

Those Of Whom The World Was Not Worthy

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Date: 18 February 1987

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[0 : 0 0] I trust that as we are gathered that God will bless all of us through taking these few minutes out of the day to turn our minds and hearts to the Word of God and seeking to understand that Word of God. I had a New Testament professor once who gave a little study, wrote a little book called Understanding the Word of God, and one of his chief analogies was that of a fairly hard nut that you had to crack and open and then pick the meat out of it. And so I think that very often that's what we do with the scriptures is to pick a passage which is like a hard nut and to try and crack it open and then pick the meat out of it. And that's, I suppose, what we are engaged in doing. I think it's important that you should eat the meat and not that I should give you a little demonstration of how to eat it, but that you should find it nourishing to you as you, as together we crack open the passage. I don't know if I ever, I came across an analogy the other day which I thought was very interesting to me. And that is that if I live in this house here, which stands here, and I go over and I visit this park here with these trees about and so on, that if I was to go on this path, which would go along like this, from here to here, now that would, when I'd gone out for my walk and I'd walk down here and then I'd walk back again, I would have covered the distance from here to here times two. You can all understand that, can't you? But if I took Jenny, our dog, with us, while I walked from here to here, Jenny would be going like this. And she would cover all sorts of territory that I wouldn't cover. And I thought that may be somewhat analogous to leading a Bible study, in that I try and walk from here to here, but you're free to range anywhere you like, like Jenny, and you can go all through all sorts of country while you're sitting listening to me. You can cover an enormous amount more territory than I can. I am limited to words, which can only come out at the rate of 110 a minute or something, but your thoughts can go at 1,000 a minute. And you can go all over the place. And the territory that our minds would cover in the course of the next half hour is we take the Word of God and I lead you down here, but you go all over the place and discover all sorts of things as God leads and directs your thinking. I just thought that was a good way of illustrating what I hope happens at Bible studies sometimes, that you cover a lot more territory than I do. So we're looking at Hebrews chapter 11, verse 23 to 28. And we'll just pray as we begin. Our God and Father, as we take the hard, not of your word, written on with ink on paper, in a language which most of us have been born to, that is our native

language, and therefore we have at least some understanding of it. We still very much need the understanding which only you can give us by the inspiration or in breathing of your Holy Spirit. That you will take all the facets of these words and all the whole range of our human experiences, and that you will bring light where there is darkness, that you will bring order where there is chaos, that you will bring faith where there is fear, you will bring hope where we are inclined to despair, and even in the midst of affliction, you will give us joy. We ask in Christ's name.

Amen. Now, the things I want to tell you about this passage, I will tell you first by reading it to you. You're all with me? Page 210 in the blue and somewhere else. By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the child.

By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered abuse, suffered for the Christ, greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt.

For he looked to the reward. By faith, he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. By faith, he kept the Passover, sprinkled the blood so that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

[6 : 30] Well, that's the end of that paragraph on the faith of Moses, and leaves us with a considerable section to deal with.

Can I point out to you first, then, that this by faith means that you develop a timeline in your life? You know, if you, if you, if you, if you, if you take this as being 0 AD, and this as being 1987 AD, then you'll know that your life has been lived just within, you know, in this little part of it.

That's where you are in terms of the whole span of history. You stand right there. Just, you're caught up in that. But when he talks about faith, he's suddenly saying that the significance of your life expands to include Abel and Abraham.

And, in this instance, Moses. I read somewhere the other day, maybe some of you read it too, and it just sort of shocked me a little bit, but I've thought about it some more.

So, it had something to do with somebody not being somewhere, and the excuse was given, well, his father just died.

[8 : 12] Well, the answer was, well, his father's father died before him, so what's new about that? You know, that doesn't, this is the kind of thing that happens in our world.

So why get all excited about it? Well, what I think it means is that what we're supposed to live our lives is not just in the narrow confines of this little point in time, but that we're supposed to live with the whole range of the purpose of God in Abel and Abraham and Moses and in me, or you.

So, you know, that it's all part of the same thing. We're all living against the background of the purpose of God. And as Abel saw God by faith, and as Abraham obeyed God by faith, and as Moses led the people of God by faith, so you and me live our lives by that faith.

Faith in the purpose of God, which is not tied to one tiny point in time. So when this passage starts out and says, by faith, Moses, suddenly you find this tiny infant being born.

