**July 3, 2016 - 11:00 a.m.**

**Pastor Jonathan Falwell**

**What Does It Take To Be An Overcomer?**

**Jonathan Falwell**

**Scripture: Hebrews 11:23-29**

Summary: In this sermon, the first in a series entitled *Overcomer*, which focuses on the life of Moses, Pastor Jonathan focuses on Hebrews 11:23-29, and how Moses changed his life from being ordinary to being an overcomer, and how we, too, can become like him, to live our lives not in defeat but to live our lives in victory.

Let’s go to Hebrews 11 this morning as we begin a brand-new series called *Overcomers*. We are people who understand what it means to overcome the challenges of life, the struggles that we face, the conflicts that arise, the difficulties that we go through day in and day out. There is no question that everyone in this room has been through moments Maybe those moments are right now. You may be going through situations where you don’t know where to turn and you don’t know the way out nor how you’re going to make it day by day.

In this series entitled *Overcomer*, we’re going to be looking at the life of Moses, one of the most significant figures in the Old Testament, an incredible example of what it means to lead, of what it means to be the kind of person who overcomes every challenge and overcomes in victory.

And I hope and pray that the lessons that we learn as we walk through this series over the coming weeks would be one that each and every one of us can take to heart, and going through the moments of challenge that we go through and the situations, the difficulties that we face as individuals today, that we will learn how to overcome in victory. Because I know that is what each and every one of us desperately wants to see.

I want to start with our memory verse for the day It’s found in the book of Exodus 2:24, and I want us to read this verse out loud together today. It says, “So God heard their groaning and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.” This is a perfect verse for what we’re going to be talking about because it reminds us of the promise of God. It reminds us that when each and every one of us goes through those moments where we are hurting beyond compare, that God will always show up and do for us what only He can do.

This passage out of Exodus 2, of course, is talking about the nation of Israel as they were enslaved in captivity there in Egypt. They were a group of people that had come from the line of Abraham, but yet were a disorganized group, going through great difficulty. They were facing situations that many of us have never even known. And so this verse says that in the midst of that, that God heard their groanings, their prayers, their difficulties, and God heard of their afflictions. I love what it says here, “And God remembered His covenant.”

The word *covenant* you could replace with the word *promise*, that God remembered exactly what He said He would do for the children of Abraham, for the children of Israel, for His chosen people. God remembered. I want you to hear and to know that God has heard your groaning too. He has heard your fears, your heartaches, your affliction. He has heard of your challenge, your problems, the situations that you face day in and day out. And I want you to know that God has remembered His promise to you. And that promise is something that is absolutely overwhelming.

That’s why it is so important—we talk about it often—of making sure that we are spending time in reading His Word, because it is through the reading of God’s Word that we are reminded of the promises of God. And when we are reminded of the promises of God, and when we are reminded that God will never forsake us, that God will never leave us, that He will always remember His promise, that He will always fulfill everything that He has said that He will do, that is how we become overcomers.

So let’s begin talking about this man Moses, and how through his life, a life that faced great difficulty, went through significant challenges and faced moment after moment of uncertainty of what tomorrow might look like, yet in every situation Moses made it through. He overcame every situation and he led the children of Israel, who were in captivity and disorganized, into a great nation right to the edge of the Promised Land. Why? Because he was an overcomer. I want us to learn how we, too, can become like him, to live our lives not in defeat but in victory.

Moses was someone who was special. There was something different about him. What was it about him that took him from being just an ordinary person to being an overcomer? In Hebrews 11, beginning with verse 23 this passage says, “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.” Of course, the king’s command was that every male child born of the house of Israel were to be killed. Pharaoh had sent down that edict. Verse 24 says

*By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.*

Hebrews 11 is a story of how Moses became a person who was an overcomer and led them to overcome. But what are the characteristics of an overcomer? What were the things that were engrained in Moses, that were instilled in him so that he could do all that God used him to do?

There are three characteristics that I want to share with you. The first one is just simply this; we read it a moment ago: the word *faith*. Moses was a man of faith. In Hebrews 11:23 you saw that that passage said “By faith Moses.” It didn’t say, “By luck Moses.” It didn’t say, “By chance Moses.” nor “Because it’s possible” that Moses was able to do this. No. By faith.

