

The Faith of Moses and His Parents

Hebrews 11:23-27

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Introduction:

Today we continue our Hebrews sermon series.

- We have been looking Hebrews 11 where we are given a great list of people of faith from the Old Testament...
 - These are presented to the Hebrews to encourage them to have faith.
 - They are models, showing us what faith does in a person's life.
 - Last week, we finished with the examples from the patriarchal period—Joseph being the last of these.

Today we come to one of the greatest figures in the Old Testament: Moses, the lawgiver.

- We will have much to say about him over the next couple of weeks.
- We will begin by reading in Hebrews 11:23 and read to verse 27.

Hebrews 11:23-27: 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.

Thanks be to God for His Holy Word.

- May He use it powerfully in our lives.

What we see in this passage is the development of faith in a covenant child.

- First, we see the faith Moses had as an infant.
- Then we see the faith he had as a young man.
- We have a lot of children in a church—and a lot of little children—we also have a number of young adults, and some who have apostatised or who are on the brink of apostasy, so this is a subject that should interest us as a congregation.

Let's begin by looking at:

I. The faith of a covenant child at birth: “By faith, Moses, when he was born.”

A. This indicates that Moses engaged in an act of faith when he was born.

1. All the examples we have seen so far tell us what individuals did by faith.
 - Almost all of them are in the active rather than the passive voice...
 - By faith, Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice; by faith, Noah built an ark; by faith, Abraham left his homeland;
2. But with Moses, it says that he *was hidden*.
 - He did not hide himself—he was a newborn baby... it says that by faith Moses was hidden by his parents.

- His parents carried out the act of faith, but it is attributed to Moses.
3. We see parental faith attributed to children in a very striking way with circumcision.
- Take a look at Genesis 17.
 - In Genesis 17:10-12, the Lord says: **“This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.”**
 - In verse 14, God declares that the male child who does not do this has broken His covenant and is to be cut off.
 - Gen 17:14: **“And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”**
 - Even though it was up to the parents to see that their son was circumcised, if he was not, it was he who was said to have broken the covenant...
 - And if he was circumcised, it was he who was said to have kept God’s covenant.
- We could give many other examples, but let’s go to one in the NT.
4. We can also see this in the example of Jesus when little children were brought to Him.
- Parents brought their infants to Him and He laid His hands on them and blessed them—and not only that, but He declared that “of such is the kingdom of God.”
 - Yes, these children are “just there because their parents brought them.”
 - Praise God for that!
 - Praise God! How else would they have come to Jesus if their parents did not bring them?
 - Jesus has no problem with this and neither should we.
- B. Our society is quite disturbed about children being tied to their parents—because then it’s not really them but their parents...
1. The air that we breathe today is Marxism—on steroids!
 - a. Marx had an economic and political philosophy that was revolutionary.
 - The establishment was the thesis, and the working people who were oppressed were the antithesis who rose up against the establishment.
 - So you had the thesis, then the antithesis that destroyed it, and then the synthesis arose that would be a beautiful, new, and better thing.
 - Gradually this way of thinking has taken hold of us, and we have seen many bloody revolutions in the last century.

- b. But around the 1960s, Marx's ideas began to find their way into everyone's homes and it became part of our thinking that for children to be right, they must revolt and form something new and better.
 - Much of this was actually designed by educators like Hall and Dewey who wanted to create a generation gap so that a new ideal society could form, led by public education—the only thing hindering was allegiance to parents.
- 2. Sadly, they were successful in getting us all to think that there is something wrong with a child who embraces what their parents believe, even if their parents believe the truth.
 - To really be themselves (whatever that means) they have to find their own way—again—even if their parents taught them the truth!
 - And of course, as this philosophy took hold, there were fewer and fewer people who actually embraced the truth anymore.
 - And because the human heart is naturally rebellious ever since the fall, many have rejected the Lord and His gospel.
- So our society looks down on children who believe the truth because their parents did.
- C. But God our creator created us to follow our parents and He is not distressed by this.
 - He doesn't call you a mindless hypocrite for following the truth.
 - 1. We were created to follow our parents in everything.
 - a. Think about what it was like before the fall.
 - Parents would have told their little ones about God and their little ones would have received it—they would not decide whether it was right for them.
 - This was a good thing—until we fell—because children would have continued in the truth taught to them by their parents.
 - What a beautiful stable society it would have been!
 - b. If you think about it, there are quite a few things that children have no say about.
 - The little things don't even get to choose which language they will speak or what race they will be—or where they will live—it is the parent's decision.
 - Though they are individuals, they are very much a product of their parents.
 - They do what their parents do, and God is not disturbed about that.
 - If their parents are idol worshippers, so are their children; if they are true disciples of Christ who worship the true God, so do their children.
 - 2. It is for this reason that God has declared that He is the God of us and our children, and that He receives them into His kingdom with us when they are born.
 - Is this something ugly that is being forced on our children against their will?
 - No! It is something beautiful being bestowed on them by our gracious God.
 - A precious inheritance in His kingdom of grace where there is forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and eternal life in God's house.

