

“Faith Demonstrated in Decision-Making”

Heb. 11:23-29

- INTRO. - Life can be defined in a number of different ways, but one important way you can define it, is to say that “your life consists of the decisions you make.”
- Without going into the theological aspect of the bondage of the will, I think we would have to say that life is made up of a series of decisions. Most of those decisions are simple and unimportant, but *many* of them are significant and extremely important.
- Most of our decisions we make without really thinking about them, but there are *some* that we think about for a long time. And (of course) there are *some* decisions we make by default. When we fail to decide, our decision may be made for us, but it is still our decision (because we decided *not* to decide).
- Decision-making is so important someone should probably write a book about it – but when we are honest, we would have to say that the quality of our lives is determined more by our *decisions* than our *circumstances*.
- Although I *do* hold strongly to the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men, I do *not* embrace “fatalistic determinism.” I believe that (in His sovereignty) God has allowed men a measure of freedom by which he can make choices. And those choices have consequences. Decision-making is a key element in the Christian life.
- In fact, you can really define the Christian life in terms of making the right choices. I think you can tell how mature a Christian really is, by the kinds of decisions he makes.
- John MacArthur says, “Our Christian living rises or falls in maturity and holiness on the basis of the decisions we make.”
- Of course, we understand that this is what temptation is all about – even for Christians. When Satan tempts us to sin, we can decide to say yes or no. When we get an opportunity to be a witness for Christ, we can take advantage of it or shrink back in fear.
- Every day we have to make decisions, like whether or not we are going to take some time to read our Bible, to pray for others, to minister in Jesus’ name.
- In the business world, we (as Christians) have to determine if we are going to make money (at all cost) or practice integrity and ethical honesty first and foremost.

- We have to decide if we are going to “sell our soul to the company store” and sacrifice our family for the sake of getting ahead and making another deal – or if we are going to balance out our lives and include our family as a high priority.
- It is safe to say that virtually *every* aspect of life involves making decisions. In fact, we see illustrations of that all throughout Scripture. From the decision of the first man, Adam, to the decisions of the Israelites in the wilderness, to the decisions of the foolish kings of Israel – we see examples of bad decision-making.
- But (in contrast to that) here in Heb. 11:23-29 we see an example of *good* decision-making. We see Moses making the right decisions – and doing that “by faith.” Right choices are always made “by faith.”
- MacArthur says, “Right choices are made on the basis of right faith. Often we cannot see the consequences of our choices. Satan tries to make his way seem attractive and good; and God’s way seem hard and unenjoyable. When we know God’s will in a matter, we choose it by faith. We know it is the right choice because it is God’s will, even before we see the results. God’s will is the only reason we need.”
- In other words, faith always believes that God’s way is best, and chooses that way. It is also believing that Satan is a liar, and the father of lies, and that his way is always deceptive and empty and destructive.
- And it is the “shield of faith” (Eph. 6:16) that will quench the fiery darts of the evil one, and enable us to make decisions that will bring about God’s best in our lives.
- And (perhaps) there is no greater text in the NT that illustrates this point than the one we are looking at today. In Heb. 11:23-29 we have this long section on Moses – and it really should *not* be surprising.
- Next to Abraham, Moses was the most highly regarded ancestor in Israel. He (of course) wrote the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) and Jesus even said of him, “Moses wrote of Me.” (John 5:46)
- Moses was one who was venerated by all the Jewish people as one who was especially close to God. Unlike others, God spoke to Moses face to face. At one point the people even had to cover up his face because it was glowing after having spoken to God.
- Guthrie says, “In certain expressions of Jewish tradition he was considered to be the greatest man in history.”

- And there is no other person in Scripture (other than Jesus) that illustrates the power of right decision-making than Moses. His decision-making was right because his faith was right. His unwavering faith in God led to the monumental decisions he made – that *not only* changed his own life in a radical way, but also changed the course of a nation.
- Even though Moses is usually associated with the Law of God received on Mount Sinai, we *must* understand that he was a man of faith. In the minds of most Jews, Moses is affiliated with all the commandments of the Law, the rituals and ceremonies of the old covenant, and the religious requirements the Jews could never fulfill – but he is a wonderful example of the life of faith – and that is what we must see from this passage of Scripture.
- In fact, this is a critical element of the argument being communicated by the author of Hebrews. Because the Jews had such a great respect for Moses, if it could be demonstrated that Moses lived by faith (and *not* according to legalism), it would be one of the most powerful arguments for the NT doctrine of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone.
- So let's move into this passage of Scripture – and it can be organized in several different ways, but we are going to take it in three main divisions. We're

going to see the vision of faith, the values of faith, and the victory of faith (then we're going to break some of that down into some sub-points). Let's begin with:

