

Faith to Go Forward

Series: Real Life. Real Faith.
Brad Bailey – May 22, 2016

Hebrews 11:23-29 (NLT)

It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command.²⁴ It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.²⁵ He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.²⁶ He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward.²⁷ It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible.²⁸ It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.²⁹ It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were all drowned.

I. The profound challenges that mark the life of Moses

1. _____ from his own family

Acts 7:20-22

"At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house. When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and in action."

Acts 7:23-28

"When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites.²⁴ He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian.²⁵ Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not.²⁶ The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do

you want to hurt each other?'²⁷ "But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us?'²⁸ Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?"

2. _____ by his own people

It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. – Hebrews 11:27

3. A new life of _____ and _____

Acts 7:29-34

4. Called out to _____ against both _____ and _____.

II. How does faith form the power to go forward?

1. _____ deeply what will last.

Hebrews 11:26

He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward.

2. Embrace _____ that is involved in doing right.

He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. Hebrews 11:25

3. _____ Him who is invisible.

Hebrews 11:27

He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible.

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Intro

If we look at the most basic dynamic of human life...we will see that life begins with forward motion...a child is born with growth and expansion and forward motion to discover all that life offers...but as we experience what we call “setbacks”...we often want to step back.

When we experience **opposition...rejection...we naturally withdraw** in outward and inward ways. If such opposition and rejection **seems to rule life...we have a hard time** standing up and stepping out.

> Today...as we continue in our focus on faith...and the lessons of faith... God shows us the power of faith that **stands up when so much wants to sit down...that steps out** when you want to **step back**.

Our focus in this series is the good we can learn. As God is involved in our lives we can learn from others’ experiences—both the struggles and the successes.

- Our lives are part of a timeless, ongoing work of an unchanging God.
- God has laid down some of His initial unchanging involvement for us to build upon
- As Bernard of Chartres said so beautifully, “We are like dwarfs, seated on the shoulders of giants. We see more things than the Ancients and things more distant, but it is due neither to the sharpness of our sight nor the greatness of our stature. It is simply because they have lent us their own.”

When we ask ‘How does God want to work in my life?’... Moses’ shoulders are among the greatest to stand upon.

- Book of Genesis provides FOUR main lives in our history (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph) whereas the next four Books (Ex, Lev, Numb, Duet.) chronicle one life – that of Moses.
- He is the one brought face to face with God’s glory, given the 10 Commandments, leads what scholars estimate may have been 2 million people thru the desert, and at the transfiguration of Christ, he is one of two, with Elijah.
- He’s a character we think only Charlton Heston could play.
 - Yet we find that he is the most human of all; that in all his greatness he faced the hardest lessons of life along the way.

- He receives more commendation in Hebrews chapter 11 than any other.

Hebrews 11:23-29 (NLT)

It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command.²⁴ It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.²⁵ He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.²⁶ He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward.²⁷ It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible.²⁸ It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.²⁹ It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were all drowned.

What is commended was not his great deeds but his profound decisions...how he overcame so much...how he move forward...by seeing what was invisible.”

The book of Hebrews, is actually focused on the **power to overcome...**to endure. The book of Hebrews is actually written to one of the first groups of Christians who were facing so much opposition...rejection...that they were tempted to give up. The writer of this **tract**, this **treatise**, says in Hebrews 10, **“Remember after you first became Christians you endured the plundering of your possessions,”** and then he goes on and gives us chapter 11, which is all about how faith leads us to endurance. He actually climaxes the book in Hebrews 12 where he says, “Look to Jesus Christ who endured the cross, endured opposition; therefore, you should endure it.”

Now the word endure, the Greek word that is continually used by the Hebrews writer, is the Greek word *hypomeno*. *Meno* means to **stand or stay**. *Hypo* is the little prefix from which we get our English prefix *hyper*. What the word *endurance* actually transliterates into is to **“hyperstay” or to “hyperstand.”** To hyperstand means you put your feet down and nothing can knock you off your feet. It's like you're in a river, but you can stand in the river. **You're hyperstanding** no matter how much the river is flowing.

Now the question that comes up ... **Is it possible to be a durable person?** Is it possible to **endure?** Is it possible in a **culture tossed about by changing ideas**, in a society of **swirling relationships**, and in a society of **changing identities** to stick with something and to hyperstand? The writer to the Hebrews says yes and shows how. And he includes the example of Moses.

God wants to show us something quite powerful in realizing **what** Moses endured ...and **how** he endured.