And he's born of a Levite father and Hebrew mother, and he's born in the land of Egypt, which is under an edict, because the people of Egypt were so afraid of this people who would come in to live among them.

[9 : 51] It's, I guess, a case of racial discrimination. But the Egyptians were becoming so afraid of the prosperity of the Hebrews, so afraid of their growing strength, so afraid that in a time of war, the Hebrews might turn against them.

And so they would have a built-in army that was right in their midst, ready to turn against them. They became so afraid that they commanded that all the boy children of the Hebrews should be put to death.

You remember there's the lovely story about how the Pharaoh went to the midwives of Egypt and said, when the women come to bear these children, and you're called in, if it's a male child, you're to put it to death.

And if it's a female child, then it can live. And the women, this didn't happen. The Hebrews continued to grow, and Pharaoh called the midwives to account, and they said, oh, the Hebrew women are different.

When they come to give birth to a child, they don't bother with midwives. They just take off. And so the midwives, in a sense, protected the Hebrews, and God blessed the midwives for that.

[11 : 15] But then the command was put out that all the children should be put to death. And so under that edict of the Pharaoh or the king of Egypt, Moses was born.

And that was why Moses, why you read in these verses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents. Some task, I would think, to hide a small baby for three months.

But they must have had some help in that conspiracy. And at the end of the three months, you know, the little, the little bulrush basket was made ready.

And the baby was floated down the river, because the boy babies were to be thrown into the Nile. And so that's what happened to him.

And he floated down. And you remember the Pharaoh whose daughter came down to swim in the Nile. And she saw this baby. And the parents had recognized what the Pharaoh's daughter now recognized, that it was a beautiful child.

[12 : 22] That it seemed to be marked as a very special child. And so she saw it and she took it and decided that she was going to make it her own, as any young woman might do under the circumstances.

And Moses' sister Miriam was standing nearby and said to the Pharaoh's daughter, would you like me to get a wet nurse to look after the baby?

And the Pharaoh's daughter thought that was an excellent idea. And so Miriam went and got Moses' mother to come and be Moses' nanny in the house of Pharaoh.

And that was how this whole story developed. By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child.

And they weren't afraid of the king's edict. You see that sort of, the difference between faith and fear. So they weren't afraid, they were full of faith rather than that.

[13 : 30] And faith is the opposite of fear. We're to live by faith. That's what makes me angry sometimes at the city of Vancouver, which constantly inspires fear in people, as being the main way of teaching people how to behave.

Make them afraid. And so we spend a lot of time making people afraid, trying to create fear. Fear of all sorts of things.

And it's a tremendous business that is generated by people being fearful. The greatest rage is to be afraid of AIDS.

And so that splashed all over the front of the province this morning. And that fear, no doubt, has certain good qualities to it.

But we're not meant to live by fear. We're meant to live by faith. And faith is a positive direction for your life, as opposed to fear, which is a constant turning away from life, and trying to protect yourself.

[14 : 47] And so faith is that kind of positive reality that we need to come in touch with. Well, that's what happened.

And Moses was picked up by the daughter of Pharaoh and raised in the courts of Pharaoh. Now not as the child of slaves living at the bottom end of the social scale, but as the child of the king of Egypt living at the very top end of the social scale, and living in great prosperity instead of wealth and enslavement.

So you see that's what happened to him. Now, the thing that I would like to remind you about this, because I really think that it's important.

This, by the way, is... This is the basket in which Moses was floated down the Nile River. One of the difficulties people have with the Bible is that it picks out certain heroes.

And I've mentioned Abel and Abraham and Moses. And those heroes live peculiar and wonderful lives under the grace and mercy of God to whom they relate by faith.

[16 : 29] But the difficulty is that we see ourselves as being somewhat less than heroes. We see ourselves as being close to the point of total insignificance.

What do I count for? Not only do we see ourselves that way, generally in our society we are seen that way. We're not really very important to anybody else but ourselves, and maybe a few people who choose to love us and be loyal to us.

But for the most part, we're not very important. And so, in our society we are taught to see ourselves as being close to insignificant.

But I want you to know that as that tiny child of an enslaved family, an enslaved family lay in that basket.

