

Hebrews 11

by Pat Kenney

The book of Hebrews exhorts us to trust in Jesus as the better way, and to walk by faith in the new covenant of complete forgiveness.

Duration: 1:10:26

Scripture: Hebrews 10:26-29, Hebrews 10:32-38, Hebrews 11:1-3

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power of faith and the importance of turning to the Lord. He mentions biblical figures such as Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jethna, David, Samuel, and the prophets who achieved great things through their faith. The speaker also highlights the ability of faith to bring about miraculous events, such as raising the dead to life. He urges the audience to receive the cleansing that God offers and to turn away from sin. The sermon concludes with a reminder that faith can conquer any circumstance and encourages listeners to trust God even in difficult times.

Transcript

All right, good evening everybody. Good to see you again as we continue our study through the book of Hebrews. So if you'll make your way over to Hebrews chapter 10, we're going to look at chapter 10 and jump into a bit of chapter 11.

The letter of Hebrews, the book of Hebrews. Oh, how it exhorts us to be confident. We serve a living savior.

And he's not only in the world, but he's in us. And because he's alive and he's conquered sin and death, we can walk in victory. There isn't a thing you guys might be facing, that I might be facing, that God has not provided the answer to.

Now, sometimes the answer isn't like we ask and then he answers immediately. Because sometimes in the waiting for an answer, there is a growing of faith. There's a learning to trust.

As we'll see in chapter 11, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. And so our whole Christian walk really is learning to walk by faith, to walk by trusting the Lord with all of our heart and leaning not on our own understanding. Anybody still have a problem with their understanding? Do you walk on a tilt sometimes? I'm glad God is so patient with us, aren't you? And praise him for his

word that we have before us that can strengthen our faith.

When we're leaning, it can kind of straighten us up and keep us on the path. And so all through the book of Hebrews, the writer of the book, who we believe to be Paul, is showing us the superiority of Jesus Christ, the superiority of his person. We've seen already in our journey that Jesus is better than the prophets, better than the angels, better than Moses, better than Aaron.

We've seen that in Jesus, there is a superior priesthood, a superior order. In chapter 7, we saw. In chapter 8, the superior covenant.

In chapter 9, the superior sanctuary. And here in chapter 10, oh, our Jesus, the superior sacrifice. There are warnings, there are exhortations as we go through the book of Hebrews, exhorting us not to drift from the word, not to doubt the word, not to be dull towards the word.

Oh my goodness, not to despise or defy the word. But the overall message of Hebrews is not, boy, you better watch your P's and Q's or I'm going to zap you and you're going to lose your salvation. That's not the message of Hebrews.

The message of Hebrews to a discouraged people and certainly the Jews of that first century that were undergoing, they were so ostracized from society, socially, culturally, economically, politically and religiously being persecuted. They had it rough. The book of Hebrews was written to encourage them to hang in there, to not give up, to press on because Jesus is the better way.

Don't go back to that thing which was just a shadow. And that's where we start really in chapter 10. So the letter of Hebrews written to Jewish people, people who understood the Old Testament, people who understood the law of Moses, people who understood the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.

And I pray that if you've been a Christian for more than a couple of months or so, you've already started digging into the Old Testament. In fact, one thing I think is very helpful is make it a habit of reading through the Old Testament at least once a year, the New Testament at least twice a year. Get familiar with it.

This is the owner's manual. This is our handbook to life. You face a lot of twists and turns in life.

It doesn't all turn out the way you planned it to turn out. And God's Word will keep you steady. Be familiar with it, as familiar as you possibly can.

We've seen that the Old Testament worship system was to be a picture of heaven, a picture that would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And in Chapter 10, as we said, the emphasis is on the perfect sacrifice of Jesus in contrast with the imperfect sacrifices that were offered under the Old Covenant. And all of this, the better person, the better priesthood, all will lead us to a better faith, a superior principle of walking.

The just shall live by faith. So Chapter 10, we can pretty much divide into three major sections. The first 10 verses deal with Christ's sacrifice, which takes away sin.

The middle section deals with Christ's sacrifice, that it doesn't need to be repeated, that he suffered once for all of our sin. And then the last section, verses 19 to 39, show us, similarly to Chapter 9, how Christ's sacrifice opens the way to God. So his sacrifice takes away sin, it doesn't need to be repeated, and it opens the way.

