



Ministry of the Word

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Scripture: Hebrews 11:23-29

Subject: Part 36, - The Decisions of Faith

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. ²⁴ 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. ²⁷ By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. ²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

Perhaps one of the best-known people in the Old Testament, that has captured hearts and imaginations, young and old, is this man Moses, especially in the Jewish mind. From the accounts of his birth in Egypt to the cruel Pharaoh who would not let the Israelites go, to the plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, the 10 commandments, the journey to the promise land and finally his death. To the Jews, Moses is the model of the Law, and without doubt, held in very high esteem. Yet, the writer of Hebrews places him here in the halls of faith, not of law. Maybe they would have thought it a stunning fact to even contemplate that Moses acted by faith, long before the law was ever given and we see this, in a series of choices he made.

In the previous verses, we have seen living by faith and dying by faith which brought us through the Book of Genesis. Now, we are being directed into the Book of Exodus right through to Deuteronomy chapter 24, to examine a fundamental important aspect of our life as a believer which is the decisions of faith.

We know that life is made up of a series of decisions. Some are simple and unimportant, while others are complex and extremely important. Many are made almost unconsciously, whereas others we think about carefully for a long time. Some decisions are made by default usually when we put off deciding. A decision is made for us, yet, they are still our decisions, because we decide to put it off. The course and the quality of our lives are determined much more by our decisions than by our circumstances. So, this subject is a highly important one because everything in a believer's life is an opportunity to glorify God.

The ancient Greeks had a statue called Opportunity. The front of the figure had long flowing hair, but the back of its head was bald, symbolising the fact that we can grasp an opportunity as it comes toward us, but once it is past there is nothing to hold on to. Since the beginning of time, God has given men choices that determine their lives. The first man to choose was Adam. He made the wrong choice, and started the tragic chain of wrong choices that has plagued his descendants ever since. We have seen this theme of choice throughout the bible:

Speaking to Israel in the wilderness, God said,

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you, life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

At Shechem, Joshua charged the people,

"Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15).

And on Mt. Carmel, Elijah asked the wavering Israelites,

"How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

In our text before us, we see that decisions are made by either accepting or rejecting on the basis of faith. The first thing that we see in verse 23, is that by faith, Moses's parents decided to reject the Kings edict but accept God's plan. Let's just read that -

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. (11:23)

The faith of Moses, began with the faith of his parents. After Joseph died and after many generations of the children of Israel residing in Egypt, Joseph's amazing administration had been forgotten, a lot had happened, the Israelites had prospered, and they had grown in numbers. The Pharaoh, who did not know Joseph as we read in Exodus 1, was afraid that in the event of war, the Israelites would rise up against them so he decided that he would afflict them with slavery and get them to build for him. Unfortunately for the Egyptians, the more they afflicted them, they more the Israelites grew in number which lead to the edict to kill all the male Hebrews babies. Initially, Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill the children, but they rejected this order because they feared God more. The midwives decision resulted in them being blessed by God with Households of their own which you will see at the end of Exodus chapter 1. Then this law was passed to all the people, to kill all the male Hebrews babies, by even drowning them in the Nile.

By faith, Moses parents, who obviously loved the Lord, and feared God more, looked at their baby and seen that he was a beautiful child. They didn't just look down at baby Moses and thought he was just too cute to throw away. Not at all, God burdened their hearts, they knew God had a special plan for this child. In fact, we find out in Acts 7 in Stephen's sermon before the Sanhedrin when he said in verse 20 - ***Moses was lovely in the sight of God.*** Moses was a beautiful baby but more than just the physical, he was exceedingly fair and beautiful to God because God had a plan for him. Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed, would have known about the Abrahamic promises, not just about the promised land but also about the promised seed. Moses' parents obeyed God. They had faith even though they did not know what the outcome was going to be. By faith, Amram and Jochebed defied the king, rejected his edict, regardless of the cost. Their decision was clear: save the child, whatever the consequences. Saving Moses was more than their own will, it was God's will. We have no way of knowing how much they knew about God's plan for the destiny of their son, but it was enough for them to know that He had a special reason for Moses' protection.