I. The profound challenges that marked the life of Moses

Four rather profound life defining challenges...

1. Cut off from his own family

For those less familiar with the background of Moses' life... it begins when the people of Israel were living in Egypt. An Israelite named Joseph had been sold into slavery to Egypt. But God's favor was on him and his gifting rose up until he was laced in a place of high command serving the King or Pharaoh of Egypt. So when a famine came, his own people, the people of Israel were welcomed to come live in Egypt where God had shown Joseph to save food. (Described in Acts 7:17-19)

Joseph had long since passed on and there is no sense of indebtedness... just a sense of threat. New King recognized that these Israelites, who had been given choice land, were becoming a powerful people.

The Israelites were now oppressed and enslaved

Pharaoh orders Egyptian midwives to kill the newborn... they refuse.

Finally he orders all the people to throw any newborn Hebrew boys into the Nile.

The account picks up with Moses entry into the world...as summarized by Stephen in The Book of Acts.

“At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father’s house. When he was placed outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and in action.” - Acts 7:20-22

His mother senses something special about this child, tries to hide him, but after 3 months she concludes to do the only thing she can think to save his life... places him in a basket... and places him on the reed-filled edge of the Nile (the enormous though slow moving river)... His sister follows... and finds, he is discovered by none other than the Pharaoh's daughter.

Too often we capture the wonderful providence of what took place, and **miss the** pain that would be carried by such separation.

Moses' mother had been forced to make the best decision she could amid bad circumstances.

... But for Moses, only an infant, it would leave a wound of separation. This isn't the type of story he likely asked his adopted mother to tell him over and over. "Tell me the story again of how you found me abandoned in the Nile." It's the kind of start that effects a life forever.

Perhaps no words capture it more powerfully than those simple words in v. 21...

“... he was placed outside” - Acts 7:21

Other translations translate this 'He was abandoned'

→ HE WAS CUT OFF FROM THE NATURAL PLACE OF BELONGING HE WAS INTENDED TO KNOW... ABANDONED FROM HIS VERY SOURCE OF LIFE & IDENTITY.

- **Not many of us** may have been **sent down a river**, but I believe every human soul **knows something** of the **wound of separation**.

... something took place in our past... a separation from our Creator... in which we were "placed outside."

... God, like Moses mother, in love, extended the best of a bad situation

... Like Moses, who now faced life with a deep separation from his true identity & people; so we are left with a wound of separation.

By God's hand, Moses was now placed in a Position of Royalty.

- Part of the royal family in a setting where royalty made any British nation pale by comparison.
- Educated in all the wisdom of this leading civilization "... powerful in speech and action."
- If they had a show like "*Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*", this bachelor groomed for success, given to sophistication would have been the **top bill**. Finest clothes, cruised in the sportiest chariots.

→ HE HAD IT ALL... but couldn't compensate for the wound...

So the account continues...

Acts 7:23-28 (NIV)

"When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. ²⁴ He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. ²⁵ Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. ²⁶ The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?' ²⁷ 'But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? ²⁸ Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'

- At 40 yrs old ...equal to age 35-50 in our modern lifespan, he feels the pain of his separation, and he looks afresh at those who can accept him beneath all he's covered himself in.
- Moses seems to have said '**Hey, I'm home. You can love me now. I'll kill an Egyptian to prove it. Here's a way I can settle up.**'... [1]

The people didn't give him the big high five & hug... rather 'We don't need you. Who made you judge?' They resented how he seemed to assume some type of elf-appointed role with them, and they were frightened of him.

So the second crisis he would have to rise above...

2. Rejected by his own people

He is "put outside" once again... once again his soul is exposed, only now there is no home of royalty to find consolation in. He went from being able to identify with two groups...to now having no place he belonged. Suddenly, Moses in one day went from having two peoples to having no people.

This is a profound rejection... We all want to be liked... popular...

If someone says..."I don't care what people think"...they care what people think. We all do.

Often... we can **declare that we are different....** as a way to deal with **not feeling we fit.**

We can try and find our identity in some form of social independence... or it can be given a **religious script... playing the prophet...**who is rejected because of God.

I want to encourage us to be honest. We can sincerely not WANT to care about what other's think...but social acceptance is a natural part of life.

As our main text describes...

It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. – Hebrews 11:27

He probably could have just told the Pharaoh he had acted impulsively...and since royalty often treated common Egyptians poorl...it may have not been a big deal. He could have gone back to his secure place as an Egyptian. But he wasn't an Egyptian. And God was not on the side of their oppression. So he chose to become a fugitive...to walk out on the Pharaoh...likely making him something of a traitor of the Pharaoh... shunning the most powerful man on earth. By faith he left it all behind.

