Moses Valued Christ More Than the Treasures of Egypt

Hebrews 11:17-28

Key Verse: 11:26 “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 11:1 teaches us what faith is. Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. In verses 2-7 we studied about three great men of faith who pleased God through their faith starting with Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Today in verses 8-28 we will study more heroes of faith who pleased God through their faith; Abraham, the patriarch, and Moses. Abraham and Moses are known as two pillars of faith in the OT. How did they please God and what made their faith special before God?

First, Abraham’s faith in his absolute trust and obedience. (8-19) Abraham’s story is written in Genesis 12-25, and Hebrews summarizes his story in verse 8. “***By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going***.” When God called Abraham, Abraham was 75 years old. He lived in the land of Chaldean helping his father Terah’s business. Verse 12 describes Abraham as a man as good as dead. (12) Here, it is important to know why God called such an old man Abraham. God called Abraham to bless him. God commanded Abraham to leave his country and his father’s household and go to the land God would show him. God promised to make Abraham a great nation, bless him, and make his name great. (Ge 12:2) God did not call Abraham only for his personal blessing, but he had a bigger plan for the world through Abraham. God wanted to bless the whole world through Abraham’s descendant. God said to Abraham, “...*and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*” (Ge 12;3) God’s plan was to save the whole world through Abraham’s descendant, who is Jesus Christ. Adam failed in keeping God’s blessing and brought death to this world through his disobedience. God swept the whole world with water on Noah's day, still God had a plan to save the world. God’s plan was to save through faith in his promise. Then, God started his plan through Abraham, a person who seemingly had no attraction to be chosen for God.

What was Abraham’s response to God’s call? Verse 8 says that Abraham obeyed and went even though he did not know where he was going. These days it is easy to know where we are going because we have Google maps and smartphones. But Abraham left without knowing the exact place, but the certain place which God would direct him. It is impossible for him to do so without his absolute trust in God. Look at verse 9. “***By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise***.” When Abraham arrived at the promised land, he might have expected a favorable welcome. But in the land there lived the hostile and militant native Canaanites who were threatening his life. But Abraham did not lose his trust in God. He lived in tents in the promised land like a stranger with his children who shared the same promise. He did not complain about his inconvenient tent life. He was not sorrowful or grumpy about his tent life in a foreign country.

How could he do so? Look at verse 10. “***For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God***.” Abraham was looking for a better city, the kingdom of God. Abraham believed in the promise of God while he lived in tents as a stranger. He taught his faith and shared it with his children. When we have hope for a better future, we can overcome present sufferings. Because Abraham had hope for the kingdom of God, he lived in tents. Paul said in Romans 8:18, “*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us*.” These days some missionaries and leaders in our church struggle to carry two crosses, the cross of mission and the cross of life. It is heavy enough to carry just one cross. But they don’t complain because they believe in a better future after present sufferings. They don’t give up because they believe that their suffering and labor for the Lord is not in vain. Galatians 6:9 says, “*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up*.” Amen

Verses 13-16 repeats this message. “***All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking for the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.***” These verses teach us our attitude as the one who waits for a better future. We need perseverance. Abraham did not receive the things promised right away. He did not become a father of nations while he was alive. He only saw it from a distance. Still, he did not go back to his old country. He stayed in the promised land and continued to live in tents. He used his opportunity to remain in the promised land with his children. He was patiently waiting for a better country and a better future with patience. We don’t have to lose our heart or become disappointed when things do not get better or go as we expected. We need patience until God works in his time. We have to wait with perseverance for a better future.

