

## “Moses: The Great Trade”

Hebrews 11:24-26

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What was the best trade someone ever made? Perhaps it was when the New York Yankees traded a couple of mediocre players for a pitcher/outfielder named George Herman “Babe” Ruth. Some of you might say, it was the Dallas Cowboys who obtained multiple premium draft choices from the Minnesota Vikings for one Planer Herschel Walker. Or maybe it was when Peter Minuit exchanged \$24 worth of trinkets for an island called “Manhattan.” Or perhaps the best trade was when Thomas Jefferson purchased the Louisiana territory from France for \$15,000,000, which was 2.8 cents per acre. Folks, those are all interesting deals, yet my nomination for the best and wisest trade of all time might be one by a man named Moses.

Folks, this summer we are touring the “Faith Hall of Fame” in Hebrews 11. Today our text is verses 24-26. Here we see how Moses gives up, trades, all the privileges of being a Prince in Egypt, for the opportunity to suffer alongside the people of Israel.

What makes this such a magnificent trade is that, on the surface, it appears a very foolish choice. Why would someone trade royal robes for the rags of a slave? Yet, in the end, it becomes obvious that Moses made a very good decision.

Folks, the Lord wants us to recognize Moses’ wisdom in choosing as he did. And I think He also wants us to make the same type of choices as well. Let’s pause and pray the Lord would enable us to understand how we should apply the truth of this passage to our lives today.

**Hebrews 11:24-26 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.**

Many of us are familiar with the account of how Moses’ parents saved his life by putting him in a basket along the Nile River. There, Pharaoh’s

daughter finds him, brings him back to the palace and raises him as her own son.

That is all we really know about the first part of Moses’ life. History tells us about the great wealth and power of the Egyptian Pharaohs. They most certainly enjoyed much prestige and a very comfortable lifestyle as part of the Egyptian royalty. To give it up would seem to be an act of great folly.

Yet the writer says that is the decision Moses makes “when he was grown up.” Moses was about 40 years old when he made this choice. This is not a child, a rebellious teenager, or even an idealistic 25-year-old making this decision. A mature, 40-year-old man chooses to trade in all the privileges of Pharaoh’s court, so that he might identify with God’s people, the people of Israel.

The writer of Hebrews wants to make sure we understand the reasons why Moses is willing to make this trade. First, Moses understands that what he has in Egypt is not really worth a whole lot. He is maybe like a guy who is willing to trade in his car because, even though it seems to be running fine, he has this sense that the engine could go anytime.

Moses knew he would likely enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin for a rather short time. We have no reason to believe that Moses lived a particularly sinful life. Sexual promiscuity and alcohol may have flowed freely in Pharaoh’s palace, but we don’t know to what extent Moses indulged in those things.

What we do know is that it would be wrong, would be a sin, for Moses to continue to enjoy the comforts of royal living, when God was calling him to identify with the people of Israel. He realized that even though it was a lot more fun to live as a prince than a slave, the fun would never last.

Perhaps by age 40, Moses, like Solomon, realized that being a prince was not necessarily a fulfilling life. Harry and Meghan, and his parents Charles and Diana, are clear examples that royalty and wealth do not equal happiness.

Perhaps Moses knew a number of wealthy, but miserable Egyptians and decided he was not giving up all that much. As someone said, "There must be more to life than having everything." Yet, even if Moses was still having a great time at the palace, he knows that if the cost of enjoying pleasure is disobeying God, it is not a good deal. Moses would certainly become a very miserable fellow if he chooses to ignore God's command. It might happen sooner, or it might be later, but any happiness he experiences while rebelling against God would be only temporary.

The second reason Moses is willing to give up his life as a prince is because he knows there is great value in following the Lord. He views it as a tremendous bargain. **Hebrew 11:26a He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt.** Or, as the NLT puts it, **11:26a He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt.**

I am not sure what value Moses put on the treasures of Egypt. Yet, whether he has a high or low regard for material wealth, he knows that experiencing the reproach of Christ is even more valuable.

He realizes that fellowship with the Lord is, as Psalm 19 says, "more to be desired than gold, yest, more than much fine gold." He knows that all the treasures of Egypt are like cheap costume jewelry compared to knowing the Lord. Moses, like the man in Psalm 84, realizes it is better to be a lowly servant among God's people than it is to be a ruler over a pagan nation like Egypt.

