

Moses--an Example

by J.C. Ryle

J.C. Ryle's sermon highlights Moses as a profound example of faith, illustrating his sacrifices and choices for the sake of spiritual integrity.

Scripture: Hebrews 11:24

Topics: "Faith", "Sacrifice"

Description

J.C. Ryle emphasizes Moses as a profound example of faith, illustrating how he chose to forsake the comforts and riches of Egypt to align himself with the suffering people of God. Ryle highlights Moses' deliberate sacrifices of rank, pleasure, and wealth, showcasing his commitment to faith over worldly gain. He argues that true faith empowers believers to make difficult choices, often at the cost of societal approval and personal comfort. The sermon calls for self-examination regarding one's own faith and willingness to endure hardship for the sake of Christ. Ultimately, Ryle encourages believers to emulate Moses' faith-driven decisions in their own lives.

Transcript

MOSES--AN EXAMPLE

"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." (Hebrews 11:24-26).

The characters of God's most eminent saints, as drawn and described in the Bible, form a most useful part of Holy Scripture. Abstract doctrines and principles and precepts are all most valuable in their way; but after all nothing is more helpful than a pattern or example. Do we want to know what practical holiness is? Let us sit down and study the picture of an eminently holy man. I propose in this message to set before my readers the history of a man who lived by faith and left us a pattern of what faith can do in promoting holiness of character. To all who want to know what "living by faith" means, I offer Moses as an example.

The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, from which my text is taken, is a great chapter: it deserves to be printed in golden letters. I can well believe it must have been most cheering and encouraging to a converted Jew. I suppose no members of the early church found so much difficulty in a profession of Christianity as the Hebrews did. The way was narrow to all, but pre-eminently so to them.

The cross was heavy to all, but surely they had to carry double weight. And this chapter would refresh them like a cordial; it would be as "wine to those that be of heavy hearts." Its words would be "pleasant as the honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones" (Prov. 31:6; 16:24).

The three verses I am going to explain are far from being the least interesting in the chapter. Indeed I think few, if any, have so strong a claim on our attention. And I will explain why I say so.

It seems to me that the work of faith described in the story of Moses comes home more especially to our own case. The men of God who are named in the former part of the chapter are all examples to us beyond question. But we cannot literally do what most of them did, however much we may drink into their spirit. We are not called upon to offer a literal sacrifice like Abel, or to build a literal ark like Noah, or to leave our country literally, and dwell in tents, and offer up our Isaac like Abraham. But the faith of Moses comes nearer to us. It seems to operate in a way more familiar to our own experience. It made him take up a line of conduct such as we must sometimes take up ourselves in the present day, each in our own walk of life, if we would be consistent Christians. And for this reason, I think these three verses deserve more than ordinary consideration.

Now I have nothing but the simplest things to say about them. I shall only try to show the greatness of the things Moses did and the principle on which he did them. And then perhaps we shall be better prepared for the practical instruction which the verses appear to hold out to everyone who will receive it.

1. What Moses gave up and refused

Moses gave up three things for the sake of his soul. He felt that his soul would not be saved if he kept them, so he gave them up. And in so doing, I say that he made three of the greatest sacrifices that man's heart can possibly make. Let us see.

1. He gave up rank and greatness.

"He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." We all know his history. The daughter of Pharaoh had preserved his life when he was an infant. She had gone further than that: she had adopted him and educated him as her own son.

If some writers of history may be trusted, she was Pharaoh's only child. Some go so far as to say that in the common order of things, Moses would one day have been King of Egypt! That may be, or may not; we cannot tell. It is enough for us to know that, from his connection with Pharaoh's daughter, Moses might have been, if he had pleased, a very great man. If he had been content with the position in which he found himself at the Egyptian court, he might easily have been among the first (if not the very first) in all the land of Egypt.

Let us think, for a moment, how great this temptation was.

