

# Many Study The Times, Few Gaze Beyond

by Fred Tomlinson

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*This sermon delves into the story of Moses from Hebrews 11, highlighting his faith, resolve, and choice to look beyond the world's offerings to embrace the reproach of Christ. It emphasizes the importance of resolute commitment to God, refusing to be entangled by past sins or distractions, and focusing on the invisible God. The message encourages believers to maintain a forward gaze, reject worldly pleasures, and eagerly anticipate the blessed hope of seeing Christ as He is.*

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**Scripture:** Hebrews 11:24, Hebrews 11:10, Psalm 27:8, Philippians 3:13, 1 John 3:2, Romans 8:18, 1 Corinthians 2:9, Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 22:12

**Topics:** "Faith in Adversity", "Commitment to God"

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## Description

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## Transcript

In this session I'd like to ask you to turn in your Bible, if you have your Bible with you, to the book of Hebrews and to chapter 11. I'm going to read a few verses from verse 24. Hebrews 11, 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 people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ 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 as seeing him who is invisible. And I think I'll draw to an end the reading just at that particular point.

You know, some of you will have recognized this before this moment, but when you're reading through the New Testament and you're reading the New Testament writers and you find that they're actually quoting Old Testament passages, making their particular point, but they're quoting scriptures from the Old Testament, scriptures that may be prophetic, scriptures that have a variety of other significances and settings. But if you've been watching carefully, you will notice that quite frequently the New Testament writers actually change some of the words and they change some of the features and some of the facts on

different occasions. And I want to encourage you that as you're reading and you find that to be true, take careful note of the fresh way the New Testament men, inspired by the Spirit of God, treat those particular passages.

And if you do that, make a note of them. And I'd like to suggest to you that if you should do that, you're in for a real treat because you will allow the Holy Spirit perhaps to speak to you and show you why those changes are made and what the significance is there. It's not by accident we believe that the scriptures are the inerrant Word of God, inspired by His Spirit, using a variety of people on a variety of occasions in a variety of situations, occupying a variety of different roles and so on, and yet all brought together for us here.

We believe by the Holy Spirit Himself with one great theme that develops as we turn the pages of scripture. And a lot more could be said about that, but that's just by the way. Except that I'd like to suggest that these few verses that we've just read fall right into the category I've just been describing.

And I'd like to suggest to you that they're not just a couple of verses that just happened to be here, jotted down by someone those years ago, but actually this is an immensely helpful cluster of statements that are being made here. Statements which add significantly to the Exodus record. I don't know if you noticed that as we're reading through.

I think most of you who are listening to me will be familiar with the Old Testament and familiar with the story that is being referenced here. What we know for certain is that we all have different callings, we all have different giftings. But I wonder if perhaps you have thought to yourself at different times, why is it really that notwithstanding these differences that I've just mentioned, there are godly men and women who having been introduced to the things of God and been studying the Word of God, they've become godly, they've become significant men and significant women.

While, on the other hand, there are others who seem to stall somehow in the spiritual journey and never seem to make real progress. I wonder if you've noticed that, I wonder if you've thought about it. Who knows, maybe you see yourself somewhere in one of those two categories, I wouldn't be surprised that would be true.

But I believe that in this little cluster, as I've called them, this cluster of verses, we can find some insight into Moses' life that will reveal, I suggest to you, the key that was the basis for him in his responses to God becoming the man that God had ordained him to be. And I'd like to suggest that we find the key phrase, excuse me just pausing just a moment longer here as I'm settling into this message. I'm very grateful that in my early teens I was part of a youth fellowship that taught the Bible very diligently and I can very, very clearly remember being strongly encouraged when I was reading sections of Scripture to note carefully if I found somewhere perhaps a key verse, a verse that was key to a section, or on the other hand to find in a particular verse a key word or a key thought and that we were to note them.

In fact we were encouraged, if we didn't mind marking our Bible, to actually mark them. We wouldn't have said highlight because none of us knew what highlighters were in those days, but to just mark that section of Scripture because we've found a key. Keys open up things, they open doors don't they, and so on.

And I believe that so far as this little section of verses is concerned, to my mind that the key phrase that I find here is at the end of the 27th verse, the end of the reading that I brought to you, speaking of Moses, as seeing him who is invisible. And I believe that that's the key to all that has preceded it in this little cluster

here on this occasion. So what I'm suggesting is we've touched there the very nerve of Moses' response to God.

