

Hebrews Part 4 - Through the Bible With Zac Poonen

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the transformative nature of the new covenant, highlighting God's forgiveness, personal relationship with Him, and the call to live out His will through submission and service.

Duration: 58:55

Scripture: Hebrews 8:12, Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 1:22, James 2:17, James 3:2

Topics: "Faith And Works", "Christian Living"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of faith that produces works, highlighting the need for believers to live out their faith through actions. It covers various aspects of faith, including victory over temptation, love towards all, and controlling one's speech to reflect the grace of God.

Transcript

Let's turn to God's Word, the book of Hebrews again. We finished in our last session in Hebrews chapter 8, where we saw 10 to 12, the terms of the new covenant. And let me just repeat them once again.

Let me start from the bottom with verse 12. The first thing about the new covenant is, God says, I will not remember your sins anymore. In the Old Testament, there was a constant remembrance of sin.

We read that in chapter 7, they were always remembering sin. In chapter 9, rather, we read about it. But in the new covenant, there is no remembrance of sin.

It's very important, if you've entered the new covenant, one thing that you must accept is that God does not remember your past life against you. You may have been brought up in, I mean, you may have lived a very wicked life, but God sees you just like someone who was brought up in a very godly family, all his life he's lived godly. Sometimes people have lived a very wicked life in the past and got converted.

They feel that, well, I'm not as lucky as those other people who lived a very good life from childhood because they had godly parents. Okay, that may be. But now that you're forgiven, God's put you in the same level.

His past is not remembered, your past is not remembered. What does it matter? What does it matter if he got 30% and you got zero? Those marks are wiped out. Your past record of the marks you've got in old

examinations is all wiped out.

So there's no question of whether he got 30 or you got zero or somebody else got 50. All the marks are wiped out. We must not look back in the past.

If you come into the new covenant, you start in verse 12, the Lord says, I will not remember their sins anymore. Secondly, the Lord says in verse 10, I will put my laws, verse 11, before that, all shall know me from the least to the greatest. Every person and starting with the least to the greatest.

Now normally in the world we say greatest to least, right? But in the Bible, everything is the opposite of the world. So we start with the least to the greatest. That means the least believer can know the Lord personally.

You don't have to go to a prophet to find out God's will. All shall know me personally. To know God personally as your friend, as your father, you can go to him and you don't have somebody else to teach you about God.

Somebody may teach you about the Bible, that's another thing. But to know God, you don't need a secretary or anyone. You go straight to Jesus.

You don't have to go through another brother to know God. All shall know me. So please remember this is your privilege under the new covenant.

Every one of you can know God personally as a friend and as a father through Jesus without the help of a single human being. Personally. To study the Bible you may need the help of a teacher but to know God you don't need anybody's help.

Nobody will teach his neighbor saying know the Lord. Thirdly, verse 10, God has promised to write his laws in our heart and in our mind. In the Old Testament he wrote it on tablets of stone outside and says you look at that and try to keep it and they couldn't keep it.

Thou shalt, thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt not and so on. They couldn't keep it. Now the Lord says I will write it inside so that you automatically keep it.

You desire to keep it and you have the ability to keep it. There are two things. I will write it on your mind means I'll give you the desire.

I will write it on your heart means I'll give you the ability. You see we need two things. First of all, I must have a desire to do God's will.

Second, I need the ability to do God's will. We read that in Philippians 2 verse 13. God works in us to will and to do his good pleasure.

Same thing here. It's written in other words. I will write my laws.

I'll put my laws into their mind that is to give them a desire to do God's will and I will write it upon their hearts which means I'll give them the power to do God's will and if God gives me the desire to do his will and the power to do his will, I'm okay and that's his responsibility. Difference from the old covenant is old covenant said thou shalt thou shalt thou shalt not and the new covenant God says I will, I will, I will and when you read that and you still think that it is dependent on you, you're mistaken. It is dependent on us in

the sense that we have to submit.

Think of that rock in Mount Sinai where God wrote the Commandments. That rock had to submit. When God wrote, the rock said okay, write and wrote.

That is what our calling is. When God wants to do something, we submit. Like Mary, she said behold the handmaid of the Lord, whatever you said O angel let it take place in me.

She submitted but God was the one who produced that baby in her womb. Even if she tried for a million years she could not have produced a baby in her womb but at the same time God would not have produced that baby in her womb if she did not submit. So that's the perfect example.

Mary submitted and God the Holy Spirit produced the baby. You submit and God the Holy Spirit produces the nature of Christ within you. In Mary it was the body in which Jesus came.

In us it is the nature of Jesus. So our part is not to produce it. Whenever you think of trying to make yourself holy, just think of Mary determining to have a baby.

How much determination did Mary need to produce a baby? She could never have produced it. The Holy Spirit had to do that. The new covenant begins with that story.