Here was a man of like passions with ourselves. He might have had as much greatness as earth can well give. Rank, power, place, honor, titles, dignities--all were before him, and within his grasp. These are the things for which many men are continually struggling. These are the prizes which there is an incessant race in the world around us to obtain. To be somebody, to be looked up to, to raise themselves in the scale of society, to get a handle to their names--these are the very things for which many sacrifice time and thought and health and life itself. But Moses would not have them as a gift. He turned his back upon them. He refused them. He gave them up!

2. And more than this--he refused pleasure.

Pleasure of every kind, no doubt, was at his feet, if he had liked to take it up--sensual pleasure, intellectual pleasure, social pleasure--whatever could strike his fancy. Egypt was a land of artists, a residence of learned men, a resort of everyone who had skill, or science of any description. There was nothing which could feed the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life," which one in the place of Moses might not easily have commanded and possessed as his own (1 John 2:16).

Let us think again, how great was this temptation also.

Millions live for pleasure. Hedonism is the great spirit that knows no boundaries, whether economical, social, political or cultural--pleasure is an idol enslaving the great majority of the world. The schoolboy looks for pleasure in his summer vacation, the young man in independence and business; the small business owner looks for it in retirement, and the poor man in the small comforts of home. Pleasure and fresh excitement in politics, travel, amusement, in company, in books, in several vices too dark to mention, pleasure is the shadow which all alike are hunting; each, perhaps, pretending to despise his neighbor for seeking it, each in his own way seeking it for himself, each wondering why he does not find it, each firmly persuaded that somewhere or other it is to be found. This was the cup that Moses had before his lips. He might have drunk as deeply as he liked of earthly pleasure; but he would not have it. He turned his back upon it. He refused it. He gave it up!

3. And more than this--he refused riches.

"The treasures in Egypt" is an expression that seems to tell of boundless wealth which Moses might have enjoyed, had he been content to remain with Pharaoh's daughter. We may well suppose these "treasures" would have been a mighty fortune. Enough is still remaining in Egypt to give us some faint idea of the money at its king's disposal. The pyramids and obelisks and temples and statues are still standing there as witnesses. The ruins at Carnac and Luxor and Denderah and many other places are still the mightiest buildings in the world. They testify to this day that the man who gave up Egyptian wealth gave up something which even our English minds would find it hard to reckon up and estimate.

Let us think once more, how great was this temptation.

Let us consider, for a moment, the power of money, the immense influence that "the love of money" obtains over men's minds. Let us look around us and observe how men covet it and what amazing pains and trouble they will go through to obtain it. Tell them of an island many thousand miles away where something may be found which may be profitable, if imported; and at once a fleet of ships will be sent to get it. Show them a way to make one percent more of their money, and they will reckon you among the wisest of men; they will almost fall down and worship you. To possess money seems to hide defects, to cover over faults, to clothe a man with virtues. People can get over much, if you are rich! But here is a man who might have been rich, and would not. He would not have Egyptian treasures. He turned his back upon them. He refused them. He gave them up!

Such were the things that Moses refused--rank, pleasure, riches, all three at once.

Add to all this that he did it deliberately. He did not refuse these things in a hasty fit of youthful excitement. He was forty years old. He was in the prime of life. He knew what he was about. He was a highly educated man, "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22). He could weigh both sides of the question.

Add to it that he did not refuse them because he was obliged. He was not like the dying man who tells us "he craves nothing more in this world"; and why? Because he is leaving the world and cannot keep it. He was not like the pauper who makes a merit of necessity and says, "he does not want riches"; and why? Because he cannot get them. He was not like the old man who boasts that "he has laid aside worldly pleasures"; and why? Because he is worn out and cannot enjoy them. No! Moses refused what he might have enjoyed. Rank, pleasure and riches did not leave him, but he left them.

And then judge whether I am not right in saying that his was one of the greatest sacrifices mortal man ever made. Others have refused much, but none, I think, so much as Moses. Others have done well in the way of self-sacrifice and self-denial, but he excels them all.

2. What Moses chose

Moses chose three things for his soul's sake, and I think his choices are as wonderful as his refusals. The road to salvation led through them, and he followed it; and in so doing he chose three of the last things that man is ever disposed to take up.

