

INTRODUCTION

President George W. Bush was jogging in his Preston Hollow neighborhood. His Secret Service agents were running with him. He ran up to a guy standing beside the street and he stopped. The guy was dressed in a robe with long white hair and beard. He was holding a staff in one hand and clutching two stone tablets in the other arm. President Bush asked, "Excuse me, but are you Moses?" The man ignored the question. George W. asked again, "Excuse me, sir, but you look like Moses, are you?" Again the old man looked away and ignored the question. President Bush turned to the Secret Service agents and said, "Either this guy is deaf, or he's extremely rude." Finally, the man answered. "I can hear you, and yes I'm Moses. It's just that the last time I talked to a bush I ended up wandering in the wilderness for forty years."

We have been strolling through God's Faith Hall of Fame over the last few weeks. We've talked about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. In this message we come to one of the most important people in the entire Bible, holy Moses. Moses is not only important as a part of the Biblical narrative, but evangelical scholars believe he is responsible for writing the Torah, or the first five books of the Old Testament. In John 5, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me." (John 5:46)

Then on the evening of the first Easter, Jesus was walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus with a couple of believers and Bible says, "Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (Luke 24:27) Moses is mentioned 82 times in the New Testament, more than any other Old Testament character.

The story of Moses is described in four Old Testament books, Exodus through Deuteronomy, a total of 134 chapters. And the writer of Hebrews devotes just six verses to his life and ministry. Hebrews 11 presents brief snapshots of the faith of these Biblical heroes. So in this message, we are going to examine four important faith choices. Moses made three and Moses' parents made one. And these are four areas where we must constantly make the right faith choice.

1. FAITH CHOOSES TO CHALLENGE A GODLESS LAW.

In the last lesson, we were in Hebrews 11 and Joseph was getting ready to die. Joseph was the vice-pharaoh and was greatly respected in Egypt. When he moved his family there, the Pharaoh gave them a fertile strip of land beside the Nile called the land of Goshen. But then fast-forward a few hundred years and by then there were a couple of million Hebrews living in the land. The new Pharaoh became concerned that the Hebrews were a threat to him, so he enslaved them. He made their lives miserable. They became the common laborers, making brick and doing the heavy lifting. They were probably the muscle that built many of the ancient wonders of Egypt. But the Hebrews kept on growing in numbers, so Pharaoh made a decision not unlike the one Hitler made 3,500 years later. He decided to commit genocide. He ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill the Hebrew boy babies as soon as they were born. By killing the male Jews, he would eventually wipe out a race. Satan has been trying to wipe out the Jews for thousands of years.

In Exodus 1 we are introduced to two of God's champions, Puah and Shiphrah. They are midwives, and they refuse to obey the king's godless law. Pharaoh was frustrated so he decreed that anyone who discovered a Hebrew baby boy had to throw him immediately into the Nile River to drown.

And this is where we come to the first verse in our passage today. "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." (Hebrews 11:23)

So, if there's one thing we know about Moses, it was that he was a basket case from birth! The reason he had emotional issues as an adult was that from the time he was a child he was in de-Nile. Sorry.

Moses' parents were named Amram and Jochebed. They already had two children, Miriam and Aaron. But they recognized something special about this baby, so they didn't obey Pharaoh's godless law to toss him into the Nile to drown. You might say they were technically obeying Pharaoh's evil edict. They put their baby boy in the Nile. However, first they made a basket of papyrus leaves and sealed it with tar and pitch. When we get to Heaven we can ask his parents if they just launched him and let him go, or if they knew where Pharaoh's daughter liked to bathe. Either way, it took faith to hide him and push that little basket away into the current. This may have been a clever plan, because in Exodus 1 we're told Moses's sister was watching from a distance. Just then Pharaoh's daughter was wading in the water and saw the basket. She lifted the cover and said, "Oh, it's a cute little baby boy! All alone!" She recognized it was a Hebrew boy, but I believe God whispered in her ear, "Take care of this boy." So she decided she would claim the child and adopt him.

At that precise moment, Moses' sister, Miriam, walked up and said, "Your excellency. The boy looks hungry. Would you like for me to go find a Hebrew mother who could offer to nurse the baby for you?" The royal daughter said, "Oh would you? That would be so nice!" So, Miriam goes and gets her mom, who was also Moses's mother, and brought her to the palace. Pharaoh's daughter said, "If you would take this baby and take care of him, I will gladly pay the expenses, and pay you some generous wages." Jochebed said, "Well, your highness, if you insist. Certainly. I'll be glad to help you out."

God really does have a sense of humor. The devil was trying to wipe out the Jews and he ended up paying the food bill, the diaper bill, and the clothing bill for child who would deliver the Jews from slavery.

Moses parents were willing to challenge a Godless law. They knew the punishment for breaking the law was death, but they didn't fear the pharaoh. They feared the One true God, and they knew God was pro-life.

