

January 27, 2021 | Hall of Flaw

Hebrews 11:23-28 | Moses, the Hothead

We kicked-off this series called "Hall of Flaw" by saying, "We can look to the heroes of faith from time to time, but we must always keep our eyes on the Son of God." That, even though Hebrews 11 is filled with good examples, our one and only perfect example is Jesus Christ. And often, our flaws highlight God's faithfulness.

Then, two weeks back, we looked at our first character study: Abraham. Though the father of Israel, he had trouble overcoming his fear. In fact, precisely because of fear, Abraham gave away his wife...twice. Yet, no matter how hard Abraham tried to ruin his life, God would not allow it. He intervened. God remained faithful to a fearful Abraham.

Last week, we got to look at Abraham's better half: Sarah. Unlike her husband, her primary flaw was doubt. How ironic that Abraham, a man known for his optimism, would have a wife known for her skepticism. Yet, once again, God would not be deterred by her distrustful nature. Even when her faith wavered, He remained loyal. So much so that eventually Sarah, holding the tangible proof of a faith in God and thinking back on her own disbelief, laughs.

We now move forward quite a bit in the story of Israel to a man named Moses. His primary flaw wasn't fear or doubt, but anger. As we'll see today, Moses was a hothead. So much so that he'll eventually pay dearly for his lack of restraint.

But before we dive into Moses' backstory, let's first read what the writer of Hebrews has to say about him.

READ: Hebrews 11:23-28 (ESV)

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

As I mentioned before, other than Abraham, Moses is the only other person mentioned more than once in the Hall of Faith. In a way, this is appropriate as, unlike Abraham, Moses didn't

struggle with fear but regularly overcame his own anxiety through faith. Personally, in Moses, I think we get a glimpse at what Abraham could've been had he not been paralyzed by fear. But to the writer of Hebrews, there are three primary faith-acts of Moses: 1.) he identified himself with the Israelites; though, at first, they did not identify themselves with him, 2.) he left Egypt behind for forty years all the while keeping his eyes on God, and 3.) he trusted God's commands that the blood of the Passover lamb would protect them from the Angel of Death. And, it should not be overlooked, that before any of these amazing feats, the writer of Hebrews connects Moses' faith with his parent's faith who helped preserve his young life.

But even with all that experience walking in faith, Moses had a problem with anger. And we see his anger on display in two key passages: Exodus 32 and Numbers 20.

Before we look at Ex 32, it bears mentioning that the Mount Sinai narrative takes up the bulk of the Book of Exodus. In fact, they arrive at Sinai in Ex. 19 and don't leave till Numbers 10. In total, they spend about 11 months at the base of the mountain. During that time Moses ascends and descends Sinai seven or eight times, depending on how you count them, and the length of each ascent varied depending on whatever instructions God was giving Moses. The events which take place in Ex. 32 occur during Moses' sixth ascent which, coincidentally, was one of the longest. Moses was on top of the mountain for forty days and the people start getting worried as he had never before been gone for so long at this point. And, as we learned from Abraham, what happens when people are led by fear? They do stupid things.

READ: Exodus 32:1-6 (ESV)

¹ When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." ² So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." ³ So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. ⁴ And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" ⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord." ⁶ And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

Moses is then informed by God what the people are doing in his absence. God says he is going to destroy them but Moses intervenes and “convinces” Him not to. Then we read about Moses’ reaction when he see, first-hand, what he knew the people were doing.

READ: Exodus 32:15-20 (ESV)

¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written. ¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. ¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, “There is a noise of war in the camp.” ¹⁸ But he said, “It is not the sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear.” ¹⁹ And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses’ anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.

Afterward, there was a great culling of about 3,000 Israelites. Then Moses intercedes on Israel behalf once again, God forgives and renews the Covenant. But as for the replacement of the ten commandments that Moses destroyed in his anger, Moses, we’re told would have to cut new ones and write them out in his own hand. A fitting punishment on Moses for destroying something as sacred as the ten commandments even if the circumstances were understandable.