By faith, Moses parents hid him for three months, and then put him in a waterproofed basket and placed him in the Nile, trusting God to take care of him, while his sister Miriam stood afar off, to find out what would be done to him. The part of the Nile where Moses ended up was

in a place where Pharaoh's daughter bathed. He was found by the princess and taken to be raised as her own child. God placed compassion for the baby in her heart, even though she knew he was a Hebrew baby and she knew her father's edict. Now remember, Pharaoh's daughter was considered a goddess, the River Nile was a god. Maybe she panned her father off by saying that the God of the Nile gave her this baby. Regardless, God moved in an amazing way and Miriam, Moses' sister, decided not to just watch anymore, but she went to the princess and asked if she could get a Hebrew nurse for the baby, which of course, once agreed, she got her mother. This meant that Jochebed was given the responsibility of care for her own son up until a certain age. She was blessed in this way for obeying God. Moses knew therefore his mother and father, and family. They would have certainly taught him about his heritage, about the history of his people, about how they got to Egypt, how they became slaves, and about the promises God had in store for the people of Israel. Moses' parents accepted God's plan, His will and His way. Trying to improve on God's plan is more pretentious than taking a felt-tipped pen and trying to improve the Mona Lisa. Our scribbling would do nothing but ruin the masterpiece. God needs our obedience, our patience, our trust and not our help, or our counsel. He makes the plans; we walk in them obediently, by faith.

Moses was 40 years of age when he had to make a clear choice of his own, which we see in verse 24 and 25

²⁴By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.

For forty years Moses had been a prince of Egypt, the wealthiest, most cultured, and advanced society of that day. He was therefore highly educated and skilled, as well as being a part of the royal court. Stephen confirms this in Acts 7 verse 22

"And Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds"

His formal education would have included learning to read and write hieroglyphics, and probably some Canaanite languages. He could enjoy everything Egypt had to offer, the power, the privileges, the pleasures, anything he could think of in the palace. No one needs to be convinced that sin is often fun. It can feed our pride, satisfy physical desires and appetites,

and offer many other pleasures. Sin has two characteristics that the world does not notice: it is always evil and it is always passing. No matter how temporarily or satisfying it may be, its satisfaction is destined to fade. It has no good in it and it can bring no good to us, to anyone else, or to God. Any seemingly good is both deceptive and fleeting. Moses chose to reject the pleasures of sin to accept the will of God. Moses made the right choice and the choice faith makes, puts momentary pleasure of this life to one side for the eternal pleasures of heaven. This is faith, the real deal. God has called us unto Holiness for He is Holy. Moses responded to this calling. He made a judgement call, a clear decision.

His training in Egypt never blurred his knowledge of the hope of Israel and of the promises of God. Moses had matured by then. While his life was in the palace and he had the wisdom of Egypt, Moses life's foundation was built on the truth of the true and living God. Yes, Moses had matured, but he faced a crucial decision. He had to decide between remaining Egyptian, with absolute loyalty and no reservations, or reject it and follow God who had made a promise. He had to choose to identify as an Egyptian Prince or as an ordinary Israelite.

Baron Justinian von Wetz, renounced his title, estates and income, and went as a missionary to what was then Dutch Guiana. Today his body lies there in a lonely grave, and he is forgotten by the world. But we can be sure 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 these vanities I will away with and all else I will lay at the feet of my dear Lord Jesus."

We live in a world where some people decide to identify themselves as all kind of things, which they are not. Some immoral people want to be identified as people of good character, ignorant people want to be identified as smart, there are even those who want to be identified by a different gender, a different race. We live in a world where many people identify themselves as Christians, but they don't even believe the bible is true, never mind read it; they don't believe Jesus is Lord never mind of His finished, once and for all, work on the cross. We are all called at one point in our lives to come to a decision about our own

identity, do we want to be true followers of Christ, or just have the name? Depending on that answer, and that choice, what we do with it, will depend on how we are going to live.

By faith Moses refused the world's privileges, he rejected the world's prestige, he rejected the honours, the status, the comforts, the wealth, the highly sophisticated advanced society and culture, by refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He forfeited all these things for the calling of God. Moses exchanged what he could see for what he couldn't see; this is an act of faith. He forsook the present in order to embrace the future. While most people spend their lives trying to get all that Moses had, Moses made a decision that it was better to follow God. Many people at the time must of thought that he gave away everything for nothing, when in fact, Moses gave away nothing for everything God had in store for him.

