**Bethel Christian Fellowship**

**Fair Lawn, NJ**

**Hebrews (38): The Book Of Better Things**

**Hebrews 11:23-28**

**“The Faith Of Moses”**

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Someone once said there are four kinds of faith. First, there is the faith that *receives*, as when we come to faith in Christ (John 1:12). Second, there is the faith that *reckons*, as when we count on God to do something for us, like Abraham did (Heb. 11:19). Third, there is the faith that *rests*, as when we wait on the Lord to provide for our needs (Isaiah 40:30-31). Fourth, and finally, there is the faith that *risks*, as when we step out of our comfort zones and trust God to do for us what we know He can do – against all odds.

That’s the kind of faith that will surface in the verses before us today (Heb. 11:23-28). It’s the faith that Moses demonstrated, and which his parents demonstrated. These expressions of faith cover a period of approximately eighty years – from the time of Moses’ birth to the time when he led God’s people out of Egypt. Within this timeframe, there are four events our author singles out. Each one begins with the same two words; “*by faith.*” Each contains some element of risk that’s involved, first on the part of Moses’ parents (11:23) and then in the life of Moses himself (11:24-28).

Therein lies the special significance of our author’s continuing theme of faith in Hebrews 11. Living by faith can be “risky business” at times. It’s like walking on a tightrope high above the ground without any safety net below – except for the promises of God!

**A. The Faith of the Parents of Moses (11:23):** “*By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict*.” Unlike Abraham, Moses was blessed to have had believing parents. Their story is told in Exodus 2:1-10, but the story begins in Exodus 1:8ff.

Moses was born in Egypt, shortly after a new Pharoah rose to power. He was afraid that the rapidly increasing number of Israelites were a threat to the national security of Egypt (Ex. 1:8-14). So, he issued a decree, ordering that all male children born to Israelites must be put to death at birth; “*Then Pharoah gave this order to all the people: ‘Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live*’” (Ex. 1:22).

The clear implication of this edict was one which Moses’ parents obviously understood. If they were to defy the King and preserve their infant son’s life, they would be putting their own lives at risk. If anyone found out, they would undoubtedly been killed. They could make but one of two choices: **(a)** kill their son as the king had so ordered, and in so doing save themselves, or **(b)** save their son and put their own lives at risk. They chose the latter, and they did so “*by faith*.” How so? Wherein did their faith lie?

The NIV says they hid Moses “*because they saw he was no ordinary child*.” This takes us back to a detail from the story in Exodus 2:2. There we read that as soon as Moses was born, his mother “*saw that he was a beautiful child*” (Ex. 2:2, NKJV). While it’s true that *every* mother’s child is beautiful – to the mother at least – there does seem to have been something extraordinary or exceptional about Moses. Stephen points to this same thing when preaching before the Sanhedrin. He says of Moses, “*He was lovely in the sight of God*” (Acts 7:20, NASB). We don’t find this said of any other child in the Bible (not even baby Jesus).

The inference is that there was something very special about his appearance which caused the parents to be hopeful, perhaps believing by faith that this was the one whom God would use to deliver their people. Perhaps they knew that the four hundred years of oppression prophesied to Abraham were nearly over (Gen. 15:12-16). Therefore, at great personal risk, they hid him for three months, then placed him in a basket of bulrushes on the banks on the Nile, where he was found by Pharoah’s daughter. They were people of faith, trusting God rather than fearing Pharoah. This is a beautiful illustration of a basic principle found in Proverbs: “*The fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe*” (Prov. 29:25).

**B. The Faith of Moses (11:24-28).** The author now pushes his “fast forward” button. He passes over baby Moses in the bulrushes, Pharoah’s daughter finding him, and growing up in Pharoah’s house. He pauses at Moses’ faith as “*a grown man*,” when Moses was about 40 years old at the time (Acts 7:23).

**1.** “*By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharoah’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward*” (Heb. 11:24-26).

The luxury and prestige of Egypt’s royal palace must have been staggering. Consider for just a moment what the “treasures of Egypt” would have entailed: **(a)** unlimited money (the priceless treasures of King Tut’s tomb alone included several thousand pounds of pure gold); **(b)** unbridled authority over tens of thousands of men and women; **(c)** unchecked military power; **(d)** access to the best of Egypt’s food and drink and beautiful women, beyond anything we can envision; **(e)** everyone bowing to his presence and quick to obey his every whim and wish. Had he remained the son of Pharoah’s daughter, he could have ascended to the throne of Egypt itself.

Notice how the author describes what happened: Moses looked at “*the fleeting pleasures of sin*” (including worldly position, prestige, power, fame, and the freedom to have anything that money can buy). Egypt was the most powerful and wealthy nation in the world at that time – and it was all his for the taking. Then what did he do? He turned it down. He threw it away.

