

Hebrews

Choosing Faith

Hebrews 11:23-26

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INTRODUCTION:

We all have to make choices in life, and often those choices result in significant consequences. In 1938, Joe Schuster and Jerry Siegel sold all their rights for a comic book character that they had invented for \$130. The character's name? Superman! In 1955, Sam Phillips sold to RCA Victor Records his exclusive contract with a young singer named Elvis Presley, thus forfeiting royalties on more than a billion records.

Bad choices!

ILLUSTRATION:

Abortion has been widely practiced in China for decades. They introduced a "one-child policy" 1979. If you became pregnant after having your first child, it had to be aborted. Millions of women a year were forced to terminate "illegal" pregnancies. Many would choose to abort their first pregnancy if it was a female.

To raise its plummeting fertility rate, China enacted the "two-child policy" in 2016, then the "three-child policy" in August of 2021.

Abortions have also remained high, even after the one-child policy was relaxed and the government criminalized sex-selective terminations. An average of 9.7 million terminations were performed per year between 2014 and 2018, according to Reuters, citing data from China's National Health Commission.

If the parents should decide to keep an "illegal" child they are required to pay a fine of more than \$31,250 USD under China's strict family planning laws. To decide to keep a baby would produce short-term suffering.

All Stand and Read Scripture.

Hebrews 11:23-26 (NASB95)

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

Prayer

Our text tells us about two good choices that greatly affected world history. The first choice was relatively routine at the time. Two slaves in ancient Egypt chose to defy the king's edict to kill all male Hebrew babies by hiding their son. That son turned out to be Moses, the great deliverer of his people. The second choice was that of Moses himself, and it was more difficult. He chose to give up his position of influence and wealth in the Egyptian court in order to side with the enslaved people of God.

Both choices were motivated **by faith** and their lessons have eternal consequences for us. **Both** choices teach that...The choice to obey God by faith will result in short-term suffering, but also in eternal blessings.

BODY:

I. The Consequences of Moses' Parents Choice to Obey God by Faith.

Hebrews 11:23 (NASB95)

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

Moses was a descendant of Amram as the father and Jochebed as the mother. Since the Jews often called ancestors from many generations back, "father" or "mother," we can't be certain that these were the immediate parents. We do know, however, that the oldest child in the family was a sister, Miriam.

The Jews had gone from the privileged position they enjoyed in Egypt under Joseph to the despised position as hard labor slaves. Because of his fear that the Jews were multiplying too rapidly, Pharaoh had issued the command to throw all newborn Jewish boys into the Nile River.

Moses was born when this "**edict**" from Pharaoh was in effect. The couple considered him to be a "beautiful" son. Since most parents would think that **every** child they have is "beautiful," there must have been something exceptional about Moses. Since Scripture forbids us from making judgments based on external appearance, Moses' parents must have seen something in this baby boy to make them hope that he would be the promised deliverer of his people. So they had a very important decision to make. Since they thought that God had destined him for such a great role, they defied the king's edict and hid him for three months. That choice, based on faith, entailed short-term suffering, but eternal blessings.

A. The Short-term Suffering.

Verse 23 says, "**they were not afraid of the king's edict.**" So why did they hide their son if they were not afraid? Trusting God does not mean taking reckless chances. While they did not fear the king's edict in the sense that they defied it, they no doubt **did** fear not only for the life of their baby boy, but for **all** of their lives. If Pharaoh's guards had caught them, they would have executed the entire family for insubordination to the king. So their "**by faith**" choice to hide their son exposed the entire family to the risk of death.

Imagine how carefully they had to live! If the baby cried at any time of the day or night, they had to muffle him while they tried to calm him down. They could not risk having their children play with other children in the neighborhood, for fear that they would let

something slip about their baby brother. If Pharaoh's police roamed the neighborhood looking for newborn baby boys, the family sat in silent terror.

The choice to obey God by faith always involves a certain amount of up-front risk.

Remember, this couple did not know the end of the story when they made their decision! They all could have been slaughtered because of what they did. Although it would have been agonizing to throw their baby boy into the river, they **could** have rationalized it by saying, "What else could we have done? We probably would have been caught and our whole family would have died. He would have lived a miserable life as a slave, like the rest of us. We just have to submit to the government authorities!"

