

(Hebrews - Part 37): Faith Is a Pertubing Thing

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer's sermon explores the transformative and often disturbing nature of faith through the story of Moses' awakening and choices.

Duration: 25:44

Scripture: Exodus 2:11-12, Exodus 2:23-25, Matthew 6:33, Romans 11:33, Romans 14:4, Hebrews 11:24-27, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal story about a moral rebound. He talks about his own past of indulging in drinking and reckless behavior, even on Christmas Eve. However, after a spiritual awakening and the guidance of the Holy Ghost, he realized the error of his ways and turned his life around. The preacher emphasizes that sometimes people become better because of the depth of their sins, comparing it to a rubber band that bounces back stronger the further it is stretched. He also highlights the importance of spiritual awakening, as many people go through life without ever experiencing it. The preacher encourages listeners to be aware of the deceit and corruption in the world and to seek a deeper connection with God.

Transcript

Now, we'll be in Hebrews again this morning. Hebrews 11, 24 to 27. 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, esteeming the reproach of Christ's greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.

For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king. For he endured, seeing him who is invisible.

Now, there in those four verses, there is the story of what faith did to and for Moses. And I would take a pencil and underscore the words to and for, because faith not only does something for us, but faith does something to us, if it's real faith. Faith is not a passive, sit-down quality, but as the old Lutherans said, faith is a perturbing thing.

If you have faith, you're perturbed until your faith finds its object in Jesus Christ, and then comes peace. But it's first greatly disturbing, though it is also a glorious and saving thing. It says, By faith Moses.

Now, Moses, you know, was an Israelite of the covenant son of Abraham, indeed. But here was his condition at the time the story opens. He was out of the land of promise.

God had given to Abraham what we now call the Holy Land, and Moses was supposed to be in the Holy Land where God had told him, told Abraham, his father, ancestor, that he would have him. But Moses was out of that land, down in Egypt, and he was disassociated from his people, altogether disassociated. He was down there, and they were somewhere else, and it didn't look good.

He was in the court of Pharaoh, and his people were out scattered throughout the land of Goshen. So he was disassociated from them, and out of the land of promise, and apparently cut off from the life of the blessed covenant which God made with Abraham, and living among the heathens, surrounded by false gods. Now, I don't know where Moses got his awakening, but it says, When Moses came of age.

The day that Moses came of age mentally, or spiritually, one day he became strangely troubled. He had, as they say, a good thing going. He was supposed to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and he enjoyed all of the luxuries of the court.

I suppose that he was dandled on the knee of many a king in potentate as he grew up, and he had all the royalty he could afford there in Egypt, one of the greatest, if not the greatest country in the world at that time. And he could have taken things for granted and grown old and fat and finally died in Egypt, still the son of Pharaoh's daughter. But he came of age, he came spiritually awake one day.

I don't know how it happened, it doesn't tell us here. But it started, I suppose, almost unperceived by him, and then it grew and it deepened until finally he kept saying to himself, What am I doing luxuriating in the court of a heathen emperor when I belong with my own people because I'm a Jew? I don't know who told him he was a Jew. Maybe his mother slipped the word to him when he got old enough to be able to understand it.

I do not know, I say, and since I don't know, there wouldn't seem to be any reason for my guessing about it. But he awoke to the fact that he wasn't where he belonged. It was a great awakening for the man Moses.

A vague but real hunger came to the man, and I like to say to you that it's a great hour for any man when he has a spiritual awakening. Now here's something we ought to take into account. The vast multitudes of people that go and come and build and plant and reap and sow and marry and give in marriage and travel and work and sleep and play and eat and laugh and swear and do all things that human beings do, most of them have never had any awakening at all.

You ought to remember that. Most of them have never been awakened by any inward voice. They are simply as Adam created them, only a little bit worse.

Or God made them, I suppose, but they came through Adam anyhow, descended from Adam. And they are about the way they were, with a little education rubbed on for a veneer. But there has been no spiritual awakening, and this man Moses had such a spiritual awakening.

He came to knowledge of who he was, and before that he had just gone along with things. He had accepted everything that was as what should be. It was perfectly all right, and so he went along with it.

But now suddenly it came to him what he could be and what he was not and what he was that he should not be, and I say that's a holy day in any man's life, to see through the pretenses of the world. For the world runs a confidence game, don't forget it. The world out there is running a confidence game, fleecing and skinning and cheating and duping and damning, finally.

And most people never see it at all. They are taken in by it just as innocently as a lamb is led to the slaughter. And some few people, by the grace of God, come awake, they come of age, and they get sick of their own sins.