When everything seems to go well and when we adjust to the life of a tent, our faith is often tested. We are tested in the time of blessing as well as in the time of suffering. Abraham was tested by God when he was in the time of blessing with his son Isaac. Look at verses 17-18. “***By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promise was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.***” There is always a purpose for tests. Students are tested to see if they understand what they studied. Patients are tested to see if they are healthy or not. Abraham was tested to see if he really feared God and obeyed him. (Ge 22:12) Who is Isaac? Isaac is not only Abraham’s one and only son, but also the covenant son. If Isaac died, there would be no heir to succeed God’s promise after Abraham. God’s command seemed to be contradictory to his promise. Still, Abraham obeyed and offered. According to Genesis 22 Abraham took a knife to slay Isaac for the burnt offering. How could he do so? He had absolute faith and trust in God. Look at verse 19. “***Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death***.” Abraham believed that God would raise the dead and bring Isaac back to life. Abraham passed the test. The angel said to him, “*Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son*.” (Ge 22:12) I pray that we all may pass God’s test in the time of blessing and in the time of suffering. Trust in God and obey him. Then, God will provide for a better future and better result.

Second, the patriarch's faith in blessing their children (20-22) Verses 20-22 tells us how other patriarchs lived by faith that pleased God. They pleased God by blessing their children at the right time and on the right person. Look at verses 20-22. “***By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Jacob’s sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. By faith, Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.***” Among 50 chapters in the book of Genesis, the story of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph covers 25 chapters. The author of Hebrews summarizes their stories in these three verses. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob as the covenant son with the help of his wife Rebekah. By faith Jacob succeeded the covenant to Judah, not Joseph. By faith Joseph asked his children to bury his bones in the promised land. These three patriarchs succeeded God's blessing to the right persons and in the right time.

Third, Moses’ faith in his value system (23-28) Moses’ story is written in the book of Exodus. Exodus starts with the birth of Moses and ends with the death of Moses. God called Moses to deliver his people the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt. Since Jacob’s family moved to Egypt from the promised land, 430 years had passed. During this period, God made Jacob's family a great nation, which became a threat to Pharaoh. Pharaoh ordered to kill all Hebrew baby boys in order to reduce the number of the Hebrews. All Hebrew parents had to throw their new born baby boys into the Nile River. But what did Moses’ parents do? Look at verse 23. “***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.***” According to Exodus 6:20 Moses’ parents are Jochebed and Amram. They feared God more than king Pharaoh. By faith they hid Moses for three months until they could not hide him any longer. They made a basket and put the baby Moses in it and sent it into the Nile River. They believed that God would protect Moses if God would choose him for his purpose. The basket of Moses was picked up by the daughter of Pharaoh, and Moses was adopted as her son, and Moses grew up as a prince of Egypt.

Look at verses 24-25. “***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 fleeting pleasures of sin.***” When Moses grew up, he wanted to find his true identity. According to Exodus 2:8 Moses’ mother became his nursing mother. There is no doubt that his mother taught Moses to have identity as a people of God. When the time came for Moses to make a decision for his identity between a people of God and the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, he refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter and chose to be a son of Hebrews. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. Being refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter means giving up all privileges and benefits as a prince of Egypt. Choosing to be mistreated along with the people of God indicates becoming a Hebrew slave. His identity would be changed from a prince to a slave. Still, Moses chose to suffer along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

How could he do so? He had the right value system. Look at verse 26. “***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.***” Moses valued suffering for God’s glory more than enjoying wealth and fame in Egypt. Moses valued God more than anything and anyone else on this earth. He valued the heavenly reward more than any glory and prize from this world. Moses’ value system is the same faith which Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph had. They did not put their hope on this earth. They put their hope in the better city, better country, the kingdom of God. They valued suffering in the promised land greater than enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin in the foreign country. They endured hardships for the sake of Christ. They looked forward to their heavenly reward, the crown of life.

These days many people have the opposite value system from Moses and the patriarch. They loved to be known as the prince of Egypt. They value pleasures of sin more than suffering for Christ. They choose treasures of Egypt rather than the crown of life. But our children and our people of God follow Moses and Abraham. Our hope is in heaven. Our goal is a better city, a better country, the kingdom of God. We endure hardships for the sake of Christ. We live by faith, not by sight. May God richly bless us when we live by faith that pleases you. May God help us to teach our children to have a godly value system as Moses’ parents did to Moses. Amen!