

# MOSES' FAITH: A SELF-DENYING FAITH

## HEBREWS 11:24-28

### *Introduction*

Following Christ is not easy, not if a person is going to truly follow Him. Why? Because His call is contrary to what most people think. His call is a call to love, joy and peace, yes; but it is not a call to a life of ease, comfort and plenty. The call of Christ is not to physical and material health and wealth. Contrariwise, the call of Christ is to a life of self-denial and sacrifice. If a person is going to follow Christ, it costs him everything he is and has. And Christ makes no exceptions (see Mt. 19:16-22; 19:23-26; 19:27-30). Moses is a prime example of a man who gave up all that the world had to offer in order to follow God and His promises. His faith was a self-denying faith.

- I. A sacrificial faith: he chose God and God's people rather than this world and its pleasures (v. 24-25).
- II. An expectant faith: he looked to the reward (v. 26-28).
- III. An enduring faith: he courageously looked to God instead of looking to man (v. 27).
- IV. A saving faith: he believed God's message of salvation (v. 28).

### **I. *Hebrews 11:24-25 Sacrificial Faith of Moses***

First, the faith of Moses was a sacrificial faith, a faith that chose God and God's people rather than this world and its pleasures. Remember: when Moses was born, the king of Egypt had issued a law that all newborn male children of Israel were to be killed. He had done this because he feared Israel was growing so rapidly as a people that they were becoming a threat to the security of Egypt. The parents of Moses, acting in faith, had hid Moses down by the river in a small boat-like basket. Moses was only three months old. His parents knew that Pharaoh's daughter bathed there, and they *sensed in hope* that she would find the child, feel compassion and keep and rear him. This she did. Moses was reared as a prince in Pharaoh's court. Jewish tradition even says that his daughter was the only child Pharaoh had and that she herself was childless. If this is accurate, it means that Moses was, as tradition says, the heir to the throne of Egypt (Thomas Hewitt. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. "Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p. 180 and Mathew Henry. *Mathew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 947). In either case, Moses was a prince, the son of the daughter of Pharaoh. He had every thing that a person on earth could ever want:

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|---|-------------------------------|
| => education and knowledge  | => fame and wealth            |
| => possessions and estates  | => power and authority        |
| => position and duty  | => purpose and responsibility |
| => a home and love (Pharaoh's daughter must have loved Moses to stand against Egyptian law to save him as a child.) |                               |
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But Moses gave it all up. He sacrificed everything for God and His promises, the *promised seed* and *promised land*. The day came when Moses had to make the most critical decision of his life. He faced as large a crisis as any man could face. Was he going to be identified as an Egyptian all the days of his life or was he going to become identified with the people of God? Was he going to pursue the pleasures of Egypt and this world or pursue God and His promises? When Moses was forty years old, he faced the crisis and made the decision (Acts 7:23). In the words of Scripture:

*Exo 2:11-12 One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.*

This was a scene that Moses had often seen during his forty years as an Egyptian prince. But apparently this was the final straw; he had seen enough of the mistreatment of his people. He made the decision that launched a number of decisions — decisions that were to show that he was rejecting Egypt and the world and identifying himself with God's people.

The point is this: Moses gave up all the pleasures and enjoyment of Egypt and the world — gave it all up. He sacrificed everything for God and His people, the very people who had been given the hope for *the promised seed and the promised land*.

As these two verses of Hebrews say:

*“[Aroused] by faith Moses, when he had grown to maturity and become great, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, because he preferred rather to share the oppression (suffer the hardships) and bear the shame of the people of God than to have the fleeting enjoyment of a sinful life” (v. 24-25, Amplified New Testament).*

**Thought 1.** Moses knew what he was doing. The decision to do what he could to stop the abuse of God's people was not the rash decision of youth. Moses was forty years old, engaged in the midst of the daily duties and power of ruling. He made his decision and acted, but as the next verse shows, only after much thought.