1. Moses chose suffering and affliction.

He left the ease and comfort of Pharaoh's court and openly took part with the children of Israel. They were an enslaved and persecuted people--an object of distrust, suspicion and hatred; and anyone who befriended them was sure to taste something of the bitter cup they were daily drinking.

To the eye of sense there seemed no chance of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage without a long and doubtful struggle. A settled home and country for them must have appeared a thing never likely to be obtained, however much desired. In fact, if ever man seemed to be choosing pain, trials, poverty, want, distress, anxiety, perhaps even death, with his eyes open, Moses was that man.

Let us think how wonderful was this choice.

Flesh and blood naturally shrink from pain. It is in us all to do so. We draw back by a kind of instinct from suffering and avoid it if we can. If two courses of action are set before us, which both seem right, we generally take that which is the least disagreeable to flesh and blood. We spend our days in fear and anxiety when we think affliction is coming near us and use every means to escape it. And when it does come, we often fret and murmur under the burden of it; and if we can only bear it patiently, we count it a great matter.

But look here! Here is a man of like passions with ourselves, and he actually chooses affliction! Moses saw the cup of suffering that was before him if he left Pharaoh's court; and he chose it, preferred it and took it up.

2. But he did more than this, he chose the company of a despised people.

He left the society of the great and wise, among whom he had been brought up, and joined himself to the children of Israel. He, who had lived from infancy in the midst of rank and riches and luxury, came down from his high estate and cast in his lot with poor men--slaves, serfs, helots, pariahs, bond-servants, oppressed, destitute, afflicted, tormented--laborers in the brick-kiln.

How wonderful, once more, was this choice!

Generally speaking, we think it enough to carry our own troubles. We may be sorry for others whose lot is to be mean and despised. We may even try to help them; we may give money to raise them; we may speak for them to those on whom they depend; but here we generally stop.

But here is a man who does far more. He not merely feels for despised Israel but actually goes down to them, adds himself to their society and lives with them altogether. You would wonder if some great man in Grosvenor or Belgrave Square were to give up house and fortune and position in society and go to live on a small allowance in some narrow lane in Bethnal Green, for the sake of doing good. Yet this would convey a very faint and feeble notion of the kind of thing that Moses did. He saw a despised people, and he chose their company in preference to that of the noblest in the land. He became one with them, their fellow, their companion in tribulation, their ally, their associate and their friend.

3. But he did even more. He chose reproach and scorn.

Who can conceive the torrent of mockery and ridicule that Moses would have to stem, in turning away from Pharaoh's court to join Israel? Men would tell him he was mad, foolish, weak, silly, out of his mind. He would lose his influence; he would forfeit the favor and good opinion of all among whom he had lived. But none of these things moved him. He left the court and joined the slaves!

Let us think again, what a choice this was!

There are few things more powerful than ridicule and scorn. It can do far more than open enmity and persecution. Many a man who would march up to a cannon's mouth, or lead a forlorn hope, or storm a breach has found it impossible to face the mockery of a few companions and has flinched from the path of duty to avoid it. To be laughed at! To be made a joke of! To be jested and sneered at! To be reckoned weak and silly! To be thought a fool! There is nothing grand in all this and many, alas, cannot make up their minds to undergo it!

Yet here is a man who made up his mind to it and did not shrink from the trial. Moses saw reproach and scorn before him, and he chose them and accepted them for his portion.

Such then were the things that Moses chose: affliction, the company of a despised people, and scorn.

Consider beside all this, that Moses was no weak, ignorant, illiterate person, who did not know what he was about. You are specially told he was "mighty in words and in deeds," and yet he chose as he did! (Acts 7:22.)

Consider, also, the circumstances of his choice. He was not obliged to choose as he did. None compelled him to take such a course. The things he took up did not force themselves upon him against his will. He went after them; they did not come after him. All that he did, he did of his own free choice--voluntarily, and of his own accord.

And then judge whether it is not true that his choices were as wonderful as his refusals. Since the world began, I suppose, none ever made such a choice as Moses did in our text.

