

Seeing the Unseen

Hebrews 11:24-28

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As a teenager, he was abruptly taken from his home in chains, never to return. He would spend the rest of his life away from home, in a foreign land. But he knew that one day, his distant descendants, generations yet to be born, would leave this foreign land of Egypt and return home to Israel, the Promised Land. The land God had led Abraham to. The place where God promised Abraham and his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob (later named Israel) that through them, all nations would be blessed! A Rescuer would come, from their descendants. Delivering them, not from Pharaoh, not from an earthly power, but from the powers of darkness. Delivering them from the power of sin, and death, and the devil. Delivering them to the Eternal Promised Land.

Joseph was so certain of this, that he even put it in his will, that when God would deliver his people from Egypt and lead them back to Israel, Joseph's bones were to be dug up and taken with these future Israelite descendants, back to the Promised Land, the place where Jesus would one day live and die and rise, blessing all nations as their Savior from sin, death, and the devil, bringing them to their eternal rest; their eternal home!

Seeing the unseen, Joseph believed. *"By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones."* (Hebrews 11:22)

Four hundred years have now passed since Joseph was in power in Egypt. His father Jacob, or Israel, and his family had been saved. They had escaped death from the seven-year worldwide famine, and had made their home with Joseph in Egypt. Their family, that had come from Israel to Egypt, numbered seventy in all. Four hundred years later, the family had grown a bit. No longer were there seventy in the family. Now, they had grown to over two million! Thus, was fulfilled God's Promise made centuries earlier to their forefather Abraham.

Genesis 15:7-16 He also said to [Abraham], "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it." ... Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. ... In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here"

Which brings us from Joseph to Moses. From Genesis, the writer of Hebrews proceeds to Exodus, and dwells at length on Moses. Not only because so much of faith appears in his life, but also because his readers looked up to Moses and esteemed him so highly.

These Jewish background followers of Jesus, who the book of Hebrews is written to, are being tempted by their Jewish families and friends and neighbors, to stop this foolishness! To come to their senses. To get out of this cult that's focused on Jesus. To return to Judaism. What did they have in following Jesus, but a criminal who was crucified and rumored to come back to life. What kind of faith was that!

Judaism had what? Moses, and all the ritual commandments given by God Himself, through Moses. Judaism had the 10 Commandments. They had the feasts. They had the festivals. They had the laws to live by; to order their lives rightly; daily habits that connected them with God. Judaism has a real, down to earth, faith, that you could touch and taste and smell and relate to.

How does the writer of Hebrews respond to this temptation to turn from Jesus, back to Judaism? He takes Judaism's very Moses, the great leader of their faith, and shows how Moses himself is one of the greatest examples of faith in Jesus! Let the readers therefore, these Jewish background followers of Jesus who are being tempted to turn away from Jesus and back to Moses and Judaism, let them follow Moses, namely this *faith* of his. They will then cling to Christ, as Moses did. As Jesus says in John 5:45-46, *"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."*

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Why would he do that? Think of what he was giving up! What must it have been like to be Pharaoh's grandson. You know the job of a grandparent, right? To spoil their grandchildren. What must it have been like to have Pharaoh as your grandpa, the wealthiest, most powerful grandpa in the world! Talk about being spoiled! Moses lived the life that most of us only dream of!

But he gave it all up. Why? Why would he do something like that? Moses saw something else. Something more important than all the riches and power of Egypt. Something more valuable than all the gold and silver and precious jewels in the world! Something worth living for. Something worth dying for!

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God, than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

Moses gave up everything; all the pleasures sin could afford! For what? In order to be mistreated. Why would he do that? What gain is there in being mistreated? What does mistreatment have that sinful pleasures don't? All the pleasure sin can afford, is what? *Temporary*. It doesn't last. It never does. The pleasures of sin are fleeting. Gone. And then what? What's left after the pleasures of sin are gone?

Moses gave up everything; all the pleasures sin could afford. He traded it all in in order to be mistreated. Why? By faith, he saw that which is unseen.

Earthly wealth and power. The pleasures of sin are visible. You can see them. You can touch them. You can smell them. You can taste them. But they never what? They never last. Why did Moses give up all that Egypt had to offer? He saw something else! Something far more valuable. Something that lasts forever! Something, in the short run, to the visible eye, that brought disgrace. It brought dishonor. It brought mistreatment. But in the long-run, something that was well worth it. Something far more valuable than anything Egypt had to offer!

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

What high position and honor to live at the royal court in all splendor, to be the adopted son of a royal princess, to enjoy all the privileges of being a member of Pharaoh's family! What prospects for a person's life! It was the "American Dream!" He had arrived. Moses had the life that most of us only dream of!

But Moses saw something else. Moses saw that he was a child, not of an earthly king, but of an Eternal King. Moses saw that he was a child of God. Do you see that in yourself? How did Jesus teach us to pray? *"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen."*

Moses saw what was unseen. Do you see it? Moses saw the One, who was unseen. He identified himself with God and his family. And he wasn't going to give that up for all the riches and power in the world! How about you? Where are your true riches found? Like Moses, are you willing to be mistreated for the sake of Christ, rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin?

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Do you see what is unseen? Are you looking forward to something far better than what you can see, and touch, and taste, and is fleeting? Like Moses, are you willing to lose your life in order to gain it? Seeing the unseen, Moses believed. How about you?

Seeing the unseen, what did Moses do?

By faith Moses ... refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Earlier in his life, Moses was afraid. Afraid of what people might think of him? Afraid of what people might do to him. **Exodus 2:11** *One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?" He answered,*

"Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known." When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian.

By faith, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. *By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.*

What had happened between Moses running in fear to Midian, and Moses standing boldly before Pharaoh? Faith. Seeing Him who was invisible!

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. ... God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey,

... Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" 12 He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." (Exodus 3)

By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

And so, in that most decisive moment of all, when Pharaoh's entire army is closing in to make their kill of the Israelites, as all the people were terrified, crying out, ""Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?" ... Moses answers the people, what? *"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today."*

By faith, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king. *By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.*

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt ... Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb [and kill it]. ... Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ... In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12)

By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

Being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Faith considers Christ, and eternity with Him, more valuable than the pleasures of sin. Faith is unafraid, for it sees Him who is unseen. Faith remembers the sprinkled blood and the Passover. The blood of Christ, covering our sin, enabling the Eternal Judge to pass over us, and instead, welcome us into His Kingdom!

He could have had it all! The riches of Egypt! But he left it all behind. Why? Moses found something far more valuable. *The riches of Christ!* Years later, there was another who found those same riches. As he puts it, *But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.* (from the letter of Paul to the followers of Jesus in Philippi - Philippians 3:7-11)

Like those early Jewish believers that the book of Hebrews was written to, we also are tempted to drift away from Jesus to something else. Something that seems more relevant. More valuable. Something we can see and taste and touch. The pleasures of sin. Pleasures that are fleeting. They don't last. And then, what do we have? What are we left with, but our sin.

Oh, to remember what we too often forget. The wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord. A treasure beyond comparison. A treasure beyond our wildest dreams!

1 Peter 1:1-9 *To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia ... Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls!*

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