

Faith: trusting God in the face of opposition, part 1 (Hebrews 11:23–27)

Walking in faith is often a road with challenges. Seven “by faith” cases are listed in Hebrews 11:23–31 that highlight some of those difficulties which are overcome by true faith. They help understand faith better and encourage the reader to persevere in faith. Here are some of the obstacles faced by those who have lived by faith.

1. ***Contrary government edict (11:23)***

See Exodus 1:1 – 2:10.

Stephen (Acts 7:20) understands Exodus 2:2 to mean that baby Moses was “beautiful to God”. It seems that the parents of Moses saw something special about Moses and despite the edict to cast all baby boys into the Nile, they did not fear to disobey.

Faith that does not fear is not necessarily a faith without the feeling of fear, but faith that acts rightly despite that which can cause fear. Faith also means obeying God rather than even human government.

2. ***Prestige and security (11:24–26)***

See Exodus 2:11–15.

Being raised in Pharaoh’s household offered prestige and security. But Moses sensed that God would use him to deliver His people from bondage (Acts 7:25). Moses had a choice. On the one hand was the earthly benefits of Egypt but sinning against God’s calling. On the other hand was identifying with God’s people and accepting the reproach associated with the Anointed Deliverer. (This assumes that Moses understood earlier prophecies such as Genesis 3:15 and 49:10; cf. John 8:56.)

Temptation could have aroused internal opposition to faith. Faith fights this battle with life’s worries, riches, and pleasures (Luke 8:14). But true faith looks forward, convinced of a greater reward.

The very character of temptation warns us that some obstacles to faith appear attractive. Remember the greater, future reward and set your hearts on things above (cf. Colossians 3:1–2).

3. ***Threat of death (11:27)***

Moses left Egypt twice, once fleeing from Pharaoh for his life (Exodus 2:15) and the second time leading Israel out in the exodus. Though debated, the latter seems the more likely reference since the first time was in fear (see also Exodus 4:19) and Hebrews speaks of leaving but not fearing the king’s anger.

After the ninth plague Pharaoh threatened to kill Moses if he saw him again (Exodus 10:28). But Moses persevered in all which God had commanded, since the unseen God who had spoken to Him was as real to him as Pharaoh, whom he could see, and much more important. Even the threat of death did not stop Moses trusting God.

As seen also in the first case, faith can overcome fear. Such faith is strengthened by knowing God from His Word so well that you “see” Him, His power, wisdom, goodness, etc.

The examples of faith in this chapter can appear to us as distant from our own realities. But the same types of challenges face believers today: increasing opposition to a God-pleasing lifestyle, materialistic temptations, and even threats against our well-being. The same responses help as well, looking toward future reward and growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- In what ways do believers in your context face opposition from the government against God-pleasing living? How might this look in ten years? How are you preparing for challenging times? How could you prepare?
- What are the temptations today for prestige, security and wealth? What act of faith is needed to live rightly and not choose wrongly?
- Has your life ever been threatened because of your stand for Jesus Christ? Has your well-being been threatened in some way? How? How does a believe by faith have victory in such cases?