Let's talk about that a little bit more. What's happening here is that the inspired author of these words is really pointing us to the underlying feature of Moses' life. And it was this fact, it was the fact that he was looking beyond, he was a man who looked beyond.

I'm not suggesting to you that Moses was flawless in his responses to God. For those of us who've read the story thoroughly in the Old Testament, we know that would not be the case. In fact, he made one particular serious error that I'm thinking of as I'm saying these things to you.

And as the result of that error he was never permitted to enter into the Promised Land, although he was leading that nation of people to the Promised Land, but he himself was not permitted to enter in. Mind you, sorry if this is getting a bit too much here, there was another reason, and I think I need to mention it, another reason why he didn't enter. He didn't enter in because of his sin of unbelief.

But the fact of the matter is he was the representative of the law. Canaan was the land of promise and the Apostle Paul tells us in the New Testament that the law can't inherit the promises. Isn't that wonderful just how the types in this case in the Old Testament are so consistent? He who represented the law was not permitted to enter the land of promise.

But there you are, these are things sort of by the way, I think really. But in noting the fact that Moses was a man who was looking toward him who is invisible, it reminds me of another statement concerning another man. In fact, in the same chapter we'll find it.

It's Abraham where I read, if I can just turn over my page here, I read in verse 10, for he looked for a city. This is Abraham of course. Abraham, he looked for a city whose builder and maker is God.

And once again, this fits right into that original statement I made at the beginning of this talk. This verse in the New Testament is throwing light on Abraham in the Old Testament. Both of these men in their unique settings and unique callings were men who were looking beyond the immediate.

And you know, I think it's true to say that although God himself would have been the author of these sort of, can I call them intuitions that these two men had, I'd like to suggest that really to the extent to which each of our lives is engaged in this action of looking beyond, that will result in determining everything else about our spiritual lives. You know, while many people today give their attention to the times in which we live, there are others who train their gaze beyond them, beyond the times, and look beyond. These two men are documented in Hebrews 11 as in that context and in that company of those who looked beyond.

I'm wondering about you as you listen to me saying these things. But you know, I hesitate to even share this with you, but you know, there's an interesting item that I recall from many years ago when the issue was a police driving course and there was training being given for high-speed driving. And one of the facts that was stated to us is that we must be careful while we are being careful to maintain a sense of what the events are that are happening right around us as we're travelling.

We must always have a focus point that is far beyond where we are at that particular time. We must be always looking beyond, not ignoring what's going on around us, but the fact is we're travelling so quickly, we must be looking well ahead so that we can process what is being revealed to us there. And I think there's a sense in which that's how each one of us as true Christian men and women should live.

We're not unaware of what's happening around us, but we're not fixed on those things, they're not, they don't consume us. We're looking beyond, we must be men and women looking beyond. You know, if I may return now to think about Moses, the question that arises in my mind, these things being so, well, what would have triggered this looking beyond, looking unto him who is invisible? What would have triggered or started that? What made the answers to that question really stir up in my own thinking about my own life or you in your own life? You know, the fact is that God, we must start here, God had a plan for Moses and a plan for his life from eternity.

In time, we may say providentially, a baby was born to two godly and loving parents. This is how the story unfolds back in Exodus. Providentially, without me describing all the circumstances, but providentially his life was preserved from execution.

Providentially, while he was in that little basket affair, floating among the bulrushes, a princess providentially walked by, she heard his cry, she responded. Providentially, her heart was opened to the little child. Providentially, his mother was contacted, at least there's a bit of a background to that, but we won't go there, but his mother ends up employed as the baby's nurse.

Providentially, she was able to spend time, I don't know how long she spent with the baby, this is Moses, but I can say this, she spent long enough with him for her to impart to him an understanding concerning the things of God and also to teach him about his Jewish heritage. We know that providentially, he became the grandson of Pharaoh to all intents and purposes, adopted of course. I'm guessing to myself slightly, but I'm convinced about this, that in his times of quiet, in Moses' times of quiet contemplation, evidently he began to see that these things that had happened to him were providential, they were somehow the result of God working in his life from the very beginning.

