

29—Hebrews 11:23-31—Looking for the Reward to Come

I. Introduction

- A. It is common these days for doctors' offices to separate the parents from their kids. We always keep an eye on this when we go. These doctors would be glad to throw our children into the river of evil ideas if we are not there to make decisions for them.
- B. We encounter not just an evil world of ideas but evil practices in Egypt. We will see these parents and others risk their lives with unshakeable love because faith looks beyond the present to the coming reward.

II. Main Point

- A. Living by faith looks to the reward

III. Outline

- A. Living By Faith Results in Costly Decisions
- B. Living By Faith Results in Miraculous Outcomes

IV. Exposition

- A. We are still in the exhortation section of Hebrews that throws multiple lifelines out for these believers to persevere in faith to the end. These real life examples of those who trusted the Lord through hard and dangerous situations was exactly what these believers needed to see as they faced costly decisions. They can only make sense of the situation if there's hope of something better to come. That's why I think living by faith looks to the reward and if that is certain then living by faith also results in costly decisions now.
 - 1. This new section of those who lived by faith begins with the parents of Moses. Verse 23 gives us their response they made in the face of danger. The first one—by faith Moses was hidden.
 - a) This story is recorded in Exodus chapter 2.
 - b) He needed to be hidden because the pharaoh feared the Hebrew people. He said in Exodus 1:9-10 "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."
 - (1) Because of this fear, he ordered that all male children be thrown into the river at birth.
 - (a) We aren't the only nation to have a culture of death for babies.
 - (2) The decree first went out to the midwives but they feared God and would not cast the baby boys into the river.
 - (a) I might add that God blessed these midwives greatly for their risky decisions out of fear of the Lord, not Pharaoh.
 - (3) Because they did not carry out the decree of pharaoh, he then ordered all his people to do this—Exodus 1:22 Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."
 - (a) So, that's the decree the Hebrew people are living under in the land of Egypt and that's an awful way to live unless you have hope in something better.
 - (4) That's where the preacher picks up the story when he says—By faith, Moses when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents.
 - (a) These parents already had a daughter named Miriam and a son named Aaron.
 - (b) This decision is not exactly like what we saw last week with Abraham where God commanded him through a messenger to do a certain thing and he obeyed a command.
 - (c) The decision Moses' parents were facing is a decision of love for their son.
 - i) Doesn't love cover a multitude of sins? Is not love the explanation of the law? Yes!
 - (d) There was no messenger from God telling them not to throw their son into the river. However, the ruler over them has commanded any citizen of Egypt to do so and they have a decision to make.
 - i) It was pure evil to demand the genocide of every Hebrew baby boy but it was next level evil to give authority to any Egyptian to kill these babies.
 - (1) It sounds like the same kind of edict Haman order in the book of Esther.

- (2) It's surprising that Pharaoh's daughter did not obey his command.
 - (3) In fact, everything about this scene is marked with God's sovereign work behind the scenes to accomplish his purposes for salvation.
 - c) There are two clear reasons given to us for why these parents hid their son.
 - (1) The first is because they saw that the child was beautiful.
 - (a) It says the same thing in Exodus. The word used in Exodus 2 is the same word used in Genesis 1 when God looked at what he had made and declared it good.
 - (b) When Stephen talks about this scene in Acts 7, he says that he was beautiful in God's sight.
 - (c) There was more going on here than just a cute baby. The Unseen God was behind this.
 - (d) Moses was to be God's means of saving the people from Egypt and therefore the Lord's plan cannot be thwarted.
 - i) God's plans for all his people cannot be thwarted either. He is a good Father.
 - (2) Secondly, it says they were not afraid of the king's edict.
 - (a) The question arises—if they did not fear the edict then why did they hide him?
 - (b) They could have thrown a party and shown off their son to all the neighbors but for three months they kept his birth a secret.
 - (c) The explanation might very well be that of course they were afraid. They willingly put their lives at risk. But fear did not determine their actions. Faith did.
 - i) Love for the Lord exercises faith in risky situations.
 - (d) By faith, we do what is right in the face of evil.
2. The next example of faith is that of Moses' own life. When he was grown up, by faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.
- a) We know from Exodus that she had compassion on him which seems so unlikely.
 - (1) The scene makes no sense if God is not behind this. To prove that he is working behind the scenes, more unlikely things happened when Miriam asks the daughter if she can call someone to nurse the child who was Moses' mom. She raises him until he is of age and then takes him to live with Pharaoh's daughter.
 - b) But even more unlikely is that Moses would give up such a status.
 - (1) Riches. Power. Safety. Privilege. He would not only be a free citizen of Egypt instead of a Hebrew slave, but he was part of the royal family.
 - (a) Some people chose to stay in such a situation and work within the system to bring about change.
 - (b) They could influence changes in the law of the land. They could be a voice on the inside.
 - (c) But even that is not without risk. However, there is always a possibility that you become one of them.
 - (2) These Hebrew Christians need to see these examples more than anything. They are tempted to pick up their previous heritage for the promise of immediate comfort.
 - c) To further clarify the message, there are two ways that describe Moses' denial.
 - (1) The first is instead of choosing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he chose to be mistreated with the people of God.
 - (a) Instead of safety, he chose suffering.
 - i) That sounds strange doesn't it? And it doesn't make sense if this is all there is. If you are to merely live for comfort and safety then sure...stay in the comforts of that powerful kingdom.
 - ii) However, if the promises of God are true, then it seems Moses and many others lived for more than just temporary comforts.
 - (b) He had in his grasp real enjoyments of all that royal life in Egypt offered.
 - i) Yet, see what faith does? By faith Moses opens his hands and lets go of those fleeting pleasures of sin.
 - (2) The second thing which is very similar to the first is this—he considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt.

