In other words, the vast majority of people believed in the existence of God, but they did not have a directing faith. Faith shows itself in action. Faith encompasses the entire spectrum of life’s encounters and experiences.

Today, we are going to learn about Moses. The writer to the Hebrews used Moses’ life as an illustration of faith. Moses teaches us that faith makes itself known by its choices.

Scripture

Let’s read [Hebrews 11:23-29](#):

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

²⁹ By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

Lesson

[Hebrews 11:23-29](#) teaches us that faith makes itself known by its choices.

Moses' life illustrated and demonstrated his faith and the choices he made. The words "by faith" are used five times in these verses and each section shows us how faith makes itself known by its choices.

I. Faith Accepts God's Plan (11:23)

First, faith accepts God's plan.

[Hebrews 11:23](#) states, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict."

Verse 23 begins with the parents of Moses. Their names were Amram and Jochebed ([Exodus 6:20](#)). When their child Moses was born, they saw that he was "beautiful." Somehow they sensed that God had given them a "favored" child. Therefore, they refused to obey Pharaoh's edict and hand the child over to be killed.

They had him preserved in the water of the Nile. Moses' older sister Miriam was posted by her parents to watch over the basket in which Moses had been placed in the Nile river.

Eventually, Moses was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter when she went down to bathe in the river. Quick-thinking Miriam said to Pharaoh's daughter,

“Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?”

And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, “Go.” So Miriam went and called Moses' mother.

And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.”

So Jochebed, Moses' mother, took the child and nursed him.

When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, “Because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water” ([Exodus 2:7-10](#)).

We don't know how much older Moses was when Jochebed took him back to Pharaoh's daughter. He was likely old enough to know that he was not truly an Egyptian but rather an Israelite. His mother undoubtedly taught him some of the basic truths about God and Biblical faith.

[Hebrews 11:1](#) states, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Moses' parents had a conviction that God had given them a special child, which later proved to be correct.

How does such faith work practically for us today?

It seems to me that as believers we cultivate our relationship with God by reading his word and speaking to him in prayer. We seek his direction constantly as we go about each day. Sometimes there are rather big decisions, such as a potential spouse, job opportunity, home purchase, school choice, and so on. We may want to write down reasons for and against a particular choice or set of choices. And throughout the process, we constantly speak to the Lord in prayer asking him to guide our decision. Eventually, we have to make a selection and we trust that the Lord has led us in making that decision. Sometime later,

sometimes many years later, we will be able to look back and see how the Lord led us to make that decision by faith.

So, faith accepts God's plan.

II. Faith Accepts God's Purpose (11:24-26)

Second, faith accepts God's purpose.

[Hebrews 11:24-25](#) state, "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin." Moses was raised as the adopted daughter of Pharaoh. When he came to manhood, however, he could have chosen to remain in Pharaoh's family, with all the privileges that would have come along with being a member of the royal family. Some scholars speculate that Moses might even have become Pharaoh.

However, Moses also came to possess a true understanding of the word of God and the purpose of God for the people of God, of which he was also a member by birth. Although Moses could have enjoyed vast wealth and pleasure, he chose instead to align himself with God's people and God's purpose.

Believers are constantly faced with the pleasures of this world, whether it be power, pleasure, popularity, possessions, and so on. There is a choice to love the things of this world or to love God. Jesus once said, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" ([Matthew 6:24](#)).

Moses was eventually mistreated with the people of God but he embraced the purpose of God. Believers must think long-term. Yes, there may be pleasure in the short term. But once they are passed, and they will pass, what is then left?

Let us embrace the purpose of God, which will last for all eternity.

Concerning Moses, [Hebrews 11:26](#) states, "He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." Moses grew up in the royal palace of Pharaoh as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. Pharaoh had vast, almost unimaginable wealth. All of this was available to Moses.

However, Moses also learned about his biological ancestors. He learned about the promise made after the fall of Adam in [Genesis 3:15](#), where God said to the serpent,

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Moses learned about the promise God made to Abraham in [Genesis 12:1-3](#),

“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Moses understood that God was going to send a Promised Deliverer. He did not know his name but we do. That Promised Deliverer was Jesus Christ. Moses was willing to forego all the treasures of Egypt and suffer “the reproach of Christ” because he “was looking to the reward,” the glory of being with the Lord and his people for all eternity.

What is it that enables Christians who live in countries where Christianity is forbidden to suffer for the sake of Christ? They may have a sense of God’s forgiveness for their sins, and they may have joy in their hearts as they know that they are new creations in Christ.

But I think that they also have an understanding that the eternal reward far outweighs whatever temporary suffering they are currently undergoing. They know that they are suffering for a season. Yes, the suffering may be brutal. Yes, the suffering may be long. And yes, the suffering seems unbearable.

But, they have fixed their eyes on the reward that awaits them when their suffering is over. And that reward will not be for a season. It will endure for the rest of eternity.

III. Faith Accepts God’s Proposal (11:27)

Third, faith accepts God’s proposal.

[Hebrews 11:27](#) states, “By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.” When Moses was a grown man, he killed an Egyptian.

The next day, when he tried to stop two of his own people from fighting each other, one of them told him about the Egyptian whom he had killed. Then Moses was afraid ([Exodus 2:14](#)), and Pharaoh also learned about Moses killing the Egyptian.

