

**Old Testament Examples of Saving Faith
Hebrews 11:23-31**

When we are saved by grace through faith or in other words when we transfer our trust to Jesus Christ alone for our salvation we have in effect given up control of our lives to Christ. Our old life is now behind us and our new life in Christ is now before us.

And what is the reward for having done this? In the present we enter into a personal relationship with God through Christ, which makes it possible for us through prayer to continuously enter into His presence and into the blessedness of His presence. But this present reward pales in comparison to the future reward that is awaiting us when we enter our eternal dwelling place that has been prepared for us by Christ in heaven.

So is entrusting our lives to Christ and living our lives for Christ a good thing? Absolutely! But let us not be so naive as to think that our faith will not be tested. God has promised to us that our faith will be tested. But let us not be afraid for if our faith is indeed genuine we will continue, even in spite of those trials, to trust God and His word for that is what genuine, saving faith will do.

And hopefully this thought will come alive for us this morning, as we once again return to our study of the Book of Hebrews. **So what have we learned so far about this book?**

We have learned that it was written to a group of Hebrew believers, living in Rome, who under a great persecution were actually considering leaving Christ and the gospel of Christ, so that they might return back to Judaism or to some form of it, knowing that if they did so, they would no longer have to suffer the things that they were suffering, as a result of their identification with Christ and His gospel.

So how did the author respond to this threat in the Book of Hebrews? He emphasized various superiorities of Christ in **Hebrews 1:1-10:18**. And then based on those superiorities, he proceeded to exhort them in **Hebrews 10:19-25**, to warn them in **Hebrews 10:26-31** and to encourage them in **Hebrews 10:32-39**.

So how did he encourage them? He encouraged them by declaring to them, that he believed that both he and they did in fact possess genuine faith or in other words that kind of faith that though tested will endure. So what did the author do next?

The author, after confidently stating that he believed that both he and his readers possessed faith, then challenged his readers to walk by faith using Old Testament examples (Hebrews 11:1-40).

And where do we see these examples of faith listed for us? We see them in **Hebrews 11:1-40**. And it is this portion of Hebrews we are presently examining. So what have we seen so far?

In **Hebrews 11:1** this author provided a working definition of faith. In **Hebrews 11:2** he made the point, that it was through this kind of faith, that he had just defined, that the "**men of old**" had gained approval from God. In **Hebrews 11:3** he then in essence linked the faith of these men of old, who had gained approval through their faith, to his reader's faith. The author then began to provide a list of these Old Testament examples of faith. So where did he begin?

The author began by highlighting examples of faith from the time period that preceded the **flood** (Hebrews 11:4-7). And who were those examples? They were Abel, Enoch, and Noah. So who were the next Old Testament examples of faith that this author chose to highlight?

The author then highlighted examples of faith from the time period of the **patriarchs** (Hebrews 11:8-22). So who were these examples of faith? They were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. And this is where we left off. So what did the author do next? And this question brings us to our text this morning.

MESSAGE

The author after highlighting examples of faith from the time period of the patriarchs then chose to highlight examples of faith from the time period

surrounding the **Exodus** (Hebrews 11:23-31). These examples are listed for us in **Hebrews 11:23-31**. So what was the first example? It was this:

"By faith" Moses parents chose to **hide** him for three months after his birth (Hebrews 11:23). So let me now read for you **Hebrews 11:23**. And this is what it says, "**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 (Or in other words Pharaoh's edict).**" So did Moses parents, as an expression of faith, choose to hide Moses for three months after his birth, based on this verse? Yes!

So what led up to this particular expression of faith? The patriarchs of Israel, as this author has already pointed out in **Hebrews 11:8-22**, had lived their lives "**by faith**" or in other words more specifically they had lived their lives, based on the promises of God to Abraham, as recorded for us in **Genesis 12:1-3**. But though they "**by faith**" had lived their lives based on those promises they never realized those promises. Or in other words they had never taken possession of the land that they had been promised. They had not become the great nation that they had been promised. And neither had they become the blessing to the world that they had been promised.

The patriarchs of Israel had been given wonderful promises through Abraham but none of those promises had been realized during the lifetime of the patriarchs. In fact, during the time period of Jacob, as the patriarchal period was coming to a close, God providentially moved every descendant of Abraham or in other words every Jew, from the land that they had been promised to Egypt.