The definition in the dictionary of what faith is, says, “Complete trust or confidence in someone or something.” It goes on to say, “A strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof.”

I love that last statement. “Based on spiritual apprehension rather than on proof.” What that means is that when you are a person of faith, you don’t have to have someone come alongside and in black-and-white, in print, explain to you who God is, what God is all about. You don’t have to have some empirical evidence and scientific experiment explain to you what it means to follow God and what it is that God has done.

You don’t need someone to show you absolute proof that God spoke the world into existence, that He, in six literal days, created all that there is. because our understanding of God, our belief in God goes beyond what makes sense. It goes beyond human nature. It goes beyond scientific evidence. It is that idea of a spiritual apprehension, a spiritual understanding that our God is. And it’s only when we come to that place of faith, of understanding that our God is, that we can become an overcomer.

Charles Spurgeon had a great quote back in the late 1800s. He said, “Not only in prayer, but in duty the man who has great faith in God and whom God has girded with strength,” listen to this, “how gigantic does he become.”

You know what that says? It says basically that when we are people of great faith, of having that spiritual apprehension of who God is, when we are a person of great faith, then we will become a giant. What an amazing concept. We will become an overcomer because we will transcend what makes sense. We will transcend what is human nature. We will have the ability to do not only what we can do. We will have the ability to see what God can do. And only when we begin to believe and to see what God can do will we become an overcomer.

Hebrews 11:1 has a great definition of what faith is. It says being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. In other words, that we have absolute confidence that our God is and that our God will do exactly what He has promised that He will do. Moses never questioned the power of God.

Moses was not sitting back thinking, well, I wonder, I hope, I’m really counting on God to do this No, He simply believed. And because he simply believed, God did amazing things. And Moses, how gigantic he became.

The first characteristic that we have to grab hold of is that we have to be a person of great faith. A person who believes in something bigger than who we are. A person who has great confidence in who God is and what God can do.

The second characteristic that Moses had, was that he was looking to God for significance. Moses was not caught up in trying to be accepted by people around him. He wasn’t worried about being liked nor about fitting in. He just looked to God for his significance.

Look what it says in the last part of verse 24 and verse 25, “When he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.”

Now let me tell you what that means. Let me tell you the significance of these two verses. And it’s found in this statement right here. “When he became of age, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” Now it would be easy to read that and kind of skip right over it, move right past that and go on and continue reading this passage without truly understanding the significance of that statement that when Moses became of age, when he became an adult, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, or as maybe might make more sense for you and for me, he refused to be called a member of the royal family.

He refused to be called an heir to the throne. He refused to be called a child of the king. He refused to be called a man of great, great power in the kingdom. He walked away from the riches; from the power; from the status and from the significance and the acceptance of that position. Why? Because he found his significance not in what other people thought about him. He found his significance in God and God alone.

How many times do we blow it in life because we’re always worried about fitting in? Because we are always worried about other people accepting us for who we are? Of trying to get people to like us? Of spending our lives trying to keep up with the Joneses, so to speak. And by the way, if your last name is Jones, you’ve gotten a bad rap, okay?

We spend our entire lives trying to be liked and trying to be accepted. We’ve gotten into this selfie generation, this selfie mentality that all we want to do is to make people think better of us, for people to look at us differently, to like us, and we spend our entire lives going down that road. Moses could have done that. He grew up in the household of the king. He grew up in the palace. He had every right to sit back and to continue to enjoy all of the riches and all of the power and all of the opportunity that came with the name of being under pharaoh’s household.

But Moses saw something different. He didn’t find his self-worth or his value in what others thought of him. He found his value in being true to God’s plan and God’s will. And I would tell you today that the only way that any of us are going to live lives being overcomers, of getting through the challenges of life in victory, is when we too get to the place just like Moses and stop worrying about what everyone else around us thinks of us and spend our time worried about what God thinks of us.

We will never overcome in life as long as we are dependent on acceptance from others. Man’s desperate desire for acceptance usually leads us to compromise in order to gain it or discouragement when we don’t.