So it was representative in a sense of the whole of humanity. It might be any child at any time in any place. And that child, there is attached to that child's life a drama which has eternal significance.

[17 : 41] Not just the significance of time and space, but eternal significance. This is really, I suppose, what the abortion debate is about.

It is the awareness that every child has eternal significance. And we can't deal lightly with that reality.

And not only is that real for every child, it's real for you and me. Our lives, as far as God is concerned, are lived in heroic proportions.

We are huge. You know, we're on a great big wide wide screen. Living out our life and the drama of our everyday life.

Now, nobody may be especially interested in it, but occasionally people are. And your life is a profound divine drama.

[18 : 41] And how you make your choices and how you live your life becomes very important. You can't disqualify yourself as being so insignificant that I don't really matter.

But I think you have to recognize yourself as a person of profound importance, living against the background of the purpose of God.

I made a list of all the things it says about Moses just in these few verses. That he was born. He was beautiful. He was, he grew up.

He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to share ill treatment. He considered abuse suffered as worthwhile. He looked for a reward.

He left Egypt. He endured. He kept the Passover. He sprinkled the blood. All these things are just sort of biographical details about Moses.

[19 : 47] But all the details of your life are really very important, too. And I think one of the ways, and you may have to argue with me about this, but one of the things that tends to be happening now is people are looking for counselors.

They're looking for people to talk to. I'm having trouble with my husband. Is there somebody I can talk to? I'm having trouble with my parents. Is there somebody I can talk to?

I'm having trouble with my boss. Is there somebody I can talk to? The function of going to talk to a counselor is to try and get some perspective on your own life.

The decisions you're making, the choices you're making, the things you're doing, the emotional responses that you're having. To look at all those things and to see them not as the insignificant details of a perpetual stream of consciousness, but as very significant decisions which account for very much for who you are and what you are and what you're doing with your life.

And so a counselor helps you to see in a little bigger scale who you are and what the meaning and purpose of your life is.

[21 : 15] Well, a friend was telling me last night about a class out at the university where a woman came and talked to them about caring for very elderly people, sometimes seriously diseased.

And the great gift that this person had who worked with these people was that she saw them as persons. Fran told me of one lady who is mentally diseased, in hospital, under constant care for it, but has managed to go to Toronto nine times without paying for it.

And without... She just gets on planes. She's so out of her mind that nobody pays any attention to her and she mumbles about the person behind her. And she gets on the plane and off she goes to Toronto.

Well, she's crazy. But she's smart. And they have to send down for her to bring her back all the time.

Well, in a sense you see through the eyes of this person who's looking after her, you don't see a sort of poor, decrepit, crazy old lady sitting in the corner.

[22 : 41] You suddenly see a character who, afflicted though she may be by some kind of mental disorder, is still a big person.

And I think that we are all very much bigger than we think we are. And our lives are full of details that are very much more significant than we think they are.

And that if we have the opportunity in fellowship with one another, and in talking to one another, and perhaps in counseling with one another, to help to see ourselves in perspective, that's what's supposed to happen.

And when you read the story of Moses, you're not to conclude that he was a great person like I could never be. But that he was, in fact, faced with almost the same circumstances in which I live my life.

And I can learn a lot about my life from watching how he lived his, and how God worked in his life. And my life can assume heroic proportions.

[23 : 45] Nobody may ever write my biography, and nobody may ever give me the order of Canada. But in terms of eternity, we are people of tremendous personal stature.

Very, very important. And to see one another, I think, in that light, is something which only Christ can give to us. To see that in one another.

So, that's why I want you to see that fact. And I think there is that fact is further endorsed by these two parents, whose names we don't know, I don't think, who bore this child, and who saw that he was beautiful.

Well, I think he was beautiful not in the sense that he would win, you know, a beautiful baby contest or something like that. I think they saw that he was a very special child.

I don't think probably any parents have ever had a child that they didn't think was very special. And I think that that's probably true. I think that may be one of the great moments of insight.

[24 : 56] For a mother to see her own child and recognize something of eternal significance in that child which she has born, is what's happening here.

And I think that's, I think that's important. I think that that's what they were meant to see. And so you have the first example of this in this story.

Well, then it goes on. The second thing that I want, well, the next thing I'll do is tell you this. There's four examples of faith in this story.