We live in a time were people believe that when you become a Christian, you are being called into a life of prosperity, abundance, comfort, ease, and even plenty. But what did Jesus tell us to do? Pick up your cross and die to self. While we are called to a life of forgiveness, love, peace, hope, joy and faith, and it's ok to experience all the lovely things, with a clean conscience and a right relationship with God, but we need to acknowledge that for the majority of Christians in this world, their experience is not that, we live in a fallen world. We see that there are a lot of Christians living in poverty, in difficulty and experiencing persecution and even murder.

Remember John the Baptist? He was not great in the way the world perceives greatest. He came from a simple family. He spent most of his adult years in the desert, dressed in camel's hair and a leather belt, not the fashion of Jerusalem, eating honey and locusts. But Jesus said that he was the greatest man who ever lived. *Even more than Moses?* Yes, even more than Moses because he would turn the hearts of the Israelites back to God (Luke 1:15-16). He was obedient to God, filled with the Spirit, and won many of God's chosen people to the Lord.

At some point, Moses came to a decision that it was better to suffer affliction for a time, with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. We learn from Stephen that Moses knew he had a mission to perform for God and for his people.

"And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand" (Acts 7:25).

Remember, Moses knew the Abrahamic promises, and he knew he could trust God to fulfil His promises. Choosing to endure ill-approach with his people may be a shock for some, but this is an element of faith. The people of Israel did not understand his mission, but he did. They were slaves in the land that had once highly honoured them because of Joseph. Moses was now in a position similar to Joseph's, but God had a much different work for him to do. Joseph used Egypt's power for the good of God's chosen people. Moses would have to oppose Egypt's power for the same purpose. It is a choice to obey God's plan, believe God's promise, believe God to fulfil His will, even if that means, choosing sacrifice rather than self.

We know the expression, blood is thicker than water, but Moses didn't throw his future or his opportunities away that he had in the Egyptian palace based on blood or family loyalties, but it was because of faith. Nor did he wake up one day, with a sudden realisation that he was an Israelite and had a conflict of identity, so he decided that he would become a Jew. Not at all, he grew up in the knowledge of who he actually was. It wasn't a rash or emotional decision but he identified with his people by faith. By faith he believed God was going to fulfil His promise to His people. The natural evidence showed that this promised wasn't going to come any time soon. The Israelites were entrenched in slavery, and entrenched in the customs of Egypt, but by faith Moses believed what God had said to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob to Joseph, each who passed down the blessing from father to son, from one generation to the other, until the promises reached him by his father. He believed a time was coming and in verse 26 of Hebrews 11, we see his rational or maybe we could say, his motivation because he *"esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."*

It's hard to understand that word reproach, isn't it? We see that as a negative term, so what does it mean here, '*esteeming the reproach of Christ*'? In this instance it means the suffering, rejection, misunderstanding. These things that Christ Himself experienced. While Moses didn't know the details of Christ, he did know of the promised seed. Moses was willing to leave the privileges of his life, the honour and having everything, to having scorn and disdain. He chose to embrace rejection, suffering, and misunderstanding just as Christ did, as we read 2 Corinthians 8 vs 9 – *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

Moses bore the reproach that was characteristic of Christ. Christ who was infinitely rich, infinitely happy and at peace in Heaven, who had infinite honour and glory, set it all aside to take on flesh so that he would do the Will of the Father and suffer ill-treatment on behalf of the people of God. Moses knew God was calling him to give his life for his people. He chose to be identified with these Jewish people in their complaint, abuse and shame, for his eyes were set on the reward. Moses' faith was not just a sacrificing faith but it was an expecting faith. The word 'esteemed' means he considered, he thought about it, he made a conscience and deliberate decision to stand with the people in order to inherit the promises of God, rather than enjoy the momentary pleasures and riches of a passing Emperor.

William Barclay put it like this –

“Moses was the man who chose the loyalty that led to suffering rather than the ease which led to earthly glory. He would rather suffer for the right than enjoy luxury with the wrong. He knew that the prizes of earth were contemptible compared with the ultimate reward of God.”