Many people are saved on a moral rebound. One of the pleasures I had when I was in Ottawa was meeting a man. He was a Hollander, born in Holland, born in the lowland of Holland.

And he was 27 years old now. He came to Canada when he was 14. That makes 13 years he spent in Canada.

And according to his own testimony, he spent a good many of them in Canadian jails. He is 6 foot 5 inches tall and weighs 280 pounds. And one time some people got to praying with him and reading the scripture with him in one of the Canadian jails, where he kept shuttling in and out, you know.

They'd throw him out and then he'd do something and throw him back in. He knew he was wrong. But I met this big tall fellow, and he came to my room and we had talk and prayer together.

It was worth going to Ottawa to get to see this great big handsome Dutchman who speaks English without a trace of an accent, good English, after only 13 years in Canada. And now he'd been converted, marvelously, wonderfully converted. He'd been a wrestler in the ring.

I told him I'd hate to have him get a hammerlock on me. Just blowing on me would be enough for me. Just looking at me real hard, I'd collapse, a fellow that size.

But here he was. And when he got converted, it wasn't just one of those easy oozing into the kingdom. He came in, all 280 pounds of him, with all he had, and now he's a happy Christian, going to Bible school with his wife, planning to become a preacher.

I gave him some good advice and recommendation about books and a few other things, and we had a nice time together. Well, you see, what I'm trying to say here is, this boy was converted by a moral revulsion. That is, he got sick of himself.

There was a moral rebound. He told about coming in Christmas, mind you. His father was a minister, and he was out drinking.

Coming in on Christmas Eve and falling dead drunk under the Christmas tree. Can you imagine a poor preacher with a son like that? Well, after the Holy Ghost enlightened him and he came of age, he got sick of that. And sometimes people are better because of the distance they've gone into sin.

It's like a rubber band. The further you stretch it, the faster it'll come back, and the further it'll go the other direction. And he had been so bad that when he was converted, the rebound was the bounce he came back with, led him far, far out into the kingdom of God.

And after only three years a Christian, it's amazing what penetration he has and what spiritual insight. I expect the world to hear from that young man, for he stands up tall and speaks beautifully. I believe he'll

be a great preacher.

But he was saved on a moral rebound. Some people are so nice, they just never feel the need of being converted. The Canadian people are unusually courteous people.

I think I never was treated except here with such utter kindness and courtesy as with those Gideons in Ottawa. I didn't deserve all that. But you know, you can be so nice that you either never get converted, or if you do, it never takes much.

It just doesn't do much for you. You take anybody that knows his sin and sickens himself with his sin, when he gets converted, the rebound is likely to take him way out far beyond the border. That's what happened to Moses.

He got sick of himself. He said, Here I am, here I am, living on the fat of the greatest land in the world and going on false pretense, claiming to be an Egyptian when I'm actually a Jew, and trying to act like the daughter of a queen when actually I'm no prince, I'm just a Jew from the loins of Abraham, and everything wrong and mixed up. He came of age, thank God for that.

And I suppose he began to hate the world and hate Egypt and hate that court with its cheap humor and its hollow pretense and its lying promises. And he said to himself, I believe there's more hope in God than in the God of my father Abraham than there is here in the court of Pharaoh. So he refused any longer.

He came to a day and he marked it on the calendar and he put an X there and he says, Today I stop pretending. Today I'm no longer from here on going to pretend I'm something I'm not. Today I say goodbye to the court of Pharaoh.

Now, Pharaoh's daughter was his supposed mother and she would have been the only mother he had. And I'm quite sure it wasn't easy for him to leave her. I'm quite certain it was hard to leave his friends there because he had friends and he owed to Pharaoh and his people a great deal.

And it was rather hard to walk out on them. But there comes a time when you're either going to walk out on some people or you're going to perish. It's one or the other.

And this man refused any longer to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He was caught in the meshes of the world and the only way he could get out was by a determined rebellion. The only people that get to heaven are conquered rebels.

That's all. The only ones that make it are conquered rebels. They're people that have rebelled against their sin and rebelled against the world and the flesh and the devil and have rebelled against Pharaoh's court and all the pleasures of sin.

But when they go to God, then they're conquered. Their rebellion is over with. Their rebellion is not against God.

It had been against God, but now it's against the enemy and against the sin and the world. I don't like to see a person converted too easily. I've said that before and I'll repeat it now.