**Thought 2.** The Expositor's Greek Testament has an excellent statement on this point: “the significance and source of this refusal lay in his preferring to suffer ill-usage with God's people rather than to have a short-lived enjoyment of sin....it was because they were God's people, not solely because they were of his blood, that Moses threw in his lot with them. It was this that illustrated his faith. He believed that God would fulfil His promise to His people, little likelihood as at present there seemed to be of any great future for his race. On the other hand there was...the enjoyment which was within his reach if only he committed the sin of denying his people and renouncing their future as promised by God” (Marcus Dods. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. “The

Expositor's Greek Testament," Vol. 14, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 1970, p. 360).

*Mat 16:24-25* Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

*Mat 19:21* Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

*Luke 14:33* "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."

*1 Cor 10:24* Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

*Rom 8:13* For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

*Rom 15:1* We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

## II. *Hebrews 11:26 An Expectant Faith of Moses*

Second, the faith of Moses was an expectant faith, a faith that looked to the reward. Moses believed in the promises which God had given to Abraham and his people, the promised seed and the promised land. (See Heb. 11:8-10; 11:13-16.) The word "regarded" means that he considered and thought about the matter; he made a deliberate decision to suffer with his people and to inherit the promises God had made to them rather than to enjoy the riches of Egypt. This means...

- that he chose the sufferings of Christ, the promised seed of the Saviour, over the riches of Egypt.
- that he considered the reward of God's promise to Israel greater than the reward of earthly riches.

William Barclay explains what Moses did in practical terms:

*"Moses was the man who gave up all earthly glory for the sake of the people of God. Christ gave up His glory for men. He became despised and rejected; He abandoned the glory of heaven for the buffets and the scourging and the shame inflicted by men. Moses in his day and generation shared in the sufferings of Christ. 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"* (The Letter to the Hebrews, p. 178)

Without question, Moses believed in the promises of God to Israel:

=> that Israel was the promised seed, the very people through whom God would send the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

=> that Israel would inherit the promised land of eternal rest with God. Moses turned away from the riches of the world for the rewards of God's promises.

*“He considered the contempt and abuse and shame [borne for] the Christ, the Messiah [Who was to come], to be greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt, for he looked forward and away to the reward (recompense)” (v. 26, Amplified New Testament).*

**Mat 5:11** *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.”*

**Mat 10:42** *“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”*

**2 Tim 2:12** *If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.*

**Heb 10:34** *You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.*

**Heb 11:36** *Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison.*

### **III. Hebrews 11:27 An Enduring Faith**

Third, the faith of Moses was an enduring faith, a faith that courageously looked to God rather than to men. This event is recorded in Exodus.

**Exo 2:13-15** *The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, “Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?” The man said, “Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and thought, “What I did must have become known.” When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well.*

Note: it seems that Moses fled because he feared Pharaoh; however, Hebrews says that he “left Egypt, not fearing the kings' anger.” Is this a contradiction? No, the answer is given in Acts:

**Acts 7:23-25** *“When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his*

*defence and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not.*

This shows that Moses had apparently thought and known for years that he was to be the deliverer of Israel. It is highly probable that his own mother had taught him this when Pharaoh's daughter unknowingly made her the nurse to Moses (Exo. 2:6-8). She certainly taught him the great promises of God to Abraham and Israel. Whatever the source, God's Spirit apparently moved upon Moses at an early age and stirred the sense and thoughts that he was to be the deliverer of his people; he was to lead them back to Israel. However, Moses went about it the wrong way. Nevertheless, he knew that God's will and purpose was for him to deliver his people. Note: Acts 7:25 says that Moses was planning to lead Israel in a rebellion against Egypt to free God's people. He did not fear Pharaoh; Moses was loaded with courage. However, when the people refused to follow him, he was left alone. He had to fear — fear in the sense of wisdom and discretion, not despondency and hopelessness. He had to fear in order to save his life.

The point is this: Moses sensed and knew his mission upon earth — that he was to free Israel in God's time. The people would not follow him then, but he believed that God would arouse the people to follow him in due time. As we find out, he kept on believing and endured in his belief for another forty years (Acts 7:30).

**Thought 1.** Imagine the terrible disappointment Moses must have felt. His people were suffering as slave-labourers under Egyptian bondage, and he had stepped forward to lead them in a rebellion for freedom. But they had rejected his leadership, and he had been forced to flee for his life. The disappointment must have been very heavy. But imagine this: Moses sensed and knew that God had called him to deliver His people Israel. He knew his calling. But there he was sitting in Midian, and he had sat there for *forty years* and God had not called him to go forth. How easily Moses could have lost faith in God. How easily he could have lost his sense of call. But he did not: he continued to believe in God and His promises. Moses endured in faith despite all the circumstances. What a dynamic example!