I. THE VISION OF FAITH (v. 23)

- Look with me at v. 23, “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.”
- This first aspect of Moses' life was more the faith of his *parents*, but this faith was passed down to Moses. Herschel Hobbs calls this the faith of “daring love.” Moses' parents feared God more than they did the king of Egypt.
- As I'm sure you know, the Egyptian Pharaoh was becoming concerned about how large the population of the Israelites had grown, so he commanded all the Hebrews to throw their baby boys into the Nile River.
- G. Campbell Morgan called the Nile the “river of death” because there would have been no doubt that any baby thrown into it would *not* have survived.
- And (of course) the assumption is, that if they did *not* do that, they *themselves* would be put to death – but Moses' parents (Amram and Jochebed) were

not afraid of this edict. They saw that there was something special about this baby boy, so they hid him for three months.

- And (of course) when they could no longer hide him, they made a waterproof basket for him and put him in the river – later to be found by Pharaoh’s daughter. I am assuming you know the story, so I won’t spend time this morning going over it again.

- The account of Moses’ birth is found in Exodus 2. Amram and Jochebed were two Jewish slaves who had gotten married during the oppression of Egyptian bondage.

- Moses had an older sister, Miriam, who watched his basket as it floated in the Nile River, and ended up calling on her mother to nurse the child for Pharaoh’s daughter.

- But the point (here) is that Moses’ parents did *not* give in to the pressures of their day. Even at the threat of their lives, they chose to do things God’s way. They chose to live by faith and to trust God instead of conforming to the demands of the world.

- And (by the way) the phrase (in v. 23) “they saw he was a beautiful child” probably means much more than “he was a good-looking baby.” In Acts 7, in Stephen’s sermon before the Sanhedrin, he

indicated that Moses was “lovely in the sight of God” (v. 20).

- The word “*asteion*” (that is used there) communicates some superior quality about the child, and therefore the NIV translates it, “he was no ordinary child.”

- There had to have been some unusual quality about him – perhaps accompanied by special revelation from God – but Moses’ parents (somehow) knew that God was going to use this child in a unique way.

- In fact, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, special revelation was given to Moses’ father Amram in a night vision about the special role his son would play in the life of the nation of Israel.

- Whether that is accurate or *not*, this passage seems to imply that his parents had some sort of spiritual insight into his significance in God’s plan. Therefore they were *not* afraid to risk their own lives to save the life of their son. They disregarded the king’s command.

- Sometimes it is right to disregard the king’s commands – and we have other examples of that in Scripture – but in this case the parents of Moses knew this was God’s will. God had special plans for this baby boy.

- They violated human authority because they believed in a higher authority – the authority of Almighty God. They believed God and by faith they witnessed the amazing protection of their son.

- And (by the way) think about the *human* side of this. Imagine how their hearts must have ached as they placed that little baby in that basket and put him out in the “river of death.”

- Yes, they acted rationally and carefully in making every provision they could humanly make for him, but ultimately they had to trust God to save him.

- I mean, think about it: How could they have imagined that the very daughter of Pharaoh would come and rescue their son, and then call for a Hebrew woman to care for him until he was old enough to live in the royal court?

- The Bible tells us that she immediately knew that Moses was a Hebrew baby, but she didn't throw him to the crocodiles – instead she took him as her own son. How could they have seen *that* kind of thing happening?

- And how could they have believed, that once Moses became a prince in the Egyptian court, that he would follow the way of the LORD instead of the pagan, humanistic religion of Egypt.

- All this was “by faith.” From a human perspective, they had no way of knowing that his life would even be spared – much less that he would grow up and become the deliverer of the Jewish nation. But they trusted him to God.

- And another important thing to think about (in this story) is the fact that Jochebed knew that she only had a short period of time to instill in him a love for the true God. She only had a short amount of time to teach him about God's special covenant with Israel and to explain to him the salvation plan of God.

- And yet we know from his later decisions, that she must have been successful in doing that. His mother helped to build in him the faith that would become the predominant characteristic of his later life.