When we live our lives always worried about what other people think about us, when we are worried about what others believe about us, trying to fit in, trying to be accepted in life, what ends up happening is we’ll do one of two things: We will either compromise what we believe, we’ll walk away from truth, we’ll walk away from real value, we’ll walk away from real significance before God in order to fit in, in order to fit into the mold, in order to be a part of what everyone else is. Or if we don’t compromise, then we will spend a lifetime full of being discouraged and being depressed because we think that people don’t care and don’t like us.

I’m not going to ask for a show of hands here today, but I have no doubt that there are some people in this room that have experienced that kind of discouragement. You’ve spent a great deal of time trying to fit in, of trying to be liked by others, of trying to build up this reputation or persona of something that maybe you are and maybe you’re not. But yet you’re building it up because you want to be included, you want to be accepted, you want to be liked.

And you get to the place sometimes where it just doesn’t happen the way you envisioned. People don’t think of you the way that you want them to think. People don’t worship you maybe the way that you had hoped. And that leads us to a place where we just find ourselves so discouraged, as if we’ve blown it, as if we’ve lost all hope, as if there is nothing to look forward to because we’ve gotten to that place. Any time we spend our lives looking for our significance in man and value in man, I promise you this: we will be discouraged.

Moses sought his significance before God, and God used him to do great things. And so we see this characteristic of having great faith, we see this characteristic of looking to God for significance. The third characteristic that we see in the life of Moses, of someone who truly understands what it means to be an overcomer, is that he recognized what truly matters in life. a recognition of what is really important.

He recognized that it wasn’t fame, power or money, because if he believed that was what was important, then he would have stayed in Pharaoh’s household. He would not have walked away from living in the king’s palace. He wouldn’t have walked away from the power that came along with that.

No, he recognized what really matters are not the things that the world says are important; he recognized something far greater. Look at what it says in verse 26, “Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.” The New Living Translation says, “He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward.”

You see, Moses recognized that even though all the wealth of Egypt was right at his fingertips, that was not what was really important. What was important was the reward that he would see one day when he stood before God. He recognized the reward that was important was fulfilling the call of God in his life, in running after the will of God in his life, of making sure that what he sought, what he worked for, what he strove to accomplish in life was not what the world says is of value, but rather what God says.

And so what Moses did is he heard the call, he answered the call, he ran after God, and God allowed him to do amazing things. Moses recognized in the midst of a life that could have been a charmed life, it could have been a life full of wealth and riches and acceptance and power and status, Moses recognized that it is always the right thing to do the right thing.

I think probably there are a lot of us in this room today that have spent our lives kind of running after the wrong things. We have spent our lives focused on the things that the earth says are important, that the world says are important, the culture celebrates, the culture worships. Those are the things that we run after. And when we run after that, it’s kind of the idea of that hamster wheel, if you’ve ever seen a hamster on a wheel where they just run and they run and they run. And it’s like they never figure out they’re not going anywhere; they’re not making progress; they’re not actually accomplishing anything. All it is doing is going in a circle, and it never really accomplishes anything of value.

That is the path of the world. That’s the path of the culture. It’s the path, the prescription, the direction of the kind of people, even Christ-followers who never figure out how to overcome in life because they are on that hamster wheel of life rather than running towards God.

So today when we talk about these characteristics—great faith, gaining our significance, our value from God rather than man, of understanding what truly and really is important in life, not the things of the world but the things of God—when we get ourselves to the place where we can allow those characteristics to be present in our own lives, what we will see almost instantly would be a life that is heading towards victory as opposed to a life that is heading toward defeat.

I used that phrase purposely, but I don’t want to convey the idea that the minute you say, “I’m going to follow God,” all your problems disappear. That’s not what happens. No. Not at all. It’s not as if in that moment everything changes where all the problems go away and everything just happens to go your way from then on and you’re happy.. No, no. That is not what I’m saying. What I’m saying is that when we allow these characteristics to be present in our lives and we are running towards God constantly, day in and day out, that we will begin to see the results of that, the victory, instantly because we will instantly begin to experience the joy of the presence of God, the joy of running after God, the joy of being in the will of God.

And let me just tell you something: that joy, that contentment, that peace blows away anything the world would ever say is of value any day of the week. That is what being an overcomer is all about.

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