

Hebrews 11:24-28 (Walter Thomas Prideaux Wolston) 61316

Young Men of Scripture, Moses; or, Refusing and Choosing

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There are three points in Moses' history recorded by God's Spirit in this passage. The history of Moses is a very interesting and instructive one; and all of you who are conversant with Old Testament Scripture will remember that his life, and what was connected therewith, occupies a very large portion of the Pentateuch, of which also he was the undoubted writer. From Exodus to the end of Deuteronomy we have a very large account of what took place in his life, and of the results of his ministry. The Spirit of God, in the verses I have read, summarizes the salient points of this remarkable man's life under three heads—(1) the moment when he turned right round to God; (2) the moment when he absolutely broke with the world; and (3) the memorable occasion when he put between himself and God the sprinkled blood, the blood of atonement, which made his own salvation a downright certainty.

Now, I wonder how many of you in this hall tonight have passed through an experience like that of Moses. Probably most of you are somewhat younger than he was when he made his remarkable choice. There are two striking things to be noted in verse 24: "By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the peoples of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." How old was he when, as the Holy Spirit says here, he was come to years? We are told exactly how old he was in the seventh chapter of the Acts, where the Spirit of God, by the mouth of Stephen, says, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel" (Acts 7:22). Perhaps you would not call a man of forty young; but he was not old, when the total age of the man is taken into consideration, "for Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deut. 34:7); so that at forty he would be, so to speak, quite in the days of his youth. I fully admit that he was not a giddy man of the moment, nor as frivolous as most of us were at twenty or twenty-five. I think he had come to the time of life when he had his head screwed on rightly, if you understand me. He had a real sense of what things were. He was forty years of age—the number in Scripture of probation, or perfect testing—and, mark you! when this man turned to God, he was no novice as to the world and its unsatisfactory pleasures. When Moses turned right round to God—when he turned his back on the world—on the idolatry of Egypt, and upon the brightest prospect that mortal man on earth ever had—he was a man who knew exactly how to appraise things at their full and true value.

At forty years of age, what was Moses' position? It was a very remarkable one. He was the child of Hebrew parents, and owing to the cruel injunction of the king, that all the male children should be destroyed, he should have perished in infancy by being flung into the river. This injunction his parents had disobeyed "by faith," and the child was put by his mother in a cradle, and laid in the flags by the river's side. Pharaoh's daughter, as she went to bathe in the river, saw this ark or cradle, and had it brought to her. When the ark was opened, "the babe wept," and her womanly heart was touched, and she adopted the child. Moses' own sister then came forward and asked Pharaoh's daughter if she should fetch a nurse. She commanded her to do so, and Moses' own mother was brought. "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages," the astonished mother hears, but from that time Pharaoh's daughter claimed the child, "and he became her son" (Ex. 2:1-10). She raised him from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to manhood, as being her own son; and what was the result? When Moses came to be forty years of age, he was within direct touch of the throne of Egypt, and with every prospect of ascending it. Pharaoh had no son, and Pharaoh's daughter had no children, and, in the event of her death, there was no doubt that her adopted son would have ascended the throne of Egypt, and would have been the monarch of the ruling nation in the world at that moment.

Moreover, Moses was evidently an exceedingly clever man. He was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and the Egyptians were not fools. It would puzzle our builders to do what they did—to put up the Pyramids, and rear the mighty structures that were common enough in the days of Moses. There was a good deal of wisdom current. The world was not quite such a baby in those days as men in their conceit nowadays are wont to think it was. There was a great deal more wisdom in those days than we are wont to credit the world with; and "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." He was a scientific, accomplished, and intellectual man; but more than that, "he was mighty in words and in deeds." As a speaker, an orator, who could address his fellows—spite of his own humble estimate of himself (Ex. 4:10)—he was clearly at the top of the tree. In the forum or the fight, in the amphitheater or the battlefield, he could meet with any man who—came against him. He was mighty. "in deeds" as well as "in words." He was an all-round accomplished man of the world, who had few, if any, equals—a man that men could be proud of. That man had the ball at his foot. He had the world before him. He was not only the king's favorite, and the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, but was within touch of the throne; and as a man, he was evidently what you may call the world's man—a notable man among men, from whom they expected much.