- It is only when children grow up twisted like Esau did and despise their birthright that they break away.
 - When they grow up and say, “What is this worthless inheritance that I can’t even see and experience until after I die?
 - “Who are these misfit people with which I am associated? These people where there are not many mighty, not many noble, not many wise!”
 - Sadly, in this fallen world, covenant children will do this.
 - This is what Hebrews warns about—to make sure there is not in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.
- 3. The way God has arranged things, when covenant children do not follow the Lord, it is a chastisement of their parents.
 - a. Though the parents may themselves be believers, you all know how easy it is to lose your focus—for your faith to grow cold and your priorities to become worldly.
 - We could give many examples—Isaac with his Esau, David with his Absalom and Amnon—David was told that it was on account of his adultery.
 - b. But we have a lovely example of faithfulness with Amram and Jochebed—the parents of Moses.
 - Let’s turn to look at that now.

II. The faith of Moses’ parents is an excellent model for us to imitate.

- **“By faith Moses... was hidden three months by his parents...”**
- A. They acted in faith by hiding Moses.
 - 1. We read about it.
 - Pharaoh, Egypt’s king, was nervous because God’s covenant people were multiplying very fast.
 - He had made them slaves to keep them under control—being afraid that they might try to take control of his kingdom.
 - But they continued to multiply like rabbits.
 - So Pharaoh issued a wicked decree that all the male children of God’s people must be aborted at birth.
 - The Egyptian midwives were unwilling to carry out this cruelty, to their great credit, but the Israelites also were in a bad spot because if they were found to have a baby, they themselves might be executed.
 - So Pharaoh ordered that these male babies must be drowned!
 - 2. The act of faith that Moses did—or rather his parents—was to hide him for three months—after which they made a little ark for him so they could hide him among the bulrushes.
 - Perhaps they had a tip that the officials had found out that they had him—but they absolutely refused to comply with the king’s edict...

- As it says in our text, they “were not afraid of the king’s command.”
 - This does not mean that they did not think the king would kill their baby if he was found—they hid him...
 - But it means that they feared God rather than man—they recognised that it would be far worse to disobey God than Pharaoh,
 - So they concluded that Pharaoh could do whatever he wanted to them, but they would live to please God.
 - Pharaoh might have the power to kill them, but that was all that he could do. God is the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell.
 - This reminds us that those who govern us have no authority to command what God forbids.
 - Moses’s father, Amram, essentially said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
 - So they hid Moses and then they put him in the ark out in the bulrushes (so he could not float away), leaving his older sister to keep an eye on him.
 - She must have been dismayed when Pharaoh’s daughter came to that part of the river to take a plunge, but to her delight, Pharaoh’s daughter had compassion on the little foundling.
 - Clever resourceful Miriam ran to her and said, “Shall I get one of the Hebrew women to nurse him for you?”
 - I am sure this Egyptian princess must have smiled—perhaps she winked—and said “Why yes, please do,” knowing that Miriam would get the child’s mother.
 - Most people don’t even know the names of Moses’ parents—I did not remember them—but the father is Amram and the mother is Jochebed.
3. Think about their faith and how integral it was to Moses.
- If they had not had this faith, they would not have hid him.
 - They would have feared for their lives and they would have handed him in.
- B. Faith was the reason they hid him—they saw that he was a beautiful child.
1. Certainly, they had natural affection as almost all parents do.
- We have brought forth children and it is beautiful thing indeed.
 - But this is not what is in view.
 - They were living under oppressive slavery that was designed to beat them down—who would want to bring forth children into such conditions?
 - Parents want their children to be happy.
- Perhaps there was a higher beauty they saw in Moses.
2. As covenant people, they knew also that children are made in the image of God.
- We are capable of things like wisdom, justice, love, holiness, praise, and mercy.

