

#2091—January 22, 2012—“Walking By Faith, Living By Courage”—2

[Gauger:] Living by faith. We know it's biblical. We know it should be our priority. But living by faith takes courage, and courage is a rare commodity. Or is it? Let's explore that further today on *Moody Presents*. Hi, welcome to the half-hour weekly teaching ministry of Dr. Paul Nyquist, ninth president of the Moody Bible Institute. I'm Jon Gauger, welcoming you to our continuing series in the book of Hebrews. We're at the eleventh chapter today looking at verses 23–31. It's a message that Dr. Nyquist began last week, and we've learned so far that courage is not something we are necessarily born with, but as we look through the life of Moses we come to understand that it is something we can encounter, something we can pick up along the way. Here's Dr. Nyquist to continue today's message.

[Nyquist:] It's interesting to note that this word *beautiful* is only used two times in the New Testament. Both times it's used, it's used to describe the beauty of Moses when he was a baby. It's used that way in Hebrews 11; it's also used that way in Acts 7 in Stephen's speech. That gives us some pretty strong evidence that this Moses must have been one gorgeous little kid.

We don't know if that's the only reason why his parents decided to do what they decided to do. It may have been because of his sheer beauty, or it may have been because God revealed to them what He intended to do with this child. But in any case, they make a courageous decision; that is, in faith they decide to disobey the king's edict. For three months they hide the baby, but then when it becomes increasingly more difficult to hide him, they come up with a plan. They find a basket, they cover its bottom with pitch, and then they carefully calculate an encounter with Pharaoh's daughter at the edge of the Nile.

Let me tell you, that took courage. That was bravery. Because, you see, if that plan didn't go exactly as they hoped, not only would that baby assuredly die, but also they would probably lose their lives as well. So this took real courage. Yet in faith they did it. In faith, it says, “they were not afraid of the king's edict.”

Moses demonstrated that same kind of courageous faith, so this is not only true of Moses' parents, but of Moses himself. That's what's described in the next set of verses. We know from Exodus that Moses lived. He was saved through that basket, and he was adopted into Pharaoh's family as the son of one of his daughters. That means then that Moses lived for the first forty years of his life as one of the princes of Egypt.

Let me just remind you what the life of a prince was like in Egypt, because this is one of the most advanced countries in the world at that time. It was extremely powerful, very wealthy. Signs of their wealth were seen when the eye-popping treasures appeared when they found King Tut's tomb. They found and unearthed that tomb in 1923, and they were amazed. Tut was buried in a coffin made of pure gold. Around him were other treasures of the royalty. There was a golden chariot. There was a golden throne. There were golden statues. There were precious jewels and perfumes in every nook and cranny of the tomb. There were treasures of unspeakable value. Tut only lived about one hundred years after Moses, so I think we can assume that Moses enjoyed that same kind of splendor and luxury.

He would have been extremely well educated, fluent in the Canaanite languages, trained in hieroglyphics. He would have been trained in warfare, in equestrian, in archery. He would have had it all at his disposal, the luxury of Egypt. But then around age forty, the Bible says he made a courageous decision; that is, he decided to forsake that lifestyle and become identified with his own people. It says in verse 24,

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

Exodus explains how he tried to first do this, and that is, when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave, he went and killed the Egyptian. We might wonder, why would he do that? Why would he react in that way? We know from Stephen's speech in Acts 7 that Moses knew long before the burning bush in Midian that he was called to be the deliverer of the Hebrew people. Somehow sometime during the years that he was growing up, God revealed to Moses, "You are the man. You are the one who is going to deliver the people out of Egypt." So it just became a matter of whether he was going to have the courage to obey that calling or not. It was just a matter of if he would have the courage to forsake his lifestyle, the courage to endure ill treatment like his brethren, the courage to incur the wrath of his adopted grandfather, King Thutmose III. But he did.

It says in verse 27, "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen." It says here that he did not fear "the wrath of the king." You might say, "I thought he fled from Egypt because he was afraid of Pharaoh." The Bible never says that. The Bible says Moses became afraid, and the Bible also says that Pharaoh wanted to kill him. But the Bible never says he was afraid of Pharaoh. Instead, what seems to be true is that Moses realized that killing the Egyptian was not how God intended him to deliver His people, and he feared that by staying in Egyptian that he would then thwart his ability to fulfill his destiny as the deliverer, because obviously the king now wanted him dead. So in faith of what he was to do, he fled Egypt, but he fled in faith, not in fear.

So here's the lesson from these first two examples. Living by faith takes courage. It takes courage, because when you order your life in light of these unseen realities, that can put you in conflict with powerful people who do not understand those unseen realities. So living by faith can take courage. We see that here with both Moses' parents and Moses. Moses' parents were not afraid of the king's edict. Moses did not fear the wrath of the king. They both displayed courageous faith.

