

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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## Memorable Choices: Moses - Hebrews 11:23-28

Empowering people with choice has been a political tool which has been well used in recent times. Choice has been given in regard to schools, hospitals, supply of gas, electricity, etc. Often the choice has benefited a minority whereas the majority continue as before, utilising what is near at hand. In one sense this is choice made available whether we want it or not.

Recently my wife and I went into a carpet shop to select a new carpet for the hall in our house. The range of carpet samples available from which to make a choice was bewildering. We came to the conclusion that you can have too much choice at times!

There are choices which affect our lives over which we have little or no control. But there are situations which are down to you and me as individuals. Our marriage partner is one of those choices of major importance. University and a career are others which have a major impact on our lives. All that I have mentioned so far have an impact on life but not eternity. There is a choice which we can make which affects our lives both in time and eternity. Commitment to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest decision a person can make. It is one of those choices available to every person in the world, but where the default is classed as refusal. Let me quote from John 3:16-18, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

This is a choice which brings a person out of refusal into acceptance. It is a situation which has no neutral or middle ground choice.

Let us consider Moses, the person who is the subject for our talk. During his life, choice was both taken on his behalf as a child and, later, he made his own choices. We see with Moses, how at times a choice made may have unexpected consequences. But, like all those who make a choice for God, then no matter how difficult life seems to be, God will faithfully help. Let us read from Hebrews 11:23-28 which covers the subject for today. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them."

In verse 23, we find faith and choice with the parents of Moses. Moses was a persecuted child from the moment he was born. The law of the land of Egypt stated that all male children were to be killed as soon as they were born, see Exodus 1:16. This was a law that legalised genocide that would have eventually led to the extermination of the whole nation. With this background, Moses' parents hide their son who was born. As with every parent, they saw that he was beautiful and their normal instinct was to preserve and protect the child. Initially hidden in the home, eventually he was hidden at the river side. I am sure you are familiar with the story of Moses, placed in an ark made from bulrushes and put into the river. God's care becomes evident when Moses is found by the daughter of Pharaoh and is adopted and brought up as an Egyptian, see Exodus 2. This was a privileged life for Moses as he became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds", Acts 7:22.

However, it seems that Moses had not forgotten his origin and nationality. Had this something to do with those very early years when his own mother had nursed him for the daughter of Pharaoh? In those few early years, his mother may well have taught him things which he only came to understand later in life! How precious are the early years of children when their character is so impressionable and needs to be carefully nurtured?

In verse 24 we see the faith of Moses coming into action, rather than that of his parents. "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter". This was the first choice that Moses made which

may not have been easy. We have already considered his training and education and, no doubt, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter his career prospects would have been extremely good. Was Moses being ungrateful?

Let us consider for a moment the words of Paul to Christians at Rome, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God", Romans 12:1-2.

Paul writes about total commitment to God as being something which is both reasonable and expected. God has the first claim on His creation, mankind included, and especially those who believe. The clash of interest is between God and this world. We need to make a choice just as Moses did in his day. God does not want Christians to be moulded into conformity with this world which is against God. It is not a matter of Moses, or indeed ourselves, being ungrateful for education, career or anything else connected with this world. It is a matter of placing the issues of time in their right place when considering God and eternity. What is God's will for my life?

Moses in a sense was to change occupations, from whatever his adopted mother had planned to what God had planned, not to be someone of importance in the land of Egypt but to be God's chosen leader to bring Israel out of Egypt and take them to a new land of God's choice.

We may not be called to give up our current occupation but we are called to place God first, to be people who are different and by the way we live give a clear testimony to the saving grace of God that has come to us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 25, the choice Moses made to refuse his place in Egypt's society and to take his place with God's people who were suffering as slaves would not be taken without careful consideration. In the United Kingdom we do not see the sharp contrast that accepting Christ as Saviour implies. Sadly, for many, there seems to be little or no difference in life style. Satan is active in two ways, one to try and stop people from responding to the message of salvation and he does this in many ways. But Satan also seeks to hinder the development of a Christian to his or her full potential for God. Don't rock the boat, blend in with society, continue as you were, it's not your job to evangelise, and so on are some of Satan's tricks. Sadly, in some countries for a person to accept Jesus as Saviour immediately brings exclusion from home, family, society and sometimes physical persecution.

One thing that Moses left behind when he made his decision was "the passing (or temporary) pleasures of sin". Egypt was a country no different to many countries, both then and now. Sin might seem to be a pleasure, no matter what form it may take, but at its heart is disobedience to God and pleasing self.

In verse 24 we see the value that God places on the choice made by Moses; it is equated to that which Christ felt when living in this world. It was of the same character as the opposition that our Lord Jesus experienced. This is what it means to be fully committed to Christ in a world which hated Jesus and hates Christians, see John 15:18 and 17:14. Are you, am I, afraid of being hated? Let us not worry about what the world might think or do for, "He who is in you (that is, the Holy Spirit) is greater than he who is in the world (that is, Satan)" see 1 John 4:4. The Spirit of God is not only living in Christians as the guarantee of future blessing and present salvation but He is able to help, direct, guide and keep through the difficulties of life. We have a God as Father who cares, a Saviour and Lord who intercedes, and the Holy Spirit who will keep.