There are times when a Christian may choose to commit civil disobedience. This is a choice when man's law commands you to do something God prohibits, or when the man's law prohibits you from doing what God commands us to do. But like Moses' parents, a believer

must be ready to suffer the consequences of breaking man's law.

Now, I assure you that driving 65 in a 30 mph zone doesn't qualify for Christian civil disobedience. But, sometimes when man's law contradicts God's law, we're faced with a choice. On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks was tired after a day at work when she got on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama. When a white man told her to move to the back of the bus, she refused. The law said colored people must sit in the back of the bus, but Rosa Parks decided in that moment God was no respecter of persons so she committed civil disobedience. She was arrested, and fined, but because of her and others, there have been many changes in civil rights.

God forbid, but if our nation ever passed a law that prohibited us from gathering to worship, then there are many of us who would break the law. And that's the choice millions of our brothers and sisters are making in Islamic republics around the world. The law says they cannot convert to Christianity, and they cannot gather to worship. So, in dozens of countries, believers are bravely choosing to obey God by faith. It's because, like Moses' parents, they don't fear the authorities because they fear God.

Do you fear God more than people? The Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of both knowledge and wisdom. (Proverbs 1:7) Fear of God doesn't mean you cringe in terror before Him, it means you love Him with a passionate affection. I love Brennan Manning's definition of the fear of the Lord: "Fear of God consists of silent wonder, radical amazement, and affectionate awe at the infinite goodness of God." (*Abba's Child*) So, if you are ever tempted to go against God's plan, make the right choice.

2. FAITH CHOOSES SUFFERING OVER SIN.

In Exodus 2 we read that after Moses' mother had raised him for a while, she brought him to the palace. That had to be another act of supreme faith to hand him over to the Pharaoh's daughter.

It's not in the Bible, but the Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote about Moses. I don't know if this happened, but it makes for a good story. He wrote that when the other members of Pharaoh's household saw this Hebrew baby, they all began to violently object and advised the Pharaoh to get rid of the foreign baby immediately. But his daughter doesn't argue. She just calmly handed the baby to Pharaoh, and in his arms, he acted like any new grandfather. He said, "You can keep him."

In Stephen's sermon in Acts 7, he points out that she raised him as her own son and brought him up in the wisdom of the Egyptians and that he was powerful in speech and action. Moses had access to the greatest education, wealth, and culture of the greatest civilization of that time. But he grew up knowing he was a Hebrew by birth, and an Egyptian by adoption. Some scholars suggest he might have actually been in line to succeed Pharaoh.

But then we come to our text again. "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time." (Hebrews 11:24-25)

Life is full of turning points. These are defining moments that change the courses of our lives. Stephen tells us Moses was forty years old when he made a momentous decision. He could continue to live in palace and enjoy all fringe benefits of being the grandson of the Pharaoh.

But deep within his heart he knew he was born a Hebrew. When he saw the suffering of the Hebrew slaves, he decided he would turn his back on the trappings of royalty and identify with the plight of the Hebrew slaves. He knew that choice would cause him to suffer alongside them.

The Bible says Moses made a choice to suffer instead of enjoying the pleasures of sin for a short time. That word "pleasures" doesn't refer to physical pleasure; it's a word that meant "worldly success, fame, and wealth." But the pleasure of any sin doesn't last very long. Sin has diminishing returns.

F.B. Meyer was a great English Baptist Pastor in the 1800s. He wrote these words about Moses' choice: "There is nothing gained in saying that there are no pleasures in sin. There are. The forbidden fruit is pleasant to the eye and luscious to the taste; the first steps along the broad road are over a carpet of velvet grass. Temptation would have no power at all if it were not so. The keen thrill of pleasure is the bait, beneath which the great enemy of souls hides the inevitable hook. And Moses was not oblivious to all this; yet, in the heyday of his strength, in the prime of his manhood, in a court where continence and purity must have been unknown, he dared to forego it all."

We're all faced with the choice to live by faith or to fall into sin. There's a huge difference between living by faith and living in sin. The devil always offers the thrill first and then there are diminishing returns. The next time it's not quite as thrilling. That's why addicts have to keep going deeper and deeper to try to get the same kind of thrill or buzz. But the things of God are just the opposite. He always saves the best for last. The Christian life just keeps getting better and better.

I've said many times that there's a parable in every miracle of Jesus and a miracle in every parable. That's the message of the miracle when Jesus turned water into wine. The master of the wedding feast tasted the wine and said, "Most people serve the best wine first, and then when everyone is full, they bring out the cheap stuff. But you have saved the very best for last." And that's God's pattern. It's more than a song, but every day with Jesus IS sweeter than the day before. So when you're faced with the choice to walk by faith or slide into sin, make the right choice.

