

CHAPTER 73

THE FAITH OF MOSES

(~~812~~ HEBREWS 11:26-27)

In our last two articles (upon ~~812~~ 11:24-26) we had before us the striking example of the power of faith to rise above the honors, riches, and pleasures of the world; now we are to behold it triumphing over *its terrors*. Faith not only elevates the heart above the delights of sense, but it also delivers it from the fear of man. Faith and fear are opposites, and yet, strange to say, they are often found dwelling within the same breast; but where one is dominant the other is dormant. The constant attitude of the Christian should be, "Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, *and not be afraid*" (~~212~~ Isaiah 12:2). But alas, what ought to be, and what is, are two vastly different things. Nevertheless, when the grace of faith *is* in exercise, its language is, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee" (~~196~~ Psalm 56:3). So it was with Moses: he is here commended for his courage.

The leading feature of that particular working of Moses' faith which we are now to consider was its *durability*. That which engaged our attention on the last two occasions occurred when our hero had "come to years." Forty years had elapsed since then, during which he passed through varied experiences and sore trials. But now that he is eighty years of age, faith is still active within him. That spiritual grace moved him to withstand the attractions of Egypt's court, had led him to relinquish a position of high honor and wealth, had caused him to throw in his lot with the despised people of God; and now we behold faith enabling him to endure the wrath of the King. A God-given faith not only resists temptations, but it also endures trials, and refuses to be daunted by the gravest dangers. Faith not only flourishes under the dews of the Spirit, but it survives the fires of Satanic assault.

True faith neither courts the smiles of men nor shuns their frowns. Herein it differs radically from that natural faith, which is all that is possessed by thousands who think they are children of God. Only yesterday we received a letter in which a friend wrote,

“I know some professing Christians who boasted that the prospect of being out of work did not trouble them at all: for they knew every need would be supplied. Now that they have no work, they are not nearly so confident, but are wondering how in the world they are going to get along.” So too we read of the stony ground hearer,

“The same is he that heareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for awhile: *for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended*” (⁽¹¹³⁾Matthew 13:20, 21).

Far otherwise was it with Moses.

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” Moses left Egypt on two different occasions, and there is some diversity of opinion among the commentators as to which of them is here in view. Personally, we think there is little or no room for doubt that the Holy Spirit *did not* have reference unto the first, for we are told,

“And Moses *feared*, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian” (⁽¹²¹⁴⁾Exodus 2:14, 15).

There he fled as the criminal, here he went forth as the commander of God’s people! then he left Egypt in terror, but now “by faith.”

There are some, however, who find difficulty in the fact that Moses’ leaving of Egypt is here mentioned *before* his keeping of the passover and sprinkling of the blood in 5:28. But this difficulty is self-created, by confining our present text unto a single event, instead of understanding it to refer unto *the whole conduct* of Moses: his forsaking of Egypt is a general expression, which includes all *his* renouncing a continuance therein and his steady determination to depart therefrom. So too his “not fearing the wrath of the king” must not be restricted unto the state of his heart immediately following the Exodus, but also takes in his resolution and courage during the whole of his dealings with Pharaoh. And herein we may perceive again the *stability* of his faith, which withstood the most fiery ordeals, and which remained steadfast to the end. Thus did he supply a blessed illustration of

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time” (~~(1005)~~ 1 Peter 1:5).

The experiences through which Moses passed and the testings to which his faith was subjected, were no ordinary ones. First, he was bidden to enter the presence of Pharaoh and say,

“Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness” (~~(1001)~~ Exodus 5:1).

Let it be duly considered that for forty years Moses had lived the life of a shepherd in Midian, and now, with no army behind him, with none in Egypt’s court ready to second his request, he has to make this demand of the haughty monarch who reigned over the greatest empire then on earth. Such a task called for no ordinary faith. Nor did he meet with a favorable reception; instead, we are told

“And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go” (~~(1002)~~ Exodus 5:2).

Not only did the idolatrous king refuse point-blank to grant Moses’ request, but he said,

“Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, hinder the people from their work? get you unto your burdens... Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves” (~~(1004)~~ Exodus 5:4, 7).

Well might the heart of the stoutest quake under such circumstances as these. To add to his troubles the heads of the Israelites came unto Moses and said,

“The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us” (~~(1003)~~ Exodus 5:21).

Ah, faith must be tested; nor must it expect to receive any encouragement or assistance from men, no, not even from our own brethren — it must stand alone in the power of God.

