



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

HEROES FROM HEBREWS

Faith in an Invisible God | Hebrews

11:24–28; Exodus 2:11–15, 12:12–13

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The past couple of times I've had the opportunity to preach during this series on Heroes from Hebrews, I've tried to have some kind of prop, but I realized that they've all been male characters so far. I started to struggle with that, knowing that I live with five females. Unless I be considered discriminating in any way against the much greater gender here today, I want to be sure to represent at least one character of the female persuasion— "Wonder Woman."

The irony of these glasses is that one of my sons was shopping with his grandparents a few months ago and they allowed him to pick something out, and he picked these. It wasn't until he got home that one of his sisters told him that it was Wonder Woman and not whatever he thought he was getting. So, I thought it would be fun to use these today.

What does that have to do with anything we're talking about today as it relates to Moses, our hero today? The answer is nothing. Absolutely nothing. Now, any good communicator knows you're not supposed to use something and then not tie it in, right? But I am today, and I'll tell you why.

Originally, I was scheduled to teach on Rahab. I had these glasses and thought, "Well, this is going to be great. I'm going to tie this in some way." Then we had to switch the schedule around, but I still wanted to use these glasses. If you remember two weeks ago when we were talking about the faith of Moses' parents, Moses was referred to as a "beautiful child." I thought, "You know what? That's close enough. It's going to work."

All joking aside, we are in a series called Heroes from Hebrews. The reality is that as the author of Hebrews was writing to these first-century Christians, this was no laughing matter. In fact, he was strongly encouraging them to make sure their faith was bolstered. He could sense that there was some stress going on then.

It was similar to many of us in our walk with Jesus—there are highs and lows, and there are times when we need to be encouraged. There may be other aspects of our world where a teacher or a coach comes alongside a student or an athlete saying, "Don't give up. Keep going. You need endurance." This is a marathon, not a sprint.

In fact, a few weeks ago Pastor Tim reminded us that it's not how we start the race, but it's how we finish the race that is important. Yes, the start matters, the middle matters, but it's how we finish the race that matters most. The author of Hebrews—though we don't know exactly who it was—had that same kind of pep talk, but with much more eternal significance.

These first-century Christians were struggling. They were dealing with various persecutions. They were being thrown into prison. They were having their possessions taken from them. They were probably being abused and physically harmed at some level. It was tough and they were struggling.

He's writing multiple things to them, but one of the biggest themes is his goal of increasing their faith in God. He wanted to encourage them not to give up. He says, "Endure. Be strong. It will be worth it." So, we come to this series with the theme of endurance. Many of us here today, myself included, need to hear that call: "Endure. Don't give up. It's worth fighting for. Don't stop."

Our next hero in this series is Moses. Earlier we looked at the faith of his parents, but today we're going to focus on the faith of Moses. If you're like me and probably like many people in our world today, we get much of what we know about the character of Moses—who was a real person—from two sources and neither of them are the Bible. One is Charlton Heston in the movie *Ten Commandments*. The second one, for those of you who are a little bit younger, is *The Prince of Egypt*.

Seriously, as we were talking a few weeks ago in one of our sermon prep meetings about this topic, the pastors were asking, "Was that in the movie? Was that in *Ten Commandments*? Did Pharaoh's daughter say that?" We were having some fun with that, because we are often drawing in what we know from other sources. While there is some truth in those movies, the reality is the story of Moses as Scripture presents it and as what the author of Hebrews wants to highlight today is far greater than any Hollywood story. But admittedly, we don't have a lot of details.

As with many of these heroes, the author of Hebrews used real examples for these first-century Christians—people they would have been very familiar with, people who were their ancestors. The author is saying, "Don't forget what these men and women went through. Hold fast to them when you feel like giving up and not finishing the race. Remember their faith and be encouraged."

Like those Christians, we're in the same place today. Some of us need to remember those who have gone before us and hold on to their stories for encouragement. They are the great cloud of witnesses that we'll read about in Hebrews 12. Ultimately the author is pointing his readers and us to Jesus. All of these heroes of the faith are foreshadowing the greater Hero Who was to come. After we finish this series, later this fall we'll be looking at Jesus, Who is the ultimate Hero, the ultimate Example we are to follow and the only One Who can save us from our sins.

As we think about the story of Moses, we need to think about more than just what we've seen in the movies. Certainly, those first-century Christians were dealing with hardships, many of which we can't even begin to imagine. Although our hurts are difficult and legitimately are painful to us, many of their trials far surpassed ours.