The Holy Spirit did it, Mary submitted. Same thing is the new covenant for you. The Holy Spirit will write, that is the finger of God, the finger of God is the Holy Spirit, will write his laws in your heart and in your mind.

We're giving you the desire and the ability but you've got to submit. If you don't submit it'll be just like Mary not submitting. What would have happened in Nazareth if the angel came to Mary and Mary said sorry I'm not willing for that.

You think Jesus would not have been born? The angel would have said okay Mary you missed the privilege I'll have to look for another girl. He finds another girl and says okay you're going to be the mother of Jesus. Jesus praised God.

So if you miss it God will just give that privilege to somebody else. Don't miss it. Don't miss the privilege of the new covenant.

We go now to chapter 9 and basically the theme of chapter 9 is the better sacrifice that God has provided for us in the Old Testament. It says verse 8 of chapter 9 the Holy Spirit showed that the way into the most holy place was not yet opened. We saw in chapter 8 the last verse of chapter 8 says the old covenant is becoming obsolete and is ready to disappear.

God is finished with the old covenant. Now there's a new covenant. In the old covenant God showed through the Holy Spirit here's a thick veil you cannot enter into God's presence because there's sin in your life.

When Jesus shed his blood all our sin was removed then we could go into God's presence. The veil has been torn. So we see from that that it's the Holy Spirit alone who can lead us into the most holy place.

And then you read this word perfect. I told you the other day that there's a perfection we can have and a perfection we cannot have. Here is the perfection we can have.

Hebrews 9 9. The Old Testament could not make a worshiper perfect in his conscience. Perfect like Christ that is in the future when he comes again. Perfect in our conscience everybody who is in the new covenant can experience that perfection.

We press on to the second perfection with this perfection. Perfect conscience up to perfect likeness to Christ which is in the future. So when we speak about perfection don't get afraid.

The Bible speaks about it but it speaks about being perfect in our conscience. If you don't distinguish between things that the Bible distinguishes you'll get confused. Okay he goes on to say in verse 14 how our conscience can be perfect.

If the blood of bulls and goats was enough for the cleansing of the flesh of man externally in the Old Covenant. Verse 14 how much more will the blood of Jesus Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself to God. Now notice a simple a little statement here.

Let me ask you a question. How did he offered himself to God without blemish? Okay and we all agree Jesus lived his entire earthly life for thirty and a half years without even a single mistake without a single sin tempted in so many ways no sin at all. What was the secret of his life? How did he do it? This verse gives us the answer.

Read it. Through the Holy Spirit. That little expression through the eternal spirit.

It's through the Holy Spirit's power that Jesus remained without blemish. That means he lived as a man. He lived as a man in the power of the Holy Spirit and that power by that power he did not sin and that's the same Holy Spirit he's given us and if you use the Holy Spirit's power you can also overcome sin.

That person got electricity in his house and he can have lights. You got electricity in the house but until you put on the switch you won't get the lights. He put on the switch.

Jesus used that power. You also use that power. You can have light instead of darkness in your life.

Through the Spirit he offered himself without blemish to God. We also through the Spirit can offer ourselves pure to God and if Jesus blood and therefore it says Jesus blood can cleanse your conscience from dead works. Notice the expression again dead works.

Works that appear holy that appear righteous but which cannot make you acceptable to God. To serve the living God. If you want to serve the living God you've got to get rid of all dead works from your life.

All works that appear good before people but which are done without joy, without faith, with a wrong motive, for some personal gain, without any zeal, without any fire. These are all dead works. Get rid of them.

Our works for God must be done with faith, with joy, with fire for God's honor and not man's honor. Not to ease my conscience but to please God and get rid of every other work in my life which is a dead work. Then only can I serve God.

It says in verse 14. Further verse 27 is a very important verse. It says that it is appointed unto men once to die and after this comes the judgment.

Now there's a beautiful truth we can all learn from this verse. You want to hear it? It's very simple. If you meditate on this verse you learn something.

What is that? When does God judge a man? Answer is there. After he dies. When do you judge a man? Long before he dies.

You see the difference between you and God? When you meditate on scripture you learn something like that. Why can't we all be a little more like God and say well he hasn't died yet. Maybe he'll improve tomorrow, maybe he'll improve next week.

God always has that hope. Okay this fellow is bad today but maybe by next week or next year or five years from now he'll be better. We don't give that fellow even one day.

Leave alone five years. God Almighty waits till a man dies and then judges. Let's follow his example and we save ourselves a lot of unnecessary sin.

But it's true that once a man dies there's no more escape. There's only judgment for him. And now we go to chapter 10.

The chapter 10 it says here about the law being a shadow of the good things to come which could never make perfect. Notice again in verse 1 the last part verse perfect. What was the fault with the old covenant? In one sentence it could not make people perfect.

What is the mark of people under the old covenant today? They are afraid of the word perfection. What is the mark of the new covenant? It can make people perfect in their conscience and help them to press on to perfection in their life till one day they become like Jesus. That is the new covenant and if you are serious about the new covenant you will never again be afraid of the word perfection.