Later, Moses was required to interview Pharaoh again, *after* Jehovah had informed him He had “hardened” his heart, and say,

“The Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the Lord, In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river” (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 7:16-18).

It is easy for us now, knowing all about the happy sequel, to entirely *under-estimate* the severity of this trial. Seek to visualize the whole scene. Here was an insignificant Hebrew, belonging to a company of *slaves*, with no powerful “union” to press their claims. There was the powerful monarch of Egypt, who, humanly speaking had only to give the word to his officers, and Moses had been seized, beaten, tortured, murdered. Yet, notwithstanding, he “feared not the wrath of the king.”

We cannot now follow Moses through all the stages of his great contest with Pharaoh, but would pass on to the closing scene. After the tenth plague, Pharaoh called for Moses and proposed a compromise, which, upon Moses refusing, he said,

“Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die” (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 10:28).

But Moses “feared not the wrath of the king,” and boldly announced the final plague. Not only so, he declared that his servants should yet pay him homage (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 11:4-8).

“He had before him a bloody tyrant, armed with all the power of Egypt, threatening him with present death if he persisted in the work and duty which God had committed to him; but he was so far from being terrified, or declining his duty in the least, that he professeth his resolution to proceed, and denounceth destruction to the tyrant himself” (John Owen).

After the tenth plague had been executed, Moses led the children of Israel out of the land in which they had long groaned in bondage. “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.” Even now he was not terrified by thoughts of what the enraged monarch might do, nor at the powerful forces which he most probably would send in pursuit; but staying his mind upon God, he was assured of the Divine protection. He allowed

not gloomy forebodings to discourage him. Yet once more we would say, it is easy for us (in the light of our knowledge of the sequel) to underestimate this marvel. Visualize the scene again. On the one hand was a powerful nation, who had long held the Hebrews in serfdom, and would therefore be extremely loath to let them altogether escape; on the other hand, here was a vast concourse of people, including many thousands of women and children, unorganized, unarmed, unaccustomed to travel, with a howling wilderness before them.

Ah, my reader, does not such a situation as we have hastily sketched above, seem utterly hopeless? There did not seem one chance in a thousand of succeeding. Yet the spirit of Moses was undaunted, and he is here commended to us for his courage and resolution. But more; Pharaoh, accompanied by six hundred chariots and a great armed force, pursued them, and “when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them: and they were sore afraid; and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us to carry us forth out of Egypt?” (¹²⁴⁰Exodus 14:10, 11). Here was the crucial moment, the supreme test. Did Moses’ heart fail him, was he now terrified by “the wrath of the king”? No indeed; so far from it, he calmly and confidently said unto the people,

“Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (¹²⁴³Exodus 14:13, 14).

O how the undaunted courage of Moses shames *our* petty fears! What cause have we to blush, and hang our heads in shame. Many are there who fear very much less than the wrath of a “king”: such things as darkness and solitude, or even the rustling of a leaf, will frighten them. No doubt such fear is constitutional with some, but with the great majority it is a guilty conscience which makes them alarmed at a shadow. The best way for weak ones to overcome their timidity is to cultivate the sense of God’s presence; and for the guilty, to confess and forsake their sins.

“The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion” (¹²⁸⁰Proverbs 28:1).

Fear is the result of distrust, of taking the eye off God, of being unduly occupied with difficulties and troubles.

And what was it that enabled Moses to conduct himself with such firmness and boldness? What was it that delivered his heart from fearing the wrath of the king? FAITH, a spiritual, supernatural, God-given, God-energized faith. Reader, do you know anything, experimentally, of *such* a faith? Again we would be reminded that

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”
(^{<45017>}Romans 10:17).

Moses had heard, he had heard something from God, and his faith laid hold of and rested upon the same. What was it that he had heard? This,

“Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent you: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye *shall* serve God upon this mountain”
(^{<44812>}Exodus 3:12).

So, too, if we are Christians, God has said to us, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Therefore

“we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (^{<45816>}Hebrews 13:5, 6).

Perhaps some one may ask, But was there *no wavering* in Moses' faith? Yes, dear reader, for he was a man of like passions with us. They who have a faith which never varies, which remains the same whether it be cloudy and stormy, or fair and sun-shiny, have nothing but a natural and letter faith. A spiritual and supernatural faith is one which *we* did not originate and is one which we cannot call into exercise whenever we please: God imparted it, and He alone can renew and call it into action. When the leaders of Israel murmured against Moses, and charged him with endangering their lives (^{<44821>}Exodus 5:21), we are told that, Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast Thou so *evil* entreated this people? why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people; *neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all*” (^{<44822>}Exodus 5:22, 25). Blessed is it to behold the patience of God with His failing servant, and to see how He comforted and strengthened him: ^{<44801>}Exodus 6:1-8.

