

In the UK, the conservative party is in the middle of a leadership election to decide on the next party leader and Prime Minister. They are now down to the last two remaining candidates, but earlier in process, Channel 4 hosted a leadership debate when there were still five candidates in the running.

During the evening, they faced questions from a studio audience of floating voters. One of these questions was about if they believed if Boris Johnson was honest. Shockingly, none of the candidates from his own party, were willing to say yes. Instead, answers varied from a 'sometimes' to a direct 'no'.

But then the audience was asked to put their hand up if, from what they'd heard so far, they trusted politicians. Nobody raised their hand.

It was a terrible indictment on the state of UK politics right now. People's perception of politicians is that they are untrustworthy and unreliable.

But if we're honest, it's not just politicians who are at times like that. All of us know that we are not as trustworthy as we should be. All of us at times fail to live up to our promises, obligations and commitments. All of us to some extent are unfaithful.

This is what made Moses stand out as unusual. For 40 years he led the people of Israel during a foundational time in their nation's history with incredible faithfulness. And God worked in power through him to bring them out of slavery in Egypt, to lead them safely through the Red Sea and to provide and protect them in the desert.

So it's no wonder that Moses held a special place in the hearts of the Jews. Many of them believed that he was the greatest person in history. Some of them even thought that he held a higher status than the angels!

So maybe it's not surprising that some of the early Christians struggled with leaving their Judaism behind. It felt like they were walking away from their connection with Moses, the faithful leader of God's people.

And so that's what the writer of Hebrews went on to address. He'd challenged them that Jesus was better than the angels. Now he wanted to show them that although Moses was faithful to God, Jesus is better. And that it is through focussing on him, that they could be faithful in their commitment to God!

Hebrews 3:1-6: "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. ² He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. ³ Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself. ⁴ For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. ⁵ Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. ⁶ But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast."

1. Moses Was Faithful

Moses was far from perfect. Like the rest of us he was a flawed human being.

He'd grown up in the palace as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. But when he was 40 years old, he saw an Egyptian beating one of his own people and in anger, "He killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand." Exodus 2:12

He thought that he'd covered it up. But when he was found out, he ran away to Midian, to be a shepherd for the next 40 years.

a) Not Perfect

And then when God told Moses at the burning bush that he was sending him back to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to let his people go, Moses' response was far from enthusiastic. And although God graciously answered each of Moses' excuses, in a way that has brought encouragement to many of us who hesitate to accept God's call on our lives because we feel inadequate, Moses still pleaded, "Oh Lord, please send someone else to do it." Exodus 4:13

And then later in his life, he lashed out in anger, striking the rock in disobedience to God. And in response, God said, "You will not bring this community into the land I give them." Numbers 20:12

b) But Trustworthy

So Moses was not perfect by any means. But he was an amazing man of faith who faithfully served God. “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house.” Hebrews 3:2

And this was not just the perspective of the Jews or the writer of this letter. This is what God said.

At one point Moses’ brother and sister was jealous of his role and so they criticised him about his Cushite wife. But God spoke in his defence.

“When a prophet of the LORD is among you,
I reveal myself to him in visions,
I speak to him in dreams.

⁷ But this is not true of my servant Moses;
he is faithful in all my house.

⁸ With him I speak face to face
clearly and not in riddles;
he sees the form of the LORD.

Why then were you not afraid
to speak against my servant Moses?” Numbers 12:6-8

So although Moses was initially reluctant, once he accepted God’s call he was a remarkably faithful in the house of the Lord.

The house might refer to the tabernacle, the tent where God met with his people. After receiving the plans for the tabernacle, Exodus 40:16 states: “Moses did everything just as the LORD commanded him.”

But this word house could also mean God’s people. Remember we saw a while back that David wanted to build a house, a temple, for God. But instead, God promised to build a house, a family, for David!

And so Moses was not just faithful in serving in the tabernacle. He was also faithful in serving in the community of God’s people. He faithfully taught them the law of God, prayed for them, led them and prophesied to them, “testifying to what would be said in the future.” Hebrews 3:2

And so the Jews were right to some extent. Moses was a great man of faith. He was trustworthy. He did serve God in amazing ways. We can be challenged by his life and learn from his example.

2. Jesus Was More Faithful

But what they got wrong was, he was not the greatest person in history. There is someone better. Like Moses, Jesus also “was faithful to the one who appointed him.” Hebrews 3:2.

He was committed to do everything that his Father had commanded him to do. He could say, “I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.” John 14:31

But the faithfulness of Jesus was at a greater level than that of Moses. And this passage declares several reasons why that is the case.

a) A Greater Honour

Firstly, “Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself.” Hebrews 3:3

As a family we like watching TV programs like Room to Improve or Grand Designs. It is amazing to see the beautiful and impressive renovations and homes that are built. It is astounding the design and creativity that these buildings demonstrate.

But of course, we don’t congratulate the buildings themselves. Instead the honour goes to the architects or builders who created them. They are the ones who’re praised.

In a similar way, Moses was part of God’s house. He was an amazing member of the community of God’s people. But Jesus was the architect and builder of that community. He was the one who brought those people together! And so the greater honour goes to him!

b) A Greater Identity

But Jesus' faithfulness is also at a higher level because of his greater identity. "For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything." Hebrews 3:4

Here is another clear pointer to who Jesus really is. Moses was part of the creation. He was part of what God made. But Jesus, is worthy of greater honour, because he is the builder. He is the Creator. He is God.

And that truth is emphasised again in the next verses: "Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house... But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house." Hebrews 3:5-6

Moses is worthy of honour because he was a trusted servant in God's house. But Jesus is worthy of greater honour, because he is the Son over God's house. He is the rightful heir of the house. The community of God's people belongs to him. And as God's Son, he is still faithful in his role.