A man that can be converted too easily can be unconverted rather easily. But a tough customer who comes hard, when he gets converted, usually that's it for the rest of his life. Paul was tough.

When he got converted, he never even looked back once. He went right on. So Pharaoh's grandson, supposedly Moses, was suddenly converted, and he said, I will no longer be a slave to the devil, and I will no longer be a victim of sin, and I will no longer let the world victimize me, and I will no longer bow down to the world, so I'll say goodbye to mother.

And if Pharaoh's daughter was still alive, as she probably was, he had to go and bid goodbye to his mother. And I'm sure she didn't understand, and I can picture a crying scene in which she said, haven't we done all for you, everything for you that possibly could? What could you have? You're dressed in the finest of silks. What could we do more for you? And he would have had to say, mother, I know.

And I don't want you to think I'm ungrateful, but I have other blood in my veins, and I am not an Egyptian, and I claim my share of the covenant with my father, Abraham, and if I stay with you, I have to give up the covenant, and I won't give it up, mother. I think that he probably kissed and hugged his old mother goodbye and then walked out and never went back until God sent him back to deliver Israel. Later, when God sent him back, he knew all about it, knew what to do, knew what door to enter, knew where to find the old king, and knew everything, because he'd grown up there and had run around there when he was a lad.

He was the right man. God certainly picked the right man to send back and say to Pharaoh, let my people go. Nobody else could have done it as well as the boy who was brought up there, and then recognized as soon as they saw him coming that here's that boy.

He's older now, but here he is. He knew the place. He said goodbye to his mother, and he chose.

Now, this is one of the big pivotal words in religious life. He chose, and this was his triumph. He chose and not only renounced, but he chose.

Let's not be too negative about it. There must be a renunciation, but that's always a negative thing. You're not saved by what you renounce, you're saved by what you embrace.

And so he not only renounced, but he embraced. He chose the Jesus Christ as he understood it, of course, looking forward, looking ahead as Abraham had to the day of Christ. He chose the covenant.

He chose redemption. He chose it. He chose to go along with the people of the covenant.

He chose to pray whatever it cost him, and he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than endure the pleasures of sin for a season. I want you to notice that it says the pleasures of sin. We usually make sin out to be a great burden on us, but sin is often a very pleasurable thing, I tell you.

That's why it can become so very dangerous. But he chose the pleasures of the kingdom rather than the pleasures of sin. The affliction of the kingdom, he chose it over the pleasures of sin.

Esteeming what did he esteem? Ah, he esteemed the riches of Christ, the reproaches of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And God said to him, Moses, if you stay in Egypt, you'll be rich, you'll have treasures here. And if you come with me, you'll have reproach.

Which will it be, reproach with me or treasures with Pharaoh? And Moses said, O God, as the son of Abraham, I choose reproach with the people of God. And so he united himself with the people of God and identified himself with them rather than to continue with the pleasures of sin. And he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.

That little phrase thrown in there seems to indicate that when the king heard he was gone, he raised heaven and earth. He was trying hard to get him back, but it didn't work, because this man was esteeming. That is, he set certain values.

You're going to have to do that, men and women. You're going to have to set certain values on things, or values on certain things. You're going to have to say, now, is this worth its cost to me? Is this worth the trouble? When you go shopping for something, you say, if it's just a trifle, it wouldn't count.

But if it's anything that costs a serious amount of money, you do some esteeming and you don't grab the first thing and run. You set values and you say, can I afford this? Well, I think maybe I can afford this, but I can't afford this. You're values on things.

And Moses, the man of God, had to do that. And there were some valuable things around there, don't you think there was? Imagine his lying down at his ease, taking his son in a barge on the river Nile, while some slaves paddled him up and down, another slave rubbed him with oil, and another one powdered him. You know, it was something.

That was the son of a king. They had that. That's the way they lived in those oriental courts, I'm telling you.

When he got tired of being powdered and oiled and rubbed, and floating around on the Nile River while he got on a horse or something and had himself a gallop, he was just a playboy. And that was valuable to anybody that wants to live there. So he had to decide, now, Moses, make up your mind.

Is this the way you want to live, or do you hear a voice calling you? And he said, I hear a voice, God. The voice, it's thy voice. It's the voice of Abraham's covenant and the voice of Isaac and Jacob, the voice of my people.

I'm a Jew, and I have a covenant claim, and I'm wasting it all down here. All right, God said, now make up your mind. Is it loaf around and play and be at your ease with everybody bowing to you, or is it joining my people, a minority group, where you will be reproached for your faith? And I don't think Moses made up his mind in five minutes on that.