“By faith he forsook Egypt.” Faith assures the heart of a *better portion* in return for any thing God calls us to relinquish. No matter how attractive to the senses, no matter how popular with our fellows, no matter how necessary it may seem for the interests of our family, faith is convinced that God will not suffer us to be the losers: ^{<0020>}1 Samuel 2:30. So Abraham left Chaldea, so Ruth forsook Moab (^{<0000>}Hebrews 1:16). Here is one way in which a true faith may be discerned and known: if we were born and brought up in an idolatrous place, where honors, pleasures and treasures might be enjoyed, and we, for conscience sake, have forsaken that place, then surely we have a *spiritual* faith. Few are now required to do as Abraham did, but all *are* commanded to obey ^{<0064>}2 Corinthians 6:14, 17.

Ah, there are many who forsake Egypt’s (the world’s) vices and pleasures, who do not separate from *its religion*, and *that* was the central thing in the final test which Moses’ faith had to overcome. Again and again Pharaoh sought a compromise, but with inflexible firmness Moses stood his ground. The demand of God was,

“Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me *in the wilderness*” (^{<0000>}Exodus 5:1):

there must be a complete separation from the religion of the world. But that is something which the world cannot brook, for the withdrawal of God’s people condemns them; hence we find Pharaoh saying,

“Go ye, sacrifice to your God *in the land*” (^{<0025>}Exodus 8:25).

But Moses was not to be moved,

“We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God *as He shall command us*” (^{<0027>}Hebrews 8:27).

Next we are told Pharaoh said,

“I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness, only *ye shall not go very far away*” (^{<0028>}Hebrews 8:28):

this was tantamount to saying, “If you are determined to adopt this holier than thou attitude, there is no reason why there should be a complete break between us.” After the Lord had further plagued Egypt, the king again sent for Moses and Aaron and asked, “Who are they that shall go?” Moses answered,

“We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons, and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds”
(~~8100~~ Hebrews 10:9).

But that was too much for Pharaoh, who replied,

“Not so: go now *ye that are men*, and serve the Lord”
(~~8101~~ Hebrews 10:11).

See here in Pharaoh, my reader, our great Adversary, striving to get us to temporize: “If you are determined to forsake the church, at least leave your children in the Sunday School !” How subtle the Devil is! What a *living* book is the Word! How thoroughly suited to our present lot and needs!

One more effort was made by Pharaoh to induce Moses to render only a partial obedience unto God’s demands:

“Go ye, serve the Lord, only let your flocks and your herds be stayed” (~~8102~~ Hebrews 10:24)

— If you must be so unsociable, if you will be so mulish and not allow your children to remain in Sunday School, at least retain your *membership* with us and *pay* into the “church-treasury” as hitherto! Ah, had Moses feared the wrath of the king, he had yielded this point. Instead, he remained firm, and said,

“Thou must give us *also* sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also *shall go* with us; there shall *not an hoof* be left behind: for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God” (~~8103~~ 10:25, 26).

Well might the apostle write,

“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: *for we are not ignorant of his devices*” (~~4101~~ 2 Corinthians 2:11)

— no, for they have been fully exposed to us in Holy writ.

All of what has been before us above is included in these words

“By faith he *forsook Egypt*,” and all of it is “written for *our learning*” (~~8104~~ Romans 15:4).

The offers made by Pharaoh to Moses to prevent Israel from completely forsaking Egypt in their worship of the Lord, are, in essence, the very

temptations which His people now have to overcome, if they are to fully heed and obey ~~4064~~ 2 Corinthians 6:14, 17,

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, *and touch not the unclean thing.*”

O my Christian reader, seek grace to obtain the uncompromising spirit of Moses. When urged to worship God in “Egypt” (i. e. the white-washed “churches” *of the world*), say it is impossible, for “what communion hath light with darkness!” when pressed to leave your children in a worldly Sunday School, to be instructed by those who have not the fear of God upon them, refuse, when invited to at least retain your membership in the Holy Spirit-deserted “churches” and contribute of your means to their upkeep, decline to do so.