Moses is worthy of honour because he loved God. But Jesus is worthy of greater honour, because he is God.

c) A Greater Role

But thirdly, it is also because he had a greater role. Moses was called and commissioned by God to lead his people. And as part of this role, he served by "testifying to what would be said in the future." Hebrews 3:5 He pointed forward to the better and fuller revelation that was to come.

But Jesus, as God's final word to this world, is that better and greater revelation. He is "The apostle and high priest whom we confess." Hebrews 3:1

This word apostle here means a personal representative of someone, sent with the authority to speak for them. And this is the only place where this title is given to Jesus. However, the truth that Jesus was sent by the Father is seen throughout the New Testament.

So Jesus said, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me." ⁴⁵ When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me." John 12:44-45 Jesus is the one who has been sent by the Father to represent him and authoritatively speak for him. And he did this perfectly!

But he did not just come to represent God to us. He also came to represent us to God. As we have already seen in this letter, he served as our high priest, "that he might make atonement for the sins of the people." Hebrews 2:17

On the cross, Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for our sins, paying the price in full in his own body and so covering over our guilt and setting us free from slavery to sin and death. And now he constantly intercedes for us, and so is able to save us completely.

That is a greater role than Moses had. Yes Moses brought a revelation of God, but he could never say as Jesus did that "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9

And yes, Moses at times served as a priest in the tabernacle, but he was not the high priest, and anyway, the sacrifices in that tabernacle could never provide salvation because "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Hebrews 10:4

So Jesus is the apostle and high priest we confess. He is the one who was sent to perfectly represent God to us and to perfectly represent us to God. He, and not Moses, is the centre of our faith. He alone is the way to God, the truth of God and the giver of life with God.

3. We're Called To Be Faithful

And it is this reality that should encourage us to be faithful, no matter what we face.

a) Our Identity

This letter was written to Jews who had confessed Jesus as their Saviour. They claimed that they'd put their faith in Christ.

As a result, the writer called them "holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling." Hebrews 3:1 This connects with what the writer wrote in the previous chapter.

They were holy because Jesus is "the one who makes men holy." Hebrews 2:11 Through his sacrifice on the cross, he has

purified them from sin, separated them from this world and sanctified them to belong to God.

And they were not just the writer's brothers, but also brothers of Jesus because "Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers." Hebrews 2:11

And so they share in the heavenly calling because Jesus is "bringing many sons to glory." Hebrews 2:10. Together they had the common blessing of being on a journey towards intimacy with God forever in the heavenly Most Holy Place.

And that's true for each one of us who've trusted in Jesus! We too are holy brothers. We are the children of God who have been cleansed and made holy through the sacrifice of Jesus. And we too are citizens of heaven. We too are heading for glory!

And so "We are his house." Hebrews 3:6. We are the community of God's people. We've been redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus, adopted into God's family, members of the church. We "like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:5

This is our incredible privilege and honour. This is the gift of God's outrageous grace. This is our new identity, our new calling, our new destiny!

b) Our Responsibility

But this amazing encouragement comes with a clear condition: "And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast." Hebrews 3:6

We can be sure of our membership of God's people if we continue to courageously stand with Christ and put our hope in Christ! Our new identity, our new calling and new destiny is closely connected with our faithfulness to Christ.

Now we need to be really clear what the writer is saying here.

- This is not in any way saying that we are saved through our efforts, our commitment, or our perseverance. Salvation is a gift from God that we could never earn, deserve or achieve. "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8
- And neither is it saying that we who've been saved through our faith in Christ could in some way lose our salvation. Jesus' promise is: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand." John 10:27–28
- But what this is saying is that our perseverance in faith demonstrates the reality that we have been saved. Those who've genuinely put their faith in Jesus, will continue to trust in him and live with him!

And so this is a call to be faithful to Christ, to keep on going, to never give up! Not so that we can work our way into God's house. But because our faithfulness demonstrates our membership of God's house! It gives us the assurance of our salvation! "We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." Hebrews 6:11

c) Our Concentration

So our faithfulness is crucially important. We need to remain faithful, just as Moses and Jesus were faithful before us.

But how? How, in the face of all the challenges and struggles, do we remain faithful and show that we truly are his house, belonging to God's people, children of God who are heading for glory? Well, the answer is that we need to, "Fix your thoughts on Jesus." Hebrews 3:1

This is the central call in this passage. Faithfulness does not come as a result of fear or guilt or shame or condemnation.

Neither does it come through focussing on Moses or any other leader, pastor or preacher. None of them are completely faithful. None of them will provide that solid foundation for our faith.

In fact there are many people who are no longer walking with Christ because they were let down by a church leader, hurt by a fellow-Christian, or disappointed by a church. We can sympathise with them. But that is not the kind of faith we need.

If we are going to be able to weather all kinds of storms we need something stronger, a more dependable foundation, a more faithful leader.

We need to fix our thoughts on someone who is completely dependable. Someone that we can totally trust. We need to fix our thoughts on Jesus!

We need to carefully consider him - his greater faithfulness, his greater honour, his greater identity, his greater role. We need to concentrate on him as our Apostle and High priest. We need to trust in him as God's Perfect Son, the rightful Sovereign of this universe, our loving Saviour.

It is as we grow in our understanding of, and appreciation for Christ, that we will hold onto our commitment to Christ.

Conclusion

This is what Hebrews is all about. It is encouraging us to make sure that nothing distracts us from Jesus.

- Yes Moses was a faithful servant in God's house.
- But Jesus is today the faithful Son over God's house.
- So let us focus on him, fix our eyes on him, treasure him, rejoice in him, trust in him, so that we will remain faithful to him and show that we belong to him and that one day we will reign with him, to his honour and his glory!

Andrew Burt
Enniscorthy Christian Fellowship
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