**1 Cor 15:58** *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

**Gal 6:9** *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

**Heb 4:14-16** *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then*

*approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

**Heb 10:23** *Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*

**1 Pet 1:13** *Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

**Rev 3:11** *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*

#### **IV. Hebrews 11:28 A Saving Faith**

Fourth, the faith of Moses was a saving faith, a faith that believed God's message of salvation. This verse refers to the great day of deliverance and salvation for Israel. God had led Moses to prepare Israel and Egypt for the deliverance of His people. God was now ready to save His people from the bondage of Egypt (a symbol of the world). God had pronounced judgment (the taking of the firstborn) upon the people of Egypt for their injustices. As He prepared to execute the final judgment, those who believed God were instructed to slay a pure lamb and sprinkle its blood over the door posts of their homes. The blood of the innocent lamb would then serve as a sign that the coming judgment had already been carried out. When seeing the blood, God would pass over that house.

Symbolically, the Passover pictured the coming of Jesus Christ as the Saviour. The lamb without blemish pictured His sinless life, and the blood sprinkled on the door posts pictured His blood shed for the believer (Exo. 12:5; cp. Jn. 1:29).

Note that God's method of salvation was the blood of the lamb spread over the door posts (cp. Gen. 12:12-14). See *Passover, the Lord's Supper*, Lk. 22:7.) Moses' great faith is clearly seen. He not only made the proper arrangements for escaping God's judgment on that dreadful night, but he spelled out that the Passover was to be observed each year thereafter. He never doubted God's planned salvation for His people. He never doubted that God would fulfil His promises, that He would give to Israel the *promised seed* and the *promised land*.

**Rom 5:9** *Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him.*

**Rom 10:13** *For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

**Eph 2:8** *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

**Heb 9:22** *In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. ■*

LUKE 22:07 PASSOVER, LORD'S SUPPER

*Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Luke 22:07*

Historically, the Passover refers back to the time when God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exo. 11:1f). He had pronounced judgment, the taking of the firstborn, upon the people of Egypt for their injustices. As He prepared to execute the final judgment, those who believed God were instructed to slay a pure lamb and sprinkle its blood over the door posts of their homes. The blood of the innocent lamb would then serve as a sign that the coming judgment had already been carried out upon the sacrificial lamb. When seeing the blood, God would *pass over* that house. Those who believed God applied the blood to their homes and were saved, but those who did not believe did not apply the blood to their homes, and they were destroyed.

Symbolically, the Passover pictured the coming of Jesus Christ as the Saviour. The *lamb without blemish* pictured His sinless life (see Jn. 1:29), and the *blood sprinkled on the door posts* pictured His blood shed for the believer. It was a sign that the life and blood of the innocent lamb had been substituted for the firstborn. The "eating of the lamb" pictured the need for spiritual nourishment gained by feeding on Christ, the Bread of Life. The unleavened bread (bread without yeast) pictured the need for putting evil out of one's life and household.

In addition to the lamb and unleavened bread, the Jewish Passover Feast was celebrated by using four food and drink items, (1) A bowl of salt water was conspicuously placed on the table to remind the family of the tears shed by their forefathers in their 430 years of Egyptian bondage. (2) A bitter salad-like plate was to remind them of their forefather's bitter experiences of slavery. (3) A paste-like mixture of fruit (charosheth) with cinnamon sticks was to remind them of their forefather's toil in making bricks from clay and straw for the Egyptian cities and buildings. (4) Four cups of wine were used to remind them of God's four promises in Exo. 6:6-8 to deliver their forefathers from Egyptian slavery.

The one thing to be noted about the Passover celebration is that it is all historical. It is celebrating an act of the past, whereas the Lord's Supper is much more than mere history. It is a celebration of the living Christ in the heart and life of the believer until He returns. It is a remembrance of the potential power of the living Christ within the life of the believer right now — an explosive power that is made possible through the cross (see 1 Cor. 11:26). □