And because of all this, God's people, you and I, should be holding fast with our perfect sacrifice, that once and for all sacrifice of Jesus. Now, sacrifice under the Old Covenant, the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel, could not truly take away sin, thus demonstrating the need for a better sacrifice. Verse 1, we read, For the law, the law of Moses, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, not the very substance of the things, can never, with these same sacrifices, these shadowy sacrifices, which they offer continually, year by year, make those who approach perfect.

The shadow can't make you perfect. For then, would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices, there's a reminder of sins every year.

Day of Atonement, priest had to go into the Holy of Holies, with the blood sprinkled for himself and the sins of the nation. But here the writer of Hebrews says, For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Judicially, they covered them from immediate judgment, but they didn't take them away.

Only in Jesus have our sins been taken away. Now, it says that they're a shadow. A shadow isn't a bad thing.

We're not saying that the law of Moses was bad, that the Ten Commandments are bad. Sometimes a shadow can tell you a lot. And certainly the Ten Commandments show us what a holy God requires that we're to be perfect with God and perfect with man.

What it shows us is that in our own strength, we can't do it because we all fall short of that. But the shadow is not the substance. The old covenant and its law were not themselves bad or evil.

They are only incomplete and insufficient to bring total cleansing from sin and to save. The shadow can never make those who approach perfect. The writer of Hebrews repeats a familiar argument.

The repetition of sacrifice shows its inherent weakness. If animal sacrifice had fixed the sin problem, then they could have ceased to be offered. Animal sacrifice under the old covenant could cover sin.

Again, the Hebrew word for atonement is kofar, which means to cover. But animal sacrifice could never take away sins. Hope we understand that.

You know, don't try to go out, you know, buy a goat and slaughter it in your backyard. It's not going to help. It's not going to take away your sin.

Only Jesus, the perfect sacrifice of the new covenant, takes our sins away. So with the need for a better sacrifice, we now see in the next few verses, God providing that better sacrifice. Verses 5 to 10, we've got a prophetic foundation for Jesus' perfect sacrifice under the new covenant.

Looking back at Psalm 40, or Psalm chapter 40, verses 6 to 8, this is a quote from that. Therefore, when he came into the world, he said, quoting Isaiah 40, sacrifice an offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, you had no pleasure.

And then I said, behold, I have come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do your will, O God. Previously saying, sacrifice an offering, burnt offerings and offerings for sin you did not desire, nor had pleasure in them, which are offered according to the law. Then he said, behold, I have come to do your

will, O God.

He takes away the first, that he may establish the second. And by that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all. You see, those animal sacrifices, they didn't offer themselves by their own will.

They had no choice in the matter. Jesus had the choice, and he sacrificed himself for you and I. So this quotation here, again, has been taken from the Greek translation of the Old Testament scriptures, the Septuagint, which was the most commonly used Bible in the first century. And it shows that prophetically, Jesus declared the insufficient character of the old covenant sacrifice and declared his willingness to offer a perfect sacrifice under the new covenant.

More animal sacrifices made under the law would not please God, but a body you've prepared for me. Instead, what pleased God could only come through Jesus, the incarnate Son of God. Behold, I have come to do your will, O God.

1 Peter 1.20 tells us that the sacrifice of Jesus was determined before the foundation of the world, but it was still an act of his will to submit to the cross at the appointed time. And by that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. Notice it was once for all.

You know, those are really important words, folks. The writer of the Hebrews repeats the theme over and over again. Once for all.

Jesus came to do the Father's will. Warren Wiersbe said, this will is the new covenant that has replaced the old covenant. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has taken away the first covenant and established the second.

The readers of this epistle called Hebrews would get the message. Why go back to a covenant that has been taken away? Why go back to sacrifices that are inferior? The work of Jesus Christ is a finished work and his sacrifice need not be repeated. What freedom, what grace.

And that's stressed in the next couple of verses. Verse 11, every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.

How many times did Jesus have to die for your stinking sins? Once. Once. Never forget that.

He suffered once that you could come before a holy God. Well, I've sinned. I've messed up.

Does Jesus have to be sacrificed all over again for your sin? No. He's already forgiven your sin. What do you need to do? Confess it.

Repent. Turn to Jesus. The way has been made open to a forgiving God for you through Jesus Christ.

To not avail yourselves of that great gift will bring judgment upon you. But, oh, God has made the way for the lousiest of sinners to be cleansed and to walk right with God who made them. So, that means there's hope for Calvary Chapel.