You will long to be perfect. If you have no longing to be perfect I'd say you're still back under the old covenant. Verse 1. They could never become perfect even in their conscience and then they could never become like Christ one day either.

Please remember these two perfections. Perfect in our conscience and perfect like Christ. One in the future one right now but which the old covenant could not help them to have.

Okay if they were perfect in their conscience they would not have kept on offering sacrifices for sins. Then let's move on to chapter 5. I like to quote this verse to people who have suffered and the preachers who are always tell them to give their offerings. I say I want to show you a verse in the Bible that says God doesn't want your offerings.

That's verse 5. Sacrifice and offering thou is not desire. Do you believe that? What does God desire? A body. You've heard me say many times in the Old Testament the emphasis was on give your tithe.

In the New Testament the emphasis is on give your body. There there was such a strong emphasis. Have you paid your tithes? Have you paid your tithes? Have you paid your tithes? You go to a church and the people are emphasizing have you paid your tithe? Have you paid your tithe? Have you paid your tithe? That's an old covenant Church.

In the New Covenant the emphasis is have you given your body? Have you given your eyes? Have you given your tongue? Have you given your hands? Have you presented your body as a living sacrifice?

Romans 12 1. Where do I get that from? Hebrews 10 5. Offering he does not desire but he desires your body. That is the New Covenant equivalent of the Old Testament tithe. Just like Jesus Christ dying on the cross is the equivalent of the Old Testament lamb which was sacrificed on the Passover day.

Everything had an equivalent that going through the Red Sea the New Testament it is baptism. The Old Testament tithe the New Covenant is giving our body. Here it is.

God doesn't want an offering. He wants your body first. Does that mean we are not to give our money to God? If you don't feel happy to give money to God you don't have to give anything to God.

Give your body. But most people who give their body will usually want to give a lot of other things as well but that's voluntary. Give what you want happily but the most important thing God requires from you is a body.

When Jesus came into the world verse 5 Jesus did not come primarily to pay his tithes. He did not come to give offerings. Instead he gave his body and he is the mediator of a new covenant for us teaching us not God what God wants primarily from us is not our offerings but our body.

What are the offerings we can give to God? Money, service. Lord I distributed 1,000 tracts today. Lord I've served in some part of North India for ten years.

These are all offerings to God. Lord I prayed for five hours yesterday. I fasted three days.

These are offerings but Lord I still lust with my eyes. I still get angry with my tongue. God says forget your offerings.

I don't want you to go to North India for ten years and I don't want your tithes and I don't want your fasting. I don't want your prayer. I don't want any of your offerings.

I want your eyes. I want your tongue. I want parts of your body.

Give me your body. Don't substitute offerings for your body. People who substitute offerings and don't give their body are back in the old covenant.

In the new covenant what God wants is your body. This is a wonderful book Hebrews. Why am I taking more time on Hebrews than any other book of the New Testament or the whole Bible for that matter? My personal conviction is it's one of the most important books in the Bible.

If you want to live in the new covenant I would say study Hebrews and that's why I've given far more importance to this book than any other. Sacrifice an offering you didn't desire but your body and what must I do with this body? Lord, Jesus is saying when I came into the world that is when he came from the womb of Mary he never had a body in heaven but now God the Father gave him a body. A body thou has prepared for me.

What shall I do with this body? Go to North India, pay tithes, pray for five hours, fast. What shall I do with this body? Very simple. Verse 7. I have come to do your will.

Whatever it is O God in this body I've come to do your will. This is what Jesus came for and this is what we have to do with our body. When you present your body to God don't present your body to go here or go there or this ministry or that ministry or anything.

Say Lord you gave me a body from my mother's womb. Every part of it, eyes, tongue, hands, passions, desires, it's all yours to do your will. What are my eyes for? To do God's will.

What's my tongue? To speak God's will. My passions, my strength, my energy must be to do God's will. One passion in life.

What is the will of God? The will of God is your sanctification. Okay? That's first part. What's the will of God for my ministry? Lord I want to know your will.

I don't want to rush here and rush there and do something for God. I want to do the will of God in this body. That's what Jesus taught us to pray.

Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. What do you think the angels are doing in heaven? They're not running around here and they're trying to do like they say something for God. I don't want to do something for God.

I want to do God's will. Jesus didn't come to earth and from the age of 12 start running around doing something for God. What is your will? And the father said work as a carpenter for the next 18 years.

Okay. I make 18 years and worked as a carpenter. That was the will of God.

And one day when the father thought he was faithful in his earthly job. Okay. Now you go.

Now you preach. You think God may tell you to be a carpenter? No. Impossible.

God will only tell me to preach. Who said that? That's the problem. A lot of people cannot hear that God may tell them to do something quite different because their understanding of spirituality is only doing full-time work.