Now the phrase "the reproach of Christ," or "suffering for the sake of Christ," is interesting because Moses lived about 13 or 1400 years before Jesus. This verse reminds us that what happens in the Old Testament is really the first part of the story we read in the New Testament.

In Hebrews 13:8, we are reminded that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Thus, to experience suffering because of one's loyalty to God or to God's people, was really for the sake of Christ.

Obedying the Lord would not be easy or glamorous and would result in disgrace from a human standpoint. But it would be a reward. A portion

of that reward would be enjoyed by Moses in this life. Yet, he knows, like Abraham and the patriarchs before him, that it will be after death, in the next life, where the bulk of that reward would be received.

So, knowing the advantages of remaining a prince of Egypt are very temporary, and knowing the benefits of obeying the Lord would eventually be very great, Moses makes an extremely wise trade and chooses to do what God has called him to do. He sides with the people of Israel against their Egyptian oppressors. Many around him would have thought Moses was a fool. Yet, as missionary Jim Elliot would say, "Moses is no fool to give up the things he could not keep, to gain the things he would never lose."

Friends, I think the Lord has important lessons for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through this text. Let me just highlight two of them.

**First**, we need to strive, like Moses, to value what we should. That is what enables someone to make good trades. We should regard the reproach or suffering for the sake of Christ, as of greater value than all the treasures and pleasures this would have to offer.

Bob Barker hosted "The Price is Right" TV game show for 35 years, from 1972-2007. The signature line from that show was "Bryan Fagerstrom, come on down. You're the next contestant on 'The Price is Right.'" One of the little games that used to be played on the show was, "What is worth more?"

There would be two items – a gallon of laundry detergent and a pencil sharpener – and the contestant would have to choose which one sold for a higher retail price. Some people were really good at that game, and then sometimes there would be a contestant who thought a box of Cheerios was worth more than a pair of diamond earrings. That would be a male contestant, of course.

Friends, in many ways, life is a "Price is Right" game. A game that we play for keeps. We have to decide how much we value certain things. We have to make choices about what is really important, about what we are willing to give up to obtain something we desire more.

Some folks, for example, believe nothing matters more than new worth, how much money one has. Thus, they do everything they can, even lie and cheat to make a few more bucks. They believe, “Whoever said money can’t buy happiness, doesn’t know where to shop.”

They are, however, making a big mistake. As H.L. Mencken said, (he was a journalist in early 1900’s who had a great way with words) “The chief value of money lies in the fact we live in a world where its value is overestimated.” And folks, it is certain that someday each of us will move to a world where our bank accounts are worthless. American currency has no value in either heaven or hell. People whose families and churches suffer because they are so busy “working to make money” need to remember that no one on their deathbed ever said, “I sure wish I would have spent more time at the office.”

Many more folks I know seem to value pleasure even more than wealth. They realize money cannot make them truly happy, so they spend money on things they think are fun or amusing or exciting and will make them feel good. It may include TV, movies, reading novels, watching or participating in all sorts of sports, or playing Bingo. It might include spending a lot of money on cabins, boats, snowmobiles, and Caribbean cruises. Now, don’t get me wrong. These things are not wrong in themselves, but they are of very limited value.

It is far more important that I be committed to Jesus Christ, that I be a good husband and father, that I be a faithful church member, that I demonstrate integrity and compassion as I relate to other people, than it is that I have a lot of fun in life.

In fact, if I never win another pickle ball game, or if the Green Bay Packers never win another football game, that is okay, if I am focusing on honoring the Lord Jesus and serving the people around me.

Now friends, I believe what I just said in theory, and many of you do as well, but it can be hard to put it into practice. For example, let me ask those of you who are parents or grandparents a question: What do you want your children to be like? You have two options.

Option A – Jimmy is 12 years old and is getting straight “A’s” in school and he made the little league all-star team for the third year in a row. He has many friends who are always inviting him over to their homes. But, umm, Jimmy does not like to go to church. He says all the Jesus stuff is just for losers.