- Every human being is constituted with this ability, but of course we can also pervert all of these things and display folly, injustice, hatred, ungodliness, and cruelty.
 - And at the present time, the church was weak and discouraged and there was probably more folly, injustice, hatred, ungodliness, cursing, and cruelty than wisdom, justice, love, holiness, praise, and mercy!
3. Surely the beauty they saw in their son was that he was a child of God's covenant promise. He was an heir of eternal salvation. Here is beauty indeed!
- No matter what might happen to him in this life, they saw God's beauty upon him because of God's promise of eternal life.
 - They believed that God was going to redeem them and their people, and that He was going to bring forth a Saviour for them.
 - They believed that He was going to gather them as His people in Canaan.
 - They had faith in God's redemptive promise and they brought their son up with the notion that his inheritance was not in this world, but in the eternal promise of God.
 - They lived not for this world, but for the city whose builder and maker is God.
- C. It is for this reason that we are told that they did not fear the king's command.
1. The king had ordered the Hebrews to cast their infant sons into the river, and their own lives were in peril if they were discovered.
 - A baby is not an easy thing to hide—but they did the best they could.
 2. If they got caught, they were happy to die because their hope was not in this world.
 - They would be glad to die in God's service.
 - But if God gave them and their son life, they would seek the kingdom that God had promised them, and the deliverance from Egypt to their own land that He had promised.
 - By faith, they were living for the things that really mattered.
- III. And now we turn to the faith of a young man—"by faith Moses, when he came of age..."**
- A. What does it mean when it says, "when he came of age"?
1. The word carries the idea of when he became great.
 - The idea is that he was mature enough to make a significant decision—no longer would he go where he was taken—like a child does...
 - Now he was old enough to decide what he was going to do.
 - As an infant, his acts of faith were passive—done for him by his parents—but now he must act.
 2. And he had this choice before him.
 - He had been adopted as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and he had been given a wonderful education.

- His adopted mother had rescued him, and she had been, it would seem, very kind to him—he owed her his very life in this world.
- What’s more, in the Egyptian court, he had many comforts, much wealth, much security, much power, much respect, much prestige.
- But he also had been looked after by his mother, whom Pharaoh’s daughter had hired.
 - And she had told him how beautiful he was—not in a vain way—but as a child of God’s promised salvation.
 - She had told him of the promises that belonged to his people, and Moses had listened.

B. Moses’ decision is presented to us with extreme realism.

- Look at verse 24-27: **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.**

1. Moses understood what he was choosing.

- In rejecting Egypt, he was leaving riches and pleasures, and in choosing God and His people, he was getting affliction and reproach.
 - Even the Hebrew people were coarse and would not be very friendly toward an educated Egyptian prince—we see how he found them quarrelling and how they spoke unkindly to him.

2. So why did he make the choice he made?

- We are told why at the end of verse 26—because he looked to the reward.
 - His choice was extremely rational.
 - Did he want happiness for a season that at best would be a mingled happiness, or did he want eternal happiness?
 - What was a little suffering now for eternal reward? That was his choice.
- He made this choice by faith because, as it says in verse 27: **he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.**
 - Faith believers what God has revealed—it sees God who is invisible. It sees the reward that is yet future.
 - Believing God who spoke by the prophets (or in Moses’ case, to his fathers) was also the most rational thing to do.

C. Our modern Marxist would say, “So Moses is just following his parents.”

- 1. And when he does, we should say, “Yes, isn’t it wonderful? His parents not only taught him the truth but they also taught to love of the truth.
 - “We see the same sentiments in him that we saw in them.
 - “Like them, he does not fear the king.
 - “He fears God—he’d rather displease the king than God—of course!”

2. As Sinclair Ferguson says, “What parents breathe out, children breathe in.”
 - If parents are breathing out the truth and the love of the truth, then it is wonderful when their children follow them.
 - It’s what we are told to do in Deuteronomy 6.
 - If their parents breathe out discontentment, frustration with God’s calling, covetous longings for the riches of this world, anxiety about this world, resentment about serving Christ, bitterness for their hardships,
 - that is what the children breathe in and unless they repent of their parents’ sinful attitude in which they were nurtured, they will either shake off their faith or embrace it hypocritically.
3. Covenant children,
 - If your parents breathed out love for God and His beautiful inheritance, don’t let “Egypt” make you ashamed for following them. Own it without apology.
 - If your parents did not breathe out love for God and His beautiful inheritance, what is needed is not revolution, but reformation. It is sheer folly to revolt against the Lord.

Conclusion

Does all of this seem too hard for you?

- Of course it is. But what does our faith teach us?
 - It teaches us that we are in the wilderness, but that we have a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is able to deliver us.
- Not only did He atone for our sin and procure perfect righteousness for us,
 - He also gives us new life in the Holy Spirit so that we can love God and live for Him.
- As we are told in the Song of Solomon, we come up out of wilderness leaning on our beloved.
 - His very purpose for saving you is not just for forgiveness, but to restore love for God and the beautiful ways of His household in you.
 - Moses’ parents came to God and for that reason, they were free, even while they were yet enslaved in Egypt.
 - They were already delighting in their inheritance and in their beautiful children who were heirs of God’s promises.
 - For them, the coming deliverance from Egypt was greatly to be desired, but they already had the greater deliverance from bondage to sin and because of that they were able to rejoice in their inheritance even while under oppression in Egypt.
 - Their son Moses followed and chose their inheritance over the inheritance he had as a prince of Egypt.