All of a sudden Moses flings all up; all of a sudden he turns his back upon what had hitherto claimed him, charmed him, and allured him. What was the reason? Well, Scripture says, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." And what was this wonderful energy that wrought in his soul this change? It was faith. Faith is the principle that links the soul with God. It is that mighty principle that sees beyond the things of time, and looks right into eternity. The fact was this—in some way or other—for the producing circumstances are not told us—the Spirit of God had wrought in that man's heart, and he looked through time into eternity.

Oh! would to God that you too would take a deep long look right into eternity! for although you are here today, you cannot tell how soon you will be in it. It lies before you, just as Moses knew it lay before him; and he looked right into eternity, and he measured in the balances of the sanctuary what he had for time, and what lay before him in eternity. By grace he was able to do this remarkable act—he gave up the present, in view of the future. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Refusing and choosing! Every man must do the same.

Every one of you must refuse, and you must, choose. Either you refuse the world and choose Christ, or you refuse Christ and choose the world. I quite admit that at that moment the present realities of the Gospel, in all their sweetness and fullness, had not come out as they have to us now; but Moses saw enough to make him see and say this: "There is something infinitely better than what I have just now; I will go in for it." But what about your position, Moses? What about your place in the court and the palace?" These things are hindrances in my road, and I will cede them," is his reply.

I have no doubt that the devil suggested to him, Why don't you keep the place that providence has placed you in? Undoubtedly providence had placed him in that position. But remember providence is one thing, and faith is another. While no doubt the providence of God had placed him in a lofty position, he was part and parcel with those who were not God's people. He saw that the thing of the utmost importance was to be of, and to be identified with, those who were God's people. There are some people in this world who belong to God. Do you belong to Him? Then distinctly understand this: If a man does not belong to God. Satan claims that man. People do not like that doctrine; they think it very strange. You are not your own, man! Oh! no. "The god of this world" claims you, holds you, and binds you, if you do not belong to God. Moses felt it and knew it, and he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." He said: "Let me be among God's people; I had rather have affliction with God's people, than have the favor and fawning of the world, and all that the children of the world can lay at my feet." He was wise.

But possibly you may say to me, What did he give it up for? I grant you he gave up an earthly court and crown, and the company of earthly courtiers, but Scripture tells us "he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." I wonder if you ever thought of the company that Moses got into afterward! I do not know whether you ever thought of it, but it is worthy of notice. In the Gospels we read there was a certain occasion when the blessed Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured. Peter, James, and John saw the Lord transfigured: "And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:30-31). Ah! Moses has his recompense there. He is in the company, not only of the people of God, but of the Son of God! I want you my friends, to follow his steps. I want everybody here this evening, who has not yet turned to the Lord Jesus, to do, in principle, what Moses did. It comes to this—a man has to refuse and to choose.

When I was converted to God myself, what did I do? I refused, and I chose. You may say to me, How did it come about? I will tell you. I was going to be a lawyer, not a doctor, and I had gone up from the south of Devon to London to go on with my legal studies, and I got into a meeting where a servant of God was preaching. That is thirty-three years ago. It was on the 16th December, 1860. The dear servant of God who was preaching that evening brought out very simply the importance and the blessedness of being a Christian. Every seat in the hall was filled, and I stood in the aisle the whole of that evening. As the preacher—who has now gone to glory—went on, I said to myself, That man is right; he is right, and I am wrong. But there was more than that, I got the sense that that man knew God, and I did not—that man was saved, and I was not—that he was going to glory, while I was going to hell—that he was going to be the companion of Christ, and I knew I was going to be the companion of the devil perfectly well. You ask, Were you a terribly gross sinner? I was exactly like you, an unconverted young man—a man full of the world. I admit that at that time there was not a pleasure of the world that I had not dipped into. I tasted of "the pleasures of sin," but they never satisfied me, and that night I was a convicted man an awakened man. I found that I was on the wrong road altogether—that I was all wrong. I was pulled up. God pull you up, my young friend. God arrested me. God arrest you!

The preacher at the end invited anybody who would like to have a conversation with him to wait behind, and I waited. Ten years before I had seen the preacher. Curious are the links in the chain of God's grace to an unconverted soul. This servant of His had come down to Devonshire to preach, and stopped in my father's house. He wanted to go to a place five miles away to see a friend, and my father let me drive him. When we got home he said to me, "This has been a beautiful drive, and here is a little remembrance of it," and he handed me a mother-of-pearl-handled knife with four blades. Now a four-bladed knife is usually thought a great deal of by a lad of ten, and I prized it accordingly.