Indeed earlier, but I don't know what extent he appreciated that, but as he considered these circumstances, he could only come to one conclusion and that was that somehow an invisible deity was somehow working and he would understand that that deity was the God of Israel. The only credible explanation for this series of events that brought him to this particular point now was that this was God, the invisible eternal mastermind behind it all was God. I wonder whether you've thought about your life like that, we all have different stories, we all have stories different to Moses, that's for sure, but I wonder if you've paused long enough to think about these things seriously.

The question is who among us, I'm being quite direct here, but who among us gets alone with God? Did you know this? Did you know that this God who is dealing with our lives can only become known in silence? I don't know whether you've thought about that. You know, noise destroys silence and there are so many professing Christian people today, I know that this is true, and they blindly and carelessly choose noise rather than quietness. For example, the noise of the TV that has to be on even when you're not watching it, the noise of turning your radio when you can't travel a mile without the radio being turned on, and the noise of the world's voices, the noise of music, even music that's imagined to be what is termed usually Christian music, yes, the noise even of daily devotion books that we read, you say really? Yes, and if those things are keeping us from the silence of the presence of God where he whispers and nudges us inwardly, then they're a hindrance to us and our understanding even of Scripture is second hand.

So many are so satisfied with with the more superficial things, but you know, we need to pause long enough to be awakened by God. No one here is going to do this, but my mother used to carry around a little tract, I don't know why she carried it around with her, but it was in her purse, I happen to know, and it

was written by an old Quaker, the original writing, and his story was getting alone with God and what he used to do as some kind of habit apparently was to climb inside of a hollow log that he'd found and he would spend hours and hours there. It was his way of just getting alone with God.

You say, well that's weird, I don't think I'm likely to do that, but I hope that the Spirit of God is perhaps able to say something to you today and remind you that if you really want to know God, you must turn the noise off, whatever it is, in whatever form it's coming, and learn how to get alone with God. Speak Lord in the stillness while I wait on thee, hushed my heart to listen in expectancy. Speak, O blessed Master, in this hallowed hour, let me hear your voice, Lord, and feel your touch of power.

I pray to God you're inspired with this whole idea. You know, for Moses, this awakening to God's providence and providential care for his circumstances and for him was really just the beginning. There would be more to God's dealings with him.

In fact, there'd be much more. I like that phrase, much more. You know, those two words together are found in the New Testament 25 times.

Much more. The basis for a great Bible study. Much more.

And God has much more for each and every one of us. There's much more to our knowledge of God if we will present ourselves and posture ourselves appropriately before him. For Moses, his sight, seeing him who is invisible, his sight would be increased.

His understanding would be intensified. Revelation would eclipse providence. Vision tarried.

You know, if the vision tarries, wait for it. You remember that verse. For Moses, real, this expanded, explosive vision tarried until he was age 80.

That's a pretty good year, actually. But you remember how it all happened. A humble bush on the hillside was ablaze.

During his night watching, and he said, this is strange. I'll turn aside and see this great sight. And as he turned aside, a voice spoke out of that burning bush and said, Moses, Moses, as far as the record of scripture is concerned, this is the first time that Moses heard God speak his name so directly.

Take off thy shoes from thy feet for the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground. Amen. And a lot went on there.

But now he knew that God was speaking to him. And he learned much that night. He had to struggle with it all because the task that God was putting before him was so daunting.

But he learned something of the presence of God. He learned something of the holiness of God and his grace in speaking to him. Providential, certainly, but it was a revelation that somehow exploded to him on that occasion.

But that revelation of God, of course, dramatically expanded. As you know, I'm thinking of him in the wilderness now and there's a mountain there and it's a virtual earthquake has taken place. The whole mountain is trembling.

I love the interesting, quite quaint wording of the old King James where it says the mount was upon a smoke. The fact is that God had somehow descended upon that mountain. He'd spoken to Moses and said to Moses, Moses, come up and be there.

Come up and be with me is what God was saying to him. What amazing how things are developing. Much more than thinking back to how his life was preserved from the River Nile those many years earlier.

But God was engaged with him. God was speaking to him and amen. So my point here, perhaps more than anything else at this stage, is there's always progression so far as God is concerned.

He's brought me onto a way that grows brighter and brighter onto the perfect day. It's from faith to faith. It's from strength to strength.