Jesus did not come to do full-time work. He came to do the father's will. When the father's will was carpentry, he did carpentry.

When the father's will was full-time work, it was full-time work. You must dedicate yourself to do the will of the father, not to do this job or that job. I can't join the Indian Army and say I want to be posted in this place.

No. If I join the army, I leave it to them to decide where to post me. They can post me on the battlefield.

They can post me in the home department behind the scenes of the battle. That's up to them. I cannot dictate.

Neither can be in the Lord's Army. Lo, I come to do your will, O God. And a second time is repeated.

Verse 8. You don't desire offerings or sacrifices, but verse 9, I come to do thy will, O God. And in this way, verse 9, he took away that first covenant and established the second covenant. The first covenant was a lot of activity, activity, activity.

If you go into the tabernacle, it's all activity, activity, activity. But in the new covenant, carpentry for so many years, helping his mother at home for so many years. It was all the will of God and preaching when the time came to do the will of God in his life.

Don't think that carpentry is less God's will and helping your mother at home is less God's will than preaching. That's old covenant idea. In the new covenant, whatever God wants you to do at this particular time, that's God's will.

That is what, that is the holiest thing you can do. And a lot of people have gone out into the ministry before God called them and now they are frustrated. They're running here and there.

They may go here and make a mistake. After five years, they go somewhere else. They get frustrated there ten years and then they go somewhere else.

And I come across people who are so old and have just made a mess of their life because they didn't seek the will of God. They went around trying to do something for God. Please don't make that mistake.

Follow Jesus. He's the pattern. Of course, there are people at the other extreme who feel that even if God calls them for full-time work, they say no, carpentry is better.

That's the other extreme. There are always these extremes in Christendom that even if God calls them, they will not go because they are making good money in their business. So let's avoid both these extremes.

And then it repeats some of the terms of the covenant again in verse 16 and 17, which we considered earlier. I will put my laws upon their heart. I will write them in their hearts and their minds and I will not remember their sins anymore.

This is so important. That's why it's repeated a second time in verse 16 and 17. And then it says, since brethren, I believe this passage, verse 19 to 25, is one of the most important passages in the whole book of Hebrews.

We could say it's the central passage of the book. It speaks about a new and living way into the most holy place. We have now confidence, brethren, to enter the most holy place, first of all, by the blood of Jesus and second, by a new and living way, which he consecrated by the veil that is his flesh.

The veil was torn, symbolizing that his flesh was torn. And there's a way for us now to go into the most holy place. A new and living fresh way.

Part of the meaning of that is that it's always fresh. It's never stale. It's always new.

Like in Revelation, we read about a new song. That means every time they sing the same song, it's like it's singing it for the first time, fresh. That's the way we should sing.

You may sing that for the hundredth time, but it's fresh again, a new song. The same way a new and living way means even though I'm taking up the cross and following Jesus today, it's exciting today. It's new.

It's fresh. This is the way of the cross, this new and living way, the way of death to the flesh, the way of rending the veil, the way that we are called to follow Jesus. Death to my own will, offering my body to do God's will, that the will of the flesh will never be done in this body.

Lo, I come, O Lord, this body to do your will. And if we keep doing that, we go through this new and living way that Jesus opened. We don't have to rend the veil today.

The veil is already rend, but to go through that way which he inaugurated for us. You see, it's like a minister cutting open a ribbon and inaugurating a new road. Of course, Jesus didn't do it that easily.

He had to pay a price for 33 years to inaugurate this road, but the road is now inaugurated for us. We don't have to make the road. No, no, no, no.

The road is already made. We have to only walk it. Jesus has opened this way of the cross, this highway of holiness, as it says in Isaiah 35.

The way of the cross, and we have to walk it. And if we walk it, we get into the most holy place. Now, don't get taken up with the road.

See, when you're traveling, supposing I'm traveling from here to Bangalore by road, and I get so taken up with the road, I say, boy, what a beautiful road this is. What nice potholes. And I get stuck in the road, admiring the road.

I'll never reach Bangalore. And that's what's happened to some people who have heard the message of the cross, of putting the flesh to death, and you see them 20 years later, they are still admiring this road. Oh, this putting the flesh to death.

This is the way, brother. And they never reach the destination. The destination is the most holy place.

We are not to get taken up with the cross, it's the resurrection we are after. We are seeking to fellowship with God, and this happens to be the way. I want to reach a destination, and that's what it says, through the new and living way, we get into the most holy place.

There are some people who are not taken up with the way at all. They never get into the most holy place. That's one extreme.

The other extreme is people who are always talking about death to the flesh, death to the flesh, the way of the cross, the way of the cross, the way of the cross, and you look at their life, they're so long-faced and gloomy and miserable, and you say, I don't want this life at all. You're not a recommendation to anybody, because you're taken up with the way of the cross. You're not taken up with the fellowship with the Father in the most holy place.