As I entered the door of the hall that night in London, and heard who was to preach, I felt I had a certain link with the speaker—beloved C. S. I listened with real interest to his solemn, searching address on Solomon building the temple—since published under the title of "Great Stones and Costly"—and I thought I would like to resume my friendship with himself.

After a few words with him, he introduced me to a young man of about my own age, who simply asked me, "Are you a Christian?" "No, sir," I answered, "I am not a Christian." "Oh, you are not a Christian! How is that?" I said, "I don't know, but I am not one." "Don't you want to be one?" "Yes, I should like to be one." "Well, what have you to do to become one?" "I suppose I have only to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." "Yes, and do you believe in Him?" "I do; we all believe in England." "Yes, but tell me, what do you believe?" Well, I confess I was struck with that question when he put it. I had been brought up in a Christian family. I had a Christian father and mother, a converted brother, and several Christian sisters, but I was not a Christian myself. I never was more puzzled than when he put that question, "What do you believe?" After a pause, I said, "I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "And to save you?" "Well, I hope so, among the rest." "Do you believe in Him?" "I do." "And are you saved?" "Oh, no, I don't feel saved; and I can't expect to be saved until I feel I am saved." My young friend said, "Stop, you think you really need saving? You know you are a sinner?" "I know it, and, what is more, I'd give the world to be a Christian." "But you have nothing to give, you have only to receive," and then he put the Gospel very simply to me. I was on the verge of believing the Gospel, and accepting God's way of salvation, when an old acquaintance stepped up, and whispered in my ear, "Remember you have to sing at a concert in Devonshire [I used to sing at concerts, chiefly comic songs] in Christmas week, and you have many other similar engagements that week. Now no man can serve two masters. You could not be a Christian and fulfill all your worldly engagements. You had better put off being a Christian for a fortnight, and then when you come back to London you can believe the Gospel and be a Christian." On went this subtle yet damnable temptation, for it was the devil who whispered, "No man can serve two masters"; and I recollect I said at the time, "That is true, I have served you too long. You are a bad master, and I will serve you no more." And, thank God! I made up my mind then and there. The scripture which the devil quoted to hinder me really helped me to decide for Christ.

"And you do believe in Jesus?" said the young man who was conversing with me. "I do believe." "And what do you believe?" he asked again. "I believe that Christ died to save me." "And do you think the Lord is willing to save you?" "Yes, I think He is." "And has He saved you?" "Ah, no! I am not saved yet; I don't feel saved." I was waiting for experience. All of a sudden he said: "I see where you are; you are just in the position of the man of whom the Apostle James says, 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and

tremble” (James 2:19). Who does not believe that there is a God? Every young man in this hall does so. “Thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” That verse pierced me through. I saw in a moment the ground I was on, and the company I was in; and I am not ashamed to confess, in the face of you all tonight, that when I saw my company I fled. Fled! To whom? To the Saviour! I saw where I was. I saw I was practically the companion of those who, while they believe there is one God, tremble under the sense of His judgment, knowing that they are eternally lost. “The devils also believe, and tremble” pierced my conscience to the uttermost. They and I were on common ground. The young Scotsman who was speaking with me said, “There is this difference between you and them; there is no mercy for them; they are beyond it. There is mercy for you, and God grant that you may taste it.” “What must I do to be saved?” burst from my lips. “You have only to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” I thought, Can I believe that Jesus died for me? Yes, I do believe, and, thank God! I made up my mind for the Lord on that spot—found Him as my Saviour, received pardon and peace on the spot, was filled with joy, and have never for one moment repented my choice.

You do the same tonight. I implore you. I chose Christ, and I refused the world, with the same breath. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather”—and you must choose. Make your choice tonight. Would you not rather choose Jesus Christ, and “suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,” and then suffer their penalty forever? Moses saw where he was. He saw he was going down with the tide. Are you going down with the tide, or are you, not? Can you tell me the difference between a dead fish and a living one, in the water? I think most of you could. A dead fish is easily enough known. It goes with the stream, but you generally find the living fish with its nose up the stream. Moses knew he was going with the stream, and every unconverted man is going on with the stream—going on with “the pleasures of sin.” They are only for a season, however. I do not deny that there is pleasure in sin, for God says there is pleasure in sin; but, Stop! there are penalties connected with sin, which all who go in for the pleasures of sin are exposed to. The pleasures of sin are only for a season; they do not really satisfy. No young man in this hall who is unconverted is really satisfied.