So, as the author of Hebrews pointed back to these stories, it would have meant a lot to them. He preceded his discussion of Moses by looking at the faith of Moses' parents. We didn't learn much about Moses himself in their story other than the fact that he was a beautiful child and they were prompted by God to do something extraordinary to protect him. Because they felt God had a special call on this baby's life, they risked going against the king's edict.

Now we come to the middle of Hebrews 11 and the author pivots to Moses himself. He's no longer a baby but is now grown up, and we read some pretty incredible things about his life. I want to read a few verses in Hebrews 11, then we'll go to Exodus 2 for a few more verses, then we'll end in Exodus 12. Does anyone remember who wrote Exodus? It was Moses. We'll be reading his words about his own life. I find that to be ironic in this process, but we'll pay attention to what Moses, led by the Holy Spirit, decided to record for us.

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

Now go to Exodus 2, where we'll get a little more context of where Moses is at this point.

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. ¹² He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³ 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?" ¹⁴ 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." ¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

Before going to the last verses in Exodus, perhaps you noticed what appears to be a contradiction between what the author of Hebrews wrote and what Moses wrote regarding how Moses responded after he was found out. Hebrews says he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, but Moses himself wrote that he was afraid. We'll come back to that a little later, but I wanted to highlight that so you don't forget it.

Finally, turn to Exodus 12. The author of Hebrews mentions the Passover. I'm not going to take the time to go through all the details of the Passover, but I want to read a couple verses where the Lord is talking to Moses, giving him instructions for the Passover.

This was the culmination of the plagues against Egypt, the final one that would result in the release of the Israelites from the Egyptians. This is what the Lord said to Moses:

¹² 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. ¹³ 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.

The big idea this morning that I want you to catch is that Moses had a faith in an invisible God that produced a very visible faith. I want to look at four faith decisions Moses made and consider how they can help us understand what visible faith in an invisible God looks like. We'll see what it means to have a visible faith in an invisible God in Hebrews 11:27, where it says Moses *"endured as seeing him who is invisible."*

How does that work? How can we have faith that's visible, even when we have a God Who is invisible? Our outline is simple; I took it right from the author of Hebrews. Why recreate the wheel? He wrote it many years ago and I thought his outline would work great for us today. I took four words he used about these four faith decisions of Moses to form our outline today. These words involve something Moses refused, something he chose, something he left, and something he kept. As we go through them, we'll ask why the author of Hebrews thought these four faith decisions were most important.

We are to refuse worldly approval.

The passage in Hebrews begins by simply saying, *"By faith Moses...refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."* I don't know if you realize this, but that was a pretty big deal. Back in that day, he was adopted out of slavery into opulence and wealth. He had every comfort and privilege he could possibly want. He was plucked out of one life and put into the other.

This was due to the faith of his parents when the king had declared that all baby boys under two years old were to die. His parents appropriately defied that order, made a basket for him, floated him down the river where he was saved by Pharaoh's daughter and eventually adopted into her family. Because she couldn't nurse the baby, she had to find someone who could, and God sovereignly arranged for Moses' sister to jump in and tell Pharaoh's daughter, "I happen to know someone who could help you with that." She took Moses back to his own mother where she was able to nurse him. We don't know how long that lasted—it could have been from five to twelve years. We're not talking about three months or seven months. He was in their home for some period of time, during which it is likely he was hearing about this Yahweh God. He understood his heritage and was being appropriately indoctrinated with his Jewish roots. But at some point, he was then passed from that family and adopted into Pharaoh's home, gaining all the privileges that came with that. So, for him to walk away from that and refuse it at the age of 40 was a huge deal.

Several of us here today have adopted children. When we adopted our third daughter, she got everything that came with being a Culver—all that wealth (which was exactly nothing, at least from a physical standpoint). However, she got the love of two parents and siblings who care for her, an extended family and lots of other immaterial things that came with that. It was a big deal and we're thankful for that.

Yet Moses got that and everything else. For us to appreciate what he was walking away from is to understand that he had it all. He was in the top five of Egypt's royalty at that point. He was a big deal and his future was set. He had nothing to worry about. For him to come to a decision at the age of 40 that he was going to refuse that, turn his back and walk away was a huge, huge deal. God had obviously been doing something in his heart, probably all the way from when he was a young boy in his birth parents' home.