Four different kinds of faith. And I want to tell you what those four different kinds of faith are. The first is what I've just spoken of, the faith of the parents who were not afraid of the king's edict, who by faith saw the importance of their child and believed that their child had a greater future than to be thrown into the Nile to be eaten by the crocodiles.

But that they saw this in the child and that was their faith. And I presume it should be the faith of every parent bringing any child to baptism.

[26 : 13] That they see the purpose of God in that child and by faith are claiming that purpose of God to be worked out in the life of that child. So that's important.

That's the first kind of faith. The second kind of faith that is example here for us is a life choice. And Moses made this life choice when it says, By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

Well, there you have a faith choice that he made. He chose to be who he really was rather than who he was adopted to be.

Now, I've run into this in peculiar ways. There's a kind of Shaughnessy syndrome which I've run into and which I think does a certain amount of damage, probably to me as well as to anybody else.

But living in Shaughnessy makes you a very special person. And you know how humble and respectful people become when you say, I live in Shaughnessy.

[27 : 41] Oh, how important you must be. Or I go to St. John's Shaughnessy. I'm told on good authority that there's a lot of people who don't want anybody to know that they go to St. George's Shaughnessy because of the way people think about it.

And there are those kinds of things which I think we are all subject to, forms of, I say, insidious forms of arrogance, either which we assume or which is wrongly conferred on us.

Because we're white Anglo-Saxon Protestants living in Shaughnessy. It's no good. It's not real.

But trying to live up to that image has destroyed a lot of people. Trying to live with that image can create an enormous amount of damage to people.

And because they lose touch with who they really are. And it's not just Shaughnessy that does that to you.

[28 : 59] When you become a vice president of a bank or you become a, you know, you become a great person in some other respect, then you choose, then I suppose, I suppose this is why lots of men spend all their time at work.

Because at work they have a certain false image that they can live happily with as opposed to the reality they have to confront when they come home. And so they spend all their time at work where they are the boss, the big cheese, the fellow, you know, the, and we, we, we do that all the time.

And we lose touch with who we really are. Well, that's very destructive because it means, and I've run into lots of people like this, we spend most of our years and most of our energy trying to generate that false picture of who we are and never come to grips with who we really are.

And you see, that's what Moses did do. He was, even though he had the opportunity, and even though the skids were well greased for him, in the sense that he could go along with that because there was a certain attraction to the fleeting pleasures of sin, in a, in a, in a, you know, in the, in the, in the, in the throne or in the, in the palace of a, of an Eastern despot, there would be lots of opportunity for sin, you know, for moral misbehavior, for, for the indulgence of the flesh.

There would be lots of opportunity for that, and that would make it all very attractive. But Moses' decision was that he would, he would rather identify himself with the people he really belonged to.

[31 : 00] He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and he chose rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, to whom he really belonged by birth, than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

That was quite a choice, and he made it by faith. Faith allowed him to make that choice. And I think we need faith in order to allow us to choose to be who we really are, because it's not easy.

And, and it's, it requires a, it requires a great deal of, of help from friends.

Partly because very often our, our view of who we are is so low. That, who would want to be who I think I am, you know. I, it's, that I think is wrong.

But, but I think that there is a sense in which we can choose to be who we are, and not spend all our years and all our energies pretending to be somebody whom we either, want to pretend to be, or who people, to live up to a, a completely false image that people put on us.

[32 : 23] Yuppies don't like being called yuppies. You know, and they, they, but how do we, how do we get to the place of acknowledging who we really are?

As a child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, which is who you really are. That's the identity which by faith you claim in baptism.

Well, that's the second kind of faith, is that life choice faith. The third kind of faith you, you can read about here when it talks about, by faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Well, what he did was that he went from being a young sort of social activist, who went out, as you may remember, that he went out and he, and he found one of the Egyptians misbehaving and abusing a Hebrew.

And so he went to the defense of the Hebrew and took his good left arm and gave him a good punch which killed him. Which wasn't a very satisfactory thing to have happen.

[33 : 48] And the next day, he didn't think anybody had seen him do it. And so the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting together and he went to them and said, Why are you fighting?

And one of them said, Are you going to kill us like you did the Egyptians? And so it was at that point that Moses knew it was time to leave.

And he left. And he left, it says, by faith. And he went into 40 years of seclusion. You know, he went down into the southern part of Egypt and there he lived a peasant life, really, for 40 years.