I don't want the way of the cross, except as it leads me to the Father. I don't want to be taken up with the way, I want to be taken up with the Father. It's not looking unto the way.

Have you ever seen a runner looking down and running? He's always looking at there in front, where I have to go, and these people who look down and run will always come last, and I want to give that word of warning to anybody sitting here who's being gripped by the message of the cross, and you think you're holy, you're not holy. If you're gripped with Jesus, you're holy. So that's a warning, because I've seen people taken up with that.

The Lord has made a way for us. He's a high priest, and therefore let us draw near, it says, with a sincere heart. Notice the emphasis on sincerity frequently.

With faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean. Our bodies washed with pure water means that there's no sin which I committed with my body which has not been cleansed, which I have not set right. If I have harmed somebody, I go and apologize.

If I've cheated somebody, I set it right. That's how my body is washed with pure water. I hold fast to the confession of my hope.

I don't shake, and I consider other brothers around me in the most holy place. I'm not selfish. I think about other people, how I can stir them up to love, and I don't live by myself.

Verse 25, I fellowship with other people as often as possible until Jesus comes again. Take that passage from 19 to 25 and meditate on it. It's precious.

Very, very, very important. And he says, instead of going in there, if we go on sinning willfully, then there's no more sacrifice for sin. See, a way indicates that we got to keep moving.

Later on he speaks about running the race. People who backslide are people who are not moving forward. You know, an aircraft in the sky, it's moving.

As long as it's moving, it stays in the sky. You know what will happen to an airplane if it decides to stop, turns off its engine in the sky? Down. That's what will happen.

An aircraft has to keep moving in order to keep flying. When it stops moving, it drops to the ground. So in the Christian life also, if we don't keep moving, we backslide.

And so he warns us, he says in the Old Testament, people who lived under the old covenant, they were punished without mercy. Verse 28, you think our punishment will be less when God has given us much greater calling and we treat the blood of Jesus as an unclean thing. It takes in lightly, it's very serious.

It's a terrifying thing, verse 31, to fall into the hands of the living God. Then he goes on to say that there's a great need for you to be willing to suffer, verse 32-34. People may take away your property.

They were persecuted in those days. And he says, okay, never mind, don't get occupied with these earthly things. You may lose them.

And I believe in days of persecution, if it comes to this country, we may lose some earthly things. We may lose honor. We may not be able to get jobs because we are Christians seeking to be upright.

We may not get promotion. People may turn against us. They may break down our church buildings.

Okay, when you live in the most holy place, these things you can take joyfully. It says you took joyfully, verse 34 middle, the seizure of your property. Your property was seized by fundamentalist religious people.

Okay, praise the Lord. I'm living in the most holy place. I'm not going to fight for these things because I've got a better possession in heaven.

And he says, instead of going this way, verse 38, if you shrink back, the Lord says you'll have no pleasure. The Lord will have no pleasure in such a person. There are only two ways, verse 38.

You either live by faith or you shrink back. If you live by faith, you're making progress. The opposite of that, not living by faith, is you shrink back.

Every backsliding is first of all a failure of faith. That's what we learned from verse 38. All backsliding is first of all a failure of faith.

That's what we read, verse 38. Then we go on to chapter 11 where he speaks a little more about faith and he says this faith is not something new. Even Old Testament people live by faith.

How do you think Abel offered a sacrifice to God? Verse 4, by faith. And he says faith is sort of believing those invisible things which we know are sure. We are sure, that's true.

The definition of faith in verse 1, the conviction of things that I have not seen. I haven't seen it, but I am convinced. The assurance of things I'm hoping for.

I haven't seen it, but I'm sure. That's faith. And Abel lived like that.

That's how he offered a sacrifice. He knew this is this is pleased God and I'm gonna do it. How did Enoch live? For 300 years he walked with God.

Here he tells us in verse 5, he walked by faith. He couldn't see, but he walked by faith for 300 years. He walked by faith in an unseen God, pleasing God when everybody else was enjoying themselves.

And God tested him for 300 years and said, Enoch, you deserve to be in heaven. And he took him up. And he says without this type of faith, verse 6, whatever else you may have, it is impossible to please God.

You may do a lot of work for him, you may sacrifice a lot for him, but if you can't trust God, trusting in the invisible, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed, you cannot please God. You want to please God? When you come to God, you must first of all believe that he exists up there and that he's a rewarder of all who seek him wholeheartedly. I want to ask you, when you're in trouble, who is the first person you turn to? I hope it's God.

We can ask people for help, there's nothing wrong in that, but the first person I must turn to is God. I've often thought if the Prime Minister of India was my father, anytime I have some problem, I have a little bit of a problem, can you help me? And he says, sure, what's it? Tell me. And I tell him, and he says, don't worry son, I'll take care of that.

Thank you dad. I put the phone down and I'm at rest. Do you believe that God Almighty is more powerful than the Prime Minister of India? Do you believe that God is your father? Is he the first person you turn to when you're sick, when you have a problem, when some impossible situation comes before you which even the Prime Minister cannot solve? Can God do something about it? Sure.