Stephen mentions in Acts 7, when he's sharing the story, that it came into Moses' heart to figure out who his people were. The Holy Spirit was working in him, so he went out to see the Israelites. At this point he knew his brothers and sisters were oppressed and in slavery. But when he happened to see an Egyptian slave master abusing an Israelite man, in a moment of righteous justice, Moses struck him down and then buried his body in an effort to hide the evidence. But when he came back the next day, two Israelites were fighting, and they said to Moses, "Who are you to tell us what to do? Are you going to do the same thing to us as you did to that slave master?" That's when Moses realized he was in trouble and needed to leave. We'll come back to the question of whether he left in faith or in fear in just a moment, but in either event, he chose to refuse the approval of the world.

This is manifested in two ways in the Scripture. First, it says that Moses chose not to hang on to the fleeting pleasures of sin and all the riches of Egypt, and second, he chose to identify with his people. I don't know about you, but at times I find sin to be very pleasurable. I might be the only one here, but I don't think I am. We would not sin if it didn't bring us pleasure.

I think of the times I have allowed my eyes to see things I know I should not be looking at. There's a momentary pleasure in that, but it is followed by shame and guilt and a desire for repentance. I think of the times I lose control and yell at my kids. In the moment, it feels really good to get that off my chest.

Or it feels good to pass along a juicy bit of gossip about someone. At the moment, it feels like I'm in the inner circle. I have something to share and it identifies me with someone—we're in this together. I could go on and on and on and on. There is pleasure in sin. But those pleasures are fleeting and for those of us who have found a relationship with Jesus and understand what He's done for us, they leave us farther from Him than we were. They're momentary and fleeting, and every one of us here has experienced that at some level, probably in multiple ways even this past week.

Moses understood that to refuse the world's approval meant he needed to walk away from the fleeting pleasures of sin, of which there were plenty for him. He could have any woman he wanted, any amount of money he wanted, any pleasure he wanted, any food he wanted. He'd never have to work. He had it all—but it came at a cost. He knew God was calling him to something else. He also knew God was calling him to identify with his people. So, for him to stay in his adopted family would have been against God's plan for him, because God was putting it in his heart to go and be with the people to whom he rightfully belonged.

Every adoptive parent's worst nightmare is that their child might reject them, and it's the same for parents in general. Yet in Moses' case, it was the right thing. Moses was going back to the family he had been taken away from, because ultimately God was calling him to be the deliverer of these people. But he didn't know that yet.

Moses' life was divided into three equal 40-year parts. The first 40 years he was adopted into Pharaoh's family, living in Egypt with all the pleasure of the world. Then he left and for the next 40 years, he was in the wilderness, in the middle of nowhere. And you have to believe he was thinking, "God, what am I doing here?"

Then when Moses was 80 years old, God called him to return to Egypt, and for the next 40 years he had the privilege of leading a group of people who really didn't want to be led. They were an obstinate, rebellious and difficult group. Doesn't it sound like a dream life? The first 40 years sounded good, but boy, the last 80—not exactly how I want my retirement to be. But that's what God had called him to, so Moses refused the world's approval.

In reality, all of us are seeking approval from someone. Some of you are seeking it from your spouse, your boss, your children, other relationships, circumstances around you in the world. In some way you just want to fit in and be like them. You're willing to compromise on what God has called you to. You're willing to make sinful decisions in the short term, because to say no would be to lose the approval you desire. Or maybe to make a stand on a conviction you know to be true just feels too costly. So, the fleeting pleasure of sin takes over. The temptation is strong to do something.

Yet what really matters is God's approval. Moses understood that and was willing to refuse the approval of the culture in his world, without knowing what would result. Like many of our other heroes, he was willing to take a step of faith—really a leap of faith—not knowing where it would take him.

During those 40 years in the wilderness, how many times do you think Moses thought, "What have I done? Right now, I could be waited on hand and foot, having everything I want. Instead, I'm in the middle of nowhere, having no idea what's going to happen. God, why?"

On a very small level I can appreciate this, because a couple years ago God laid on my heart and my wife's heart that He wanted us to step out in faith and do something that seemed very ridiculous, radical, and crazy at the time. I was employed at a great job. I was well-compensated with dental insurance, health insurance, a 401k, plus all the things that went with that. But God was calling us to step out in faith and leave that, because He had something else for us—but He chose not to tell me what it was. That didn't sound good, right? I wrestled with that for months. I don't have time to go into details, but after much prayer we made the decision to step out in faith. There was a lot that went into that, both prayer and counsel. On a Tuesday morning, I headed into work to share with my boss that I was about to quit. I also told him I didn't know what I was going to do, but I felt as though God was calling us to do this.