Now, you might say obviously there was something in the genes here. There was something in their constitution that allowed them to have that kind of courage. That's possible. There is nothing in the text to indicate that. I think, if the truth were to be known, they were probably just as chicken as you and me. Remember, they were bucking the most powerful man on the earth at that time: Pharaoh. That took brass.

So how did they do that? How? I don't have a chapter and verse on this, but here's how I put it together. If you have the commitment to live by faith, God will give you the courage to live by faith. If you supply the want to, God will supply the bravery. If that's true, then I find great encouragement in that, because I don't consider myself to be one of the most courageous people on this earth. I mean, I'm probably just as much a chicken as you. But even though that's true, what we find here is that if we supply the want to, God will supply the courage. God says, "I did it with Moses. I did it with Moses' parents. I will do it for you." I like that. I need that.

When we have the courage and commitment to live by faith, that opens a door for God to do things in our life. When we have the courage and commitment to live by faith, God is then able to do things in our life that can only be explained by God. We're going to see three examples of

that in the remainder of this passage. In each case we're going to see courageous faith demonstrated, and we're going to see God preserving His people while others are destroyed.

In the first example we see God preserving the nation of Israel in the midst of the deadly tenth plague. This was found in verse 28. It says, "By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the first-born might not touch them." You know the story in Exodus. After nine successive plagues, hardheaded, hardhearted Pharaoh had still not decided to let the nation of Israel go, so God revealed to Moses that there was a tenth plague still coming. This plague would break the stubborn will of Pharaoh. This would be the death of the firstborn. The firstborn of Egypt would die, from the firstborn of the cattle in the field to the firstborn of the king in the palace.

Now, in order to protect the nation of Israel from that deadly plague, God gives them some simple and yet somewhat bizarre instructions. He says to them that each of them is to kill an unblemished lamb precisely at twilight on the fourteenth day of the month. Then they were to take some of the blood of that lamb and smear it on the door posts and lintels of their home. That blood would be a sign of their faith, and as a result of that, the angel would them pass over.

Rest assured, God had never done anything like that with the nation of Israel before, so I can imagine that there were some very interesting discussions around the dinner tables in Goshen. The father says, "How do we know there's really going to be a death plague? Even so, if there was, what good would smearing blood on our door post do? Besides that, I just painted them." Then the mom says, "Now, Jacob, I was just at bridge club at the Ben-Gurions, and they're going to put blood on their door post. I'd hate to have the only house in town without blood on my door post."

Then the firstborn son chimes in, who has a vested interest in this. I mean, your firstborn. All right? Right! All right? You know. He says, "Yeah, Dad, and what about me? What if you're wrong?"

So in faith they slay the lamb, and they smear the blood. That night when there is weeping and wailing throughout all of Egypt as Egyptians arise to find their firstborn dead, the nation of Israel is perfectly preserved in Goshen.

What's the lesson? When we have the courage and commitment to live by faith, God is able to do things in our lives, including protecting us supernaturally in the midst of a deadly plague.

He gives us two more illustrations of this truth in the stories that follow. The next one is when Israel is actually coming out of Egypt into the wilderness. You know from Exodus that they don't get too far out into the wilderness when fickle Pharaoh changes his mind. He jumps in his chariot, collects his armies, and begins to give chase to the Israelites. When the Israelites look back and see the dust being kicked up by Pharaoh's chariots, they get extremely frightened for two reasons. First of all, they know they are no match for those armies. I mean, they were just a bunch of slaves. But secondly, they looked ahead of them and saw the Red Sea, and there was no way of escape.

Their first response to this is not exactly that of faith. It says in Exodus 14 that they come to Moses and say, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us into the wilderness to die?" Lovely people. Charming people. But Moses stands tall. He says, "Behold the salvation that the Lord is going to bring to you today!" He stretches forth his arm, and as he

does, the waters of the Red Sea begin to pile up on top of each other until finally they are separated. Then, more amazingly, the ground underneath is perfectly dry.

You can imagine the hesitation of the first Israelites when Moses and Aaron said, “Go.” The first one says, “I’m not going first; you’re going first.” He said, “No, I’m not going first. You’re going.” Finally they shove some unsuspecting soul down into the riverbed. They watch in amazement as he goes deeper and deeper into the riverbed and the walls of the water are still there. Buoyed by that confidence, they all tear down into the Red Sea. How long did it take them to cross the Red Sea? I don’t know, but I do know this: Every step was a step of faith, because at any moment God could have chosen to no longer suspend the laws of nature and send them all to a watery grave. And that’s what He did with the Egyptians. It says in verse 29, “By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.”

What’s the lesson? When you have the courage to live by faith—going down into the sea—when you have the courage to live by faith, God is able to do things in your life that can only be explained by God—even building walls of water around you.

The last example He gives us here is an unusual one. It’s unusual because it’s not even about a Hebrew. It’s about Rahab. Look at verses 30–31: “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.” The readers, the Jewish readers of this epistle, I can guarantee you did not expect to find the name of Rahab in God’s hall of fame of faith, for two reasons. First of all, she was not even a Hebrew. She was a Canaanite, for goodness’ sake. Then secondly, she was a ... harlot! A prostitute! Not even someone you would expect to find mentioned in the same breath with Moses or Abraham. Yet here she is.