Why don't you talk to him? Why don't you ask him? Why don't you go to him first before you go to anybody else? Let's develop that habit. He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. We must develop this as a way of life.

When I have a problem, I turn to God first because I believe he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. How did Noah live? Verse 7, by faith. And by faith it says he condemned the world.

Verse 7, the way, his way of life was a condemnation to the world. And that's how it must be with us. When people saw Noah spending all his savings for making a ship, saying judgment is going to come, you've got to get inside the ship.

Spending all his savings, not keeping anything aside, saving it all, using it all for building the ship. That was a condemnation of the world because people in the world were using all their savings to build their houses and better houses and bigger houses and go on travels and tours and enjoy themselves and drink

wine and eat good food. And here Noah was denying himself all those things.

He didn't go for any holidays and he didn't spend money on fancy food or clothes. He was spending it all on the ark. That was a condemnation to the world.

And today when a Christian spends all his time and energy building the church, and that's the most important thing in his life, and he denies himself and he gives his time and his money and everything for the building of the church, the people in the world say you're crazy. What are you doing? Spending money like that, time like that, to give the gospel, to publish literature, to go here, to travel there, and you have no interest in enjoying yourself in the world. I said sorry I don't have time to enjoy myself in the world.

This is the only, this church is the only thing that will last when Jesus comes again. Now if you don't live like that, you don't have the faith of Noah. Your way of life, what you spend your time, energy, money for determines whether you've got faith.

Everybody saw Noah spending all his time, energy, money for building the ark. What do people see you spending your time, money, and energy for? That's the test of your faith. By faith Abraham, when God called him, he did not leave Ur of the Chaldees without God calling him, and don't ever leave without God calling you, but when God called him, verse 8, he obeyed immediately.

When Peter was called, he obeyed immediately. When Abraham was called, he left his relatives, he left his home and said I'm going. You asked him where are you going? He said I don't know.

I don't know. I don't know where I'm going, but I know who is leading me, that's enough. And he was led and he lived like a stranger, verse 9, in a foreign land, dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, because he was looking for a city whose foundations are up in heaven.

And by faith he and Sarah received the ability to conceive. Here we see the faith of parents, faith of husband and wife together. You're a blessed man if you get a wife like Sarah, who has faith along with you.

She had faith, he had faith. Husband and wife joined faith, living for God. And they died in faith, verse 13, without receiving the promises.

You know they never got all that God promised them, they got a little bit. He got a son, but the Lord told Abraham all the families of the earth will be blessed through you. Did he see it when he died? No, he died there in Canaan.

He never saw all the families of the earth being blessed through him. Today it's happening, but he never lived to see it. And sometimes we may serve and we may die.

William Carey died and he never saw the fantastic blessing that would come through his translation ministry and his missionary work, not only in India, but the number of people around the world that would be challenged by his life. He never saw it. A lot of godly missionaries never saw in their lifetime the challenge that would come.

Jim Elliot died out there in South America without seeing how many people were blessed, would be blessed through his life in the future. You may die without seeing all that God can accomplish through your life, but if you are faithful and you live by faith, you'd have lived in a good way and when you die your

blessing will go on for generations after you die. They didn't receive the promises, but they lived in such a way that they proved that they were not living for something on earth.

They were desiring, verse 16, a better country in heaven. He was willing by faith to offer up Isaac. He offered up Isaac in faith.

Lord, I don't know how you're going to fulfill the promises through this son if you want me to kill him, but that's your business. I'll do it. I'll do what you say.

Faith makes us do some things which the world cannot understand. When Elijah wanted fire from heaven on the water, what did he tell them to do? Pour 12 buckets of water. Pour water to get a fire? He should have told them to put a few matchsticks there.

You know like today when people want to do a miracle they do all kinds of tricks. That was no tricks there. He said I'll show you this is a fire from heaven.

Pour water. God will bring the fire. I'll kill Isaac and God will bring seed through Isaac.

I don't know how. That's faith. That's how Abraham lived.

He said well maybe God will raise him from the dead. Verse 19, bring him back to life and still fulfill his promise. What faith Abraham had.

He had faith in the resurrection. Amazing. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and he saw about things to come and Jacob blessed his children.

By faith we can bless our children. Do you know that? You can bless your children concerning their future. Faith because you taught them the ways of God.

You say now I have faith that you'll obey these ways and it's going to go well with you. What a blessing we can give as parents to our children like Joseph, like Jacob and like Isaac gave to their children. We read that Jacob did this leaning upon a staff meaning that he was a broken man he couldn't stand on his leg properly because God had broken him.

It's a wonderful thing in Hebrews chapter 11 in the midst of all these great things that people accomplished you see a man walking with a stick. That was a great miracle but God broke him. That's another type of miracle God does when he breaks a man.

