

## 26. Faith and choices

July 5, 2015

In 2013, one of the world's top financiers quit his job with no real explanation. Immediately the financial world was a little nervous over PIMCO's Mohamed El-Erian's abrupt departure from his \$100 million a year job – that's over \$47,000/hr. wage – heading a \$2 trillion investment firm.

A year later, El-Erian has come clean about the real reason he left it all behind, actually all 22 of them. It turns out that his 10-year-old daughter had presented him with a list of 22 things he'd missed in her life that year, and he called it "a wake-up call" that his work and family life balance was extremely out of whack.

He now has a few part-time jobs. But the 56-year-old was quick to point out that he knows how fortunate he is to be able to make this choice, as many people in America, particularly single-parent or lower-income homes, don't have the option of working less to spend more time with their kids.

Yes, Mohamed El-Erian certainly made a controversial choice with his career path. No doubt he gave up a lot of power, prestige, and wealth, but what he got, in return, is something money can not buy.

One of the three most respected ancient Israel people by the Israelis – Abraham, king David, and Moses – made a similar choice like El-Erian, not for his daughter, rather for His God. Moses, by faith, made his choices to follow the God of Israel, not many gods of Egypt that went with wealth, fame, and power.

We all make millions of choices in our lifetime. Not every choice we make has long-lasting repercussions in life. But there are definitely decisions that will bring good or bad consequences to us. The most important choice for every single human to make is whether that person receives Jesus Christ as one's Savior and Lord or not.

The process we will come across before and after the choices can be divided into three stages – Refusal, Determination, and Willingness. Let's learn from Moses how we can make the right choices by faith.

### A. THE FIRST STAGE: REFUSAL TO THE SINFUL LIFE

*Hebrews 11:23-26 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command. 24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.*

Every parent think that they have the cutest baby in the world. But Moses had to be a good looking kiddo for the Bible to say this. His godly parents chose to go against the Pharaoh's command and saved the baby.

To get the proper background, we need to learn about the political and cultural atmosphere of Egypt. The River Nile brought the rich agricultural soil from afar to the Delta area. From there, they could generate enough corn and rice to feed the entire known-world around. In other words, the countries around Egypt were at the

mercy of the Pharaohs of Egypt if these countries had a famine. Consequently, Egypt was the ancient superpower kingdom of that region with stately temples, advanced civilization, loose moral, and many idols.

The cream of all this was poured into the cup of Moses. He was brought up in the palace, and treated as the grandson of Pharaoh. When he rode his princely chariot into the streets, his advanced men would yell, "Bow the knees."

When Moses was old enough, he was taught in the Egyptians' highest education systems – the Temple of the Sun. It has been called "the Oxford of Ancient Egypt." There he would learn to read and write the mysterious hieroglyph, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, and all the other education Egyptians could provide.

Moses became a statesman and a soldier. When the Ethiopians invaded Egypt, they were coming up to Memphis, the capital of Egypt. According to the oracles of the Egyptian priests, Moses was entrusted with the command of the royal troops. Moses and his army defeated the enemy and brought spoils and slaves of victory.

According to Josephus, a Jewish historian, Moses was appointed as a crown prince which meant that he was going to be the next Pharaoh someday.

Now with this background in mind, let's think about the choice Moses made. Though he was living in a luxury Egyptian palace, his heart was out in the midst of his people, Hebrews – wrestling with the tension of embracing the material at the expense of the spiritual. His choice was made carefully.

The mental picture of v25 and 26 is of a fork in the road that forced Moses to make a hard choice. The road that veered left was broad, well-traveled, and well-paved with golden opportunities and many enticements to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. But the road on the right was potholed with uncertain footing, shaky bridges, and rough rocky territory ahead.

But his choice of the roads was determined by what he thought through. KJV and NKJV translated it "esteemed"; NIV translated "regarded"; and NASB translates "consider." The Greek word for this is "hegeomai". Its literal definition is "to lead, to go before, to think ahead." Moses looked far down the road to where his decision would take him. That was the place where his eternity would be in balance – the reward for enduring the reproach of Christ outweighed the experience of enjoying anything Egypt had to offer.

The biggest downfall of the people who choose the passing pleasures of sin over God's way DO NOT think ahead other than what is in front of them immediately. They don't think about the consequences. If it feels good to them, they do it no matter what kind of disasters they would face later.

