

Heroes of Faith—Hebrews 11:23-28-The Faith of Moses  
College Baptist Church  
August 16, 2020—Michindoh Outdoor Service

Today's sermon text is printed in your bulletin. I invite you to follow along as I read God's Word for us this morning.

*23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.*

I've entitled today's sermon as "The Faith of Moses," but this passage begins by highlighting the faith of his parents—Amram and Jochebed. Don't you love those names? I'm counting on the Gordons, Wilsons, or Lawsons to use one of *those* Bible names for the kiddos on the way! Heaven knows we have enough Benjamins and Rachels. Where are the Amrams and Jochebeds? But seriously, the passage begins by highlighting the faith of Moses' parents.

This is a subtle reminder of the importance of faith-filled parenting. Faith is something that must be modeled and cultivated and passed down to the next generation. There is no guarantee that the children or grandchildren of Christian parents and grandparents will be believers. So we must exhibit faith and proclaim the works of God to the next generation. Yesterday's Psalm of the Day—Psalm 78—reminded us of this important task.

*We will not hide them from their children,  
but tell to the coming generation  
the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might,  
and the wonders that he has done.  
5 He established a testimony in Jacob  
and appointed a law in Israel,  
which he commanded our fathers  
to teach to their children,  
6 that the next generation might know them,  
the children yet unborn,  
and arise and tell them to their children,  
7 so that they should set their hope in God  
and not forget the works of God,  
but keep his commandments;  
8 and that they should not be like their fathers,  
a stubborn and rebellious generation,  
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,  
whose spirit was not faithful to God.*

There is in that Psalm both a tone of *hope* and a tone of *horror*! *Hope* that the next generation might set their hope in God and keep his commandments by faith. And *horror* that they might become stubborn and rebellious.

So, parents and grandparents—and anyone with a position of influence in the life of those younger than you (that’s everyone!), listen to and follow the example of Moses’ parents—Amram and Jochebed. They provide the first point in my sermon today.

### **By Faith We Fear God, Not Man (23)**

By faith, we fear God, not man. You can read about the faith of Amram and Jochebed in Exodus 1-2, where, as the writer to the Hebrews summarizes, the ancient Hebrews were commanded by the Pharaoh of Egypt to kill all baby boys. You see, the Hebrews—the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—were growing in number in Egypt. And the Egyptians feared that they were becoming “too many and too mighty.” So, the Pharaoh ordered male infanticide. They were glad to take Hebrew girls in marriage, but they feared that Hebrew boys would grow up to overthrow them.

This edict of the king was a “test of faith” for Amram and Jochebed. Would they fear man—namely the Pharaoh, who had already made life miserable for them—forcing them to make bricks for their monstrous palaces and tombs? Or would they fear God, who is the maker of every living thing...including the life of their newborn baby boy? Hebrews 11:23 answers that question. “*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*”

Hiding Moses—and eventually sending him down the Nile River in a basket made of bulrushes was an act of faith—they feared God, not man. And their faith was fueled by two things:

First, they saw that the child was beautiful. Now to say that baby Moses was beautiful is to say that he was “extraordinarily beautiful.” In Exodus 2, Jochebed saw that Moses was a “fine child.” There is no way for us to know exactly what was so “beautiful” and “fine” about baby Moses. But here is something I do know about all children according to Psalm 139. “They are fearfully and wonderfully made” from the moment of conception, when the Lord “knitted [them] together in [their] mother[s]’ womb[s].” Make no mistake, my friends, ALL children and “beautiful and fine” because they are the handiwork of God himself. Each of you sitting here today has value—you are beautiful and fine creations of God. Amram and Jochebed saw that as they did their best to hush their little three-month-old baby boy.

Second, they did not fear the king’s edict, which is to say that they feared God more than man. We’ve been thinking a lot about our relationship to governing authorities during this pandemic, haven’t we? And I want to make abundantly clear that Roman 13 is still applicable to Christians. We are still bound by Scripture to “submit to governing authorities,” who have been placed in positions of power by God himself—whether they rule wisely or foolishly.

However, we must NEVER submit to a governing authority who asks us to sin against the ultimate governing authority, God himself. That’s perfectly clear in Acts 5:29, when Peter and the other Apostles said, “*We must obey God, rather than men,*” when they were forbidden by the Jewish authorities to preach the Good News about Jesus as Messiah.

This is something our Chinese brothers and sisters face have faced for decades. In 1980 the Communist Party in China instituted a “one child policy”—which forbid parents from having more than one child. Now this policy has been relaxed in recent years, but this governmental law stood in direct contradiction to the first command to people in the Bible—“*be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.*” God loves children. He wants husbands and wives to have babies—little image bearers—who will grow up to fill His world and rule it in dependence on Him. Making babies makes God famous!

Now the Bible does not specify exactly how many children each couple must have. But a Biblical marriage should be ready and willing to accept children as the gift of God. The Roman Catholic tradition incorporates this question into its marriage ceremonies, “*Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?*” That’s not just a question for Catholics...that is a good question for every Christian couple considering marriage. Are you ready to have and raise kids should God bless you with that ability?

Now, I don’t know how most Christian couples in China operated for the last 40 years. But they were forced with the question: will I fear the edict of the Communist Party or will I fear the good and loving command of God?

We have heard of the bold faith of Chinese Christians--especially about their boldness to meet boldly in “underground churches” though the government prohibits any Protestant gatherings outside the “Three Self State Church,” which is not faithful to Biblical teaching. So, every Sunday, Chinese Christians live by faith—fearing God, not man as they “meet together”—even if that means being crammed into an apartment bathroom singing softly so they can’t be heard.