- (a) He traded comforts for chastisement...wealth for poverty
 - i) He had a different King and a different hope.
 - (1) He wanted the greater prize, not the lesser.
 - (2) He modeled Christ in that he become poor so that others might become rich—rich in faith.
 - (3) The people of God needed a leader and God’s sovereign and gracious plan would not be thwarted.
 - (3) But how can we live this life of faith when life is so hard or so easy?
 - (a) The reason the parents of Moses and Moses himself can live by faith rests in the fact that they were looking to the reward.
 - (b) You will not have suffered in vain in this life. Indeed, it has great purposes for us even in this life. But people who have faith in the Lord Jesus have their eyes set of much higher things than this world can offer.
 - (c) However, our idols are not carved images but rather comfort.
 - i) It is very possible that our comforts will cause us to compromise.
 - ii) Is the reward of Christ sufficient to wait for?
3. The next act of faith is given to us there in verse 27—by faith Moses left Egypt.
- a) We are faced with a similar issue here as with his parents. It says he left Egypt not being afraid of the anger of the the king.
 - (1) Well, why did he leave if he wasn’t afraid?
 - (2) Again, I think we must continue to wrestle with the tension we often see in this and in ourselves. Fear is a very natural response that comes on us to which we have little control over.
 - (a) Maybe he had absolutely no fear. No sudden impulse in his heart. That’s not most people’s natural response.
 - (b) However, fear must not determine whether we are going to have faith in the Lord.
 - i) The greater fear was to fear the Lord—the one who can cast both body and soul into hell.
 - ii) We must have our fear in right place or we will respond wrongly.
 - (c) Like Moses we must endure as it says there in v. 27—as seeing him who is invisible.
 - (d) Faith sees the unseen God. The same God who was at work in his parents to bring about the salvation of Moses. His parents did not see God as he protected that baby floating in a basinet covered with tar in a river. I can think of countless reasons why that should not have gone well and the Lord saved them from them all.
- B. Well, we’ve heard how by faith the people of God make risky decisions in the face of evil. Now we are going to move to our second point—living by faith results in miraculous outcomes.
- 1. In the order of the events in Exodus, we now come to the final example of Moses’ faith there in verse 28—by faith Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood.
 - a) Here this was a direct command of the Lord to keep the Passover.
 - (1) The last plague from God was the killing of all the firstborn in Egypt. The people had many opportunities to trust the Lord.
 - (2) The Hebrews were instructed to slaughter the lamb and sprinkle the blood on the doorpost of their house.
 - (3) When the Destroyer came through, if the blood was there by faith then he would passover that house.
 - (a) Again, I’m certain that fear swept over them.
 - (4) But the evidence of faith was the putting of the blood on the door.
 - b) By faith, he kept the passover so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.
 - c) This is a picture of how it will look in the end for those who have faith.
 - (1) The sting of death is swallowed up by faith in Christ.
 - 2. This next example of faith includes all the people of God who were in Egypt—there in verse 29 it says by faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land.