Do you remember that old song '*I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold, I'd rather have Jesus than riches untold*'. But how true is that really? How many here could honestly put their hands on their hearts and say, 'I rather forsake everything, and even join in with the sufferings of the Saviour, than have riches and ease right now'? We need to be careful what we sing; but even more still, the choices we make. Are they God honouring to the very end, where does our treasure lie? So far, as we've gone through this chapter, we've asked the question what did they really believe – what did Able, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and now Moses, even Moses' parents believe? What is more of an important question is, what do you really believe and at what cost? It shouldn't be a shock that the bible invites you to believe the same thing with possibly the same costs.

We see in chapter 11, that faith isn't just an expectant faith but it's enduring –

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

By faith Moses Forsook Egypt. Here 'forsook' means that he gave it up, once and for all. Now when I look at this verse, and take into consideration the account of Moses, it seems to me

that this verse is speaking about the second time Moses left Egypt and not the first. Remember the first time Moses left Egypt was after he killed the Egyptian who was beating the Hebrew. When he thought no-one was looking, he hid the body in the sand. When he found out that he was seen by others doing it and Pharaoh was going to kill him, he fled to Midian. So the first time he fled, he feared the King. Stephen again in Act 7 verses 24 to 29 tells us of this. At age 40, Moses believed God had a special plan for him. We don't know if it was something that his parents had told him or that God's Holy Spirit moved on him, or something stirred in his very being; but in these verses and in Exodus 2 we see that Moses tried to accomplish God's plan in his own power. Maybe in his mind he thought that he would have to do something about it, and they were looking for help; it never occurred to him that God had a different plan with a different purpose, a supernatural plan, to supernaturally deliver the people from Egypt by His own mighty power. Moses ran the first time because not only was Moses afraid of the King, but perhaps he was afraid of being alone, of not having the support of the Hebrew people (Acts 7 verse 25). We have seen it time and again, when people try to fulfil God's plan or promises in their own way, by their own resources, strength, plans, abilities and talents, that things go wrong. It's when people do things in their own power that they end up fleeing situation, and maybe even God when things don't work out.

Moses left the first time to Median, married the Priest of Median's daughter, and had two sons. He was in the wilderness for 40 years, taking care of sheep. God was obviously preparing him before the burning bush incident; where God commanded him to go back to Egypt to deliver the people but this time in God's own Supernatural and Mighty way. This time when Moses went back, he left with the people and didn't look back, he was not afraid of the Pharaoh and he never went back again.

For some Christians, this can picture their walk. They leave the world but have a difficult time. Yes they want to follow Jesus but it's hard out there in the wilderness. Some pop in and out of the world, but there comes a time when everyone needs to make that clear and forever decision, go back or forsake the world. 1 John 1 verse 5 clearly state –

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For Moses it wasn't just a physical departure from Egypt, but it was a heart renunciation, he rejected the fear of man, even if he was the Pharaoh for he knew the King of Kings. Fear gave way to faith. Moses was brave. Just look at Abraham and Isaac who decided to tell the kings that their wives were their sisters, or Jacob who spent his life afraid. But after 40 years out there in the wilderness with tenacity and boldness, Moses confronted the Pharaoh, 'Let my people go' with no soldiers with him but with the Word of the true and Living God. Moses forsook Egypt and was not afraid. Where did he get this kind of Faith? Moses had this kind of faith because he decided to trust Him who is invisible. *Who is invisible?* God is invisible. Remember the definition of Faith is verses 1 to 3 of this chapter! Moses had a practical conviction of the reality of the invisible God. This is the very nature of faith.

I don't see God's plan, I don't know how God's plan will pan out, I'm not sure how its' going to work out, or what it will accomplish; but I will trust in Him. I don't see, but I believe God who has made the promise, I trust Him. How certain can we be of the future? Very, because God holds the future. He has made the promises, and He will ensure they will come to pass. What is the absolute most ultimate promise that we as Christians have? Jesus is going to return and take us home... When? Don't know, but we know God promised, and He will deliver in His own timing. Where is home? The invisible city. Life will never be complete until you begin to understand this and that this place, where we sit, eat, drink, and make decisions, is not our home!