Amen? There's hope for you and me. There's certain confidence for you and me because Jesus suffered once for us. And that's why the seated posture of Jesus is important here.

David Guzik says, it shows that his work is finished. He doesn't need to stand ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices as priests under the old covenant had to. Jesus still ministers in heaven.

He has a ministry of intercession for his people. But that ministry flows from his completed work so he can adopt a posture of rest. We're told that he sat down at the right hand of God.

And by one offering, that offering of himself, he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. So, if you've opened up your heart to Jesus, you've put your trust and faith in Jesus, the word of God declares you to be sanctified. It declares you to belong to him.

And here we're told that that is a work that he has perfected forever. So, don't give up. Don't stop pressing on.

Don't think, oh, this is too hard. I mess up. Get your eyes off of what you're doing and get it on to what he has done.

And therein, you'll begin to walk in victory. Trust him. Draw an eye unto him.

He'll certainly draw an eye to you. And verse 15 says that the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us. There's a witness of the Spirit in us.

After he had said before, this is the covenant, quoting Jeremiah 31 here, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my law where? Into their hearts. And in their minds, I will write them. And then he adds, and their sins, and their lawless deeds, I will remember no more.

Why? Because the work is finished. One offering has completed the work. What's your sin? How nasty has your sin been? Is it too nasty for Jesus to forgive? The answer is absolutely not.

His sacrifice was sufficient to cleanse you and me. And we could probably, we won't do that because it wouldn't edify, but we could probably share some pretty nasty stuff with one another. Just in this small gathering.

We got enough to fill up a lot of, I mean, we got a lot of crud. But praise his name. He's washed us clean.

He's washed it away. In fact, he's washed us so clean that the Bible says he remembers our sin no more. So you can't use a guilt trip as an excuse for not going to church.

Huh? Sometimes you go, oh, I'm just so messed up. I can't go. Those people are so perfect.

I can't do it. Can't use that anymore. Throw that one, throw that excuse right out.

Because I know a lot of you came here tonight and you had a rough day. You may have had a hard week. You may have had a failure or two or a hundred.

But God bless you, you came. And I trust that now that you're here, you're just letting the Lord assure you and strengthen you. You know that because of his death on the cross at Calvary and his resurrection from the grave, that the price and the penalty for your sin has already been paid.

Thank God for that. Don't forget it. Receive the cleansing that God has for you.

And like he said to the woman caught in adultery, he said, go sin no more. Turn from those things. Turn to the Lord.

As you turn to the Lord, you're turning away from the junk. Stay turned towards the Lord. You'll stay away from the junk.

Turn your eyes off of the Lord. What's left? Junk. Does this world have anything redeeming to give us? Is there any philosophy that exists in this world that can wipe away the stain of sin and guarantee us eternity? That can change us, not just on the outside, but change us on the inside, which then produces an outside visible change? If you're only trying to change the outside, you fail.

You fail, you get others disappointed or angry, and you get yourself disappointed or angry. But turn your eyes to Jesus tonight. Whether you're sitting here or watching on TV, he's your only hope.

He's our only help. He's the only sufficient sacrifice for our sins. Their deeds and their sins and their lawless deeds, hallelujah, I will remember no more.

The new covenant in Jesus Christ offers complete forgiveness. The forgiveness is so complete that God can say that he doesn't even remember our sins in the light of the new covenant. I can't say that, but God can.

God says. So where do I have to align my thinking with? Who do I have to align my thinking with? With myself or with God? I need to align myself with God. That's the only way I can be lifted up.

That's the only way I can be rescued. The old covenant worshiper could not say that he had no more consciousness of sins, but the new covenant believer can say his sins and iniquities are remembered no more. You and I can say that.

Maybe we need to say that right now. Oh, Lord, my sins and my iniquities, you have remembered no more. Would you let that sink in? That I might walk in joy and love and in victory and in worship of you.

See, the Christians got to endeavor to do with their sin exactly what God has done. Forget about it. Now, that doesn't mean we cease to be disciplined.

That doesn't cease to mean that we don't do what is right and good, but we don't dwell on our sin. Because frankly, if I dwell on my sin, it's just going to soften me up to sin some more. I don't want to dwell on my sin.

I want to dwell on Him. Whatsoever things are good, Philippians 4, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are right, if there is any virtue, if there's anything of good report, think on these things. That's what I need to think on.