They take seriously the admonition of Hebrews 10:25, which warns us of falling into the habit of “*neglecting to meet together.*” Now, that’s not a warning to the sick or infirm or medically comprised who are unable to meet during this pandemic—that’s a warning to the rest of us, who are tempted to fear man more than God. It’s for those of us who are tempted to show greater respect for our own personal recreation than the inter-personal edification. It’s for those of us who are tempted to prioritize work over worship. So, let’s keep meeting together—fearing God not man—so that if (or when!) the government truly prohibits our gatherings we will be poised to respond boldly by faith...even when that means mistreatment.

### **By Faith We Choose Mistreatment by Association over the Pleasures of Sin (24-26)**

That’s the second thing that this passage teaches us about faith. By faith we choose mistreatment by association over the pleasures of sin. As you probably know, the basket carrying Moses down the Nile was found by Pharaoh’s daughter; and Moses was subsequently raised in the Pharaoh’s household. Though he was a Hebrew—he was afforded all the rights and privileges of Egyptian living—education, money, power. Now there is nothing inherently wrong with education, money, and power. In fact, they are very good things when used for God’s glory. But the Egyptians did not use these gifts for the glory of God—they used them and consumed them for their own fleeting pleasure.

So, once Moses had encountered Yahweh, the one true God, in the burning bush, he had a decision to make. Would he identify with God's people—the Israelites—his people by birth? Or would he continue to be identified primarily by his pagan Egyptian family—who lived their lives as hedonists—that is, living for the pleasure of the moment?

By faith, Moses chose to be associated with Yahweh...and Yahweh's people—even though it meant mistreatment and ridicule. It made no sense on paper. Moses' story was not a rags to riches story, but a riches to rags story. He went from the palace to the poor house. But he knew that faith in God required that he disassociate with the sinful ways of this world—even his beloved Egyptian family. Instead he must primarily associate with the LORD and his people.

Today we will see two people baptized. And not only is their baptism a declaration of their personal faith in Jesus, it is also a declaration of their allegiance to Jesus' people—the church—and our allegiance to them. To be sure, association with God's people will bring mistreatment in this sinful world. Notice that Moses experienced the reproach of Christ—that is to say, the ridicule that Moses faced as he went back to Egypt and begged the Pharaoh to let the Israelites go was a foreshadowing of the reproach that Jesus faced. It is a reminder that the Christ, the Messiah came to suffer. It is a sobering reminder that following Jesus will bring suffering. But let us never forget that suffering for Jesus brings more pleasure than the fleeting pleasure of sin and worldly wealth.

#### **By Faith Await An Eternal Reward (v. 26b)**

Which brings us to our third point about faith from the life of Moses—which we find at the end of v. 26. By faith, we await an eternal reward. This has been a theme in Hebrews 11—the hope of a future reward. We saw this in the life of Abraham, who was seeking a better country than Canaan, a heavenly homeland, a city built by God.

This probably isn't a perfect example, but walking by faith is kind of like saving for a vacation. You could spend every cent of your take home pay on cheap thrills and never have the opportunity to take a trip. Or you could steadily sock away a little bit of your paycheck each week—so that you can travel somewhere special or visit that relative out of state. Your pleasure is deferred temporarily for something greater later.

Living by faith means recognizing that God has more to offer than this sinful world. Living by faith encourages us to seek pleasure in the right places...to “desire” more. As C.S. Lewis famously put it, “...*your desires aren't the problem. The weakness of your desires are the problem. You are like a child fooling about in slums with your mud pies because you can't imagine what a holiday at the sea is like.*”

Moses was able to look at the riches of his Egyptian family and see that they were fleeting in comparison to the eternal riches that God offers his children. In Ephesians 2:7, Paul says, that God saved us so that “*in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*” Remember, Hebrews 11:6 says that God “*rewards those who seek Him.*” So, by faith we await an eternal reward and the pleasure of the presence of Jesus and his people for all eternity.

### **By Faith We Trust Our Invisible King (vv. 27-28)**

And as we wait, we trust our invisible king. That's my final point from the life of Moses. By faith we trust in our invisible king. The King of Egypt was tangible. Moses could see him and Moses knew him; and Moses might have feared angering him—after all, the Pharaoh was his adoptive family!

But then there was another King—an invisible King, who spoke out of a mysteriously burning bush in Exodus 3—a God who could not be seen with the human eye—but that did not mean that he was not real. This invisible King had a reputation for acting in tangible, miraculous ways in this world. This was the same King, who graciously commanded Noah to build an ark before he sent a flood to destroy wicked humanity. This was the same King, who provided a ram for Abraham at the last moment, so that he did not slaughter Isaac, the son of the promise. This was the same King, who raised Joseph to power in Egypt in order to provide a place for the Israelites to sojourn for 400 years. And this invisible King was now asking Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt by faith. This invisible King had already sent 9 horrific plagues on the land of Egypt...but the 10<sup>th</sup> would be the most horrific. The invisible King was sending “the Destroyer” to take the lives of all the firstborn sons in the land...except those who *by faith* sprinkled the blood of the Passover lamb on their doorposts.

Moses trusted in the Invisible King even though it angered the King of Egypt. And when Moses and the people of Israel trusted the Invisible King and sprinkled the blood of the lamb on their doorposts by faith—their firstborn sons were saved and their rescue from slavery had begun. And like the Israelites in Egypt, we are people who are saved and rescued and ransomed by faith. Faith not in the blood of a lamb sprinkled on our doorposts, but faith in the blood of a Son sprinkled on our hearts. As Peter puts in 1 Peter 1:19, we are ransomed “*with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*” May we walk by faith in awe of Him alone.