So what happened after they were relocated? The Jewish people while living in Egypt grew exponentially in number and so much so that the Egyptians began to view them as a threat. And what was the Egyptians response to this perceived threat? The Egyptians enslaved the Jews. And how long did that enslavement last according to **Genesis 15:13** and **Acts 7:6**? It lasted for 400 years.

So did this enslavement of the Jewish people actually result in the Egyptians feeling less threatened? No! In fact according to **Exodus 1** we find the Egyptian pharaoh, near the time of Moses' birth, trying to counter this ever-increasing perceived threat, by seeking to find a way to kill all the Jewish

male newborns. He first tried to use the Jewish midwives to do this but when that failed, he through an edict commanded the Egyptian people to cast any Jewish male newborn that they became aware of, into the Nile River so that they might drown.

And it was into this environment that Moses was born. So what would his Jewish parents do? Would they honor the edict or not honor the edict? They, in spite of the danger, chose **not** to honor the edict. So why did they do this?

Moses parents chose to hide their son and not honor Pharaoh's edict because they, after seeing how **beautiful** he was, became convinced that God had not only favored their son but that God also wanted them to protect their son (Hebrews 11:23 cf. Acts 7:20).

This is reinforced in **Acts 7:20** where Luke, recording the words of Stephen, declared that when Moses was born, he was not only seen as beautiful in the sight of his parents, but also seen as beautiful in the sight of God.

So why did Moses parents hide Moses? They hid Moses because they believed that is what God would have them to do and in doing so their faith triumphed over their fear of any consequences that they may have had to endure. So what happened next?

The parents of Moses after those three months, knowing that they could no longer keep him hidden, devised a plan. They placed him in a wicker basket and then placed that basket amongst the reeds that grew along the banks of the Nile. This is recorded for us in **Exodus 2:3-4**. Now obviously this would appear to us, as perhaps a very desperate plan, but to them I don't believe it was. I believe that Moses parents truly believed that God had favored their child, and just as God had enabled them to protect him, God would now enable someone else to protect him. And were they right? Yes! And who was it that God supplied? He supplied the daughter of Pharaoh!

According to **Exodus 2:5-10** the daughter of Pharaoh discovered the wicker basket with Moses inside, amongst the reeds. And how did she respond to this beautiful Jewish newborn? She took compassion on him, and eventually chose to raise him as her son in the house of Pharaoh. Amazing!!

And did Moses prosper in the household of Pharaoh? Yes, absolutely! And in what ways did he prosper? According to **Acts 7:22** he not only became educated in all the learning of the Egyptians but he was also described as a man who, while living in the house of Pharaoh, had become powerful both in words and deeds. So had Moses prospered in the house of Pharaoh? Yes, he had prospered but because of the sufferings that were being imposed on the Jewish people by the Egyptians he, in spite of all his personal prosperity, was not a peaceful man but rather he was a very troubled man, which now brings us to Moses 2nd expression of faith.

"By faith" Moses chose to identify himself with God's people and with their **sufferings** rather than with the pleasures of sin and the treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:24-26 cf. Exodus 2:11-14, Acts 7:22-29).

So let me now read for you **Hebrews 11:24-25** and see if this is not so. And this is what it says, **"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."** So, based on these verses, did Moses choose to identify himself with the sufferings of God's people rather than with the pleasures of sin and the treasure of Egypt? Yes!

So when did this choice manifest itself? When Moses was nearly 40 years of age, and still living in the house of Pharaoh he made a decision to visit his brethren. This story is recorded for us in **Exodus 2:1-4**. And what happened on this visit? He saw an Egyptian abusing a Hebrew slave and he killed the Egyptian.

So why would he do such a thing? He did this because he believed, based on **Acts 7:22-29**, that the Jewish slaves would view him as their deliverer and would rise up with him to overthrow their Egyptian masters.

And is that what happened? No! This is not what happened! And why didn't it happen? It didn't happen because Moses' plan was not God's plan. Moses most certainly must have believed it was God's plan, but it was not God's plan, he had acted presumptuously.

