

*By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>25</sup> He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. <sup>28</sup> 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. (Hebrews 11:24-28)*

### **Does Your Faith Change You?**

Did you ever wish that you could throw a football like an NFL quarterback or that you could come up with the stuff that the most gifted engineer in your company does? Did you ever wish that you could write music that everyone wants to download? Most of us aren't the star quarterback or the brilliant innovator at work or the genius artist that everyone oohs and aahs about. But if you could, what would you do to become that person? What would you sacrifice to change and be like them? This morning, God shows us a man that we should all want to be like. He was Moses, the greatest Old Testament prophet. For most of us, being like Moses would require profound changes. Changes like that are possible. But they don't come from natural talent. They don't come from training or getting an advanced degree. Spiritual changes result from faith making an impact on our character. My friends, **does your faith change you?**

#### **I.**

Faith won't make you a world class quarterback or a brilliant engineer. When God comes through the gospel and plants faith in you, it changes your attitude and the way you view the world. It changes what's important to you. You see that in Moses. Moses was born an Israelite when God's people were slaves in Egypt. He was born during the darkest period of Israel's slavery. The Pharaoh was afraid of how fast the Israelites multiplied, so he ordered that all male Israelite babies be thrown into the river to drown. Moses' parents hid him for three months. But you know how babies are. They grow very fast. They make noise. It wasn't possible to hide Moses anymore, so his mother made a basket and waterproofed it so that it would float. And she put her son into it and released this tiny ark into the Nile River. Moses' older sister stood on the bank and watched what happened.

What did happen? The daughter of the king of Egypt came down to bathe and she found the basket. She opened it and that wonderful maternal instinct that God designed in the hearts of women kicked in. She knew Moses was an Israelite child. But she didn't care. She raised him as her own. He was probably never in line for the throne, but he was a member of the royal family. He could've lived out his days in luxury. But what did Moses do? God says, **"He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time."**

Moses turned his back on power and privilege and joined the slaves at the bottom of society. That must have been incomprehensible to the Egyptians who knew him. But Moses wanted to be known as a child of God. The book of Hebrews says, **"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."** Fifteen centuries before Jesus was born, Moses trusted in him and looked forward to the day when he would come. He considered it a badge of honor to be despised as a worshipper of a slave's God, because he knew that unbelievers always despise those who worship the true God. Moses put God first because he knew that this life only lasts so long. No matter how much garbage he had to take for following the Lord, no matter how many friends and relatives turned against him, when he saw Jesus face to face, it would all be worth it.

Faith changed Moses. My friends, **does your faith change you? Does it change what you value?** It's easy for us to talk about something that happened three and half thousand years ago. It's easy for us to cheer for Moses because he made the right decision then. If I were good at wrenching your emotions, I bet I could even get a few tears to flow by conjuring up visions of Moses' adopted mother begging him to come back to the gods of Egypt. But what if we fast forward from Moses to Livonia in 2009? Do we follow the example of this great hero of faith?

God calls us to identify ourselves with the people of God. We do that when we stand up here on our confirmation day and swear to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from the truth. Being a member of this congregation is a public confession that we are one with the people of God. But do we try to keep that confession as quiet as possible? What about when our relatives want us to give in a little bit and be reasonable? What about when a boy friend or a girl friend pressures us to do things we know we're not supposed to do because we love them? What about when a spouse or a mother in law doesn't understand what the Bible teaches and gets angry because we won't commune with them or let them commune here? Are we willing to stand with the people of God?

Are we willing to be ridiculed in a society that considers commitment to doctrine and practice to be a clear sign that you're a fanatic? Do we regard disgrace for the sake of Christ to be of more value than all the riches of America? Are we willing to lose our jobs, our inheritance or our place in our family because people who can hurt us don't like what we believe? Or do we try to distance ourselves from what goes on here? Do we portray it all as "pastor stuff" and give the impression we'd be a whole lot more comfortable if our pastor took a less "hard line" approach?

Moses sets a pretty tough example to follow. By faith Moses did all these things. Does our faith change us? Does it change what is important to us and put Christ first – ahead of family, ahead of wealth, ahead of respect from people around us? Or do we have to admit that there are times when you can barely tell that our faith is alive? I feel that way sometimes. God's law is razor sharp and many of you probably are either making excuses in your minds for why this shouldn't apply to you or your hearts are sagging in shame. We're sinners. And God deserves better from us.