And this reminds us, and this is important for some of you perhaps tonight, that the believer is in no way on probation. Is that good news? You got saved. The Lord says, okay, you're on probation.

You don't have to raise your hand if any of you have been on probation, but I mean, that's not a fun place to be. You know, you're always looking over your shoulder, and man, if you mess up, man, they throw you right back in the joint. God doesn't say, you mess up once, I'm pulling it back.

Pulling your salvation back. I'm gonna take the white out. Wipe your name back out of the book of life.

I'm gonna hit the delete key. Oh, thank God. Thank God we're reminded here that we are in no way on probation when he saves us.

Before God, our past sin has no bearing on God's present dealing with us. He's dealing with us as a loving dad. Our sin has been washed away.

Therefore, God is not punitive towards us. He is not casting judgment upon us. Our sins already have been judged.

They were judged when Christ took our sins on the cross of Calvary. And verse 18 says, now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. Where sins are really forgiven and forgotten, there no longer must be an offering for sin.

So in light of Jesus' perfect sacrifice, those that were discouraged, some of us who may have been discouraged, are encouraged, knowing Jesus has opened the way. Let's draw near to God. Let's draw near.

We have an open way. And we looked at verses 19 to 25 Sunday. If you weren't here, get the tape or the CD or the MP3 or the real audio file or whatever's available.

Let's read through it. Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he consecrated for us through the veil, that is his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near, not circling around, draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, cleansed on the inside for outside service. He's washed us inside.

He's cleansed us outside. The idea is of our whole being being presented now as a living sacrifice, Romans 12. Present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world, to the things of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you might prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God. The Lord's done it. Now, he didn't do it just to give us fire insurance and then la-di-da, we just go on doing whatever we feel like doing.

No, he did it to change us. He did it that our whole lives, I don't think we really understand Christianity until you give it 100%, till you're walking 24-7, till you become a constant worshiper. I don't think you're... Otherwise, it's just religious.

You go to church, that's boring. I mean, just to go to church... I mean, I don't know how many of you had to sit through church at one time. You had to sit through... There's nothing worse than having to sit through church because... I don't know how... I mean, I had to when I was a kid.

And I'll tell you, it just alienated me because my idea of religion, my idea of that church was being forced to do something that I didn't want to do. Now, obviously, when our children are young, we have to give them a good example. While they're under your authority, they go where you go.

We understand that. But I pray and I hope that you as a parent are teaching your kids from the first time they can begin to understand that you're talking to them about Jesus' love. And at an early age, they

themselves have a personal relationship with Jesus so that when they do come into church, they too can get fed.

That's our desire. Not to bore kids, but that all kids, young and old, can be fed the Word of God. That's what our Sunday School is here for, to train those kids up, to help and assist you as parents in teaching them the Word of God and preparing them.

And you'll know if you ever sit in in our Sunday Schools that each of the Sunday Schools from the toddler on up is centered on these kids learning the Word of God so that they can have a real walk with God. And their own walk with God, not their parents' walk with God. Because how many of you know, God doesn't have any grandkids, He just has kids.

He just has kids. You must be born again. So I'm a born-again Christian just because I had Christian kids doesn't automatically guarantee them having a personal walk with Jesus.

They have to choose to follow Jesus. And when they do, Jesus will be just as faithful to them as He's been to me. Hallelujah.

How did I get off on that tangent? You all know, He wants our whole life. He doesn't want us to serve Him part-time. He wants us to serve Him all the time.

And so He says, so the whole idea is intimacy. God wants us to be intimate with Himself. So let's hold fast.

Don't back away from it. Don't go back to the rituals of Judaism which might be a little easier and get a little flack off of you, but it's not going to help you. It's not going to draw you closer to the Lord.

You're drawing away if you go back to that stuff. So hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. And here's the deal.

For He who promised is faithful. He's faithful. He's faithful to hold you.

He's faithful to get you through this life on into the next. He's faithful to keep you from falling. He's faithful to give you all that pertains to life and godliness.

Trust Him. And let's consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. Don't isolate yourself from the body of believers.

Hang out with them. Well, they make me feel convicted. Good! That's what they're supposed to do.

If you've been messing up and you come around a true body of believers, you ought to feel, you feel kind of dirty. You ought to feel it. My goodness! That's what it's there for.

Not to condemn you. But as iron sharpens iron, we build each other up. We need that.

We need to help each other. Provoke one another to love and to good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some.