I think he might have said, God, give me a day to think it over. Maybe give me a week to think it over. And it grew on him as he thought about it, and he placed his value.

There was a day when he said, I can't afford to bear reproach. And then when he got straightened out, he said, I cannot afford not to bear reproach. And then there was a day when he said, I can't afford to leave Egypt.

And then there came a change, and there came a day when he said, I cannot afford to stay in Egypt. You see, his values have changed. So now he goes out and leaves the place of pleasure for the place of reproach.

But wonderful paradox, he finds the reproach more pleasurable than the pleasure had been before. And that's always the way with Christians. I think there are hundreds of thousands of people everywhere that won't become Christians because they fear reproach.

The Bible hasn't anything sympathetic to say about them. It says that the fearful shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. And the man that is afraid to follow the Lord because he's afraid of

reproach, he'll suffer loss.

God can't possibly do anything for him. But the man who will follow Christ, regardless of the reproach, he'll be saved. So it says he forsook.

There's no salvation without abandonment, though the abandonment is not the salvation, as I've explained. There's no salvation without renunciation, but the renunciation is not the salvation. The forsaking, the abandoning, the renunciation, they are necessary before we can turn to the Lord.

It seems like a reasonable thing, a sinking ship. Nobody stays on a sinking ship. When it's obvious it's going down, falling plane.

The boys of the RCAF, when one of their planes goes bad on them up there, they don't stay and ride it to their death. They're taught not to do it. They're taught, jump out, pull your string and come floating down and what, another day and try it again.

But the only way to be saved from a falling plane is to get a parachute open. The only way to be saved from a burning house is to get up and get out of it. So he forsook, and he endured.

He endured to seeing him who was invisible. No Christians are odd people. They see things that can't be seen and hear things that can't be heard and talk to people, to a person that's invisible.

They're strange people. And that's why we suffer reproach. They say, well, they're odd.

They're too religious. Say, you're fanatic. You just go to church once a week.

Nobody thinks anything about it. You're a good citizen. But take yourself seriously, and they'll say you ought to see a doctor.

One of my little side bits of fun is to read Dear Abby in the paper. Somebody wrote to Dear Abby here the other day and said, Dear Abby. Incidentally, they're Chicago people, those two girls, Ann Landers and Abigail are sisters from Chicago.

I didn't know them there, but I like to read their stuff. One of them wrote and said, Dear Abby, my mother has had something happen to her. She was a good, sensible woman up to recently, and now she wants to read her Bible all the time, and she wants to go to church all the time.

What's the matter with her? She reads her Bible and marks it, she said, and goes to church. Do you think I ought to take her to a doctor? Do you know Abby's reply? Yes, take her to a doctor as soon as you can. Now, she meant that.

Somebody had gotten converted and loved her Bible and took a pencil out and marked on the promises, and she said, get her to a doctor. Well, God bless Abby. She gives some pretty good advice, but she doesn't know it all, and she sure missed that one.

That's what happened to me, and I didn't go to a doctor. I started reading my Bible and marking it and going to church and not wanting to go anywhere else, and I never was blamed for being anything but sane. Nobody ever said that I'd lost my mind.

Abby didn't know me in those days. But now I say to you that you've got to endure seeing him who is invisible. There are days, there are times when not even your friends round about you can be trusted.

Now, not that they're false, but that you don't know who quite to believe. So you do what my good big friend. Coincidentally, that big man I told you about has a name, John Baptist.

John Baptist, my big friend is my new made friend. He told me about a situation that was developing in the church where I used to belong. I wanted to know what he should do.

That's why I wanted to see me. And he said to me, looking me in the eye, he said, I'm not going to allow those people to tear me down. I said, brother, you said the wisest thing I've heard for a long time.

Don't you let anybody tear you down. You don't pay any attention to what other people do. See him who is invisible.

Keep your eye on God and his son, Jesus Christ, and you'll come out all right. But if you start saying, I don't see how sister so-and-so can do what she does and be a Christian. I don't see how brother so-and-so can act the way he does and be a Christian.

Well, there's a lot of them I don't either. But on the other hand, they're not going to cause me to stumble because I am not converted by looking to my brother or my sister. I'm converted in order that I may look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith, and he'll never disappoint you.

There'll never be a day when you will say, I don't see how the Lord does this. You will always say true and righteous are his judgments and his ways, beautiful beyond finding out. So let's endure as seeing him who is invisible.

And like Moses, we'll come out all right. And the glory of God will be our reward. Amen.

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