So Moses fled from Egypt in fear and went to the land of Midian. Moses stayed in Midian until Pharaoh died. Then he encountered God in the burning bush (see [Exodus 3](#)), and God called and commissioned him to lead his people out of Egypt.

Moses returned to Egypt and eventually led the people of God out of Egypt in the face of Pharaoh’s protests.

This time, as Moses led the people of God out of Egypt in the Exodus, he was no longer afraid “of the anger of the king.”

Having encountered the living God at the burning bush, Moses’ faith was renewed and strengthened. And he became one of the greatest leaders of the people of God.

Regarding faith, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (XIV:3) states:

This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed and weakened, but gets the victory; growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.

The object of our faith is Jesus. But our faith may be weak or strong. That is why it vacillates at times. We may experience fear or uncertainty or confusion.

But, if we have genuine faith, Christ will keep us safe until glory. We strengthen our faith by walking in obedience to the word of God.

That is what enables faith to accept the proposal of God.

IV. Faith Accepts God’s Provision (11:28)

Fourth, faith accepts God's provision.

[Hebrews 11:28](#) states, "By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them." Moses' faith was strengthened by his encounter with the living God at the burning bush. He returned to Egypt and boldly urged Pharaoh to let the people of God leave Egypt. Pharaoh refused and God sent nine different plagues to Egypt. Pharaoh kept vacillating but each time refused to let the people of God leave Egypt.

Finally, God told Moses to have his people get ready to leave Egypt. Before they left, however, they were to slaughter a lamb and sprinkle its blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. Then they were to cook and eat the lamb.

During the night, the Destroyer passed over all the houses in Egypt. Those houses that had blood sprinkled on the doorposts and lintels, the Destroyer *passed over*; hence "Passover." But those houses that did not have blood, the Destroyer would strike the firstborn in that home, both man and beast (see [Exodus 12](#)).

By faith, Moses obeyed God's instruction and called the people to observe the first Passover. The people of God were spared from the Destroyer but the Egyptians were not spared.

In the disarray that followed, Pharaoh permitted the people of God to leave Egypt, which they did.

The people of God were covered by the blood of the lamb. This Passover foreshadowed the Lamb of God, Jesus, who would come centuries later and take away the sin of the world (see [John 1:29](#)). Jesus died on the cross and shed his blood to cover the sin of his people. Everyone who takes shelter, as it were, in Jesus will not taste eternal death. Believers in Jesus Christ are covered by his blood. And they will be able to travel safely to the new Promised Land, where they will spend eternity with Jesus and all those who are united to Jesus by faith alone.

As you hear this message, I must ask you: are you covered by the blood of the Lamb? Will the Destroyer pass over you when you breathe your last breath? I must warn you that a terrible fate awaits you if you are not covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. So, if you want to spend eternity with God and the people of God, turn to Jesus in faith and repentance. Ask Jesus to give you new life today.

V. Faith Accepts God's Promise (11:29)

And fifth, faith accepts God's promise.

[Hebrews 11:29](#) states, "By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned." After the final plague in Egypt, the tenth plague, Pharaoh relented and let the people of God leave Egypt.

So, all the people of God ate the first Passover meal and headed toward the Promised Land. After several days, they arrived at the Red Sea.

Then, Pharaoh had a change of heart and had his army pursue the people of God. The people of Israel were now trapped between Pharaoh's army behind them and the Red Sea in front of them. [Exodus 14:10-14](#) states:

When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD.

They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

Then God parted the Red Sea so that the people of God were able to cross over on dry land.

But when Pharaoh's army followed them, they drowned.

Faith is best displayed in adversity. It is easy to say that one has faith in God and his promises when all is going well. But, do we still trust in God and his promises when things are not going well for us?

I remember reading a story about some Christians who were meeting in secret in a country where Christianity was outlawed. One day, while they were meeting for worship, a soldier burst into the room. He said that he would shoot and kill all who professed faith in Jesus. So, if anyone wanted to leave, they should do so immediately. A handful of people left but the majority stayed, expecting to be shot and killed. Once the soldier verified that all who remained were Christians and were willing to die for their faith, he dropped his gun and said that he too was a Christian. He wanted to make sure that he was worshiping with those who really had faith in Christ.

In the face of great uncertainty, faith says, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today.”

In the face of great trial or seeming impossibility, faith says, “The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

In the face of all obstacles, faith accepts God’s promise.

Conclusion

Moses teaches us that faith makes itself known by its choices.

We have seen several ways in which Moses made choices—and sometimes very difficult choices—to follow God.

But Moses also had flaws. After the people of God crossed the Red Sea and the Egyptian army drowned, the Israelites were traveling through the wilderness, known as Zin, on their way to the Promised Land. We read in [Numbers 20:2-13](#):

Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

And the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD! Why have you brought the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.”

Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them, and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.”

And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?”

And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock.

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”

These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the LORD, and through them he showed himself holy.

Moses did not enter the Promised Land because of his sin at the waters of Meribah. Nevertheless, he did not lose his salvation. Despite his flaws, we will see him in glory.

However, the lesson of Moses’ life still stands for us: faith makes itself known by its choices.

Let us choose Christ. Let us put our trust in him. Let us turn from sin. In the words of [Hebrews 12:1-2](#):

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.