Evidently there are some that had already been, had slipped away. But rather let's hang in there, exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching. Discouragement has made them avoid community at the very time they needed it most.

Please don't forget, folks, that Jesus meets us in one another to stir up love and good works. We need the fellowship of the brethren. You need to hang out with other Christians who are in love with Jesus.

Not just other people who go to church on Sunday, but you need to hang out with people who are on fire for the Lord. And ask God, if you're around a group that really is just being phony and aren't really walking with the Lord, then you ask God to change your friends. Ask God to move you into that place where you can walk right on and the people around you aren't playing a game, but are serious about walking with the Lord.

We need that. I need those kind of men and women in my life. You need those kind of men and women in your life.

Our church needs those kind of men and women. God, make us those men and women. Amen? Do it, Lord, please.

Now, in this last section of chapter 10, we find the way open to God through Christ's sacrifice. We first saw a gracious invitation to enter in, verses 19 to 25. And then at the end of the chapter, verses 32 to 39, we have an encouraging confirmation.

But in between is an important exhortation, not to despise the word of truth. So here we have another warning to endure, press on. And we're warned of the danger of a willful rejection of Jesus' perfect sacrifice for us.

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. That was the law of Moses.

Of how much worse punishment do you suppose will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and insulted the spirit of grace. For we know him who said, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. And again, the Lord will judge his people.

So don't forget it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. So what's he talking about here? If we sin willfully, to sin willfully is defined, in verse 26 there, is defined in verse 29. It's pretty clear.

Speaks of someone who's trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sacrificed a common thing and insulted the spirit of grace. It is knowing deliberate rejection of Jesus' great work for us on the cross. Now, in a sense, every sin is a willful sin.

But here, the writer to the Hebrews speaks of something much more severe and relevant to these discouraged Jewish Christians who contemplated a retreat from a distinctive Christianity and a return to Judaism with its sacrificial system. This is turning your back on Jesus. You can almost hear the deep plea of the writer here.

If Jesus' sacrifice for sin is rejected, there remains no other sacrifice that can cleanse. Now, Rick Cather's said, verse 26 can give you the idea that if you should ever sin willfully after having become a Christian, that you're going to go to hell. I've actually heard people say that.

But slow down and think about the context. And, you know, you always have to look at the context. Whenever there's a verse that's kind of obscure, that kind of just, where did that come from? You got to look at all the rest of Scripture and judge that by the rest of Scripture.

Keep in mind also that the writer is writing to Jewish people. This is the audience that it was initially intended for. These are people who have trusted in the sacrificial system of Moses.

But as we've seen, the sacrificial system of Moses was a shadow of the real thing, Jesus Christ. Once a Jewish person has come to understand that Jesus is the real sacrifice for sins, they can't just turn their back on Jesus and go back to the old system of sacrificing goats and bulls. That's what he's telling them here.

Once a Jewish person has heard of Jesus, there is no going back to the old way of sacrifices because they were all meant to point to Jesus. So what's he saying here to them? Don't go back. Let's not get any more spooky about it.

He's telling them, don't go back. Press on in trusting the Messiah. Press on in trusting Jesus.

Do you understand the context? Do you understand who he was writing to? You have to keep that in mind when you look at this seemingly difficult verse. If you try to take the background of this verse away, then that's where people get into error. And that's where you have some people actually saying, well, I can't be a Christian because after I got saved, I sinned willfully.

And Hebrews 10.26 says, there's no hope for me. You have taken that verse out of context. That's not what the verse says.

Now, are you a Jew? And have you received Messiah Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Well, in today's day, there's no going back to the old sacrificial system because in 70 AD, the Roman emperor Titus wiped out the temple and it's never been rebuilt since and there has never been any sacrifices since. So it's even more ridiculous to go back to a system that was only a shadow. So he's encouraging them, don't go back to the shadow, guys.

Press on. So take heart. Don't go back.

Press on trusting Jesus. And now his encouragement of the Hebrew believers, verse 32, where he's telling them to take heart in their discouragement and remember how you have stood for God in tough times before. He says to him in verse 32, but recall the former days in which after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings, partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated for you had compassion on me and my chains and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods knowing that you have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

So he's telling them, recall the former days. These Christians had suffered for Jesus already being rejected from their Jewish community and perhaps by that community being counted as dead. And this came after they had trusted in Jesus, after you were illuminated.