It's from glory to glory. This is the pathway, as it were, upon which God has started each and every one of us. We need to catch the vision that there's much more yet and we need to be going after it.

Our inward gaze must be fixed upon it as we close off the noise of other things and other voices and allow God to speak to me. Amen, as he did then. Although Moses was experiencing this seeing, quote unquote, of the invisible, yet even in spite of all, in spite of Mount Sinai and all that took place there, he never knew God as he would later allow himself to be known.

In other words, let me put it this way. Moses never knew the Lord as John the Baptist did. When John the Baptist pointed to him as Jesus was walking in the days of his flesh and he said, behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Moses didn't know the Lord as John the Apostle knew him. When he's standing at the cross and he's gazing at his crucified master and he hears Jesus addressing him as he stands there and instructing him to take care of Mary. Moses never experienced things like that.

Moses never experienced what John experienced on the Isle of Patmos. You remember when John saw the Lord, chapter one of Revelation, we read him saying, and when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. Amen.

You know, earlier in this little section of verses here, we come across something that's very, very important. In fact, I believe it's crucial. If we are to be people who experience the kinds of things that we're touching on or pointing toward at this particular point in this talk together, there was something key and it's, I think it's tied up in another word in this section.

If you're still looking there with me, but in verse 24, it says, by faith, Moses, when he was come to years, he refused. Let's just stop there. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

He refused. That's an important word here. This is a verb.

I remember not very much from school days, but I remember being told that a verb is a doing word. It's an action word. And the fact of the matter is we're being drawn to pay attention to Moses here in this reading.

And we find that he was an action man. And in this instance, and in this context, he refused. He was a man of resolve.

What does it mean to be resolute and to be a person of resolve? I know this much, that being a man or a woman of resolve doesn't make you a Christian. I know that. And you should know that.

But what I also know is you will never become a true Christian man or a true Christian woman without a response of resolve. And it would be true to say also that every true Christian man and Christian woman will be identified by the total absence of vacillating and compromise. The true Christian who is walking in the Spirit will live a life that is lived before the gaze of God, before the presence of God, and in his heart.

This is what makes him tick. He is a man or he is a woman who is resolved. They have recognized the providence of God that brought them to the place of response.

They've responded and are continuing to respond to God in this manner of resolve that is not compromising. It doesn't vacillating on one day and off another day, or behaving in one way in one company and in another way in another company, or what about the secret times when no one's watching, there's not a dual life being lived. The man and woman of God, they're consistent, they're integral, they're integrated, they're people of integrity.

They're one thing people. This one thing I do, said the Apostle, and were to be that kind of person, Moses resolutely rejected everything that the world was offering to him at that particular time. And here lies the great snare for each one of us.

We make some kind of beginning in the things of God, but we become ensnared, or for many perhaps they never allowed the Spirit of God to disentangle them in the first place from the things of the flesh and the things of the world. For Moses, the snare I suppose was, he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He was in line for the throne, this man.

He was highly privileged and so incredibly positioned for the call that seemed to be upon him. And let's face it, he could have stayed in the palace. I don't know whether you want to question me on that, but there's a sense in which to have stayed in the palace, except it would have been disobedience you could argue, and rightly so, if he knew God had spoken to him concerning it.

But to stay in the palace wasn't essentially sinful, but he knew he couldn't stay there. That's the important point. Sort of imagine that statement in bright red capital letters, he knew he couldn't stay.

What he could have done, he could have compared himself with someone he would have learned about and who lived long before him, and that would have been Joseph. He could have thought, well I'll compare myself with Joseph. I find myself in this privileged position, in this high lofty position in the national government and so on.

That was the right place for Joseph. God put him there. But so far as Moses was concerned, he couldn't do it.

And the Holy Spirit, through this inspired writer here, he projects the statement forward and suggested that by his refusal to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he was in fact, according to the Holy Spirit's interpretation, he was choosing Christ over all the carnal things of the flesh, over all the prestige of the world and over all of the worldly power and influence that the world may offer one or another. In verse 25 we read that he rejected sin's pleasures. He was resolute over this.

There was no vacillating. He did it. And he knew that sin's pleasures, well there was some pleasure there to the flesh, but it was limited for a season.