You know the story. After the nation wandered in the wilderness for forty years, they finally came to the edge of the Promised Land and were preparing to enter in. General Joshua sends in the spies. Rahab shelters them. She hides them. But then before releasing them, she makes them give her a promise: that they will spare her and her household when the invasion finally occurs. They give her that pledge if she will hang a scarlet cord from her window. But when the invasion actually comes, it says in Joshua 6 that Joshua gives these instructions to two of the spies. He says, “‘Go into the harlot’s house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her.’ So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives. ... And they burned the city with fire, and all that was in it.” It says in verse 25, “Rahab the harlot and her father’s household and all she had, Joshua spared.”

That’s not all there is to this story, because in Joshua 2 we find that Rahab’s house was built into the walls of the city, which was very common back then. In Joshua 6 we learn that those walls came straight down, because the armies were able to go straight in to the city. It’s only after the armies went in that they were able to rescue Rahab and her family. So the question is, how did Rahab survive that? How did she live in the midst of all that destruction? Well, we don’t know for sure, but it’s possible—it’s possible—that God caused all the rest of that city wall to fall except the portion that had her house built into it. That is, it could be that the only part of that wall that remained standing was the portion that had her house built in it, along with that window and the scarlet cord. If so, then it’s another illustration of the principle. When we have the courage to live by faith, God is able to do things in our lives that can only be explained by God, including preserving us when all the rest of the wall falls.

Now, don't misunderstand me here. I'm not saying that the Christian life should just be regularly marked by all these miracles. I'm not saying that. But what I am saying is that when we have the courage and the commitment to live by faith, God can do things in our life to encourage us to continue to live by faith. When we have the courage and commitment to live by faith, God can do things in our life that can only be explained by God. These are not always going to be blessings. They're not always going to be victories. We're going to see that in the very next passage in Hebrews 11. But when we have the courage and we have the commitment to live by faith, God can do things in our life that can only be explained as the hand print of God.

One of the MKs I got to know as the president of Avant was a young man named Jonathan. He lives by faith. He is now a missionary in Africa with his wife and his infant daughter. But back when he was a senior in high school as an MK at a school in Quito, Ecuador, he and the entire school were out at the beach one day on a class outing. They were all in the water in the ocean when an earthquake measuring 5.0 on the Richter Scale struck nearby, causing massive waves and rip tides to go right through that area. Here's what happened next. One second they were standing with their feet touching the bottom of the ocean, and the next second they were way out in the ocean over their heads. About twenty kids got swept out far into the ocean, including Jonathan and his younger sister, Lauren. After what seemed like a long time, Lauren made it in with the help of a lifeguard. She thought she was going to drown. Jonathan was farther out, and he was making his way to shore when he saw a head go under the water next to him. He grabbed down and pulled a kid, a ninth-grader, above the water by his hair. He tried to get the boy to swim on his own, but he kept going under the water, so he told the boy to get on his back. Then he saw another boy struggling, a seventh-grader, and maneuvered toward him. This first boy was bigger than the second, so he put the lighter boy on his back and secured the first boy under his arm, kind of like in a headlock. Two others were swimming near him. He saw the younger boy grab for the older boy's back, but the older boy was already panicky and shoved the kid off his back. This third boy was in tenth grade. He called to Jonathan to help him, so Jonathan was able to get close enough to the boy to get the boy to hold on to his shoulder. Have you got the picture? Jonathan said it took him about twenty minutes to swim to shore. Meanwhile, Lauren was on the beach, crying and wondering why her brother had not made it to shore yet. When Jonathan was past the large waves, others came out to help him with the three boys. Jonathan was able to walk to the dry sand, and then he just fell down in exhaustion. Two of the boys he saved crawled over to him, crying and thanking him for saving their lives. Jonathan's response was, "There is no way I could do that. God did it." That's living above the earthly plane. That's life in a different dimension.

Do you want to live a life that can only be explained by God? Sure you do. We all do. Then live by faith.

[Gauger:] Fresh insight from Hebrews 11 today on *Moody Presents* with our teacher, Dr. Paul Nyquist. Don't you love the way he just shares his own heart, his own life, and just lets us in on what Scripture is really teaching here in this eleventh chapter of Hebrews? We'll continue here in our series next week on the broadcast. Meanwhile, let me encourage you to visit our website. If you never have, there's an awful lot waiting there just for you. For example, online audio, meaning you can hear today's message again at your own pace, at your own place. We've got MP3s you can download, podcasting subscriptions ... All this stuff is free, by the way. We've got Dr. Nyquist's speaking schedule posted there. You'll find links to other ministries of the Moody Bible Institute ... all there at moodypresents.org. Now for producer Chris Segard, I'm Jon Gauger. Thanks for listening. I hope you'll come back next time when we continue here on *Moody Presents*.