The night before, my wife and family were in Michigan, and she called me to say, "Hey, guess what? I'm pregnant." Now, that wasn't part of the plan. We were trusting God with some pieces, but getting pregnant was not part of that plan. So, my first question to her was, "That's great—who's the father?" It was me, but in that moment, we couldn't understand. "God, is this what You have for us? This doesn't make any sense." Still, we felt as though He was calling us to move forward. So we did.

A few months later, Sarah lost that baby in the second trimester. It was a difficult situation with hemorrhaging and her ending up in the ER. We were thinking, “Seriously?” It all felt like a cruel joke. It was painful and difficult. In some ways, humanly speaking, we still wrestle with it. It was hard to understand what God was doing and hard to believe He had something else for us.

Moses was in a similar place of stepping out in faith without answers to his questions. Then God called him to something that led to his having to flee because he was willing to refuse the approval of the world. Are you willing to do that? I don’t know if you’re like me, but even in my job decision, I’d love to say that two years later God brought it all together. He hasn’t. I still wrestle with it and I’ll come back to this later. There are still moments of peace and panic in the process.

We went to the dentist the other day and five of my kids had cavities. Oh, my word. That’s when you ask, “Lord, what are You doing?” But do I trust Him? Do I want His approval more than the world’s approval? In theory I do, but daily I have to ask God to give me the strength and endurance to follow Him, just as Moses did and as the author of Hebrews is encouraging those first-century believers to do.

We are to choose the better treasure.

Secondly, Moses was able to refuse the world’s approval because he had chosen a far greater treasure. We’re all treasure seekers—every one of us. The question is what kind of treasure are you seeking? For some, your treasure is all here in this world. You’re killing yourself. You’re working hard to make as much money as you can, because that’s your treasure. “If I can just get a little bit more, then I’ll be happy. If I can just get a little more stuff...if I could just get that house...that car....” None of these things are wrong, unless they become where you find your deepest satisfaction.

Moses was willing to leave behind stuff because he was choosing a far greater treasure. It says in the Scripture that he was willing to say no, to refuse the approval of the world, to refuse being called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, because he had chosen and believed that the reproach of Christ a far greater wealth than the riches of Egypt. He was willing to identify with his people to be in community with God’s people and was willing to say no to the short-term pleasures for the long-term gain.

You know, the author of Hebrews is all about helping us to know Jesus is better. Jesus is better than the angels; He is better than Moses; He is a better sacrifice than the lambs were. Jesus is better. He’s the greater sacrifice and best treasure, and the same is true for us as we think about the treasures we seek. Are we willing to trade the short-term for the long-term? Are we willing to say no to the fleeting pleasures of sin now—as satisfying as they may feel temporarily—because we believe we have something far greater in the future and are willing to wait?

That’s the decision Moses made here. He was willing to choose the better treasure, which meant saying goodbye to the short-term pleasures and treasures that had been afforded to him. How much more should those of us who know Jesus, who believe that what God offers us is a far greater treasure, realize that He will deeply satisfy us—both now and in the age to come—when we choose His treasure, when we choose Him. Jesus is ultimately the greatest treasure.

It’s remarkable to me that Moses was talking about this over a thousand years before the Messiah actually came. Yet God had put it in his heart, and through what he knew at that point—through the stories that had been passed down—Moses understood that there was an Anointed One, a Messiah, Who would be coming. I’d like to say it’s because he read Genesis and realized what had happened at the Garden. But who wrote the book of Genesis? Moses. He wrote the first five books of the Bible—the Pentateuch.

Somehow God had laid on his heart, over time, a strong enough belief that he was able to walk away from all the pleasures of that world—refusing the approval of Egypt and accepting the ridicule and mistreatment that would come with that—and instead put his faith in a Messiah Who had not yet come.

As I was thinking about this, I realized how much easier it is for us today who have the opportunity to know God’s heart—the very words of God through His Scripture—and to know how the story ends, to then say, “We choose the treasure.” But for Moses to choose that treasure meant a short-term life of suffering. The “reproach of Christ” means suffering. To identify with the Messiah to come meant he was giving up a life of comfort.