Why? Something happened that reset his vision and changed his evaluation of the pleasures and treasures of this world. So, what happened to Moses? Our author tells us in verse 26: he “*regarded the reproach of Christ* (“the Anointed One”) *as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward*.”

It appears that Moses took a long, hard, honest look at everything that life in Egypt could offer him. Then he looked at the “reproach,” or the suffering and stigma that comes with identifying with the people of God and the coming of the Anointed One . . . (the Christ). In view of what he saw in the promised reward (the eternal “rest” of Hebrews 4:1-9), he made a *momentous decision*. In light of the greater blessing and joy, he said “No” to the lesser temporary pleasures of Egypt. That’s how the glitter, the grandeur, and the pleasures and treasures of Egypt lost their grip on his heart.

This is the same way the fleeting treasures and pleasures of this world lose their grip on our hearts. This doesn’t just happen overnight. We just don’t wake up one morning and become less enamored with the beautiful homes that we see, the beautiful cars that we drive, the beautiful clothing and jewelry that people wear, or the luxury cruises that are just a phone call away. No – we become less enamored with the things of this world as we become more enamored with Christ. What Moses saw in the promised reward was the “*fullness of joy*” in God’s presence, and the “*pleasures forevermore*” at God’s right hand (Psa. 16:11). The same should be true for us.

**2.** “*By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible*” (11:27). There were two occasions when Moses left Egypt. First, he fled to Midian after he had killed an Egyptian (Ex. 2:11-15), then he left with the rest of the Israelites at the Exodus (Ex. 12:31-14:31). It’s possible that our author is referring to Moses’ earlier escape from Pharoah, which would explain why this verse would come before the one that follows; Moses’ celebration of the Passover in verse 28 was before the Exodus (v. 27). But it's more likely this is a reference to the Exodus, which would explain the mention of Moses’ faith. It was fear that led Moses to flee to Midian, not faith. That wasn’t the case in the Exodus.

However, Moses must have been terrified as he and the people stood at the edge of the Red Sea. It was only “by faith” that they could walk through that sea on dry land. Moses had heard God’s promise (Ex. 14:1-4; 15-18), and he had seen “*him who is invisible*” (in the burning bush; Ex. 3:1-4:17). Yes, there are those times when trusting in God involves risk – real risk. Yet these are the moments when we step out of our comfort zones and trust Him to do what we know He can do – despite all odds!

**3.** “*By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel*” (11:28). This is yet another illustration of how faith, at times, involves real risk.

We may recall that Moses was instructed by the God of Israel to kill an unblemished lamb and to sprinkle its blood on the door posts of each Israelite home. When “*the Destroyer*,” or the angel of death came through the streets of Egypt, the Lord told him that only the firstborn of the *Egyptians* would die. When God saw the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of the Israelite homes, He promised to “pass over” them (the tenth Egyptian plague, Ex. 11:1-15:21). The point is that Moses celebrated the first Passover *before* seeing the deliverance it would bring (Ex. 12:1-32)! That took faith!

Think of the ways Moses could have responded to the Lord’s command – and promise: (1) Lord, you want me to do what? (2) You want me to sprinkle the blood where? (3) Are you sure the “Destroyer” will pass over us? (We have a lot of firstborn babies in the camp.) That’s how many people would have responded – but not Moses. He was willing to risk the lives of all the firstborn Israelites when the Destroyer would show up later that night, trusting in the promises and the shed blood of the lamb. That takes faith!

As we may know, an acrostic is a word that can help us remember important teachings about the Christian life. For example, the word A – C – T – S reminds us how to pray: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. The word G – R – A – C – E spells out its meaning perfectly: God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense. The same is true for the word F – A – I – T – H; Forsaking All, I Trust Him.

That what Moses’ parents did. They gave up their beautiful little boy, trusting he would be the one whom God would use to deliver their people from the promised Egyptian bondage (Cf. Gen. 15:12-16). That’s what Moses did. He forsook the pleasures and treasures of Egypt and trusted God’s promises. He believed that whatever this world has to offer, God has something better to offer. He believed that whatever God had led him to do, God would meet his every need. We have the same God, and those who have faith in Him do not do nothing. Their faith does not lead to inaction, but rather to the action that God blesses, regardless of the risk that may be involved.

William Carey was a great man of faith and a great missionary pioneer. He’s often referred to as the “Father of Modern Missions.” He once spoke to a group of ministers at a Baptist Association and challenged them with these words: “Expect great things *from* God; attempt great things *for* God.” That’s the kind of person Moses was. Look for people with that kind of faith. When you have found them, get alongside them and work with them – and see what God will do!