*Matthew 7:13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it."*

In light of what is happening in this country lately, more and more Americans are being divided by the influence of media and celebrities over the truth of God. I can understand that unbelievers want to accept gay marriage. But I do have a problem with people who call themselves Christians, yet they embrace this ungodly decision as a right one. If they are born-again Christians, they should be appalled by it. Yet, they go on with business as usual.

## **B. THE SECOND STAGE: DETERMINATION TO LEAVE**

*Hebrews 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.*

Don't think that Moses' decision was a casual and easy one. He was walking away from everything except the robe on his back. Yet, by faith, he chose to leave all that behind. This kind of choice requires a serious backbone and determination to follow God. Moses chose the imperishable, saw the invisible, and did the impossible. He believed that His God could take care of the wrath of the Pharaoh.

You might be in a similar situation. You can choose the road that leads to the easier life materialistically. But the small voice in your heart consistently tells you that it is not the right road to choose. Are you going to leave that easy road or are you going to ignore the voice of the Holy Spirit within you? It is your faith and it is your choice.

## **C. THE THIRD STAGE: WILLINGNESS TO DO WHAT GOD WANTS**

*Hebrews 11:28-29 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. 29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.*

To understand what is happening here, we need to go to Exodus 12:

*Exodus 12:7 And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.*

*Exodus 12:12-13 For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. 13 Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.*

Can you see Moses applying the blood of the lamb on the door post and lintel of the house where they stayed and ate the lamb? Moses was a brilliant man, well educated, yet doing something strange because this unseen God told him to do so.

Let's go one step further. Who would ever come up with the idea of crossing a sea through the dried sea bed while the sea water was standing tall on each side. The Israelis might have seen Nemo in the middle of the school of fish.

Listen, the difference between the Israelis who crossed the Red Sea and the Egyptian army which chased after them was not courage, rather faith in God. Actually, the Egyptian army had more courage and determination than the Israelis, but not the same faith. Because they didn't have the same faith in God, they each had different fates. The Israelis passed through and the Egyptians were drowned.

Moses was not the only one who did strange things as the Lord told him. Noah was building an ark for 120 years in the middle of the place where nobody ever had heard the word "rain". Abraham and Sarah were taking childbirth classes when they were 100 and 90 years old respectively.

In our walk with the Lord Jesus, the Word of God tells us to do the things that go completely against our human logic. Are we willing to trust Him and follow His ways that go against our logic or are we planning to go our ways and hope that God would bless our decisions?

Many people in this world say things like, "Well, I don't believe in a God of love judging anyone." Or, "The loving God would never..." Or, the all-time classic: "Well, I am not into organized religion. I am just a really spiritual person in my own ways."

As believers, we need to think and act biblically, not emotionally. But far too many people, including some born-again Christians, today think about God according to what they have done and what they want to do so that they can justify their ungodly thoughts and actions. Our experience is never to be the basis for theology; rather, sound theology should be the basis for our experience.

I mentioned this a couple of weeks ago, but it is worth repeating. All of us, regardless of spiritual maturity or Bible knowledge, have our own personal theology which means "belief about God," whether it is right or wrong. Many of us neglect the study of God to our own peril. C. S. Lewis warned, "If you do not listen to theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones."

The faith of Moses was rewarded with deliverance for him and the entire 2 million Israelites. Faith in God DOES NOT guarantee an easy road, actually expect a more difficult road. But faith in the Lord Jesus brings us OUT and takes us THROUGH and eventually will take us IN.

Listen, when we are facing the situation that pass our logic so much that we cannot understand what the Lord is doing, we need to fall back to what we understand – our Lord is good; our Lord is faithful no matter what; and our Lord is our Shepherd who leads us and never forsakes us. That's the real faith in God.

#### **D. APPLICATIONS**

**1) We need the discernment from the Word of God to refuse the sinful things.**

Our faith in the Lord must overshadow our feelings and logic.

**2) We need to leave our sinful past and current situation with a godly determination.**

Our faith in the Lord must be our security.

**3) We need to have a willingness to do what God tells us no matter what.**

Our faith in the Lord must silence other people's opinions and even, our own logic.