Some of you have had to do that in your own lives as well. You’ve said, “I choose the greater treasure,” but that has meant you have had to choose perhaps a lifetime of suffering. It could be relational suffering. It might be physical suffering. You may have had to say no to something. You may have had to go somewhere or do something or obey God in a way that cost you greatly, because—like the heroes in Hebrews and those first-century Christians—you are looking to Someone Who will be far greater.

What treasure are you seeking? What's most valuable to you in your life? Is your faith visible in a way that would show others around you that you put your treasure there? A few years ago, I was talking to someone who works with a missions organization, and I was reminded of this idea of choosing the greater treasure even when it can be very costly. Someone had signed on with their mission organization to work with Muslims and share about Jesus in places that were hard to reach. His dad was very wealthy and owned a large chain of quasi-fast-food restaurants all across the country. You'd recognize it if I named them, but it's not important to this story. His dad had told him, "If you choose to go into that world, you're dead to me. You will lose it all. I've planned to hand you the keys to the kingdom. You'll run the whole operation. But if you choose to leave, not only will you lose that, you're dead to me."

It wouldn't have been wrong for him to work with his father and share the gospel in that context, but because he believed God had called him to something else, he refused his father's approval and chose the far greater treasure. Today he's continuing to share the gospel with Muslims.

Now, that's kind of an extreme example, but let's look at our own lives. How often do we choose the short-term treasure, the temporary, fleeting treasure, over the long-term, eternal treasure in Jesus Christ? We're running that race, which is a marathon, not a sprint. When we choose to hold on tightly to our stuff, fearing we might lose it, Jesus is saying, "I'm going to give you everything. I'm going to give you Myself—just trust Me."

I've wrestled with that many, many times in my circumstances. I tell God, "Intellectually I trust You, but I'm not feeling it so much in my heart right now. That was a big bill. How is this going to work out? That's disappointing. It didn't come through. Where are You now?" Or there are those moments when I think, "What have I done?"

Remember in the passage we read about Moses, it says he fled, then it says he sat down by a well. That's kind of what I would have done after fleeing. "I'm just going to sit down here, asking, 'Now what?'" You have to believe there were moments going through his mind—even with understanding Who God is and what God had called him to—when he would be thinking, "What have I done? Did I make the right choice?"

I'm here to tell you that if you've chosen Jesus, you have made the right choice. You have chosen the treasure and the reward that cannot be corrupted. Yes, there will be difficult days. We're told in Scripture that all those who desire a godly life will be persecuted. Not just first-century Christians, but 21st-century Christians as well. If you haven't noticed, persecution is rising. If you choose to say, "I refuse the world's approval and I choose the greater treasure," you will more than likely be persecuted, and you will have to make a choice between standing and identifying with God's heart and His teaching or identifying with the world. It's not just in other parts of the world—it's coming here as well.

We are to leave behind the old life.

Our faith decisions also include the choice to leave behind our old life. Moses was willing to walk away—we've already seen that. God called him, he saw the suffering of his people, and he knew he needed to do something about it. He stepped in to do something about their slavery, to establish justice, but that caused him to have to flee. He was willing to leave his former life behind.

The key word we see in Hebrews 11:27 is endurance. We've talked about this over and over again in this series. It says, *"By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible."* That's a remarkable faith. Moses did not know how the story was going to end. He didn't know what God had for him.

But because he had faith in a God Who was working in and through him, he was willing to take on the reproach of God, to identify with God rather than the Egyptians, and to make a decision that would have made no sense at that time. He would have been ridiculed, misunderstood, and sent down the road less traveled.

Some of you are at that same point today. You need to leave your old life behind, but you're struggling. I think there are probably two groups here today. There are some who have never left the old life behind, because you have yet to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. You have yet to exchange your life for His, saying, "I'm going to identify with You. You offer a far greater future—the opportunity to be reconciled through the blood of Jesus and put into a right relationship with the holy God." But today God may be working on your heart, so you need to make that decision and put your faith in Jesus Christ, choosing the far greater treasure.

I believe there's another group here today who have done that. Maybe you're younger, maybe you're older, but you've made that decision. Yet while you've unloaded part of it, like unloading part of a backpack, you're still struggling because you've got some of that old life holding you back. God is calling you today, like He called Moses, and you need to leave it all behind. You need to let

go. There are things you're still watching, seeing, doing, relationships that are holding you back, choices you're making—and God is calling you to do something greater while you're still indulging in some level of sin. You know it. Maybe nobody else knows it. But God is saying, "It's time to cut that loose, to leave that old life behind, then with endurance you need to follow Me. I'm worth it. Even though I'm invisible, trust Me."