The persecution came in many different ways, but it was a great struggle with sufferings. They were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations. They were companions of those who were so treated, including the writer of Hebrews himself.

They had also faced economic persecution. Your goods were plundered. But the point is that they had faced these things and that they had endured them.

They could take a look at their past endurance and be encouraged to keep standing strong in the future. Knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. They made it through the time of persecution by keeping a heavenly perspective.

Is that pertinent for us today? Making it through times of difficulty, of pain or of suffering because we keep the heavenly perspective. We know where we're heading. We know what's waiting for us.

We press on just because things get tough. We don't turn our backs. We press on and that's what chapter 11 is all about.

So knowing that you have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in heaven, you can make it through this present time of discouragement. Draw on your past experience to gain strength to endure for the future. That's what he's telling them.

Therefore, verse 35, hey, don't cast away your confidence. Don't cast that away, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance so that after you've done the will of God, you may receive the promise for yet a little while and he who is coming will come and will not tarry.

And then quoting Habakkuk, now the just shall live. Live, live folks, live by faith. Draw near, don't draw back.

If anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. And they and we have need of endurance to receive the promise of God after we've done the will of God. You know, the toughest and most discouraging trials are when we are called to obey God's will, when the fulfillment of his promises seem so far away.

And many of us have had to go through things like that, go through hard times. This is why we need endurance. Faithfulness during the time when the promise seems unfulfilled is the measure of your obedience and spiritual maturity.

God has promised to heal us. I believe in divine healing. I believe that Jesus heals.

I believe he not only forgives our sin and heals our relationship with himself, but I believe he heals physically as well. Now, when we get sick and we pray for healing, O Lord, heal me of this headache. Heal me of my ulcer.

Heal me of my cancer. We want the answer now. I'm praying for my wife.

I wanted the answer six months ago. But because God didn't, in this space and time, immediately answer my prayer, would it make any sense to say, I figured you weren't a God who answers prayer. I asked you and you didn't give it to me.

It's like a ten-year-old asking God for a bike and he doesn't get the bike and he says, well, I'm not going to serve God ever in my whole life because I didn't get my bike. We need to grow up. We need to learn that sometimes there's things that God wants to teach us and wants to work through it.

But I know, ultimately, my Joyce is healed. I know she is. And whether she gets that healing in this temporal life or when she stands perfect before the Lord, His word is still sure.

And I don't turn back from it. You can't turn back. There's nothing back of any substance to turn to.

Like Peter said, you know, after everybody else bailed in John chapter 6, and Jesus turned to Peter and the disciple says, you guys going to take off too? Peter said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of life. That was a good call, Peter. One of the few bright things Peter said before he got filled with the Holy Spirit.

Very solid. So you understand, God's word is sure. And we trust it.

Faithfulness during the time when the promise seems unfulfilled is the measure of your obedience and spiritual maturity. James tells us this endurance is built through trials. Hey, if you're looking for the Christian life just to please me, make me feel good, don't let me have to do anything that's hard.

Amen. Exactly. You know, that's about all that's worth.

I'm sorry. But that's true. That's so true.

Life is hard. Get used to it. Jesus is strong to see you through a hard life with joy.

With joy. Hallelujah. And since trials and tribulation and hardship are a given, they're going to happen, I would rather face it with joy than griping and complaining all the way to the grave.

Fill me with joy, Lord. But we are not, verse 39, of those who draw back to perdition. But in contrast, we are of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Man, we are folks that are dialed in. We're tuned in. We're turned on.

We are all systems up. That's what our walk with Jesus is supposed to be like. The opposite is this word perdition.

Now, the word perdition is used over 20 times in the New Testament. And it can be translated perish, die, destruction, or waste. And I think the context here would lead to understanding it in the terms of waste.

Because a believer who doesn't walk by faith goes back into the old ways and wastes his or her life. It's such a waste to not walk 24-7 with the Lord. Amen? It really is.

So what's he saying? Don't waste your time. Don't be a time waster. Press on.

Press on. Draw near. Walk on fire.

Not literally. But be a blaze for Jesus so that not only your path will be lit, but you can show the way to others who are groping in darkness too. And didn't Jesus say that we are to be the light of the world? Don't let your lamp be hidden.

Don't set it under a bushel. No, that's not what a light's for. You set a light on a lamp stand.

The city set on a hill can't be hidden. Be a light. And this is a confident conclusion.

