

Hebrews 11:1–2; 23-31

In Hebrews 11, the author of Hebrews characterizes some key aspects of the faith of the OT witnesses (**Heb 11:1**) in connection with which God testified of the invisible objects of hope to the saints of old (**Heb 11:2**). Those saints in turn, responded with persevering faith and became “a cloud of witnesses” to us (**12:1**).

After the patriarchs, the focus now moves to characters and events associated with the Exodus, the entry into the Promised Land, and its occupation.

All of these events were set in the context of opposition. The witness of Moses was particularly significant for the author of Hebrews since the overall purpose of the letter is to persuade Christians not to abandon Christ for Moses.

Summary

In Hebrews 11:23-31, the author of Hebrews gives another longer presentation concerning the testimony of Moses and the Israelites, beginning with Moses' parents and ending with the generation that followed him.

1. Parental Testimony vs. 23

The Pharaoh of Egypt feared the growing numbers of the Israelites, and so decreed that all Hebrew baby boys were to be killed. So after he was born, Moses' Hebrew parents concealed him. They persevered in faith that God would protect and nurture their baby. Believing the revelation they had received that God would fulfill His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they responded in persevering faith even in the face of great opposition.

2. Witness Moses vv. 24-28

The author of Hebrews next fast forwards from the time when Moses lived as the son of Pharaoh's daughter (**Exod 2:5-10**) to the occasion when he 'went out to his people and looked on their burdens' (**Exod 2:11**). When he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, 'one of his own people', Moses killed him and effectively renounced his membership of the royal household (**Exod 2:12**). Moses began to share the mistreatment of the Israelites when Pharaoh heard about the killing of the Egyptian and tried to kill Moses forcing him to flee to Midian (**Exod. 2:15**). Many years later, Moses went to Pharaoh many times in God's name, with the message 'let my people go', and he continued to suffer with them until the Exodus took place.

The author further clarifies that Moses chose to identify with the people of God 'rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin (**Heb 11:25b**).

He 'refused' what was visible; he 'chose' what was invisible; and he 'endured'.

Moses 'considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward' (**Heb 11:26**). The word 'reproach' is significant here, because the same term was used to describe the 'insults' previously experienced

by the recipients of Hebrews (**Heb 10:33**) and it will be used again to challenge them to bear the 'disgrace that Jesus bore (**Heb 13:13**).

For Moses all the splendor and wealth of Egypt could not even be compared with the lowly condition of the oppressed Hebrews because of the reward (**Heb 11:26**) that was bound up with the coming of the promised Messiah from their race.

Like his parents before him, Moses feared God rather than the anger of Pharaoh (**Heb 11:27**). He focused on the One who is invisible and believed that 'He rewards those who earnestly seek him' (**Heb 11:6, cf. 10:35**).

This argument prepares for the exhortation to Christians that they should endure and enter into their heavenly inheritance by looking to the exalted Lord Jesus, who though yet unseen is perceived and known by faith (**Heb 12:2, cf 2:8-9, 3:1-2**).

Moses also testified and persevered in his faith by keeping the Passover and the sprinkling of blood (**Heb 11:28**). The Passover meal was to be a sign to that generation of their impending deliverance from Egypt and from death in the sea, encouraging them to persevere in faith. It was also meant to be a perpetual memorial of God's saving grace to later generations (**Exod 12:14-28**).

3. Corporate Testimony vv. 29-30

The Israelites persevered in their faith despite the opposition and placed their lives completely in the hands of God who delivered them by holding back the waters, whilst judgment fell on their pursuers, who were drowned (**Heb 11:29; Exod 14:23-31**). The next generation of Israelites also persevered in faith in response to God's extraordinary instructions about the defeat of Jericho, just as their parents had concerning their escape from Egypt (**Heb 11:30; Josh 5:13-6:27**).

4. Gentile Witness vs. 31

Rahab knew what God had done for the Israelites and sought deliverance for herself and her family from the destruction that was coming upon her city (**Heb 11:31; Josh 2:10-13**). Rahab's implied status as a Gentile and her reputation as a prostitute were no barrier to her being delivered along with all those who persevered in faith in God's promise.

5. Persevering Midst Opposition and Conflict

The period of the exodus and conquest in Israel's history was characterized by conflict between the people of God and unbelieving world. Persevering in faith would consequently enable the Israelites to endure a wait, and also a war, until the One whose coming was drawing near would be present and the promise would be fulfilled. With this perspective we can obtain that encouragement to wait with expectation for God to fulfill all His promises, delivering us from all our enemies and bringing us into our heavenly inheritance in glory.