As far as he was concerned, his life was over. That's what it looks like to all ...

- In Exodus this section states simply, that **having headed out into this wilderness** region, **“HE SAT DOWN BY A WELL”**
- ...sitting down he would now face the most excruciating and essential period of his life; a period I believe every one of us may face in one form or another.

He lends a hand to some women at the well, is taken in by their father who gives one of their daughters (Zipporah) in marriage. So now it's "Mo & Zippy"...and need I say that few things will ground your life more than marriage. They had two sons...and that too will bring one down to earth, [2]

And he's now just trying to lead sheep as a nomadic shepherd. He was being prepared to rule all of Egypt... now he's waking up in a small far off land, saying 'Hey sheep, let's go for a walk.'

... He's as grounded, 'brought down to earth,' and this itself creates a new challenge...a new season to go forward in. It was

3. A new life of dependency and obscurity

How significant this is. The human ego can start with great hopes... gods of life...but reality comes...we are not gods...and we begin to develop various ways of managing denial, despair, and dreaming of some level of face despair...or dreamers. When life grounds us in obscurity and dependency ...it can be devastating...and liberating. Moses found freedom to embrace reality...to just be loved by God as he was.

There he was. He passed his forties. He passed his fifties. He passed his sixties. He passed his seventies. **He got to 80 years old.** There he was, a **complete has-been**, everything over, but then one day **God showed up in the burning bush** and said, **“Moses, I have a job for you.”**

When our pretense and pursuits are removed, we face the futility of our own wills, come to terms with God's absolute acceptance, then...We're prepared to hear God's calling

After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look. "Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground. I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.'
- Acts 7:29-34

You may recall...Moses didn't hear something positive in this. He didn't hear something that sounded inviting. In fact....nothing could be more challenging. **He was being called out to go**

back and face all the powers of opposition of the Egyptian Empire...and all the pain of rejection by his own people.

4. Called out to lead against both opposition and rejection.

He would argue with God... giving reasons why he was not gifted. Ultimately... it was his story.

You could sum up his life this way...Moses spent...

40 years trying to be somebody

40 years learning how to be nobody

40 years discovering what God can do with a nobody

Once again he had to overcome. This time he had to face all the opposition and rejection that was part of his life.

II. How does faith form the power to go forward?

It's important to see that the life of Moses does not capture the power to endure as simply some type of stoicism...it's not just a grit your teeth kind of life. Rather, we see how the power of faith called him into some deeper dynamics. What God teaches us through Moses...

1. Assess deeply what will last.

Hebrews 11:26

He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward.

He looked at the treasures of Egypt, and he looked at the reward he would have with God. He assessed the two, and he assessed the opportunity to be faithful to God as far more valuable than all the treasures of Egypt.

Don't miss the point. Moses made a choice.

Our problem is not that we don't make the choice. It is rather that we don't see that a choice even needs to be made. *We think we're supposed to live in Egypt!* It hasn't occurred to us to leave. We like being Pharaoh's daughter.

This is the deeper assessment that every soul should dare to make. He decided the treasures he would have in God are far greater than the passing pleasures of sin. The pleasures of sin last for a short time.

As Tim Keller describes, Moses knew... *You're only as durable as the thing you love most.*

If I love something most that can never pass away, I will never pass away. If I can love something most that will last forever, I will last forever, but if I love anything that's vulnerable, I'm vulnerable. I'm as durable as that which I love most.

Thomas Oden who taught philosophical theology at Drew University, says, “**If you choose a finite center of value, you’re always anxious. Anxiety becomes neurotically intensified to the degree that I have idolized finite values ...**”

He goes on. He says, “Suppose my center of value is my health or my political party [bad year] or sexual attractiveness or financial productivity. If my center of value is any of these things, when these things are under threat, and they always are if I think about it, I am shaken to the depths. Therefore, I try not to think in order to keep my peace.”

He was saying if you choose anything but God, anything but an infinite source of value, center of value, you’re shakable, and Moses figured that out. He says, “*I will be as durable as the thing I love most in life.* If I decide the most important thing is I have to have somebody to love me, I will do whatever it takes to get somebody to love me. I’d like to obey the Ten Commandments, but if I have to disobey the Ten Commandments to get somebody to love me, that’s the center of my value.”