3. The principle which moved Moses

How can this conduct of his be accounted for? What possible reason can be given for it? To refuse that which is generally called good, to choose that which is commonly thought evil, this is not the way of flesh

and blood. This is not the manner of man; this requires some explanation. What will that explanation be?

We have the answer in the text. I know not whether its greatness or its simplicity is more to be admired. It all lies in one little word, and that word is "faith."

Moses had faith. Faith was the mainspring of his wonderful conduct. Faith made him do as he did, choose what he chose and refuse what he refused. He did it all because he believed.

God set before the eyes of his mind His own will and purpose. God revealed to him that a Savior was to be born of the stock of Israel, that mighty promises were bound up in these children of Abraham, and yet to be fulfilled, that the time for fulfilling a portion of these promises was at hand; and Moses put credit in this, and believed. And every step in his wonderful career, every action in his journey through life after leaving Pharaoh's court, his choice of seeming evil, his refusal of seeming good--all, all must be traced up to this fountain; all will be found to rest on this foundation. God had spoken to him, and he had faith in God's Word.

He believed that God would keep His promises--that what He had said He would surely do, and what He had covenanted He would surely perform.

He believed that with God nothing was impossible. Reason and sense might say that the deliverance of Israel was out of the question: the obstacles were too many, the difficulties too great. But faith told Moses that God was all-sufficient. God had undertaken the work, and it would be done.

He believed that God was all wise. Reason and sense might tell him that his line of action was absurd, that he was throwing away useful influence and destroying all chance of benefiting his people by breaking with Pharaoh's daughter. But faith told Moses that if God said, "Go this way," it must be the best.

He believed that God was all merciful. Reason and sense might hint that a more pleasant manner of deliverance might be found, that some compromise might be effected, and many hardships be avoided. But faith told Moses that God was love and would not give His people one drop of bitterness beyond what was absolutely needed.

Faith was a telescope to Moses. It made him see the goodly land afar off--rest, peace and victory, when dim-sighted reason could only see trial and barrenness, storm and tempest, weariness and pain.

Faith was an interpreter to Moses. It made him pick out a comfortable meaning in the dark commands of God's handwriting, while ignorant sense could see nothing in it but mystery and foolishness.

Faith told Moses that all this rank and greatness was of the earth, earthy, a poor, vain, empty thing, frail, fleeting, and passing away; and that there was no true greatness like that of serving God. He was the king, he the true nobleman who belonged to the family of God. It was better to be last in heaven than first in hell.

Faith told Moses that worldly pleasures were "pleasures of sin." They were mingled with sin, they led on to sin, they were ruinous to the soul, and displeasing to God. It would be small comfort to have pleasure while God was against him. Better suffer and obey God, than be at ease and sin.

Faith told Moses that these pleasures after all were only for a "season." They could not last; they were all short-lived; they would weary him soon; he must leave them all in a few years.

Faith told him that there was a reward in heaven for the believer far richer than the treasures in Egypt, durable riches, where rust could not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. The crown there would be incorruptible; the weight of glory would be exceeding and eternal, and faith bade him look away to an unseen heaven if his eyes were dazzled with Egyptian gold.

Faith told Moses that affliction and suffering were not real evils. They were the school of God, in which He trains the children of grace for glory; the medicines which are needful to purify our corrupt wills; the furnace which must burn away our dross; the knife which must cut the ties that bind us to the world.

Faith told Moses that the despised Israelites were the chosen people of God. He believed that to them belonged the adoption and the covenant and the promises and the glory: that of them the seed of the woman was one day to be born, who should bruise the serpent's head; that the special blessing of God was upon them; that they were lovely and beautiful in His eyes, and that it was better to be a doorkeeper among the people of God, than to reign in the palaces of wickedness.

Faith told Moses that all the reproach and scorn poured out on him was "the reproach of Christ," that it was honorable to be mocked and despised for Christ's sake; that whoever persecuted Christ's people was persecuting Christ Himself; and that the day must come when His enemies would bow before Him and lick the dust. All this, and much more, of which I cannot speak particularly, Moses saw by faith. These were the things he believed, and believing, did what he did. He was persuaded of them, and embraced them, he reckoned them as certainties, he regarded them as substantial verities, he counted them as sure as if he had seen them with his own eyes, he acted on them as realities--and this made him the man that he was. He had faith. He believed.