By faith Joseph made mention of the future that we go back to Canaan. We won't stay in Egypt and by faith Moses took three decisions. Verse 23, 24 and 25.

Number one, verse 23, sorry verse 24. Verse 23 was Moses' parents took a decision to take care of their child. Another example of faith of the parents.

Verse 24 to 26 Moses took three decisions by faith. One, verse 24, he refused the honor of this world. I don't want to be known as Pharaoh's daughter's son.

Number two, he refused the pleasures of sin. Verse 25. Number three, he refused the wealth of this world.

There are three things Moses rejected. The world's honor, the world's pleasures and the world's wealth. And if you are a man of faith there are three things you will reject.

The world's honor, the world's pleasures and the world's wealth. And Moses took that decision because his parents brought him up properly. That's the decision you need to take and instead of that he chose the reproach of Christ better than all these things.

That's what we must choose as well. And goes on to say about the many other wonderful things that happened through faith. The splitting of the Red Sea, verse 29.

The breaking down of the walls of Jericho. And then it says about Rahab the harlot, how she had faith that God would protect her and so she welcomed God's people even though she risked her life. Rahab risked her life to protect those spies.

Sometimes we have to risk our life to protect the people of God. There we can follow in Rahab's footsteps. And what more shall I say, verse 32.

Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, sign of the prophets. By faith they conquered kingdoms, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, put armies to flight. Women, verse 35, received Baghdad dead by resurrection.

In Elijah's time and Elisha's time. And then that's one type of faith. I mean that's one type of result of faith.

And then there were other people who lived by faith who did not get these things. Others were tortured, verse 35. And they did not accept their release because they wanted a better resurrection.

Some experienced mockings and scourges and chains and imprisonment. Some were stoned, some were sawn in two. Tradition says that was Isaiah.

They were tempted, verse 37. They were put to death. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated.

Men of whom this world was not worthy. They were too good for this world. They wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

So you see faith does not always mean that we shut the mouths of lions. Sometimes it means we're killed. Some people think that faith always means we call down thunder and break the walls of Jericho and split the Red Sea.

That is faith. To endure when a lion is coming to eat me up and I say I still believe in Jesus Christ, that's also faith. When they are ready to chop off my head and I say I will not deny Jesus, Jesus is my Lord, that's also faith.

So both are mentioned together. Some people think faith means you'll do, you'll see some miracle. No.

Faith that may be like that if that's God's will but it also may mean that I endure till the end, whatever the cost, without giving up. That's also faith. And leave it to God to decide which it is to be in your case.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego went into the fire and came out untouched. The early Christians were burnt in the fire and they got burnt up. Daniel went into the lion's den and came out by faith.

The early Christians were thrown to the lions and the lions ate them up. Who had more faith? Both had faith. One to endure till the end and the other to come out.

They left it to God to decide whether the lion should eat me up or the lion should spare me. They left it to God to decide whether the fire should burn me up or whether it should be spared. Leave it to God to decide whether you should be beheaded or you should escape.

James was beheaded, Peter escaped. So God's will is different. But all of them, this group and the other group, verse 39, they all got approval through faith.

But now God has provided something better. You see that word better keeps coming in Hebrews for us. What is that? Now our faith is not looking unto Abel or Moses or Enoch or Noah or any of these people.

Our faith is, verse 2 of chapter 12, looking unto Jesus. He's the author and finisher of our faith. We look unto him and run this race.

We don't stand still. The race of faith is something in which you can't stand still. You look at Jesus, time is short, you have to run.

If you fall down, get up and run. There are many people who have fallen down in a race and got up and run and still got the prize. Don't get discouraged if you fall down somewhere in the Christian life.

Just get up and run and look at Jesus who endured the cross and ran to the end of his life. And when many enemies oppose you, verse 3, consider him. How many enemies oppose him? You have not yet resisted, verse 4, to the point of shedding blood like he did.

You know how much Jesus resisted? To the point of shedding blood and striving against sin. Now verse 4 teaches us that Jesus also strove against sin. It wasn't easy for him.

How much did he strive against sin? With this attitude, I would rather shed my blood, verse 4, than commit sin. That means I would rather die than commit sin. If you have that attitude, you'll be an overcomer.

You come to a situation where you have to tell a lie. And you say, I would rather die than tell a lie. Oh, and you'll be an overcomer.

You come to some situation where you can cheat a little bit and make a little more money and you say, well, I would rather die than cheat a little. Any sin, you're tempted to lust somewhere, you're attracted by some woman to sin, and you say, I'd rather die than commit that sin. That is the secret of overcoming.

Then he goes on to speak about discipline. You see, we look unto Jesus as our example and we look unto our Father who disciplines us, verses 4 to 11. God disciplines us and all discipline is for our good.

We don't feel happy about it now, but later on it'll work for our good. It says in verse 14, pursue peace with all men and sanctification. There are two things we must pursue in life, peace with all human beings and holiness, otherwise we'll never see the Lord.

