**Moses’ decisions of faith**

June 21, 2015

Hebrews 11: 23-28 / Key Verse: 11:24-25,

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.”

Life is a series of choices that we make. We make either good choices or bad choice; right choices or wrong choices.

From the choices we make in life, we come to either live a great and honorable life, or a life with many regrets; a life that entails either eternal rewards or fleeting rewards. Everyone must face moments in time when he or she should make important decisions that determine whether they are going to accept God’s invitation (calling) or not; to live by faith or not. Today we are going to learn about Moses’ decision of faith, which pleased God and made him one of the most outstanding leaders in history. Perhaps, not everyone will live a life as dramatically ‘epic’ as that of Moses, but the principle of how an individual can live a great, God-pleasing life equally applies to us. If we look at today’s passage, we see that when Moses’ lived out his faith, his faith especially worked in 3 ways; by (1), refusing to enjoy the pleasure of sin and the treasures of Egypt, (2) by choosing to be mistreated along with the people of God (the disgrace for the sake of Christ), and (3) by persevering in the land of discipline.

May God please bless today’s bible study for each one of us to deeply learn what it means to live by faith!

**I. The faith of Moses’ parents (23)**

Before dealing with Moses’ 3 acts of faith, the author of the Hebrews talks about Moses’ parent’s faith in verse 23. Please look at verse 23. “By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.” At the time Moses was born, the situation for Israelites was very difficult. Exodus 1:8-22 tells us the background of Moses’ birth. When Moses was born, the Egyptian Empire was undergoing a political transition. A new king of Egypt, who did not know Joseph, came to power. When the new Egyptian Pharaoh saw the Israelites multiplying like the swarms of grasshoppers, he realized they would be a great threat to his empire. Thus, without any hesitation, the Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites by forcing them to hard labor so that their number might not increase any more. However his strategy did not work, because God was with them. The more the people of Israel were oppressed, the more they grew resilient, multiplied and spread. Finally, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt issued an edict that every baby boy born to Hebrew parents was to be cast into the Nile River. It was in this kind of tragic and brutal situation that Moses was born. In many houses where the Hebrew baby boys were born, crying and weeping did not stop because of such cruel command. Although obeying king’s edict was unbearable, no one could dare to disobey it because they were just slaves. But in such horrible situation, by faith, Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.

Well, as we all know, all parents think that their children are not ordinary but special and beautiful. So in light of such general and common norm, the fact that Moses’ parents saw their baby was not ordinary does not give any distinctive reason about how they could hide their baby for 3 month without fearing king’s edict. Indeed, here, the key word is “by faith”. Moses’ parents came to have personal faith so that when Moses was born and they saw him, he was not a merely ordinary baby but a baby for whom God had his certain plan. By this faith, they hid him for three month after he was born, not afraid of the king’s edict. Undoubtedly, their act of faith was a very dangerous and costly act as disobeying the king’s decree could lead to their own death. However, their faith made them willing to pay whatever the cost, even their very life. Here, we learn that true faith makes ordinary people courageous and extraordinary, empowering them to take risks for their very life; in other words, true faith enables us to do what are true acts of love.

No doubt, such act of faith by Moses’ parents’ must have influenced Moses in *his* future decision of faith. Moses’ parent’s act of faith might look like a small event, isolated to the level of one family. But in essence, it was very great event; just as great as that of Moses ‘decision of faith which affected the whole Israel community in the future. Indeed, when we see Moses’ decision of faith in part II, we see how the characteristics of how his faith worked is very much same as his parents’ case. That being said, let’s now see how Moses’ faith worked.

**II. Moses’ decision of faith and act of faith (24-28)**

Look at verses 24-26. “By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.” By God’s intervention and leading hand, Moses was adopted by king Pharaoh’s daughter and he grew up as the prince of Egypt. According to Acts 7:22-23, he was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action. In Moses’ time, the Egyptian Empire was the most powerful, superpower country. Therefore, to be the prince in the Egyptian Empire meant he had everything that the people of the world wanted: power, fame, recognition, wealth, pleasure, the love and honor from many, many people. Surely, he was adored and envied by many Egyptians. But when he became a grown-up, there was one thing that he had to make a decision for himself. He knew that he was not an Egyptian but a Hebrew and that he became the Prince of Egypt after being adopted by the Pharaoh’s daughter. He knew he was enjoying a tremendous privilege that his own people would never taste. Moses must have began to ponder deeply and seriously over his own people’s suffering and questioned why he alone as a Hebrew could receive the fortune to become the prince of Egypt while all his own other people had to suffer endlessly. He must have asked, ‘What is the meaning and purpose of all this prestige and power that I am allowed?’