- a) This scene spelled out for us in Exodus 14 details an unexpected route.
 - (1) Pharaoh finally heeded the demand of God—Let my people go. However, it wasn't long before he regretted that decision.
 - (2) But before Pharaoh decided to pursue them, the Lord was leading his people to an impossible situation that would require faith.
 - (a) It says this in Exodus 14:1-4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, 'They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD." And they did so.
 - (b) In other words, God put them in this situation so that they could not get out without exercising faith.
 - i) He hemmed them in that he might display his glory.
 - b) So, there they are with nowhere to go. The Red Sea on one side and the Egyptian army on the other.
 - (1) So, the next day, God pushes back the sea like walls of water on each side.
 - (a) Let's not forget that we are talking about a million plus people with their livestock and belongings.
 - (2) By faith, they cross the Red Sea as on dry land.
 - (3) Can you imagine taking hold of your kids' hands and walking through a sea with walls of water on each side?
 - (4) Again, fear of drowning or fear of being attacked by the Egyptian army loomed over them.
 - (a) Sometimes the Lord puts us in situations where the exercising of faith is easy.
 - (5) When the Egyptians attempted to do the same, they were drowned.
 - (a) What was different? Why did they perish but the Hebrews were saved?
 - i) Faith.
 - ii) Faith results in miraculous outcomes that cannot be explained apart from God's work over creation. He created the world and world obeys his commands—even water.
 - iii) So too—if you will trust in the Lord to the end, you will be saved!
 - (1) Death will be reversed for those who had faith.
3. Another miraculous outcome is given to us there in verse 30—by faith the walls of Jericho fell down.
- a) Continuing the sequence of events, he bypasses the wilderness wanderings. But one note we need to hear—those who started by faith and crossed the Red Sea did not continue in faith. They were not there marching around the walls of Jericho.
 - (1) In fact, we've already heard about them in Hebrews 3:16-19 For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.
 - (a) They wanted the fleeting pleasures of Egypt rather than the eternal inheritance of the Promised Land.
 - (2) The failure of some did not determine the failure of all.
 - b) The people of God find themselves in the promised land and their first battle plan is one of the most absurd battle plans ever.
 - (1) They are told to march around the city for seven days and the priests were to blow the trumpets and then the people were to shout.
 - (2) That's it. That was the plan. And the walls fell down.
 - (3) We all know that doesn't happen apart from God's invisible hand at work to knock down those walls. But the people gave evidence of their faith when they followed the instructions of the Lord.

4. And now we've come to the last example of faith there in verse 31—by faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish.
 - a) This is an appropriate ending for today. She may be the highest example of faith in this chapter.
 - b) The story of Rahab the prostitute began when the spies enter the land to investigate Jericho.
 - (1) In Jericho they came to the house of Rahab and lodged there.
 - (2) This matter was told to the king of Jericho.
 - (3) He sent word for Rahab to bring the men out.
 - (4) But she took and hid them.
 - (5) She sent the guards who came looking for them on a wild goose chase while the men lay on the roof under stalks of flax.
 - (6) It's important to hear what Rahab said to the men concerning why she did that—Joshua 2:8-13 ⁸ Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof⁹ and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. ¹² Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign ¹³ that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.”
 - (7) By faith, she hid the spies and did not perish with those who were disobedient.
 - (a) They all had heard about the Lord but only Rahab responded in faith.
 - (b) She did not perish because her faith was evident when she received the spies with peace.
 - (c) And she received the spies with peace because she wanted the reward of salvation. And she got it!
- C. By faith, salvation comes to those who believe to the end...no matter who you were.
1. Rahab never lost her title of prostitute but she was named among these because of her faith.
 2. She's also named among the genealogy of Christ in Matthew chapter one.
 - a) Her son was Boaz who fathered Obed by Ruth who fathered Jesse who fathered David the King.
 3. You can be named among God's family no matter what you have been.
 4. God's grace is not limited to those who get it all together first. If you will but repent of your sins and place your faith in Christ you will be saved.
 5. Do you want the fleeting pleasures of sin or the pleasures forevermore with Christ?
 6. The question is, will you look to the reward to come or the fleeting pleasures of comfort now.
 7. Do not give of the greater for the lesser. You will not be disappointed.