Marvel not that he refused greatness, riches and pleasure. He looked far forward. He saw with the eye of faith kingdoms crumbling into dust, riches making to themselves wings and fleeing away, pleasures leading on to death and judgment, and Christ only and His little flock enduring forever.

Wonder not that he chose affliction, a despised people and reproach. He beheld things below the surface. He saw with the eye of faith affliction lasting but for a moment, reproach rolled away, and ending in everlasting honor, and the despised people of God reigning as kings with Christ in glory.

And was he not right? Does he not speak to us though dead, this very day? The name of Pharaoh's daughter has perished, or at any rate is extremely doubtful. The city where Pharaoh reigned is not known. The treasures in Egypt are gone. But the name of Moses is known wherever the Bible is read and is still a standing witness that "whoever lives by faith, happy is he."

4. Some practical lessons

"What has all this to do with us?" some will say. "We do not live in Egypt, we have seen no miracles, we are not Israelites, we are weary of the subject."

Yet our subject is a considerable and weighty one which we should not easily dismiss. It is particularly relevant to anyone desiring salvation for many reasons:

1. If you would ever be saved, you must make the choice that Moses made--you must choose God before the world.

Mark well what I say. Do not overlook this, though all the rest be forgotten. I do not say that the statesman must throw up his office, and the rich man forsake his property. Let no one fancy that I mean this. But I say, if a man would be saved, whatever be his rank in life, he must be prepared for tribulation. He must make up his mind to choose much which seems evil, and to give up and refuse much which seems good.

I dare say this sounds strange language to some who read these pages. I know well you may have a certain form of religion and find no trouble in your way. There is a common worldly kind of Christianity in this day, which many have and think they have enough--a cheap Christianity which offends nobody and requires no sacrifice, which costs nothing, and is worth nothing. I am not speaking of religion of this kind.

But if you really are in earnest about your soul, if your religion is something more than a mere fashionable Sunday cloak, if you are determined to live by the Bible, if you are resolved to be a New Testament Christian, then, I repeat, you will soon find you must carry a cross. You must endure hard things; you must suffer in behalf of your soul, as Moses did, or you cannot be saved.

The world in the nineteenth century is what it always was. The hearts of men are still the same. The offense of the cross is not ceased. God's true people are still a despised little flock. True evangelical religion still brings with it reproach and scorn. A real servant of God will still be thought by many a weak enthusiast and a fool.

But the matter comes to this. Do you wish your soul to be saved? Then remember, you must choose whom you will serve. You cannot serve God and mammon. You cannot be on two sides at once. You cannot be a friend of Christ and a friend of the world at the same time. You must come out from the children of this world and be separate; you must put up with much ridicule, trouble and opposition, or you will be lost forever. You must be willing to think and do things which the world considers foolish and to hold opinions which are held by only a few. It will cost you something. The stream is strong, and you have to stem it. The way is narrow and steep, and it is no use saying it is not. But, depend on it, there can be no saving religion without sacrifices and self-denial.

Now are you making any sacrifices? Does your religion cost you anything? I put it to your conscience in all affection and tenderness. Are you, like Moses, preferring God to the world, or not? I beseech you not to take shelter under that dangerous word "we"--"we ought," and "we hope," and "we mean," and the like. I ask you plainly, what are you doing yourself? Are you willing to give up anything which keeps you back from God; or are you clinging to the Egypt of the world and saying to yourself, "I must have it, I must have it: I cannot tear myself away"? Is there any cross in your Christianity? Are there any sharp corners in your religion, anything that ever jars and comes in collision with the earthly-mindedness around you? Or is all smooth and rounded off and comfortably fitted into custom and fashion? Do you know anything of the afflictions of the gospel? Is your faith and practice ever a subject of scorn and reproach? Are you thought a fool by anyone because of your soul? Have you left Pharaoh's daughter and heartily joined the people of God? Are you venturing all on Christ? Search and see.