But, my friends, faith is not what we do. Faith is trusting what Jesus has done for us. It's looking forward to the reward he gives to every believer, even imperfect ones like us. Moses is not our Savior. He's an example of faith in our Savior. But our faith is about Jesus. Only Jesus was perfect in trust. Only Jesus was perfect in putting God first in his life. Only Jesus never failed to give testimony to God no matter what the cost to him personally. Jesus did all that for us. He replaced our weakness and our trembling. In God's eyes, we have all been perfect. And in exchange for that perfection which he gave to us, Jesus took our sin. He took every time we downplayed our faith so as not to look foolish in front of other people. He took every time we valued the respect of people we know over God's Word. He took every compromise we ever made. He took it all to the cross. He let sinners nail him there. He hung there while his Father poured all the hell that every human being deserves on him. He died there for us. And then he rose. When he rose, he told us that all that sin is gone forever. God has forgiven it all.

Faith knows that. Faith finds peace in what Christ has done. And then faith changes us. When we know what Christ has done for us, when we know what Christ is saving for us in heaven, then we value what God has done. And we value what God commands. We put Jesus first. We treasure all that he has said. We even make sacrifices to share his gospel. My friends, that faith is what God gives us in Christ.

## II.

Moses didn't make himself a great hero of faith. God made him that. It didn't happen all at once. When Moses was a young man, he went to see his own people and he witnessed their suffering. And he stood up for them. He killed an Egyptian who was beating a slave. With that action, he crossed over to their side.

But Moses had to flee from Egypt because Pharaoh wanted to kill him. And Moses himself says that he was afraid when he realized his actions were known. Yet, the book of Hebrews says, "**By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.**" So was he afraid or wasn't he? The answer is yes and no. Like you and me, Moses was a believer who still had an unbeliever in his heart. That unbeliever was afraid. But when Moses left Egypt, his faith was still real. When the time was right, God appeared to him. God who is invisible came in the form of a burning bush. Then for years after that, God showed himself to Moses. On Mt. Sinai, God revealed more of himself to Moses than any human being had ever seen in this world – at least since Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden.

So Moses went back and he challenged the most powerful ruler on earth and demanded that Pharaoh free God's people. Now, during all that history, there were moments of weakness and the Bible records some of them. But Moses continued to proclaim the message God gave him. God overcame his weakness – starting at the burning bush where Moses begged God to send someone else. God made him an example of courage and conviction when all the world stood against him.

By faith, Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood. When Pharaoh wouldn't let Israel go, God sent nine plagues – nine disasters that devastated Egypt. But still Pharaoh refused. So God sent the angel of death to kill the firstborn in every home in Egypt. But God told Moses what he was about to do and how they could avoid it. They had to kill and eat a Passover lamb. And they had to paint its blood on their doorposts. That was it. Moses had to trust in God that lamb's blood would spare their children while the children of Egypt were dying. My friends, if it were us, don't you think we'd try and get some kind of extra insurance? We might do what God said and paint the blood on our doorposts. But don't you think we'd try something else too – running away or digging a cellar or something? Moses did nothing. He simply trusted and courage born of faith saved God's people.

My friends, **does your faith change you? Does it free you from fear?** I've talked with many people who suffer from anxiety. What is anxiety? It's fear. It's a constant, low level fear that something bad is going to happen. Sometimes, you can point to something specific – fear that you'll get fired, fear that your kids will get hurt at school, fear that you'll look stupid in front of everybody. But sometimes, you can't put a finger on it. You're just afraid. About everything. All the time.

Faith is the only cure for fear. God is control. God loves you. How much? He sent his one and only Son to die for you. You matter that much to him. He promises that he will give you all things. Who's going to keep you from getting fired? Who's going to watch over your kids at school? Who's going to keep you from looking stupid? God who sent his Son to die for you. And if he allows any of those things to happen to you, he has a reason. He loves you. Every time you go through something that makes you feel more anxious, he is working to teach you to trust in him.

Even the most terrifying things of this life cannot hurt you permanently. The worst disease, the most painful death, the most terrible loss you can think of – all these things do happen. And they're painful. But if God sends you through them, he does that because that is what is best for you. When you wrestle with that promise and doubt it, you're no different from Moses, who wrestled, too. But where do you find relief? Not in trying to make the good outweigh the evil. You can't do that because you can't see all that's really happening. The answer to fear is Christ's love. Jesus knew you before he and his Father created this world. And he loved you then. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit called you by name before the world began. When the time was right, they sent the gospel to you and gave you faith. They have watched over your life every day until now. And they will stand by you every day you live here. You will live with them forever. Trust them. It's the only answer to fear.

Faith changes us. It's a gift only God can give. He gives it in only one way: through the gospel in the word and in the sacraments. Like Moses, you will have days of weakness and difficulty, days when your faith needs to be renewed. Come and hear the gospel. Come and have your faith strengthened. Come and God will change you. Amen.