But even though we can find fault with Moses for his presumptive behavior as recorded in **Exodus 2** and **Acts 7**, the manifestation of his faith as described in **Hebrews 11:24,25** is truly exemplary and so much so that the author even added an additional commentary in **verse 26**.

(1) So what was the author's first comment in **verse 26** about what he had just said about Moses' faith? He said this, "**... considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt...**" So what does this mean? The author of Hebrews saw Moses' choice to identify himself with the sufferings of God's people as a decision to identify himself with the sufferings of Christ. Why? When God's people suffer, Christ suffers. What did Jesus say to Paul on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians in **Acts 9**? He said this, "**Why are you persecuting Me.**" Christ feels the pain of God's children!

Therefore, when Moses choice to identify himself with the sufferings of God's children, he was also in the mind of this author choosing to identify himself with the sufferings of Christ, which this author stated that Moses considered to be of greater value than the treasures of Egypt.

(2) And why would he consider those sufferings to be "greater riches"? This is explained by this author in his second comment at the end of **verse 26** when he said this about Moses choice, "**... for he was looking to the reward.**"

So what is this reward? "The reward is the eternal reward that is awaiting all those who in their trusting of God are willing to **obey God** in spite of whatever difficulties they may have to suffer (Hebrews 11:26 cf. 11:10,16).

This eternal reward has always been the hope of all those, who in spite of sufferings, have been willing to listen to God and to obey God. This truth has already been pointed out to us earlier in this chapter, in respect to Abraham in **Hebrews 11:10** and then in respect to all of the patriarchs of Israel in **Hebrews 11:16**. And this was the hope of Moses and this is why he was able to choose what he chose in **verses 24-25** and to endure the consequences of that choice.

So what were the consequences of having killed the Egyptian? Moses, according to **Exodus 2:14-15**, out of fear of Pharaoh fled from Egypt to

Midian. And where was Midian? Midian was East of the Red Sea in the country that we now know as Saudi Arabia. And how long did he stay there? He stayed there for 40 years.

But then what happened? God spoke to Moses out of a burning bush and commanded him to return to Egypt. And for what purpose did God ask Moses to do this? He wanted Moses to deliver His people from their bondage and to lead them, out of the land of Egypt to the land that He had promised them through Abraham. All of this is recorded for us in **Exodus 3:1-9**.

So was Moses concerned about his readiness to do this thing? Absolutely! He had been extremely humbled through the events of his past 40 years. But God patiently persuaded him that He would be with him and His power would be so clearly manifested through him that Pharaoh would not only be willing to let them go but would even eventually compel them to go. This is clearly stated in **Exodus 6:1**.

So did this actually happen? Yes, it did. **Exodus 12:31** tells us that after God, through Moses, had displayed His power through 10 different plagues, that Pharaoh came to Moses while it was still dark and said to him, "**Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel...**" So based on these words that God told Moses would happen did happen.

This now brings us to the third expression of faith that this author chose to highlight. And what was this third expression? It was this: "By faith" Moses left Egypt without any fear of Pharaoh (Hebrews 11:27). Let me read **Hebrews 11:27** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, "**By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.**"

The first time he left Egypt, when he fled to Midian 40 years earlier, Moses was very much afraid of Pharaoh but NOT this time. Why? It was because Moses had just very successfully endured multiple confrontations with Pharaoh, during the period of the 10 plagues, while keeping His eyes on God. This is why he was able to leave Egypt for this second time without fear.

So what was the next expression of faith that we find in this text? It was this: "By faith" Moses "kept" the Passover (Hebrews 11:28 cf. Exodus 12). So now let me read for you **Hebrews 11:28** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, **"By faith Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them."**

So what is this referring to? Just before the 10th plague, which was the **"death of the first born,"** God, according to **Exodus 12:1-11,** gave specific instructions concerning a particular feast, called the "feast of the Passover" that the children of God were to celebrate on the night of the 10th plague.

And what were they instructed to do? They were to kill a lamb and put the blood of the lamb on the two doorposts and the lintel of their houses. And then they were to eat the lamb along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. And they were to eat it in haste. And why were they to eat it in haste?

They would have to eat in haste because God had told Moses that they that very night were going to be delivered from Egyptian bondage and be told by Pharaoh to get out of Egypt. And through what means did God tell Moses this would be accomplished?