We're going to be those who endure on and gain the promise of God. We're not going to draw back into old traditions or into an old covenant relationship with God or any other replacement for Jesus. Because there's none that's sufficient.

Trust Jesus. He'll see you through. Now, we're going to walk by faith.

We're not going to wander in the wilderness of waste. We can be confident. And as we walk by faith, our great high priest, Jesus, will guide us and perfect us.

You can count on it. The people are going through tough times. Maybe you are too.

And we need to endure. And the key to enduring is faith. So, just what is faith? That brings us to the beginning of chapter 11.

Chapter 11 illustrates the lesson of that last part of chapter 10. And shows that throughout history, men and women have done the impossible by faith. The just shall live by faith.

Verse 38 of chapter 10. And chapter 11 proves that faith can conquer in any circumstance. Let's read the first three verses.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. And we're going to see a list of the elders here in a little bit.

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. Now look at this. The whole context here is to encourage people to trust God when it's difficult.

It's the times when everything is going wrong that we need to take up the challenge to keep trusting the Lord. It's one thing to say you trust the Lord when everything is going right with your life. But when you hit difficult times, it can be pretty hard to keep trusting.

But it's in difficult times that we often have a hard time believing that God really cares about us. And I can confess to you as your pastor and your brother and your friend, I've gone through that these past six months in particular. And I went through that many, many years before.

When my kids, first my son and then my daughter later, were not really walking with the Lord and didn't want to have anything to do with the Lord. I prayed and I prayed and I prayed and I prayed. It was very difficult.

God, why won't you answer this? Have any of you had prayer requests like that? I think I got some company here. You know, I think we all have. And I'll be the first to tell you it's frustrating.

But I got to understand that my focus when I get frustrated is not on God's promises and on his faithfulness. It's on how I feel at the time. And I got to learn through life not to trust in my feelings.

That's not faith. Just because I feel or see or can touch the answer. It's in difficult times that we have a hard time believing that God really cares about us, that God knows what's going on in our lives and that God has the power to do something to help us out.

But it's just at those times where we are so blessed. Amen. So blessed by the Lord to help us, to assist us, and to see us through.

God does have the power, and he will help us through. Trust him. Trust him, trust him, trust him.

Keep your heart fixed on him, and he'll see you through the hard times. And I know to this day that God is still going to work in my kids. I believe that.

When? Oh, now be careful there, Pat. Because I want it yesterday. I want it yesterday.

Amen? Dick. Enjoy. They gave me two.

I knew there was a reason. All right. So, faith.

The substance of things hoped for. The evidence of things not seen. Now obviously we're not going to get through the whole chapter tonight, and I've asked Pastor Mark if next Wednesday night, because that's when Joyce has her next chemo, is that following Thursday.

So I'm not going to be here next Wednesday. But Mark has had a very interesting life learning faith. And so I asked him to touch a little bit on this chapter before he gets into chapter 12.

So he'll continue on. But we've still got a few minutes. So I don't want to jump out of here just yet.

This is not a definition of faith here. Some people say, well, define faith. And they quote this.

But rather, it is a description of what faith does and how it works. True Bible faith, Warren Wiersbe said, is not blind optimism. Blind faith.

Or a manufactured hope so feeling. Neither is it an intellectual assent to a doctrine. It is certainly not believing in spite of evidence.

That would be superstition. True Bible faith is confident obedience to God's word in spite of circumstances and consequences. Should I say that again? True Bible faith is confident obedience to God's word in spite of circumstances and consequences.

This faith operates quite simply. God speaks, and we hear his word. We trust his word and act on it, no matter what the circumstances or what the consequences may be.

The circumstances may be impossible and the consequences frightening and unknown. But we obey God's word just the same and believe him to do what is right and what is best. Remember, faith is only as good as its object.

Faith is only as good as its object. And the object of our faith is God. Faith is not some feeling that we manufacture.

It is our total response to what God has revealed in his word. True Bible faith is summarized by three words in these first three verses. Substance, evidence, and a good testimony or witness.

Substance means literally, the word there in the Greek means to stand under, to support. Faith is to a Christian what a foundation is to a house. It gives confidence and assurance that it will stand.

So we could say faith is the confidence of things hoped for. When a believer has faith, it's God's way of giving him confidence and assurance that what is promised will be experienced. The word evidence simply means conviction.

This is the inward conviction from God that what he has promised, he will perform. God's going to do it. The presence of God-given faith in one's heart is conviction enough that he will keep his word.