The second passage which highlights Moses’ anger comes in Numbers 20. At this point, Israel should’ve been in the promise land. But, as we discussed this past Sunday, some wicked spies convinced the nation of Israel that it was just too dangerous. And so, they chose fear over faith and God condemned them to wander the wilderness for forty years. Then there some more rebellions, more miracles, some more laws, and then we come to Numbers 20.

READ: Numbers 20:1-13 (ESV)

¹ And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. And Miriam died there and was buried there.

² Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. ³ And the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! ⁴ Why

have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? ⁵ And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.” ⁶ Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them, ⁷ and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ⁸ “Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.” ⁹ And Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he commanded him.

¹⁰ Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” ¹¹ And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. ¹² And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” ¹³ These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and through them he showed himself holy.

Now, while Moses’ first outburst of anger can be excused, this one cannot. Unlike smashing the tablets, hitting the rock was in direct disobedience to God’s instructions. God told Moses to simply speak to the rock. Instead, Moses berated the people and struck the rock. And notice, this failure wasn’t only Moses’ failure but Aaron’s as well. In fact, at the very end of this chapter Aaron will be immediately struck down by God after handing over his priestly garments to his son.

So, WHAT’S THE TAKEAWAY?

We must **control** our anger or we will be **consumed** by it and then **condemned** because of it.

Anger, in and of itself is not wrong. Jesus, in Jn 2, in angry zeal whipped and throw the money changers from the Temple. And then, in Mark 3 we see another instance of Jesus’ righteous indignation.

READ: Mark 3:1-6 (ESV)

¹ Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. ² And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come

here.” ⁴ And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. ⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

In fact, Paul even commands us to be angry, as long as we do not forget three important stipulations when we are angry.

READ: Ephesians 4:26-27 (NKJV)

²⁶ Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place to the devil.

Sometimes it is necessary to be angry. But Paul says our anger ought never to cause us to sin (How many of us have allowed anger to control us and then do something we later regret?), it ought never to last into the night (How many of us have allowed anger to fester and become bitterness?), and it ought never allow Satan a foothold into your life (How many of us have allow anger to so consume us that we become more susceptible to prompting of the Devil than God?).

So, yes. Not all anger is sin. And yes, even Jesus was angry. However, anytime we feel angry we must remind ourselves we are on dangerous ground.

So, what should we do when we are angry? We pray and leave any retribution to God.

READ: Psalm 4 (ESV)

¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

² O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? *Selah* ³ But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.

⁴ Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. *Selah*

⁵ Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.

⁶ There are many who say, “Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!” ⁷ You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. ⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

The Psalmist says be angry...be prayerful...then be silent.

It is okay to be angry. It is not okay to be controlled by your anger. So when we are angry, we must relinquish control to another and then, as the Psalmist said, "In peace, I will lie down and sleep..." The angry prayers to a righteous God alleviates our angry hearts because we know the One who hears us will have the final say.

This is why Paul says

READ: Romans 12:14-21 (ESV)

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Paul's point is that we must return virtue for vice. We are not to perpetuate bad behavior no matter if our anger is justified or not.

So, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

We must **control** our anger or we will be **consumed** by it and then **condemned** because of it.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | Hall of Flaw | Week 4

TITLE: Moses, the Hothead

TEXT: Hebrews 11:23-28

Tonight, we move on to our next hall of famer: Moses. He led the children of Israel out of Egypt. God used him to perform miraculous things. But Moses wasn't perfect. Now, unlike Abraham and Sarah, Moses' primary flaw wasn't fear or doubt, but anger. And as we'll see today, Moses was such a hothead that he'll eventually pay dearly for his lack of restraint. Through His example we'll learn that while anger is not, in and of itself, wrong, it is still a volatile emotion in need of restraint. That should we fail to control our anger, we will inevitably be consumed by it and then ultimately be condemned because of it.

Pastor's manuscript can be found [here](#):