I was thinking of an analogy a couple weeks ago when we were at my wife's family for the Fourth of July. Her grandparents have a farm out in the middle of nowhere in central Michigan. As I've mentioned before, I like to take walks, so that day I went out for a walk. It was only something like 160 degrees that day, along with heavy humidity. There was a path that was about three and a half miles one way to a country road, then you reach an intersection with a blinking light.

I thought that would be fun, so I went out on that path wearing flip-flops—which has nothing to do with the story, but just to create an image for you. I knew, in 160-degree weather, that somewhere about three and a half miles away there's a blinking red light. I knew I was going to get there. I believed it, because I remembered driving past it. I know it's there. As I started walking in that hot humidity, I couldn't see that light. But even though it was invisible, I believed it was there enough to move toward it.

As I was walking, I was thinking about this—knowing I would be preaching on Moses—and I thought, "That is so often how our life is. We are plodding along with endurance, knowing there's an invisible God Who is orchestrating all the details of life and Who is sovereign over all things, but we can't see Him." There were times during that walk when I was thinking, "Yeah, this feels far enough. I've lost enough sweat today. I'm not sure I'm going to make it home actually. Hopefully someone will come looking for me if I don't." It was requiring endurance.

The word "grit" comes to mind. Do you know that word? I love that word. I'm not talking about John Wayne "True Grit." I'm talking about Jesus grit—perseverance that says, "I'm going to stick through this and I'm going to hold to Jesus, even though I can't see Him."

I want us to have grit here today like Moses; like these first-century Christians. I don't know what your circumstances are. I know what mine are and I know I need more grit. I vacillate. I mentioned before, even in my own journey, I've had moments of peace and moments of panic in this process. Sometimes they happen at the same time. It's possible to have peace and panic at the same time. Intellectually, you have peace knowing there's a sovereign God. You believe God is good, that He's sovereign, that He will take care of you. His promises are true and He's a refuge like the Psalms say. Yet on the other side, as a human, you're panicking, thinking, "What have I done? How is this going to work out? God, please show me, because right now I'm freaking out and this doesn't make sense."

I could tell you lots of times when I've vacillated through that process, but I've continued to hold onto and believe in this invisible God Who is faithful and trustworthy, Who has given us the ability to know and understand His heart. But it is hard and requires endurance and a courageous faith, no matter what your circumstances are.

Some of you know God is calling you to do something that's pretty radical. I don't know what it is, and I won't even try to suggest it. But God is speaking to you about something—a relationship, a decision, a job—something you need to do, and He's calling you to step out in faith.

Let's go back to Moses and those contradictory statements that Moses was not afraid according to the author of Hebrews, yet Moses himself says he was afraid. Which is it? Did God mess up? Did the author of Hebrews miss something? I feel like Moses would have told the truth. He's a humble guy—Scripture tells us that. He says he's afraid, that he left Egypt because of fear. So why does the author of Hebrews then say he was not afraid of the king? These two statements seem to contradict each other. Was he leaving because of faith, or was he leaving because of fear.

My answer to that is, "Yes." Yes, from a human perspective, he was afraid for his life. He knew if he stayed around he was going to get killed. I look back to the faith of his parents. Remember what the author of Hebrews says? By faith they were not afraid of the king's edict.

If you're a parent here who has just found out your baby is going to be killed would you say, "Okay, God, You've got this covered. Yeah, I'm good. I'll just step back, *laissez faire*, and see what You're going to do about it"? No, there would be fear in your heart, humanly speaking. But that doesn't mean we don't have faith that God is bigger than that. I think that's what we see here. I believe God had been working on the heart of Moses, calling him to this place for 40 years, putting in him the belief that He had something for him. But like Abraham, God wasn't telling him where he was going to go or what it was going to look like. Now it had come and

God said, "Okay, it's time." So yes, Moses left partly in order to survive, but I also think he left primarily because he had faith in God that had been growing and growing and growing.

Partly I believe that because I've experienced some of that in my own life. When I stepped out in faith there was plenty of fear. But my overriding desire was faith in God. Others of you have experienced that as well.