Moses had an enduring faith, like all those in this chapter because they foresaw the invisible city which is indicated in verses 10, 13 to 15, and verse 16. The invisible city is a city, it's all there in place, your room is being made ready, you just don't see it right now, but it's there! Heaven is real. Not because somebody told you about a near death experience or whatever other story, but because Jesus told us in John 14, which is the most secure reason ever.

Moses believed that suffering for the sake of the Lord was better than having what this world could offer. This leads us to verses 28 and 29 of Hebrews 11

By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. ²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

By Faith, Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood. These are the elements of Salvation. The Passover represents the passing of judgement. This last plague that was visited upon Egypt required the sacrifice of a perfect lamb, and its blood had to be applied to the door posts so when the destroying angel passed the household, the firstborn would be saved, otherwise they would die. While there are many things we could go into, what we need to focus on here are the elements of Salvation. It was not just the shed blood that would save the household, but the blood needed to be applied by a person onto the door. It was by God's grace that the destruction passed by and it was God's peace that followed in that household. All the elements are presented here for Biblical Salvation, the shed blood, the applied blood, a person, grace, passing of judgment, deliverance, followed by peace.

The Parting of the Red Sea was another stunning act of faith. Moses led the people out of Egypt to a massive body of water. Moses told the people to hold on and see the deliverance of God to do something miraculous and miraculous it was, because every single person that was in that exodus was saved and did not drown.

What do the Passover and the parting of the Red Sea have in common? They both share the testimony of the power of faith as well as the difference between the believer and the unbeliever. The Power of faith is Redemptive, it brings Salvation and Deliverance. Whereas the non-believer's first-born's died or were drowned. At the Red Sea, the Egyptians seen that the children of Israel crossed it, they saw the impossible journey they undertook and the followed them out but the water consumed them. Why? They were not following after the people of God because they decided that they loved God and wanted to follow the plan of God. They went because they wanted to kill the children of God and would embrace the miracle to achieve their goal. So, it is for all the unbelievers and the make-believers who pretend to follow God in order to harass the children of God. They have no intention to believe the promises of God or embrace the Son of God, or even follow his plan. They just want the miracle. But our faith is a faith of deliverance and of destiny.

Moses's Parent chose to reject the King's edict (verse 23), Moses decided to refuse prestige (verse 24), Moses decided to forsake the pleasures of sin (verse 25) and though it better to suffer affliction with the people of God (verse 25), esteeming the reproach of Christ as greater

(verse 26), Moses decided to forsake Egypt and refused to be intimidated by Pharaoh (verse 27), Moses decided to keep Passover (verse 28) and cross the Red Sea (verse 29).

We see with Moses that faith is not simply something that you possess but something that possesses you. It's not just something you believe or embrace, but it embraces you. True Faith accepts God's plan, God's provision and God's promises. True Faith rejects the World, rejects men's approval, and rejects the temporary pleasures of this world. These acceptances and rejections come from the decisions that we make.

So how do we make the right decisions – Often it begins by asking the right questions. Martin Luther King Jr was very insightful into asking the right questions, he said –

“Cowardice asks the question, ‘Is it safe?’, Expediency asks the questions, ‘Is it politic?’ Vanity asks the question, ‘Is it popular?’ But conscience asks the question, ‘Is it right?’ And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because one's conscience tells one that it is right.”

Once we have the right question, we then need to seek God for the answers. We need the word of God, we need to be still and listen to His voice and not anyone else's, we should in certain circumstances seek godly counsel. The decisions we make need to be more than is it just right, but does the decision bring glory to God.

Moses' faith was sacrificial, expectant, enduring and it was saving. The reason the writer of Hebrews put all these elements in place was to remind the Jewish reader, that God knew exactly what they were going through. They faced difficult decisions. For some of you here, you too have to face some difficult decisions. You may think that the only reason why you would call anyone to a life that is sacrificial and expect a life that is saving and enduring is because the difficulties that you face are not understood. But the bible says No, that's not it! God is calling you to this life and He completely knows and understands the challenges you face, but it is also encouraging you not to throw away the promises of God which are eternal for temporary peace.

Making the right decision can take practice but it begins with the first one. We know that the right decision is to follow God regardless of the cost, because there is a great reward waiting for us. Do not lose sight of the now invisible city. *Amzn.*