“Not fearing the wrath of the king.” The courage of Moses is here set forth in three degrees: he feared not *man*; he feared not the greatest of men, a *king*; he feared not that which most affrights people, the *wrath of a king* — “The king’s wrath is as the roaring of a lion” (~~3092~~ Proverbs 19:12). It was his faith in God which expelled this fear. When faith is exercised the greatest terrors cannot alarm saints. And, my reader, those who “forsake Egypt,” especially *religions* of Egypt, must expect to encounter the “wrath” of man: none hates so bitterly, none acts so cruelly, none comes out more in his true colors, than the worldly religionist when the veneer of hypocritical piety has been seen through by a child of God. Yet *his* “wrath” is less to be feared than was Pharaoh’s: “If God be for us, who can be against us!”

“For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” Ah, here is the key to all that has been before us, Moses “endured,” which tells us of the state of his heart. He “endured” the attractive honors and alluring pleasures of Egypt’s court; he “endured” the repeated compromises of Pharaoh; he “endured” the terrors which his conduct might inspire. His courage was no mere flash in the pan, or momentary bravado; but was steady and real. O how little of *this* faith and its blessed fruit of holy boldness, is now to be seen in poor, degenerate Christendom. Yet how could it be otherwise, when worldliness has “quenched” the Spirit on every hand? May we who have, by sovereign grace, been drawn to Christ outside the camp, be very jealous and watchful against grieving the Spirit.

The precise word which is here rendered “endured” is not employed elsewhere in the N.T. Scholars tell us that it is derived from a root meaning strength or fortitude, to bear evils, undergo dangers with resolution and courage, so as not to faint beneath them, but hold on our way to the end. It was a word most appropriate to express the firmness of Moses’ mind in this work of faith in “forsaking Egypt.” He met with a long course of difficulties, and was repeatedly threatened by the king; and, in addition, he had to endure a great conflict with his own unbelieving brethren. But he strengthened himself with spiritual courage and resolution to abide in his duty to the finish. *How? Whereby* was his strength renewed?

“For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” Ah, it was no mulish stupidity nor obstinate imprudence that wrought such a resolution in Moses, but the constant occupation of his heart with the Divine perfections. We say “the *constant* occupation,” for note carefully our text does not say “*he* endured because he *saw* Him who is invisible,” but “as *seeing* Him who is invisible” — it was a continuous act! O to be able to say in our measure, “I have set *the Lord always before me*” (^{<39168>}Psalm 16:8). This is absolutely essential if faith and courage are to be kept healthy. Nothing else will enable *us* to “endure” the frictions and trials of life, the attractions and distractions of the world, the assaults of Satan.

“He endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” “God is said to be invisible (as He *is* absolutely) in respect of His essence, and is often so called in the Scripture: ^{<4612>}Romans 1:20, ^{<51015>}Colossians 1:15, ^{<54017>}1 Timothy 1:17. But there is a peculiar reason for this description of Him here. Moses was in that state and condition, and had those things to do, wherein he stood in need continually of Divine power and assistance. Whence this should proceed, he could not discern by his senses, his bodily eyes could behold no present assistant, for God is ‘invisible’.

And it requires an especial act of the mind in expecting help from Him who cannot be seen. Wherefore this is here ascribed to him. He saw Him who was in Himself invisible; that is, he saw by faith, whom he could not see with his eyes” (John Owen). This word “invisible” shows the uselessness (as well as sin) of making images to represent God, and warns against our forming any apprehensions in our mind patterned after the likeness of any visible object. Though God be invisible, yet He sees us!

“He endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

“A double act of the faith of Moses is intended herein.

1. A clear, distinct view and apprehension of God in His omnipresence, power and faithfulness.
2. A fixed trust in Him on their account, at all times and on all occasions. This he rested on, this he trusted to, that God was everywhere present with him, able to protect him, and faithful in the discharge of His promise” (John Owen).

God is the proper object of faith: on which it rests, from which it expects every good and to which it returns the glory for all.

O the surpassing excellency of faith. It takes in eternal, invisible, infinite objects. By His providences God often appears to be against His people, but faith knows He is for them. In this world we are subject to many trials and miseries, but faith knows that “all things work together for good to them that love God.” The bodies of God’s children die, are buried, and return to dust; but faith beholds a glorious resurrection for them. O the wondrous power of faith to rise above the things of sight and sense. It is true that neither the impartation of faith, nor its growth and exercise, lie within *our* power; nevertheless, we *are* responsible to avoid those things which becloud and weaken faith, and we are responsible to nourish faith. How very few make serious efforts *to see* “Him who is invisible!”