3. FAITH CHOOSES ETERNAL REWARD OVER TEMPORARY WEALTH.

Once Moses identified with the Hebrews I suspect he thought he was doing God a favor. After all, he was an Egyptian VIP. He had wealth and influence. So one day he was walking among the

Hebrew camp and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. Moses stepped in and stopped him. He looked left and then right to make sure he wasn't being observed and then he killed the Egyptian. He tried to cover up his sin in the sand—but your sins have a way of finding you out. The next day he saw two Hebrew men arguing and he tried to mediate. They didn't want his help. They said, "Who made you a judge and ruler over us? Are you going to kill us like you killed the Egyptian? Those were the last words Moses wanted to hear. He was a wanted man and the Pharaoh wanted his head. In one day, Moses went from hero to zero. He was a disgrace both to the Egyptians and to the Hebrews.

The Bible says, "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." (Hebrews 11:26)

Moses became a man on the run. In Josephus' account, Moses' princess mother begs him to plead his case before Pharaoh. And with the wealth and influence of Moses, he probably could have talked or bought his way out of the charges against him. But he refused to defend himself, so he became a fugitive. He suffered disgrace and in so doing he surrendered all the fabulous wealth of Egypt. And trust me, they had wealth beyond description. When the tomb of King Tut was discovered, there were over two tons of pure gold buried with him. At today's prices that's \$83 million in gold they BURIED with their Pharaoh.

If Moses had chosen to stay in Egypt being rich and famous, he would just be an obscure historical character; just one of hundreds of Egyptian rulers whose bodies are still hidden by the sands of time. He would have been a footnote in history. But because he chose to identify with God, he stands today as one of the great lawgivers of history. His face is etched in the center of the relief above the U.S. Supreme Court Judges, with every other relief facing toward Moses. He made the right choice

So how could Moses suffer disgrace for the sake of Christ? Jesus wouldn't show up in the flesh for another 1,500 years. But these Old Testament saints knew about Christ. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day. He saw it and was glad." (John 8:56). Abraham looked ahead and saw Christ, and so did Moses. He knew there would a deliverer who would come to set people free.

He realized all the gold, silver, diamonds, and jewels of Egypt were only temporary ways to measure value. Moses saw the treasures laid up in heaven, and he made the right choice. Have you made the right choice? Are you running after the riches that this world has to offer instead of focusing on the eternal reward that comes from serving Jesus?

4. FAITH CHOOSES TO PERSEVERE WHEN THE GOAL CAN'T BE SEEN.

Moses ran away from Egypt, but that's not the last we hear of him. He went silent for a long time, but he never quit. The Bible makes it clear he wasn't running away so the king couldn't find him; he was running away so he could find God. The verse in our passage says, "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27)

Moses headed East toward Midian, where he would live for the next forty years. He would marry and have sons. He would tend sheep, but he would never give up seeking to find the God who was invisible. He had a nagging sense that this invisible God had a plan for his life he just didn't know what it was.

Then one day he saw a burning bush and the fire wouldn't go out. So, Moses went over and checked it out. And the voice of God came out of the bush and said, "Moses, take off your sandals because you are standing on holy ground." Moses said, "Who are you?" The voice said, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and I have seen the affliction of my people. I'm going to set them free and I'm going to use send you to tell Pharaoh I said, "Let my people go!" But this Moses wasn't the self-confident, cocky 40-year-old who had rushed into action. He was now 80 and he tried to convince God to get someone else. But eventually God convinced Him, and Moses was ready to finally get back into action. He made a choice to persevere.

There are times when you probably feel like giving up, or that God is finished with you. For some of you, the faith choice you need to make today is, "I will not give up. I will not quit. I will keep on praying. I will keep on serving. I will keep on worshipping. I will NOT quit!" Make the right faith choice today. Keep on persevering. God isn't finished with you yet!

CONCLUSION

Moses' life is an amazing pattern of three parts, each lasting forty years. He spent his first forty years in the culture, wealth, and education of royalty. He got a B.S. degree, a be somebody degree. Many people today are striving and struggling to be somebody important. The Bible said he was mighty in word and deed. He was Egyptian *Time Magazine's* man of the decade. But after he showed up to help the Hebrews, he killed a man and found himself of the FBI's most wanted list. Then he became a fugitive. He fled to the obscurity of the desert of Midian for the next forty years. He spent that time leading a bunch of dumb sheep. He spent those forty years getting a B.N. degree, Be Nobody degree. When he was forty and in his prime, he was too full of himself for God to use him. But forty years in the desert turned him into a humble man who stuttered. Then at age eighty, God got his attention at the burning bush. And he spent the last forty years of his life learning that God is somebody who can use nobodies! And he died at 120 after leading another flock of dumb sheep forty years in the desert. But the Bible says an amazing thing about Moses. It says "God spoke to Moses face to face as one would speak to a friend." (Exodus 33:11)

Where are you today? Have you discovered that the mighty God, the Creator of the universe can not only use nobodies, but He wants to be your friend? All it takes is faith!

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For the Joy...
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