These are hard inquiries and rough questions. I cannot help it. I believe they are founded on Scripture truths. I remember it is written: "There went great multitudes with [Jesus]: and He turned, and said unto them, 'If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple'" (Luke 14:25-27). Many, I fear, would like glory, who have no wish for grace. They would sincerely have the wages, but not the work; the harvest, but not the labor; the

reaping, but not the sowing; the reward, but not the battle. But it may not be. As Bunyan says, "The bitter must go before the sweet." If there is no cross, there will be no crown.

2. Nothing will ever enable you to choose God before the world, except faith.

Only faith enables you, nothing else, whether you have knowledge, feel strong emotions, practice regular use of outward forms, or have good companions. Faithless religion does something, but it isn't enough; it is a clock without mainsprings or weights; its face may be beautiful, you may turn its fingers around, but it will not work. Religion of substance that stands has as its foundation the firmness of faith.

There must be a real heartfelt belief that God's promises are sure and to be depended on--a real belief that what God says in the Bible is all true and that every doctrine contrary to this is false, whatever anyone may say. There must be a real belief that all God's words are to be received, however hard and disagreeable to flesh and blood, and that His way is right and all others wrong. This there must be, or you will never come out from the world, take up the cross, follow Christ and be saved.

You must learn to believe promises better than possessions, things unseen better than things seen, things in heaven out of sight better than things on earth before your eyes, the praise of the invisible God better than the praise of visible man. Then, and then only, you will make a choice like Moses, and prefer God to the world.

Now the salient question presents itself: "Do you have this faith?" If you have, you will find it possible to refuse seeming good and choose seeming evil. You will think nothing of today's losses, in the hope of tomorrow's gains. You will follow Christ in the dark and stand by Him to the very last. If you have not, I warn you, you will never war a good warfare and "so run as to obtain." You will soon be offended and turn back to the world.

Above all this, there must be a real abiding faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The life that you live in the flesh you must live by the faith of the Son of God. There must be a settled habit of continually leaning on Jesus, looking unto Jesus, drawing out of Jesus and using Him as the manna of your soul. You must strive to be able to say, "To me to live is Christ." "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" (Phil. 1:21; 4:13).

This was the faith by which the old saints obtained a good report. This was the weapon by which they overcame the world. This made them what they were.

This was the faith that made Noah go on building his ark, while the world looked on and mocked; and Abraham give the choice of the land to Lot, and dwell on quietly in tents; and Ruth cleave to Naomi, and turn away from her country and her gods; and Daniel continue in prayer, though he knew the lions' den was prepared; and the three children refuse to worship idols, though the fiery furnace was before their eyes; and Moses forsake Egypt, not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh. All these acted as they did because they believed. They saw the difficulties and troubles of this course. But they saw Jesus by faith and above them all, and they pressed on. Well may the apostle Peter speak of faith as "precious faith" (2 Pet. 1:1).

3. The true reason why so many are worldly and ungodly people is that they have no faith. We must be aware that multitudes of professing Christians would never think for a moment of doing as Moses did. It is useless to speak smooth things and shut our eyes to the fact. That man must be blind who does not see thousands around him who are daily preferring the world to God, placing the things of time before the

things of eternity, and the things of the body before the things of the soul. We may not like to admit this, and we try hard to blink the fact. But so it is.

And why do they do so? No doubt they will all give us reasons and excuses. Some will talk of the snares of the world, some of the want of time, some of the peculiar difficulties of their position, some of the cares and anxieties of life, some of the strength of temptation, some of the power of passions, some of the effects of bad companions. But what does it come to after all? There is a far shorter way to account for the state of their souls--they do not believe. One simple sentence, like Aaron's rod, will swallow up all their excuses--they have no faith.