Don't be like Esau, verse 16, who for a little bit of earthly profit lost a spiritual birthright. He's saying for some small earthly gain, don't lose your eternal inheritance. You know afterwards how much he prayed, he couldn't get it.

At the judgment seat of Christ, many people will pray with tears, but they can't get back the life they wasted on earth. Verse 18 onwards, he speaks about Mount Zion compared to Mount Sinai. He says that now we have come to the church and not to the mountain to be afraid.

And one last, one thing I want to mention in verse 24, the last thing here in verse 24, the blood of Jesus and the blood of Abel. The blood of Abel cried for judgment, the blood of Jesus cried for mercy. When somebody harms you like Cain harmed Abel, you will either pray for judgment on that person or you'll pray for mercy.

That depends on whether you're under the Old Covenant or the New Covenant. If you follow the Old Covenant, somebody harms you like Abel's blood, it'll cry out for judgment, Lord judge that man, Lord judge that man, like the Old Testament sounds. If you follow Jesus, your blood will cry out for mercy, Lord forgive him for he doesn't know what he's doing.

Verse 25 to 29 says about this kingdom that God is building, the church, the only thing that will remain forever, everything will be shaken, people who have put their confidence in money, in Jesus name I prophesy their confidence will be shaken according to verse 25 to 29. You put your confidence in real estate, property, anything on this earth, it'll all be shaken. Some of whom people are finding their security in buying up a lot of land and earthly property, brother forget it.

Don't put your confidence there, you can have property but don't put your confidence there, let your confidence be in God. Everything else will be shaken. Let's serve God with thankfulness because he's a consuming fire.

And then some closing exhortations in chapter 13, love the brothers, verse 1, show hospitality, anyone who comes to your house, remember those who are suffering, prisoners who are ill-treated, suffer with them, encourage them, visit them, keep your marriage perfectly pure, verse 4, don't ever sin sexually because God will judge them, be satisfied, verse 5, with what you have, don't run after money because God has said, I will never fail you nor forsake you. That is a promise, it's like a bank, like a bank account. What he's saying is, what is your bank account? Let me give you a bank account, the best bank account you can have, God's promise, I will never fail you nor forsake you.

How many rupees is that? I will never fail you nor forsake you. Isn't that enough? The Lord said, the Holy Spirit says, don't be satisfied with what God gives you, don't look at that other brother or sister who's got more than you and say, oh I wish I had all that. You think that'll bring happiness? You think a better house, more clothes, a car or any of these things will bring happiness? No.

Be satisfied with what you have. I will never fail you nor forsake you, that's enough. You can boldly say in every situation, the Lord's my helper, I will not be afraid, let any man, what can any man do unto me? No fear of any man or any circumstances.

An advice to listen to your elders, verse 7 and verse 17, obey your leaders, remember those who led you, value them, submit to them because they have to give an account for your life one day. To God, you know that leaders have to give an account, verse 17, to God for everybody under their charge, respect them. Verse 7, it says, look at their life, look at the life of these leaders, follow their example, verse 8, because the same Jesus Christ who led them yesterday, today can lead you.

He's the same. What he did for that brother, he can do for you. That's the meaning of Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever in the context of verse 7. What he did for that godly brother, he can do for you.

Don't be occupied with strange doctrines, verse 9, there are plenty of them today. See whether these doctrines have helped the man who is preaching to live a good life, otherwise don't follow it. Let us go outside the camp with Jesus, bearing his reproach.

As long as we live in this world, we have to bear reproach. Let us offer a sacrifice of praise to God, always having a spirit of praise in our life and then he says finally, may the God of peace, verse 20, who brought up Jesus from the dead, equip you in every good thing to do his will, working in you what is pleasing in his sight, to him be glory forever and ever. Now let's turn to James chapter 1. In terms of when the letters of the New Testament were written, as far as we know, James was probably the first book of the 27 books of the New Testament written and that's significant that the very first book, if this is the first book of the New Testament, it was written before the Gospels, the Gospels were written, Mark was probably written the first of the Gospels, was written about two years after James I think, and if this is the first book of the New Testament, as we think it possibly could be, it's interesting that it speaks about faith that produces works.

That's the subject to this book, faith that produces works, because I think James saw how when faith was being preached for all those 20 years since the day of Pentecost, after which he wrote this book, he could see how so many people, just like today, had misunderstood faith. It was almost as though faith meant how I live doesn't matter. The main thing is to believe in Jesus.

And so James had this burden inspired by the Holy Spirit to write about faith, saying that faith must produce works. And some of the things he talks about in the first chapter, he speaks about faith producing victory over temptation. In chapter 2, he speaks about faith producing love towards all men, so that you're not partial towards anyone.

And in chapter 3, he speaks about how faith will make you, your tongue controlled, you'll be gracious in your speech.

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