You’re as durable as that person is you have banked everything on. That person is not durable. That person is a sinner. That person is frail. That person is fragile. If you do the same thing with, as he said, your political party or your sexual attractiveness or your productivity, Moses figured it out. He assessed. He thought about it.

Moses reminds us that faith is thoughtful. We are wise to think about what is lasting...what we can be rooted in.

2. Embrace suffering that is involved in doing right.

Hebrews 11:25

He chose to share the oppression of God’s people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.

He chose to suffer. He chose to be mistreated. Let’s be clear - he didn’t look for suffering, but he decided that standing on the right side was more important.

At some point we will each decide, perhaps unconsciously, if we just want the easiest path in life. Life can be guided by simply following the path of least resistance. But it is pure passivity...and may end up in a ditch.

Moses chose to stand where God was. The people he served often were ungrateful...it wasn’t fair...but he rose above reciprocity and fairness...and led. It wasn’t easy...his whole life he struggled with their grumbling...and his own resentments...BUT...he kept going forward...willing to suffer.

How?

3. See Him who is invisible.

Hebrews 11:27

He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible.

He kept his heart and mind on God.

Psalm 16

“I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”

Moses reminds us of the power to say no... to choose who was going to be. [5]

Out of such a connection, Moses made the deeper decisions that change a life...that make a life durable and powerful In fact, that is what makes Moses so powerful. He had the faith to make the deeper decision in life.

He Refused Egypt’s Fame.

[“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (v. 24).] – When you decide that the world’s fame is not something you need...you become powerful.

He Repudiated Egypt’s Pleasure.

[“He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time” (v. 25). “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” (v. 26).]

He Renounced Egypt’s King. [“By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible” (v. 27).]

He Rejected Egypt’s Religion. [“By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel” (v. 28).]

CONCLUSION:

It’s not where you begin....it’s where you finish. It’s about moving forward.

We learn from Moses...and we can see in Moses the even greater power of Christ to finish what was set forth.

We see someone in Moses. We know of somebody who left a much greater palace than Pharaoh’s, and we know somebody who came to his own and his own received him not. We know somebody who was rejected by his people, but they rejected him in a far deeper, profound, and radical way than Moses was rejected. They killed him.

We see wisdom in Moses because we see, incredibly, God’s wisdom was such that the very rejection of Moses led to the salvation of those people. We see the very defeat of this greater-

than-Moses led to the greatest triumph in history. Therefore, because we see the one who did that and who was faithful in spite of our rejection of him, we see the wisdom of God in a way Moses didn't.

We see the incredible wisdom of God on the cross, and we see here's somebody who was willing to be rejected and to be obedient to God. It meant oblivion for him, and yet redemption came out of it.

Resources: I have drawn from Jim Dethmer whom I heard capture the theme of rejection in the life of Moses at a pastor's conference and from Tim Keller's message "Moses and the Patience of Faith" (1994). As I do not speak directly from notes, but rather the general ideas developed, some sections of these notes use the entire paragraphs of Keller's thoughts, but were not conveyed as such, apart from his quoting of Thomas Oden.

Notes:

1. When Moses tries to earn acceptance by killing an Egyptian, it shouldn't surprise us. What do we do when we don't feel accepted for who we are? We seek acceptance for what we do. "Doubting they could like me, I'll see if they can NEED me."

I want to suggest that there are various ways/styles we find to face our desire to be accepted and adequate. We can tend to become a...

REACHER... new goals... successes... achievements... heights... another performance... customer... close another deal... build a bigger church

RESCUER... draws more on personal scale... I'll be certain to care & meet each person's needs... one more favor... call...

RECEIVER... I'll connect with people **by needing them**... each crisis in my life will help the connection... until they can never depart... My need & their care will become my place.

RETREATER... I won't bother anyone. Perhaps if no one really knows me I'll be safe. Better unknown than disowned. Not much of a connection, but it's all I trust in.

Moses showed courage in challenging a brutal Egyptian, but the problem is that they represent **OUR WILL BEING ACTED OUT**. Moses had a sense that God could use him, but he hadn't come to the deep realization that he was acceptable by **GRACE**, so his would & corresponding will were at work. What a great temptation there is to call our will God's will. We may have to learn, as Moses did, that **OUR WILLS & OUR WAYS** will inevitably crash.

2. The name of his first born... Gershom is a Hebrew name meaning: Exiled, alien, or bell.

3. This is a calculation word. This is the same word Paul uses in Philippians 3:8, where he says, “I had it all. I counted it all as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ.”
4. This list of rejections is drawn from Ray Pritchard