But instead, they chose to obey God and risk the consequences. They feared the unseen God, who is the author of life, more than they feared the king's edict of death. If someday our government mandates, as the Chinese government did, that we must abort all babies beyond one per family, as God's people, we would have to risk obeying God by defying the government. It could result in imprisonment, loss of income, or other hardships, as many Chinese Christians can testify. The choice to obey God by faith often results in short-term suffering.

B. The Eternal Blessings.

Their son grew up to be the greatest leader in Jewish history. He delivered the Jews from slavery. Under divine inspiration, he wrote the first five books of the Bible. The seemingly **small choice** to save this one little life had **huge** consequences for world history! We may never know what eternal blessings will flow from our choice to obey God by faith. But His blessings flow through such choices.

The author states that **faith** was at the heart of this important decision. God often works through the faith of unknown parents or grandparents to raise up an unusually gifted leader to accomplish great things for God. Except for their well-known son, this couple would have lived in obscurity as lowly slaves. But God used their courageous faith in a mighty way.

As parents, we should live by faith and ask God to make our children "beautiful for Him." At first, like Moses' parents, we have to protect them from this evil world. We teach them His ways and pray for their salvation. Eventually, we have to launch them, trusting God to take care of them. Even after Pharaoh's daughter rescued Moses from the river, his parents must have prayed for many years, "Lord, keep him from the many spiritual dangers in Pharaoh's court and teach him to follow You!" Obey God by faith and entrust your children to His care. He may use them mightily for His kingdom!

II. The Consequences of Moses' Choice to Obey God by Faith.

Hebrews 11:24-26 (NASB95)

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

A. The Short-term Suffering.

When Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to be identified with God's people, he chose to suffer for his decision.

Pharaoh's daughter had rescued Moses from death, adopted him as her own son, and raised him in the splendor of the palace. Even if, by some miracle, he had even survived in his natural family, he would have been doomed to a difficult life as a slave. Instead, he grew up enjoying the most luxurious living conditions imaginable.

Luke gives us a glimpse of his living conditions.

Acts 7:22 (NASB95)

22 Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.

Imagine the hurt feelings and misunderstanding that must have swept over Pharaoh's daughter when Moses chose to walk away from everything that she had provided and identify himself with these "slave laborers"! Pharaoh must have been outraged when he heard about it: "How could he leave us after all that we have done for him!" When you choose to follow Jesus Christ, which may involve walking away from the education and comfortable lifestyle that your family has provided for you, you will suffer the pain of alienation and being misunderstood.

As the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses enjoyed a position of honor higher than almost anyone else in Egypt. When he identified himself with the Jewish slaves, he became the object of contempt and scorn. As a family member in Pharaoh's court, Moses enjoyed whatever pleasures anyone could seek. He lived in luxury. He ate the best food available. He wore the nicest, newest clothes. If he had wanted, he could have enjoyed the pleasures of the most beautiful women in Egypt. He had wealth to buy anything he wanted or to live without working for the rest of his life. But when Moses chose to obey God by faith, he instantly lost it all!

It is not necessarily sin to enjoy a position of honor and the comfortable life that wealth provides. Joseph enjoyed both while following God. **But I want you to consider this very important lesson.** When God called Moses to give it up all of his prestige and lead Israel out of bondage, at that point it would have been **sin** for him to continue living as he was. Also, the Bible does not deny that sin brings **passing** pleasure. If it did not, we would not be tempted by it! But in the end, it brings **eternal misery**. **Do not be deceived by temporary earthly pleasures!**

As the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses ran in the top circles of Egyptian society. He knew everybody who was anybody. He frequently ate at the king's table. People sought out Moses as an influential man. But he chose to give up all that status and live among these "wretched" slave-laborers!

Imagine the gossip in Egyptian high society! "He did **what? Unbelievable! What an idiot!**" Ridicule is a powerful thing. People go to great lengths to cover up embarrassing mistakes that would cause them shame but Moses **chose** a course that he knew would bring outrage against him!