- And the application for us is obvious. Listen, we may think we have a lot of time to teach our children about the Lord, and to instill in them a love for the true God – but that time flies away quickly. We must make sure we do it while we have opportunity. (Pause) But I *have* to move on to a second main division, and that is:

II. THE VALUES OF FAITH (vv. 24-27)

- In vv. 24-27 we see the values Moses exhibited in his later life. Most of this is communicated from a

negative perspective – in regard to what he later *rejected*. In order to say “yes” to God’s will, he first had to say “no” to some very enticing things. *Not only* did Moses’ parents demonstrate faith in God – Moses himself did as well. And what we see in this, is that genuine, biblical faith rejects four aspects of worldliness. First:

A. It Rejects Worldly Prestige (v. 24)

- Look with me at v. 24, “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter...”

- Now, most of us read that and think that this was when Moses was (perhaps) in his late teens. But what we need to understand, is that the phrase “when he had grown up” means “when he was fully grown.”

- In fact, according to Stephen’s sermon (in Acts 7) he was “about 40 years old” at this time. You may know that the Bible writers divided Moses’ life into three main segments, each lasting 40 years each. This was the first of those segments.

- For 40 years Moses had been a prince in Egypt, which (by the way) was the wealthiest, most cultured, and advanced society of that day. There is no doubt that Moses had become highly educated, cultured, and skilled (as part of the royal court).

- Acts 7:22 says, “Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.”

- One commentator said, “His formal education would have included learning to read and write hieroglyphics, hieratic, and probably some Canaanite languages.” There is absolutely no doubt he was one of the most educated men of his day.

- And (of course) he also learned the Hebrew language from his mother and father. It was in *that* language that he learned about all the promises of God to His chosen people.

- And the point of *this* passage, is that, although he enjoyed everything Egypt had to offer, his training in Egypt never blunted his knowledge of the hope of Israel, and of the covenant promises of God.

- He came to a point at which he had to make a critical decision. His decision was to reject all the prestige of Egypt in order to identify with the people of God.

- And we’re told, he did this “by faith.” The deciding factor was his faith in God. After all these years, his early training kicked in, and he made the right decision.

- Now, the author of Hebrews doesn’t go into this, but the biblical account tells us how this worked

out (in practical terms). By choosing to intervene on behalf of a Hebrew slave (that was being beaten by an Egyptian task-master) and killing that Egyptian, he (in essence) crossed the line, identifying with His own people and forfeiting his place in Egypt.

- O'Brien says, "He thus effectively renounced his position as 'the son of Pharaoh's daughter.' His actions spoke louder than his words: he left Egypt for the land of Midian."

- So what we would have to say, is that this was the faith of self-denial. The word for "refused" (in Heb. 11:24) means that he took a definite position.

- There was a line in the sand (as it were) and Moses chose to cross that line. He made a willful and deliberate choice to renounce his status as a prince in Egypt and to publicly identify himself with his suffering people.

- So what kind of application is there for us today? We live in a world where fame brings with it a lot of prestige. If you are born into a certain family or have a certain kind of athletic ability or you are a well-known entertainer, people will begin to think you are *great* (whether you are or *not*).

- If you have a lot of money, (regardless of how you got it), our world will hold you in high esteem (unless your name is Donald Trump). If you have

enough degrees behind your name, or you have written popular books, or you have a certain academic recognition as an expert, the world will laud your wisdom.

- If you can put a basketball in a round hoop or carry a football into the end zone or hit a baseball over the outfield wall – people will fall all over themselves to get your autograph and to elevate you to superstar status.

- But what we have to understand (here in this passage) is that Moses had *all* this, but he turned his back on it. From a human perspective, this was a foolish decision. Why would he sacrifice everything to gain nothing in return?

- But we learn (from the remainder of this passage) that Moses had an eternal perspective that guided his decision-making. He saw God's Kingdom (and purposes) as eternal – and much greater than the power and prestige of Egypt.

- The eyes of faith can see that there is something much greater than the prestige and fame of this world.

- John MacArthur writes, "Baron Justian von Weltz 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 [do] away with and all else I will lay at the feet of my dear Lord Jesus.’”

- Genuine believers know that the prestige of this world is *nothing* in comparison to the eternal glory that awaits those who faithfully follow Christ. But notice another thing faith rejects:

B. It Rejects Worldly Pleasures (v. 25)

- Look at v. 25, “...choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin...” This is such a short verse, but it is *packed* with truth. We can learn *so much* from it!