And the proud prince of Egypt became a wandering nomad down in the desert, forgotten by everyone.

And passing, you know, he was 80 by the time that finished, that period of his life was over. But by faith, he chose to leave Egypt and to go into 40 years of seclusion, to go into, you know, to go into a place where he was utterly abandoned, apparently.

[35 : 06] And he was like, well, the reason he did that, and I shall write it out for you, because it's, he endured in that situation.

Because it says, as seeing him who was in.

Now, the reason I write that out is because this is a very practical definition of what living faith is.

You endure as seeing him who is invisible. This word only occurs in this, in this verse, in the whole of the New Testament.

It occurs a couple of times in the Old Testament, and I'll show you one of those shortly. But what he did then, you see, was he saw him who was invisible. Well, who did he see?

[36 : 16] Well, I don't know if you've noticed the anachronism in this verse, but in these verses. But it's there, and it's very important that you should see it.

You remember in verse 26 it said, he considered abuse suffered for the Christ, greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt.

The Christ had not been born, and wasn't to be born for 2,000 years almost. But he made a choice that was based on the Christ.

He considered abuse suffered for the Christ. It's an amazing statement, isn't it? What does he mean?

What does it mean that Moses made a choice based on the person of Jesus Christ? Well, it refers to the Christ here, and the Christ, as you know, is the Anointed One, or the Messiah, the One whom God has chosen.

[37 : 29] So that what it means, I think, is simply that our life is Christ-centered.

History is Christ-centered. God is Christ-centered. That at the center of history, the center and focal point of history, is the Christ of God.

And to live by faith is to live as seeing Him who is invisible. As seeing the Christ. God is in the center of the world.

You live as one who sees Jesus Christ. And so you live in obedience to Him. You live in relationship to Him. You live in communion with Him.

You live in Him. You live because of Him. The whole of your life is focused on that person of Christ. And whether you were Moses living way back in the dawn of history, you live in relationship to that person, Jesus Christ.

[38 : 37] Or whether you live 2,000 years the other side of the cross, you live as seeing Him who is invisible. That's what Christian faith is.

The other example of that same word comes in Job chapter 2 and verse 9. And it's when Job's very practical wife, seeing the total disaster of Job's circumstances, gave him a little personal advice.

And she said to him, Look, Job, give up. Pack it in. Don't go on with this any longer. She said to him, Do you still hold fast your integrity?

Do you still endure? Every possible and conceivable human disaster had fallen on Job. Every unimaginable and undesirable circumstance had overtaken Job.

And Job's wife had had it. And her advice to Job was, Curse God and die. You know, which is what we do.

[39 : 58] I mean, that's just exactly the pattern. You know, if we say God can't possibly exist, because if He did exist, this would never have happened.

Therefore, we curse God and die. We may not curse God and drop dead. But we curse God and stop from that moment on, living in relationship to and independence upon Him, because things have happened which we don't want Him to allow Him to do.

And that's what this kind of faith is about. Job endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

And you and I, in the circumstances of our lives, have to endure whatever happens on the basis of seeing Him who is invisible.

And if you want a practical definition of faith, there it is.

[41 : 20] There it is. And that's the faith which gave courage to Moses when he headed out for 40 years of seclusion in the wilderness.

Time's up. I have one more thing I want to say, though, so I'll say it in just one minute. The fourth kind of faith is, it says that Moses kept the Passover.

Now, it doesn't say that he instituted it, though it was, in fact, instituted during his time. But he kept it. He had faith which gave meaning to a submission to an unexplained precept.

And I don't think that it's very much different, and this I'll leave you with. At the center of our Christian life is a precept which says, this do in remembrance of me.

That is, we do that because we have been commanded to do it, and we do it by faith. It doesn't make sense to a whole lot of people. And a lot of people are terribly casual about it.

[42 : 38] And from time to time, you know, they do it. But Moses kept it, and it said, and the word is that he went on keeping it.

It was right at the center of his relationship to God, was to observe this precept which God had given him. And we as Christians are called to preserve a precept right at the center of our life together, too.

And that is, this do in remembrance of me. And we do that by faith.

Well, amen, and we'll quit there and carry on with Hebrews 11 next week. E Nicholas for the witness of Ephraim.

I'll see you next week.