And for him, he could not engage in it. And so it must be for each and every one of us. He resolutely chose.

He acted upon it. And he chose to be mistreated with the people of God, we read, in the same way that today true Christian men and Christian women were out of step with the world. Our citizenship is not from this world, it's in heaven.

We're born not of this world, but now we've become born of God. We're a different entity altogether. We'll never fit in.

We'll never get along in that harmonious way that those outside of the knowledge of the redemption which is in Christ can get along. This is totally different. And so what we're reading here, then again in verse 26, you'll see it in the reading, symbolically in rejecting what the world was offering, its pleasures and its treasures, he was embracing the reproach of Christ to himself.

Or today we might more commonly say this is embracing the cross. And this is what is being sort of worked out in these circumstances back here. He saw that the knowledge of Christ symbolically was far greater treasure than the treasure of Egypt or that Egypt had to offer to him.

And you judge whether I'm right or not, but it seems to me that today so few of those professing to be Christians really come to this point of clear, decisive, resolved response to the word of God. And we don't earn anything from God by what we do. It's all of his grace.

We understand that. It's not of works, lest any man should boast. What I am talking about here is the most natural and the most appropriate response of a human heart to the extension of the grace and love of God toward each one of us.

It's the most natural thing that we let go of. It puts me in mind of the marriage lines that many of us have repeated. I repeated them 58 years ago.

We remembered that just a few days ago. But the fact is, you know, forsaking all other, we committed ourselves in a covenant relationship to the one that we were being married to on that occasion. For richer, for poorer, for good or for bad, for good health and bad health, whatever it takes, I'm in this with all my heart.

And God's looking for that. As we hear the message of the gospel brought freshly to us by the Holy Spirit and our hearts are beginning to understand that this is the nature of God. He cannot be satisfied with anything less than a full, wholehearted response, a wholehearted resolve that rejects everything that is out of sync with him.

We can't be entertained by the things that the world is entertained by. But we get along with God and he becomes the focus of our inward gaze for the entirety of this journey in this life. Amen and amen.

You know, I think I can add another thought to this. You know, Moses, he would have been tempted along this line many times, I would guess, but I'm only guessing really. But he refused to look behind.

He was going forward and in that way he is an example to us. You know, we must be careful that we make sure that we refuse to look back. We've got, each of us have got a history of one sort or another.

And if we're not careful, we'll find that the enemy will take full advantage of it and weaponize our past to discourage or derail us and destroy our faith in God as a result of that. You know, thinking back to driving the car very quickly and so on, if you spend too much time looking in the mirror, you're going to end up in a wreck. And I think there's a spiritual parallel to that.

The godly man and the godly woman has a single eye. We're looking forward. We resolutely commit ourselves to maintain this focus, gazing on him who is invisible.

Or as the song put it, since my eyes were fixed on Jesus, I've lost sight of all beside. Amen. The apostle also makes reference to the reward as well in this little passage.

You know, gazing on him who is invisible carries a reward. And the 26th and the last part of the verse has it has it there. Glory to God.

And, you know, the reward that we see as we look ahead, based on this verses of Scripture and the text of Scripture is what elsewhere is called the blessed hope. It's the ultimate hope for men and women who've given their lives to God and resolve to live for him, no matter what the cost or what the price we have to pay. The apostle John says in his epistle, he says, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

As I close, let me caution you. Be careful that none of us squander our lives on the passing pleasures of sin, whatever form they come in. But may the Lord enable us to resolutely refuse these things to the end of our journey.

We don't want to finish our journey with King Saul's words ringing in our ears. Do you remember when he said, I have played the fool, I have erred exceedingly. May the Lord bring each one of us to a new level of understanding, to a new level of repentance before God, to a new level of surrender and yieldedness to him.

Father, we commit this, which really is a faltering word, but Lord, somewhere in it, we trust that your Holy Spirit will communicate the very word of God to the hearts of men and women listening. Bring glory to your name and bring your people into that wealthy place, Lord, where they begin to discover that there's much, much more to knowing him and seeing him who is invisible in Jesus' name. Amen.

Some of you I may not be able to talk to again for some reason or another, but I encourage you, please check out the website which is simply [mckenziefellowship.com](http://mckenziefellowship.com). God bless every one of you. Amen.

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