They do not really think what God says is true. They secretly flatter themselves with the notion: "It will surely not be fulfilled. There must surely be some other way to heaven beside that which ministers speak of. There cannot surely be so much danger of being lost." In short, they do not put implicit confidence in the words that God has written and spoken and so do not act upon them. They do not thoroughly believe hell and so do not flee from it; nor heaven and so do not seek it; nor the guilt of sin and so do not turn from it; nor the holiness of God and so do not fear Him; nor their need of Christ and so do not trust in Him nor love Him. They do not feel confidence in God and so venture nothing for Him. Like the boy Passion, in Pilgrim's Progress, they must have their good things now. They do not trust God and so they cannot wait.

Now how is it with ourselves? Do we believe all the Bible? Let us ask ourselves that question. Depend on it, it is a much greater thing to believe all the Bible than many suppose. Happy is the man who can lay his hand on his heart and say, "I am a believer."

We talk of infidels sometimes as if they were the rarest people in the world. And I grant that open avowed infidelity is happily not very common now. But there is a vast amount of practical infidelity around us, for all that, which is as dangerous in the end as the principles of Voltaire and Paine. There are many who Sunday after Sunday repeat the creed and make a point of declaring their belief in all that the Apostolic and Nicene forms contain. And yet these very people will live all the week as if Christ had never died, and as if there were no judgment, and no resurrection of the dead, and no life everlasting at all. There are many who will say, "Oh, we know it all," when spoken to about eternal things and the value of their souls. And yet their lives show plainly they know not anything as they ought to know; and the saddest part of their state is that they think they do!

It is an dreadful truth, and worthy of all consideration, that knowledge not acted upon, in God's sight, is not merely useless and unprofitable. It is much worse than that. It will add to our condemnation and increase our guilt in the judgment day. A faith that does not influence a man's practice is not worthy of the name. There are only two classes in the church of Christ--those who believe and those who do not. The difference between the true Christian and the mere outward professor just lies in one word; the true Christian is like Moses: "he has faith"; the mere outward professor has none. The true Christian believes and therefore lives as he does; the mere professor does not believe and therefore is what he is. Oh, where is our faith? Let us not be faithless, but believing.

4. The true secret of doing great things for God is to have great faith.

I believe that we are all apt to err on this point. We think too much, and talk too much, about graces and gifts and attainments and do not sufficiently remember that faith is the root and mother of them all. In walking with God, a man will go just as far as he believes, and no further. His life will always be proportioned to his faith. His peace, his patience, his courage, his zeal, his works--all will be according to

his faith.

You read the lives of eminent Christians, of such men as Wesley or Whitefield or Venn or Martyn or Bickersteth or Simeon or M'cheyne. And you are disposed to say, "What wonderful gifts and graces these men had!" I answer, you should rather give honor to the mother grace which God puts forward in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; you should give honor to their faith. Depend on it, faith was the mainspring in the character of each and all.

I can fancy someone saying, "They were so prayerful; that made them what they were." I answer, why did they pray much? Simply because they had much faith. What is prayer, but faith speaking to God?

Another perhaps will say, "They were so diligent and laborious; that accounts for their success." I answer, why were they so diligent? Simply because they had faith. What is Christian diligence, but faith at work?

Another will tell me, "They were so bold; that rendered them so useful." I answer, why were they so bold? Simply because they had much faith. What is Christian boldness, but faith honestly doing its duty?

And another will cry, "It was their holiness and spirituality; that gave them their weight." For the last time I answer, what made them holy? Nothing but a living realizing spirit of faith. What is holiness, but faith visible and faith incarnate?

If you would be like Moses, making it clear as noonday that you have chosen God before the world, what does Christ ask of you? Would you bring forth an abundance of fruit? Do you want to be eminently holy and useful? I dare to be sure that every believer would reply with a resounding, "Yes! This is my desire!"

Then take the advice I give you this day: go and cry to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the disciples did, "Lord, increase our faith." Faith is the root of a real Christian's character. Let your root be right, and your fruit will soon abound. Your spiritual prosperity will always be according to your faith. He that believes shall not only be saved, but shall never thirst, shall overcome, shall be established, shall walk firmly on the waters of this world and shall do great works.

Reader, if you believe the things contained in this paper, and desire to be a thoroughly holy man, begin to act on your belief. Take Moses for your example. Walk in his steps. Go and do likewise.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-ryle/mosesan-example/>

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