Or option B – 12-year-old Johnny struggles to get B’s and C’s. He did not make the little league all-star team. He was a second-string outfielder who still struck out more than anyone on his team. Johnny doesn’t seem to have a lot of friends, but one thing he loves to do is go to church. At home he loves to sing the songs from the worship services. A few years ago, he made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and for the past few months he has been trying to read one chapter in his Bible every day.

Here’s the question: Would you rather have a son or grandson like Jimmy or one like Johnny? I think many of us, in all honesty would say, “Yes, I would rather have a son like Johnny. It is more important to me that my son or daughter follow the Lord than be successful in other things.”

But there is another question: Do your actions reflect that priority? Do you focus your time and energy on encouraging and helping your children or grandchildren in their walk with Jesus? Or do you devote more time and energy to encouraging them to make sure they make the honor roll and all-star team?

Folks, Moses realized that what the Lord offered him was much more valuable than anything the Egyptians had. It is because Moses’ values were good that he made the right trade. Choosing against the Lord would have reflected distorted, foolish, and wrong values.

Whenever we choose against the Lord, when we choose to put anything ahead of Him, it reflects distorted, foolish, and wrong values. Let the Lord help you to value what you should. May you treasure Jesus and His kingdom more than anything else in your life.

**Second**, we should find encouragement in God’s promise to reward those who trust and follow Jesus. Many people think Christians have to make all sorts of sacrifices to be faithful to Jesus Christ.

Maybe you think, “Oh, I hope I never have to give up everything to follow the Lord like Moses did.”

Folks, I remind you of what David Livingstone, the great missionary to Africa once said, “Over the years I have given up many things, but I have never made a sacrifice.” In other words, what some might consider sacrifices are really investments.

Remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 19:29** **And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.**

You see friends, the gal who chooses not to buy a new car this year, so that she will have more money to send to a global partner who is sharing the gospel with people who have never hear about Jesus, is not making a sacrifice. She is making a wise investment. The guy who comes back two days early from vacation to take the Junior High’s Sunday school class on a fishing trip is not making a sacrifice. He is making a wise investment. The dad who turns off the football game to read a Bible story to his children, is not making a sacrifice, thought it may feel like it. No, he is making an investment. A very wise investment.

A folks, God wants you to make good investment. Sometimes we think we should do the right thing, just because it is right, and not because we will benefit in any way. Yet, that is not the view of the Bible. God frequently promises rewards. And part of the reason He does that is to motivate us to trust and seek to do what honors Him in every part of life.

Theres is nothing wrong with wanting to be happy. In fact, the Lord encourages us to strive to find joy in life. But He reminds us that treasures and pleasures can never bring true, lasting happiness. That comes from trusting, following, obeying, and serving Jesus and receiving the rewards He promises for both this life and in Heaven.

C.S. Lewis once said, very important words, *“It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling around with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us. Like an ignorant child*

*who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a vacation at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”*

Friends, the Lord wants us to strive for the rewards He promises those who, by God’s grace, trust and follow Jesus. Whenever we get discouraged, whenever we don’t think it is worth it to trade our own comfort to do what is right and pleasing to God, we need to remind ourselves of God’s greatness and goodness, and of His wonderful promises and find encouragement in them.

A few weeks ago, we mentioned missionary Jim Elliot, the man who said, “He is no fool to give up the thing he could not keep, to gain the things he would never lose.” A couple years after he said that he and four of his friends were murdered by the Auca Indians.

Let me remind you of the story of the other missionary whose story is told in the song, “He Is a Fool.” In the 1924 Paris Olympics, Eric Liddell, of Great Britian, won the 400-meter race. Liddell’s best event was the 200-meter race, but he chose not to run in that contest because he didn’t believe the Lord wanted him to compete on Sunday.

This story was made famous in the film, “Chariots of Fire,” which won an Oscar for best picture way back in 1982. Yet, this is a story that Christians today need to be reminded of frequently. In a culture that often worships successful athletes, we need to remember that obeying God is more important than any sporting event.

We need to realize that whenever something stands between us and following the Lord, whether it be the treasures of Egypt, a chance for an Olympic medal, or anything we own or like to do, that thing needs to be traded away.

It would be very foolish to try to hang on to something we cannot keep and miss out on gaining those things of true value that God offers, things which we will never lose.

Moses chose wisely when he gave up the treasures of Egypt and embraced what the Lord had for him. May God grant us the grace to choose wisely as well.