The author of Hebrews is kind of cherry-picking in Hebrews 11. Have you noticed that? Is he telling us everything there is to know about these different characters? No. He's telling us primarily the really good parts. If I was going to be mentioned in Scripture, Hebrews 11 is where I would want to be. It's a record of, "He did this and it was awesome. He did that and it was awesome." But then we go back to the accounts in the Pentateuch and we see, "Oh, he was kind of evil at times. He slept around; he made bad decisions; he didn't believe in God; he chose that; he was an adulterer and a murderer; he didn't trust God." It makes us realize that God loves to use sinners like you and me.

His purpose in Hebrews 11 is to pick out the best parts, as if to say, "Yes, ultimately it was faith and not fear that was driving this person." Does that make sense? Do you see how those can co-exist at some level? Faith is not like stepping out with total courage and having no fear. Faith is stepping out even in the midst of fear, with courage, believing God is sufficient. He's all-satisfying. He can handle it, even in the midst of my temporary and momentary—or maybe longer—fears, tribulations, and sufferings. My God will be with me and will see me through. He will give the endurance that's needed.

Some of us need to hear that today, myself included. We need grit. We need endurance, just like those first-century Christians who were thinking about throwing in the towel, thinking, "It's not worth it. It was easier back before all this Jesus stuff happened. At least the Romans left us alone." Do you know what that sounds like? It sounds like the Israelites after they left Egypt. "If we could just go back, at least we would have leeks and melons and fresh food again. Yeah, we were slaves and never had a moment to ourselves, but at least we had that good food."

I have a tendency to do that. We have a tendency to do that. We look back and think, "Ah, if I could just go back. It would be better if I could go back." But God is saying, "Keep your eyes focused with endurance—with grit—on Me. Even though I'm invisible to you now, believe that Who I say I am is Who I am, and it's worth following Me today."

I want to encourage you, no matter what, that if you've not left the old life behind—or if you're kind of holding on part-way, still strapped to that old life—let today be the beginning when you get honest and say, "I've got to cut bait today and start moving forward, leaving that life behind."

We are to keep confidence in God's promises.

The fourth part of the faith decision we see in Moses' life is that we have to keep confidence in God's promises. Hebrews 11:28 gives us an indication of this, where the author writes, *"By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them."*

Many of you are probably familiar with the Passover in Exodus 10–13 and the plagues leading up to what God did that fateful night. This was a faith decision for Moses because God was asking him to do a really unusual thing—let me argue, absurd and ridiculous thing.

There were multiple plagues leading up to this point, yet Pharaoh had continually refused to give in to what Moses was asking. At the end of this time, God came to Moses to tell him it was time for the big one. He said, "I'm going to give you some really specific instructions about food preparation, what kind of animals to sacrifice and what you're to do with the blood. Then everyone who follows these instructions to the 'T' will be spared and their firstborn animals and children will not die. But anyone who does not follow these instructions and those who are in Egypt will experience death in their households."

If I were Moses, I would be thinking, "What? You've got to be kidding. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and wondering what I'm doing there, You bring me back, take me through all these plagues, and now this is what I'm supposed to do? First I've got to convince a group of people—who aren't even sure they want to follow me right now—that they need to do all these things? Then I've got to believe You're going to do what You say You'll do, and that spreading this blood on our doorposts is going to protect us when the destroyer passes over our homes?"

Remarkably, Moses has confidence in God's promise, both in that promise and looking back to the Abrahamic covenant. He's remembering that God made a covenant with Abraham that He would make a nation out of him. Moses believed that God was good for His word. I think it that moment, even though it might have been hard for him to understand what God was asking of

them, he knew God was not going to destroy His people but would deliver them. I think in that moment, Moses realized that God would be using him as the deliverer. This is the culmination of 80 years for Moses—40 years of living in Egypt with everything he could have wanted, then 40 years on his own, with moments of peace and panic. Who knows what was going through his mind during that season? He might have thought, “Maybe God has forgotten about me and I’m on my own. Maybe I’m going to live out my life as a shepherd.”

But then he comes to the place where God tells him, “Here’s what I have for you. Here’s what you need to do. Here’s what you need to describe to these people. Now, go and do it. You have a very short time.” I believe Moses obeyed by faith because he trusted God, he had confidence in God’s promises and he believed God was the greatest protector Who would keep His word and His covenant with His people. I believe the same is true for us today.

That night, the Destroyer came through and everyone who did not have the mark of the blood had family members who perished. But all those who followed the instructions God had given Moses were spared. We have a hard enough time getting people to switch services and change times. Imagine Moses having to be the one to try to get people to follow those instructions. “Hey, I’ve got a word from the Lord. Listen carefully.”