Why would a man knowingly choose such suffering? Did he **enjoy** the pain and suffering? Was he insane? No, actually he was quite shrewd. Like the man who sold **everything he had** to buy the pearl of great price, Moses gained something better:

Matthew 13:45-46 (NASB95)

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶ and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

B. The Eternal Blessings.

He chose “**to endure ill-treatment with the people of God.**” They were not much to look at—a sweaty bunch of raggedly dressed slaves. They would later give him a lot of trouble, grumbling about the conditions that he led them into. Some would challenge his leadership. But in spite of all the problems he experienced with them, they **WERE the people of God.** It was a far greater blessing to endure ill-treatment with them than to live in the worldly, superficial society of Pharaoh’s court.

Even though the church has some difficult people in it, it is far better to journey toward heaven with God’s people than to live among the self-centered people of the world!

He considered “**the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.**” **The reproach of Christ** is a startling phrase! It was probably very similar to what Christ endured when He was despised and rejected by the world.” How much Moses knew about the promised Anointed One, we cannot know for sure. But we know that Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus’ day when He was sacrificed on the cross for our sins.

John 8:56 (NASB95)

⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.”

Moses spoke of the Lord Jesus, Who would be the ultimate Prophet, through Whom God would speak His words of salvation. In the same way that Moses was the first and most important prophet, who brought His people out of the land of Egypt and through whom God spoke during their long history, so the coming Prophet would be fulfillment of God’s plan of redemption. He would save His people from their sin and restore to them the joy of their salvation.

Moses also knew of God’s promise to Eve, that one from her seed would bruise the serpent’s head. He also no doubt knew that the sacrificial system pointed ahead to a Redeemer. And so Moses considered that any reproach that he endured for identifying himself with God’s Messiah was far more valuable than the worldly treasures he could amass in Egypt.

John tells us that the ways of the world are not of God.

1 John 2:16 (NASB95)

¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

The major way to combat the temptations of world is to see the infinite value of possessing Jesus Christ. When you see what a treasure Christ is, everything else fades away.

Our text says that Moses “**was looking to the reward**” If this refers to some earthly reward, Moses was badly mistaken. His earthly “**reward**” for giving up the treasures of Egypt was to wander in the barren wilderness for 40 years with a bunch of complaining people. The reward that he looked for was the same as all of the “hall of fame saints”.

Hebrews 11:16 (NASB95)

¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

So...how was Moses able to do what he did? It was faith in the promises of God! Faith was the only thing that enabled Moses to choose God and heaven above the treasures of Egypt. He believed God and His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But, we would be mistaken if we thought that he just closed his eyes, shut off his brain, and took a giant leap of faith.

He made this choice after “he had grown up”. Stephen tells us in Acts that he was 40 when he made the decision. Perhaps he had lived in Pharaoh’s court long enough to become thoroughly nauseated with the superficiality that he saw every day. Moses carefully weighed **in the balance** what the world had to offer on one side and what God had to offer on the other side. The world’s side was momentarily attractive, but had no eternal value. God’s side was momentarily difficult, but satisfying in the long haul. Moses chose to believe God and reject the world. So must everyone who wants to go to heaven.

1 John 2:15 (NASB95)

¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

The crisis that pushed Moses over the line to renounce Egypt and choose ill-treatment with God’s people was when he saw the Egyptian beating one of the Hebrew slaves. Moses’ response was not an impulsive reaction that he later regretted. He had been considering, weighing, the greater riches of Christ against the temporary treasures of Egypt. So when the moment came, he acted decisively by killing the Egyptian and taking his stand with God and His people. That critical choice affected not only Moses, but many generations of Jews after him.

Your choice to trust Jesus Christ affects your eternal destiny, and it also can have far-reaching consequences for your children and their children, as well as for many with whom you will have contact just as it did with Moses.

Faith causes one to pin their faith on eternity. In the short-term, Moses had to endure ill-treatment with a bunch of refugee slaves in the wilderness. But weighed against eternity he realized that any ill-treatment suffered was worth the reward. Paul stated it this way...

Romans 8:18 (NASB95)

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

If you want to believe the gospel, you must weigh the passing, momentary pleasures of sin against eternal punishment. Weigh momentary affliction against eternal joy in heaven. Then choose!

Conclusion:

What about you? Have you made faith’s choice? Do you believe what God has said about sin and about the Savior? Have you weighed in the balance the treasures of Egypt against the greater riches of Christ? Have you chosen to renounce the world and trust Christ?

What a Day That Will Be!