

## Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, You see the world today with all its paradoxes and complications. Pain and distress live alongside joy and happiness, and beauty and finesse are found next to ugliness and strife. Give us the means to understand our world, and come to love it with the same passion with which You worked for its salvation. Save us, Lord God, save us: AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Christmas Preparation

Pray for the children you know for whom Christmas remains a special time when wonderful things happen and they learn something of the love of God through the Christmas story. Pray for family life in your country, and pray that Christian parents will have the wisdom to find their way through the commercial pressures of Christmas and truly celebrate Christ in the home.

## Meditation

I was wondering when the Lord might speak to me; and then He did:

I was working away at my desk, and He said 'Come, follow me';

I was in the middle of a meal, and He said 'Share with the poor';

I was thinking about myself, and He said 'Love your neighbour';

I was checking my bank balance, and He said 'Give sacrificially';

I was talking to a friend at work, and He said 'Share the Good News';

I was relaxing at home watching the news, and He said 'I am the truth';

I was enjoying a stroll in the countryside, and He said 'I am Lord of all';

I was living life to the full and enjoying it, and He said 'I died for you';

I finally came to a stop, and He said 'Come, follow me' ... again.

## Bible Study - Hebrews 11:23-29

<sup>23</sup> By faith, Moses was hidden by his parents after he was born because they could see that the child was special, and they were not afraid of the king's order. <sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he had grown up, renounced the position of a son of Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>25</sup> He preferred to share the hardship of the people of God rather than accept the fleeting pleasures of vanity and sin. <sup>26</sup> He considered the disgrace of the Anointed One to be of far greater value than the treasures of Egypt because he was looking ahead to the reward. <sup>27</sup> By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king's anger, and persevered as though he saw Him who is invisible. <sup>28</sup> By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the firstborn might not be touched by the Destroyer. <sup>29</sup> By faith, the people crossed the Red Sea as through dry land, but when the Egyptians tried to do this, they drowned.

## Review

The letter of Hebrews now turns to the story of Moses and uses it as an example of Christian faith. If you ask the majority of Christian people today where they might find examples of faith in the Old Testament, then few people would choose Moses! Typically, Moses is regarded as the man who set up the core traditions of 'Torah', which lay behind the Pharisaic traditions and laws which Jesus battled against for the whole of his ministry. His name is so intimately associated with the law and everything regarded as opposite to faith in the New Testament, how is it possible that we can find in him an example of faith?

It may well have been the express intention of Hebrews to use Moses as an example of faith, however, in order to defuse the misperceptions which abounded in the early church about the Old Testament and Moses. These misperceptions are around us even today, particularly when people have a dismissive attitude towards the Old Testament because of the ancient times and cultures described in its stories, and the traditions of legalism which developed from it. We

should not forget, however, that Moses was supremely a servant of God (Deut 3:24, 34:5) who acted according to God's instructions.

So where do we find faith in the story of Moses? Although the word 'faith' does not crop up in the stories of Moses, the Bible does make it clear that Moses' early work of liberating the Israelites from Egypt was done so that the Israelites might 'believe' in the Lord their God (Ex 4:31, 14:31; please note, both of these quotes are important defining comments by the author of Exodus about the reasons for the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt). The author of Hebrews finds faith implicitly in a number of features of Moses' story. Firstly, he considers it present in the story of Moses' birth, where faith is exercised by his parents; they believed he was special and sought to save Moses from the edict of Pharaoh to kill all the firstborn of Egypt, putting in place an elaborate and successful scheme to get him adopted by the royal family of Egypt (Exodus 2).

Moses himself exercised faith by rejecting the favours and temptations of court life in Egypt and accepting the 'hardship' of his own people the Israelites. Hebrews explains that by this action, Moses placed his hope in an unknown future with a hope that only God could provide. This is what is meant by verse 26 which makes reference to Moses' understanding of the value of 'the Anointed One' (literally, the 'Christ'), but although Moses did not know Christ as a person, his hope in God was for the salvation of the Israelites, and in this sense, his hope was for the principle of God's work as 'Saviour' of His people. If you read through the first twelve chapters of Exodus, then you will find that it was this hope which kept him going, and it was a foretaste of what later Israelites would hope for in someone called the 'Anointed One' (Psalm 132:10).

Moses also exercised faith by instructing his people to keep the Passover meal before the terrible night of the Destroyer (Exodus 12), a fearsome event which finally led to the liberation of the Israelites. He certainly had to trust that the word God had given him about this was correct; otherwise he could have made the most terrible of mistakes! And finally, Moses acted in faith by leading the people of Israel through the Red Sea 'on dry ground'. He had to trust God for this miracle, because those who came after the Israelites found the ground rather wet, and their chariot wheels clogged as they were eventually overcome by the sea (Exodus 14).

It was important and remains important that we see how faith is an integral part of the stories of God's people throughout the ages. Seeing faith in the story of Moses helps us to stop treating Moses as if what he did stands in opposition to Christ. When Jesus was transfigured, he was seen by the disciples as talking with Elijah and Moses. When will we learn that God has always been working in His world to encourage His people to have faith in Him.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Are the illustrations given of the life of Moses true examples of faith, given that faith is not specifically mentioned in these Old Testament stories?
2. Do you believe it was possible for Moses to have some kind of foresight of 'the Anointed One', that is, the 'Christ'? In what way?
3. Discuss whether you can think of other examples of 'faith' in the life of Moses?

## Discipleship

Is faith an observable feature of your own life? Moses was clearly a man of God and people have debated for centuries about whether his life is a true example of faith, so it is clear that these things are not straightforward, at least in the eyes of others. Some people say that someone's faith is private, and whether it shows is not important. However, this makes the water even murkier, and we gain the best advice about this from the New Testament, which is that faith, if it exists, must be shown in some way (see James 2:14f.). We must therefore return to our original question, and the need to answer it positively!

## Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, be our guide through the years. Work through all that has happened to us in the past; touch us with Your loving hand as we find our way through the present; and give us confidence in the future You have prepared for us. Thank You Lord Jesus: AMEN