Can you imagine the looks he must have gotten? They had seen all the plagues, but this was the first one that would directly involve them. It was primarily Moses’ faith, but at some level those people also had faith to believe and obey God, even though they had probably been thinking, “This is crazy.”

Are we willing to follow God even when it seems absurd and when what He tells us to do makes no sense? I know I wrestle with that, but I want to be someone who’s looking to an invisible God and who’s following Him each step of the way. Friends, the bottom line is that blood is still our saving grace today. It’s not the blood of an animal anymore. We sing about the Lamb of God Who shed His blood—that same blood is available for each one of us today.

In the view of the world, it’s kind of weird to talk about blood like this. They think it’s gross. But blood is the most precious thing in this world—the blood of the Lamb of God, Who takes away our sin. We don’t have to put blood on a doorpost. We don’t have to kill an animal. God has given us His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the ultimate Lamb, the far better sacrifice, so that we can have forgiveness of sins and no longer have to be bound in slavery to sin. We no longer have to live with a lack of understanding or simply a hope for where God is taking us. Rather, we can have peace, knowing our God is faithful. But the blood still is what saves us today.

So how visible is your faith in an invisible God? As you evaluate this morning, have you been willing to refuse the world’s approval? Have you been willing to choose the greater treasure, to leave behind the old life, to keep confidence in God’s promises? This faith journey is not a perfect line. My faith journey looks like a roller coaster with ups and downs, struggles and difficulties. There are moments when I feel so close to Jesus and moments when I feel so far away. I’m in despair, frustrated and discouraged. I’m crying out, because I have nowhere else to turn. But I believe that invisible God still hears me in those moments and still loves me amidst my unbelief and struggle. The same is true for each of you here today. It is worth finishing that race—or for some, starting that race. How visible is your faith?

I want to close with another illustration taken from my own family—not my children this time but about my wife’s grandparents, Stan and Helen Kresge. Let’s put some flesh on the bones of this message.

One year ago, on July 3, Stan passed away. After living a life of following Jesus and living a commitment to God, God took him home. Helen is still at the farm and we saw her just a couple weeks ago. But as I was thinking about Moses, I kept thinking about Stan, the grandson of a man named S.S. Kresge. Some of you may be familiar with that name. He lived in Michigan and started Kresge Five and Dime. They eventually started something called Kresge Mart, which became Kmart and was connected with Sears and Roebuck. Back in 1924, S.S. Kresge, Stan’s grandfather, was worth \$324 million. Today that would be about \$5 billion. He had a \$100 million in real estate. He was a big deal, had a lot of money and would have been able to pass a fair amount of that prestige and money on to his grandson Stan. But Stan didn’t want anything to do with it. He saw how money and alcohol had corrupted some of his family members, causing them to be away from their homes and not to raise their children to know and love Jesus. God had laid on his heart a desire, so he went to school to be a farmer. He bought an 80-acre farm in the middle of Central Michigan, north of Lansing, raised eight kids and hand weeded those 80 acres of corn for his cows. He never used pesticides—he was committed to being that kind of a farmer.

Stan was a very unassuming man for the 80-plus years God gave him until he died. He was willing to refuse the approval of his dad and his grandpa, so the world thought he was crazy. He knew there was a better treasure for him and he was willing to leave behind that old life, because he had confidence in an invisible God.

In the year preceding his death, he was having some problems with his heart and they were recommending a procedure that was going to cost between \$70-80,000. He decided he didn't want to do it (he was self-insured). We have a big family—my wife is the oldest of 44 grandchildren on that side, and our oldest daughter is the first of 40 great-grandchildren and counting, which promises to be in the thousands by the time they're all done.

He had a big family and he was an unassuming man who just kept to himself, but people knew he had faith in God. He decided he didn't want to have that surgery, because he had a heart for the nations his whole life and thought, "That money can be used to reach people with the gospel." I'm not saying you have to make that decision, but that's what God had laid on his heart.

So he chose not to have the surgery and shortly after that God took him home. After he died, it was discovered that he had given hundreds of thousands of dollars away for missions. He was unassuming, never had much, didn't leave much behind, because his eyes were fixed on an invisible God. He was far from perfect. He had his flaws. He had his issues, just like we all do. For all his years, his visible faith was strong daily. He had visible faith in an invisible God.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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