After what must have been a long period of inner turmoil and struggle, Moses chose to deal with this serious question that lay in deep in his heart. He chose to believe that his life was not meant for his enjoyment of fleeting glory and pleasures but meant to serve the people of God, God’s covenant people. With this faith in his heart, he decided to refuse to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter and chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. Obviously, it was not an easy decision. Most of all, he must have cried many tears when he thought about leaving behind his foster mother, Pharaoh’s daughter. Also he knew how dangerous his decision might be if his decision had been known to King Pharaoh.

However, by faith Moses knew that his life was not meant to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin in the palace for only himself while his own people were suffering endlessly. By faith, he knew that choosing to be mistreated along with the people of God was worth more than enjoying all the treasures of Egypt. Here, we can clarify once again what faith means. According to Hebrews 11:1, faith is the confidence in what we hope for and the assurance about what we do not see. Here, “what we hope for and what we do not see” means God himself and his promise.

If you recall Luke’s message two weeks ago, faith “sees what is invisible but not what is non-existent.” While God is invisible, God is living and real, and thus we hope for and have assurance of the fulfillment of his promises. Moses believed in the invisible God and had confidence and assurance of God’s promise that had been passed down from Abraham. And as Hebrews 11:6 says, when he believed in God, he also believed God’s reward and to him it was *real* that God’s reward was of greater value than the passing treasure of Egypt, even though it was not seen and entailed getting involved in all the ill-treatment and disgrace his own people experienced. The author of the Hebrews equalized the disgrace that Moses accepted with the disgrace for the sake of Christ in New Testament’s point of view.

From Moses’ faith, we learn that our faith in God enables us to refuse a life that seeks pleasure and worldly treasures, propelling us to live for the sake of Christ. In Christian history, there are many examples that illustrate this principle. One of them is the story of Charles Studd (1862-1931) who became one of the Cambridge 7. In 1882, Charles Studd was one of the most successful young men you’d find. As a Cambridge student, he was the captain of England’s national cricket team. He was the most popular sports star and an honor student at most prestigious university. In addition, he was an heir to his father who was one of richest man in England. In short, he had almost everything that people want to have in this world. But God led him to attend an evangelical conference of D.L. Moody and Charles heard John 3:16, “God so loved the world that he gave his One and Only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” This one word struck his heart and he was convicted by the love of God. Later he came to confess, “if it is true that God really gave his One and Only Son to die for our sins, anything that we offer for him cannot be said as a sacrifice.” When the faith in the love of God who gave his One and Only Son for us struck his heart, he without hesitation decided to refuse all his privilege and worldly honor and chose to give his life for Christ. Indeed, later, Studd left to go to China as a missionary with Hudson Taylor and later served in India for 30 years and in Africa for 18 years. In 1918, he founded WEC and since then, this mission organization have been serving world mission for almost 100 years until now.

Let’s go back to the passage and please look at verse 27. “By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.” When Moses decided to refuse to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter and choose to be mistreated along with the people of God, contrary to his expectations, he was not welcomed by his own people. Instead they rejected him. And because the Pharaoh heard about Moses killing an Egyptian to help a Hebrew slave and wanted to kill him, he had to leave Egypt.

At a glance, this act might not look like an act of faith. But the author focused on Moses’ perseverance in the wilderness for his perseverance was accompanying his decision of faith that had already been made before the threat of Pharaoh. Moses persevered 40 years of living in the wilderness. And it was during this long period, God worked for the good of Moses. God broke his pride, self-confidence and hot temper. The author illustrates that what motivated Moses to persevere the long period of humbleness training was his faith in the invisible God. When Moses completed this humbleness training for 40 years, God called him in a burning bush and gave a clear mission to liberate his people from slavery in Egypt. Moses’ self-confidence was totally broken in the wilderness training and he couldn’t believe that he could carry God-given mission. This time God helped his faith and finally he decided to obey by faith. When he decided to obey God’s calling by faith finally, he could carry impossible mission. By faith he challenged Pharaoh and kept the Passover and the Pharaoh finally let the people of God leave Egypt.

While preparing this message, Moses’ decision of faith newly taught me what it means to live by faith. It can be summarized in 3 ways. First, it means to refuse to enjoy the pleasure of sin and the treasure of this world; second, it is to choose to live for the sake of Christ, and third, to persevere in the seasons of God’s discipline. Charles Studd said when he left for China as a missionary, “When you give up all things for God, God will work through you and he will show you what you should do personally.”

To be honest, I have never felt that I have given up all things for God consistently. There have been mainly two or three things in some places in my heart that have choked my spirit from time to time not to give up all things for God. It was sense of failure in worldly point of view, easy-going mentality, and pleasure-seeking mentality. From what we learned of Moses’ faith, these three things that I have had in my heart all go against the faith that pleases God. To put it differently, when I am occupied by these three things, I displease God. I pray that I may refuse all this three things and choose to live for Christ only and completely so that God may work through me and show me what I should do all the time. I also pray that each one of us may make decisions of faith that enable us to refuse to enjoy the pleasures of sin and the passing treasures of this world and choose to live for Christ and persevere in the long journey of our life of faith. Amen.