Just settle down for five minutes and think, in the midst of your folly, and giddiness, and godlessness— think for five minutes, and you will become unhappy. Your conscience will act. Three months before I was converted I was in a ballroom, and in the middle of a waltz with a young lady we paused before a chiffonier where there were some lovely flowers. “Are not these flowers lovely?” she said. “Yes, they are beautiful,” I replied, “but they are very like us.” “What do you mean?” she asked. “They are cut; they will be withered and dead tomorrow.” I had a conscience, you see. “Oh! what do you mean?” said she, perfectly alarmed. “Never mind,” I answered, and we got into the whirl of the waltz once more. But the remark stuck to her conscience; she saw death was ahead of her. Death and damnation were before me, and I knew it full well. I knew that death and judgment and hell lay before me. I am thankful to say that my remark was used by the Spirit of God, and was like seed dropped into good ground. It rankled so in her conscience, that she had no soul-rest till she came to Jesus. When God brought me to Himself, and I was preaching a few months afterward in the town where she lived, she came to hear me preach, found Christ as her Saviour, and then told me how she was awakened in the ballroom.

Ah, my friends, it is a great thing to have Christ. It is a wonderful thing to have Christ—a wonderful thing to be saved. Have your fill of pleasure here, take all that the world can give you, and what then? You pass into eternity. You have no lease of life. You may have a lease of your house, of your shop, or of your warehouse, but you have no lease of your life. That life is often short. The call to eternity is often sudden. Since I spoke to you in this hall last Lord’s Day evening, a fine young man, the son of one of my oldest friends in this town, has been suddenly called away. He was out riding, his horse shied, and he struck his brow against an overhanging branch of a tree. He fell to the ground insensible, and within twenty-four hours passed into eternity. Tell me, if within the same space of time you were to pass into eternity, where would you spend it? Don’t shirk the query. Have you eternal life? Are you forgiven? Do you know that living Saviour, who died on Calvary’s tree?

By faith Moses refused that which was unsatisfactory. By faith he made his choice to keep company with the children of God. By faith he laid hold on that which was revealed to his soul—the things of God and of eternity. He was not ashamed to be found among God’s people. Possibly some of you might feel ashamed to be called a Christian. Nay, you need not. Suppose you do suffer affliction with the people of God, rejoice therein. The early disciples “rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41). The man who suffers for Christ has no need to be ashamed. There is shame enough coming to the impenitent and eternally lost sinner. He gets the pleasures of sin in time, and the pains, penalties, and consequences of sin in eternity. Sin is a terrible thing. The doing of our own will is a terrible thing: It sundered man from God to begin with, and it sunders man from God for eternity. The pleasures of sin carry most fearful penalties, and the man who chooses the pleasures of sin in preference to God’s pleasures is not wise. The Psalmist truly said, “In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa. 16:11). And who may have them? You may have them this night, if through grace you are led to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The next thing we read about Moses here is, that he “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” I have no doubt Moses got well laughed at, when he made up his mind to come out on God’s side and identify himself with God’s people. You must not forget what they were. They were slaves under Pharaoh. When Moses’ mind was fully made up, I have no doubt his old comrades laughed at him, despised him, and jeered at him, and said, What a fool that Moses is! Moses was no fool. Folly is in the pathway of the man who enters eternity regardless of the need of the soul. Moses might have been called all sorts of names. But it does not do a man much harm to be called names. Never mind if the men who have been your companions call you a “blue light,” a “salvationist,” or a “revivalist.” Never you mind, my friend, if you are the Lord’s man, though your comrades in the class-room, the counting-house, or the workshop, make sport of you. The Christian man has got the best of it all along the line—right through time and into eternity. He has God for his Father, Christ for his Saviour, the Holy Spirit for his Comforter, the Bible for his guide, and the children of God for his companions. Happy man! blessed man! What is it he loses? He loses his sins; and the loss of being judged for your sins is not one to be mourned.

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” was a fine working principle. I have no doubt Moses, before he took that, step, put into one scale pan of the balance what he had for time in connection with the idolatry of Egypt, and put into the other scale he put the reproach of Christ. He weighed the treasures of the world against “the reproach of Christ,” and was then happily found “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” He looked into the future. I pray you, look into the future. Think what eternity is. Have you ever really pondered what eternity is? It is a terrible word for an unsaved man. You cannot picture it. You cannot measure it. If it were possible that a bird should fly from this earth to the nearest

fixed star, and his flight be as, rapid as light, it would take thousands of years.