So Moses looked beyond the present circumstances to see the reward that was to come and to be enjoyed. Faithfulness to God brings its own reward. For Christians, reward is connected with Christ. When He enters into His kingdom then the rewards for faithfulness will be enjoyed by those who are His. But you might say, "Did not Moses fail to enter the 'Promised Land?'" Yes, that is true in that he only saw the greatness of the land from the mountain Nebo, then he died. However, when we consider the transfiguration scene in Matthew 17, we find Moses talking with the Lord Jesus. I would think that such an event was far greater than walking across Jordan into the land that God had promised. At the same time, historically, Moses learned that words and actions in haste and not according to God's mind caused him to miss the joy of physically entering the "Promised Land". But Moses has a heavenly reward which far exceeds what any earthly blessing might have been. Christian, we have heavenly blessings which far outweigh any earthly blessing and advantage which we might seek to achieve in this world. There is a great need to get our priority right.

Eventually, at about the age of 80, Moses in faith leaves Egypt altogether. Moses leads out the people on their journey to a far better country. Verse 27 states that "Moses forsook Egypt". Moses abandoned Egypt in the same way we might leave a sinking ship, for there was no possible benefit in remaining there any longer. God often uses Egypt as a picture of this world and its godless nature. Again, Christians are challenged as to whether in their hearts they have abandoned this world. The world will not change but thankfully, through the Gospel of a full salvation, people can be

changed and rescued. As we live in this world, let us live in such a way as to evangelise those we are in contact with every day.

The next phrase in verse 27 shows that Moses was not afraid of the king of Egypt. The ruler of this world is Satan and he is described as the prince of the power of the air. As already mentioned, Christians have living in them the Spirit of God who is greater than the one in this world. The problem with being afraid is that some times the fear is greater than the reality. That boldness in testimony is greater than the opposition. Why should we be afraid when such a great God is our God?

The faith of Moses took him beyond the realm of sight, "for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Moses remained firm in his commitment as it was based, not on the temporary and passing things of this life, but on the everlasting foundation of the invisible God. The faith of Moses grasped hold of the God who can only be seen by faith. People without faith cannot see God. Hebrews 11:1 states, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This was true for Moses as it is true for the believer today. God had given Moses a limited view of Himself when Moses was placed in the cleft of a rock, see Exodus 33.

In a more glorious way, the Christian sees the invisible God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. The disciples of old saw God as they looked upon Jesus and they saw God in that special way of relationship as God the Father. In John 14 the request was made by Philip, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father." As Christians, we wait until we reach heaven to see the Father. But now we know Him by faith, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

In order for Moses and the nation of Israel to leave Egypt, God brought about one last judgement upon the Egyptians. Before the judgement came, a way of salvation was provided. This salvation became known as "the Passover", when God passed through all the land of Egypt and slew every first born son in the houses of the Egyptians. But, in every home of the people of Israel the Lord did not enter because the blood was on the door posts and the lintel. The provision was that a lamb had to be taken and when it was killed and the blood applied, then that whole house, especially the first born son was safe. Every family of the nation of Israel had a choice to believe God or not. It is the same today: do we believe God or not? It is not a lamb from a flock of sheep any longer, but it is the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have we applied the blood to ourselves and made sure that we are eternally safe. Faith to do what was right was required by Moses and Israel as it is required by people today. So verse 28 states, "By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them."

We all have choices to make, day by day. For the most part, those choices are simple, straight forward and are not life threatening. But, from time to time, we are called upon to make choices which are of a more serious nature and we have mentioned some during this radio talk. I re-emphasise that the most challenging of choices and, by definition, the most serious is to determine whether or not God is true and the need to choose Christ as Saviour and Lord. Having accepted the Lord Jesus as Saviour, then the next choice is all about Lordship. Who rules my life?

Thankfully many are accepting the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and every Christian would rejoice along with the angels in heaven over sinners repenting. The Lord said in Luke 15:7, "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."

The second part of salvation, if I may speak in this way, is that Jesus is both Saviour and Lord. As mentioned earlier, Romans 12 speaks about presenting "[our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is [our] reasonable service." It is a choice between being a Christian with no testimony and the alternative of being a Christian with a testimony. Matthew 5 states, "We are the light of the world". Am I shining as a bright testimony in this world of spiritual and moral darkness?

So we come to the daily challenge: is the Lord Jesus governing every part of my life - in business, social, church, family or any other aspect of my life? Can I truly say that the Lord Jesus would find approval in all that I do and say? When Paul wrote to the Philippians in Philippians 1:20-21, he could say of himself, "According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul desired that the Philippians should live the same kind of life as himself when he wrote to encourage them in verses 9-11 and said, "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." Paul recognised that it was possible to live a full and committed life for the Lord Jesus Christ. Such encouragement cries out to us from the pages of the Bible that we too might live that same kind of life.

Moses chose to suffer with the people of God. Are we willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with other Christians or are we looking for the easy option?

John Bunyan, the well known writer of Pilgrim's Progress, one of sixty books that he wrote, also wrote the following poem concerning the person who makes the choice of being a pilgrim for God in this world. This poem was set to music and was at one time widely sung. The following verses capture the sentiments of choice and commitment that have always been necessary for a Christian who sees the world as God sees it!

*He who would valiant be  
'Gainst all disaster,  
Let him in constancy  
Follow the Master.  
There's no discouragement  
Shall make him once relent  
His first avowed intent  
To be a pilgrim.*

*Who so beset him round  
With dismal stories,  
Do but themselves confound  
His strength the more is.  
No foes shall stay his might,  
Though he with giants fight:  
He will make good his right  
To be a pilgrim.*

*Since, Lord, Thou dost defend  
Us with Thy Spirit,  
We know we at the end  
Shall life inherit.  
Then fancies flee away!  
I'll fear not what men say,  
I'll labour night and day  
To be a pilgrim.*

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