And then witness, or a good testimony, or as the King James says, obtained a good report. That's an important word in this chapter. It occurs not only in verse 2, but twice in verse 4, once in verse 5, and once in verse 39 in this chapter.

Good testimony, a good witness, same word. The summary in Hebrews 12, verse 1, calls this list of men and women so great a cloud of witnesses. They are witnesses to us because God witnesses to them, witnessed to them.

In such examples cited, God gave witness to that person's faith. This witness was his divine approval on their life and ministry. So faith accomplishes things because there is power in the word of God.

We see the last part of verse 3, speaking of creation. God spoke, and it was done. God still speaks to us.

When we believe what he says, the power of the word accomplishes things in our lives. I mean, that God would make me a new creation. If you knew me before, B.C., you'd have shaken your head.

I've known some of you, B.C. But God's made you a new creation. Look at you now. Who'd have thunk it? You know that we'd be people of the word when we were just people of the, or people of the bottle, or people of all this other garbage.

People of the world. But now we're people of the word. And God's changed us.

And he's filled us with his love, and he's given us his wisdom so we're not duped by the subtle traps and not-so-subtle traps of the world. Oh, God's done a wondrous work in us. Thank you, Lord.

He's done a new creation in us. And, you know, the same word that acted in the old creation acts in the new creation. God's word is just as powerful today.

And I wish we had time to go through the whole rest of this chapter. Do we have time to read it? Just read it through? Can we do that before we end? You're looking at me going, you're going to do it anyway. All right, let's wrap up with just reading through.

By faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. And through it, he, being dead, still speaks. Hey, if you guys aren't familiar with all these things, most of your Bibles have a little reference thing next to each of these.

Go back into the Old Testament. Look up these references. Read the stories.

By faith, Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death and was not found because God had taken him. For before he was taken, he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith, it's impossible to please him.

For he who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Oh, I've got a whole page of notes on that. By faith, Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, being moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness, which is according to faith.

By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going, but by faith, he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

By faith, Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed. She was 90 years old. And she bore a child when she was past the age because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Therefore, from one man, Abraham, and him as good as dead, he was 100 years old, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, innumerable as the sand which is by the seas. Don't forget, Abraham didn't see that. Isaac didn't see that.

Jacob didn't see that. But they believed it. And one day it was true.

Millions and millions had come from him. And I would say billions because we are children of Abraham by faith. That same promise of faith to Abraham.

Righteousness is counted to you and me by our faith in Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment of the seed of Abraham. These all died in faith. Sometimes you die in faith.

That's kind of negative. But it's true. Sometimes you die.

But they died how? Grumbling? Angry? Moaning? No, they died in faith. Not having received the promises but having seen them afar off, were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. And he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was... That's a whole other story. It's a great one.

In Isaac your seed shall be called. Concluding that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff. Remember when he prayed for Ephraim and Manasseh? Only one of them was going to be in the bloodline of Jesus. He switched hands.

Remember that? He switched hands. What did Joseph try to do? He tried to straighten him out. By faith.

By faith. And gave instructions concerning his bones. 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.

Sometimes you got to blow off the king's command when it's contrary to God's word. 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. Moses saw Christ, verse 26, 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.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe when she had received the spies with peace. And what more can I say? For the time would fail me, as it is already, to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jethnah and also of David and Samuel and the prophets who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to fight the armies of aliens, women received their dead raised to life again.

But you know, it wasn't all victory and rosy. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins being destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom the world was not worthy. You know, the world would be saying to them, look at those, they're just scum. Look at them, they're just roaming around.

They'd look, the world would look down on you. But God says of them, of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth and all these haven't obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Therefore, we also, since we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, as we go from this place tonight, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us. And brothers and sisters, let's run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Amen.

Amen. Let's stand together, okay? Would you pray with me? Father, thanks for this time tonight. Thank you for teaching us, Lord, more about you.

Our perfect sacrifice, better than anything the old covenant had. And on the basis of all of that, we can be a people of faith. Oh, there were so many who had such a good witness of faith, and they were looking forward to the promise.

We have the promise. May we not fall back. May we draw near and press on as we serve you, Lord.

Bless this congregation, Lord. Draw each one into a deep and wonderful and powerful and joy-filled walk with you. May we serve you and serve one another in the days ahead, God, use us.

We hold to you. We trust you. We believe your promises.

Use us for your glory, we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.

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