- First of all, there is an acknowledgment that there is “pleasure” in sin. Why do people sin? Because it’s fun. It can feed our pride, satisfy our lusts, and meet the desires of many of our physical and emotional appetites.

- Ah, but what is the problem with sin? The pleasure of it is always “passing.” It satisfied temporarily, but its euphoria quickly fades. In fact,

it leaves behind a great sense of guilt and emptiness.

- Any sense of “good” that sin promises to produce, is quickly replaced with that which is “bad.” Sin is always deceptive and fleeting. By its very nature sin is always evil (and has as its source the Evil One).

- But the point in this passage of Scripture is that Moses was able to see through the deception of the passing pleasures of sin in Egypt, and “by faith” to make his decision to identify with the people of God (even if it would mean suffering as a result).

- The eyes of faith can see through the emptiness and deception of “the passing pleasures of sin” and embrace (even) “ill treatment with the people of God.”

- Paul said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (Rom. 8:18) That’s what faith sees. Faith sees beyond the temporal to the eternal. Faith sees beyond the deceptive nature of the “passing pleasures of sin” and embraces that which will last forever.

- One of the great theological questions raised in Scripture is why the wicked often seem to prosper. Many unbelievers, who are immoral and pagan, are

famous, wealthy, and well-off in practically every way.

- On the other hand, many of God's most faithful saints are (often) poor, unsuccessful in business, and in bad health. Why is that? This is a question the Bible answers.

- In Job 21 (for example) Job asked, "Why do the wicked still live, continue on, also become very powerful? Their descendants are established with them in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes, their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God on them."

- He goes on to mention how successful they are in business, how happy their children seem to be, and how they are always carefree and celebrating.

- Verse 13 says, "They spend their years in prosperity..." (NIV) Job even goes on to question whether it is beneficial to serve God. It seems like the wicked, unbeliever is better off.

- We see the same kind of thing echoed in Jer. 21:1, "Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?" The Psalmist asked (in Ps. 73:12-13), "Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure, and washed my hands in innocence..."

- In other words, what good does it do to be righteous? The wicked are the ones who seem to prosper. Maybe I would be better off to just be a pagan unbeliever.

- Ah, but the Bible answers this question in a way that causes us to change our perspective on it. In Job 21:13 it says, "They spend their days in prosperity, [but] suddenly they go down to Sheol."

- They enjoy all those temporal pleasures, but then (suddenly) they die and it's all over (except for judgment). They get by with their sin for awhile, but only for awhile. Job 20:5 says, "...the triumphing of the wicked is short..."

- In the NT, in the Book of James, we see those referred to who "...lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure..." (5:5) But James warns, "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire."

- There's coming a day of judgment when all your wealth will be worthless. In fact, it will become a witness against you that you chose temporal pleasure over the things of God.

- But, getting back to Moses, he knew that God was calling him to give his life in service and sacrifice for His people. He had a choice, and praise God, he made the right choice.

- MacArthur says, “He could have obeyed or disobeyed. Disobeying had many attractions. Among other things, it would have been a lot easier and a lot more enjoyable in the short run.”

- Of course, it would have been a lot easier for him to just stay there in the royal palace and enjoy all the pleasures of Egypt. You know, it’s hard enough to *refuse* worldly pleasures – it is much harder to give them up once you have them!

- Moses had been enjoying the pleasures of Egypt for 40 years. Now, don’t misunderstand, there is no reason to believe he was ever involved in anything immoral – but he enjoyed the pleasures of an extremely comfortable life.

- He had the best food, the best sleeping quarters, the best recreation, the best of everything his age could provide. But the point is, this was *not* God’s will for his life. He had to make a decision. Would he stay in that comfortable life, or take his stand with the people of God?

- We know what he decided. He chose “rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin...” For this he is

a great example of faith. He believed that what God wanted for him was far better in the long run.

- In the same way, God has called us (as believers) to live a holy life that is pleasing to Him. He has called us to separate our lives from sin. Obedience to His will is *not* always easy – in fact it seldom *is* easy. But ultimately it is the best. Will we be as wise as Moses was?

- Well, we’re going to have to stop here for today. This is going to have to be another of my infamous “two-parters.” We’ll get the rest of this next time...

- MAKE APPEAL

- PRAYER