He told Moses that He was going to send an angel that night throughout the land of Egypt. And that angel would be looking for blood on the doorposts and lintels. And when he saw blood he would pass over that house but if he did not see blood he would kill the firstborn of that household. This is what he told Moses.

And did Moses believe God? Yes! This is why Moses "kept" or in other words "instituted" the Passover per the instructions of God. And this expression of faith now leads us to the next expression of faith.

"By faith" the Jewish people **passed through** the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land unlike the Egyptians who were later drowned (Hebrews 11:29 cf. Exodus 13:17-14:31). Let me now read for you **Hebrews 11:29** and see if this is not so. And this is what it says, **"By faith they (the Jewish people, God's covenant people) passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned."**

So how did this happen? Pharaoh after he had told Moses to take the Jewish people and go following the 10th and final plague, changed his mind according to **Exodus 14:5** and ordered his army to pursue them and it didn't take them long to catch up to them.

And when the Egyptian army caught up to them it certainly did appear from the standpoint of the Jewish people as well as from the standpoint of the Egyptian army that they were indeed trapped. But from the standpoint of God they were not trapped at all.

So what did God do? He told the Jewish people through Moses to stand by and see the salvation of the Lord and it was then, according to **Exodus 14:15**, that Moses at the urging of God commanded the people of God "**to go forward**" toward the water. And did they do that? Yes! they did.

From a sure human standpoint what they had been asked to do seemed ridiculous but by faith they did it. And what happened? The sea parted and they walked through as on dry land. And what happened to the Egyptian army? They followed them and were drowned.

So now the children of God under the leadership of Moses only had to do one more thing and that was to claim possession of the land that they had been promised unfortunately because of certain sinful actions recorded for us in **Numbers 10:11 - 14:45** that entrance had to be postponed 40 years.

But they did finally enter and they began to take possession of the Land and what was the first obstacle that they encountered when they entered the land? The walls of Jericho! And this leads us to the next expression of faith.

"By faith" the walls of Jericho **fell down** after the children of God circled the walls for seven days (Hebrews 11:30 cf. Joshua 6:1-21). Let me read for you **Hebrews 11:30** and see if this is not so. And this is what it says, "**By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.**" Hopefully you are very familiar with the details of this story that is recorded for us in **Joshua 6:1-21**.

It is a very interesting story. The children of God probably could have, humanly speaking, overcome this city by virtue of their sheer numbers,

based on the fact that **Exodus 12:37** tells us that when they left Egypt that there were 600,000 men besides women and children. But God had a different plan. And what did he tell them to do?

He told them to march around the city one time for six consecutive days along with 7 different priests each carrying a ram horn. On the seventh day they were to circle the city 7 times and after the 7th time the 7 priests were to blow on their 7 ram horns and the people were to shout and course you know what happened. The walls of the city, after the children of God, as an expression of their faith in God, had obeyed this seemingly illogical command, fell down. And what was the last example of faith from this time period surrounding the exodus?

It was this: "By faith" Rahab the harlot having welcomed the spies did not perish with the other inhabitants of Jericho (Hebrews 11:31 cf. Joshua 2:1-15, 6:25). So now let me read for you **Hebrews 6:31** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, **"By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."**

Again, hopefully you are familiar with the details of this story that is recorded for us in **Joshua 2:1-15**. In this story, we are told that even before the children of Israel had crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land after their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, that Joshua sent two spies to enter the land. And Rahab, by faith, in spite of the danger to herself protected those two Jewish spies.

And why did she do that? She feared God more than she feared the people of Jericho. And did God reward her for this expression of faith? Yes! He did.

CONCLUSION

When we are saved by grace through faith or in other words when we as an expression of our faith transfer our trust to Jesus Christ alone for our salvation, we have in effect given up control of our lives to Christ.

But it will not be easy to live this life for our faith will be tested. But don't be afraid. Our faith if it is genuine will not fail or in other words we will continue to trust Christ and what He has said to us and we will be rewarded.

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May each of us by God's grace continue to fight the good fight of **faith** until that day when we enter into the reward that has been promised to all those who have placed their faith and trust in Christ alone for their salvation.

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