Were his duty to convey this earth thither, grain by grain, the time occupied by journeys to and fro, till all the earth had been so carried to yonder fixed star, would be illimitable and utterly uncountable. But when that work has been done eternity is only just begun. Your condition and fixed state, as a sinner without God, in that which the Scripture speaks of as “the lake of fire,” where “the worm dieth not,” is then only beginning. Oh! I pray you think of it.

But I hear you say, I don't believe in hell. My friend, your not believing in it does—not reduce it to nothingness. Men would have us believe nowadays that it is an idle fable; but that is impossible. The fact that Christ died, suffering “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God,” and that the gates of glory might be opened to us, is a conclusive proof of the eternal realities of the scene in which the unregenerate man must suffer. Were there nothing to escape, why did Jesus voluntarily endure the forsaking of God on the cross? It is written that He “suffered for sins once, the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God”; and the sufferings of the Saviour are to me an absolutely conclusive proof of the inevitable sufferings of the sinner who goes into eternity in his sins.

The man who now passes into eternity in an unsaved, unconverted, unforgiven, unbelieving state, goes into it with his eyes open, for God has spoken plainly. The light you have is infinitely more than that which Moses had, but he “had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” “The world is for time,” he says, “I want something for eternity. The world is fleeting and passing; I want something abiding and eternal. This world is passing! give me that which will abide forever—the companionship of the people of God in time, and of God Himself forever.” From the ninth of Luke we have seen that his reward was glory; for there you find Moses in glory with Christ. I will never meet you in hell, and Moses will never meet you there; and if his voice could be heard from heaven tonight it would say: “Young man, you had better follow my pathway. People thought me a fool in my earthly pathway, but see where I am now; I am in glory with Christ.” He “had respect unto the recompense of the reward,” and it was indeed great.

But there was great energy in Moses' faith, for we read, “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.” What cheered him, kept him going? What carried him on? “He endured as seeing him who is invisible?” He had his eye on God. He knew God. The Christian knows God. The Christian young man knows God as his Father, and the Son of God as his Saviour. He knows his sins are forgiven. “He endures as seeing Him who is invisible.” Faith sees right into the future. Faith knows what is coming. I can tell you nothing about time, but as to eternity all is as clear as noon-day light. The believer in Jesus has eternal life. The sinner who trusts in Jesus knows his sins are forgiven. “For to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

There is a third point of immense importance stated about Moses in the scripture before us. “Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.” Do you understand that? It was the sprinkling of the blood of the passover lamb on the lintel and two sideposts of the door before the Israelites could come out of Egypt. Moses had made up his mind at that time to turn his back on the king of Egypt, the prince of the world, and start for heaven and glory. But God had said that, in order to the deliverance of the people, the blood of redemption, the blood of the lamb of substitution, must be seen by Him on the lintels. The Holy Spirit records about Moses here that in order to secure his redemption, and in order to his being sheltered from the righteous judgment of God, he put between his soul and God the blood of atonement, the blood of the slain lamb. You must imitate Moses if you want salvation. You can have it tonight, if in faith you put between your guilty soul and God the blood of Jesus. Wonderful is the truth that the Son of God—the sinless, blessed Son of Man—died for you; and if you believe in Him, and rest your soul on the blessed truth of His death and resurrection, your eternal salvation is assured. “By faith Moses kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them.”

Now, why, I should like to ask, is the sprinkling spoken of here? Because belief in the mere fact that Christ died will not save me. I must appropriate it, and must make it my own, and that is what faith does; it sprinkles the blood. There is many a man today who believes that Jesus died, but who has not got His blood applied to his own soul. That is like the man in Egypt who had slain the lamb, and put the blood in the basin, but had not put the blood on the lintel of his door. The shed blood is the fact that Jesus died; the blood sprinkled indicates that I believe He died for me; I have appropriated it for my own need. There is no real application of the truth to the soul till this point is reached. There must be a personal application of the truth. God's salvation is individual. It goes not by families, kirks, or nations. “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.” And why? Because you can only get in one at a time. It is individual. You must have it for yourself; you must get it for yourself. Thank God, I have got it! Will you not receive Christ tonight? You could not do better than follow in Moses' path—First, Decide for Christ; second, turn your back on the world; and third, get under the shelter of the blood of Jesus. Faith does all three. Have you faith?

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