



Summer 2020 Series

Hebrews 11:

**“..keeping our
eyes on Jesus”**

Eric Blick



Helena, Montana, May 2020

Hebrews 11 - What is Faith?

Faith is seeing the unseen as the true reality.

Book Overview: "God's commentary for the Old Testament" [and] how [it] beautifully it casts the scripture and history of Israel in the light of Christ... Although they were persecuted when they became Christians and had gained a reputation for sacrificial service, the author is now deeply concerned for them... Many scholars conclude that the Jewish recipients of this letter were considering abandoning Christianity and returning to Judaism (Dever); Luther believed Apollos wrote it; probably 60 A.D., before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

Theme & Big Idea: The supremacy and finality of Jesus Christ as seen in his person, his work and his trustworthiness "Jesus, the preeminent of all God's servants, has, as we read in chapter 9, 'appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself' (9:26), and in that sacrifice he has brought us eternal salvation (5:9; 12:22-24; 1:2). And given this, we also see major emphasis on the need to continue in the faith" (Dever).

More Than a Cliche: Why Faith Actually Matters?

Pastor Ryan, Intro, 11:1-3, 5/30/20: Our faith is not wishful thinking. We wish our sports team does well. But it is not guaranteed.

Big idea. Faith matters because God commends it.

Why is faith so important and takes up the whole chapter of Hebrews 11? Vs1-3 give us a good start in answering this question:

1. Faith fuels our endurance. God does not promise us A's on tests here or health forever or success or . We are assured that the promises of God are true. So what are the promises? Our faith is in his promises and his character.
2. Because it is commendable by God. By faith they received their commendation by God. This is not the hall of fame/faith since there is one hero of the story. This is the story of sinful, flawed saints who

Hebrews 11:1-3

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

2 For by it the people of old received their commendation.

3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

through faith received commendation from God. Commendation is approval. In Jesus we can be rescued too and get this commendation. We ask valedictorians to speak at graduation for their accomplishments. God is more concerned about our faith than our accomplishments.

3. It is the building block by which we see the rest of the world vs3. By his light we see light. He is the Creator, and we live in his world.

Will we take our faith as seriously as the Bible does?

A Dead Man Who Still Speaks, a Man Who Never Died, and the Importance of a Living Faith

Pastor Ryan, Intro, 11:4-6, 6/7/20: the day Virginia died in the morning.

Big Idea: Faith is what Abel and Enoch had in common even though the uncertainty of their lives could not have been different.

The Story: Abel is murdered and his life is cut short for having saving faith. Enoch had the same faith and never died. God took him direct to heaven and was the only human never to die.

In John, Jesus says to Peter, What is it to you if I have John live until I come again and you die now? Come, follow me. Walk after me with the same trust at Abel and Enoch. The uncertainty of life is not God punishing us and awarding Enoch.

The Lesson: If we truly believed God is THERE AND that he rewards those who seek him, we would live differently.

In an uncertain world, there is TWO things that are absolutely true. It is what Abel and Enoch believed: God is there. He rewards those who trust him. That is faith. That is what verse 6 says. These rewards are not guaranteed for this life but for the city who's architect and builder is God.

That, in essence, is what these two men did, and that is what made them great - the OBJECT of their faith.

Kangaroos, Giant Boats, and the Importance of Putting Faith into Action

Pastor Ryan, Intro, 11:7, 6/14/20: We do not trust nor like hypocrites, people saying to do one thing and not doing it themselves.



Drive Up COVID Graduation Party, May 2020

Big idea. Faith matters because it changes our actions.

Faith of Noah: acting on an event yet unseen as if it for sure is going to happen.

To live by faith means you live for the unseen.

a. Faith includes enduring through counter-culturalism: We do not need to be angry that the cultural norm is moving away from us and what the gospel teaches. Like Noah, it was costly to endure ridicule by friends and people who lost respect of him building a large boat with no body of water nearby the construction site. Why? He responded in faith.

Faith for Noah meant going against the flow. Taking action that will actually put us the cross-hairs of what the world believes.

b. What was Noah's motivation? WHY did he build?

Vs6 he was warned by God and then acted in reverent fear. If you don't rightly understand who God is you will never live differently. Because we know he is loving and just, we are passionate about racial rest and reconciliation.

Hebrews 11: Abraham & Sarah

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

And he went out, not knowing where he was going.
9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

Living by Faith in Times of Uncertainty and Sorrow.

Pastor Jim, Intro, 11:8-12, 6/21/20

Big idea. Faith matters because it gives us a better way to live in the broken world.

Two observations:

1. Faith comes before obedience.

2. Faith leads to action. Faith will always lead to obedience, in fact, faith is what changes our nature to want to obey and is impossible to obey without it.

Abraham and Sarah exhibit strong faith through different circumstance.

A. Abraham's story here is one of uncertainty. He demonstrates his faith by living in a tent. What? Abraham is told he will get the land but instead of putting down foundations for a massive house like the one he left in Ur, he resides in tents. How can he do that? He is putting his confidence in the word and promises of God.

B. Sarah's story is one of sorrow. She was barren and lived in shame. She was powerless in herself. Faith does not call us to be perfect but to trust the one who is perfect. Hebrews 11 is about how great God is. This is not really the "Hall of fame of faith" - there is One hero of the story.



Kayacking, June 2020

Is anything too hard for the Lord? Look what results from this faith in the powerful God. A 100 year old man with a barren wife become the physical parents of many nations and the spiritual ancestors of all who believe in the same God with the same faith.

Applications:

1. How is God calling you to obey him by faith in this part of your life?
2. Know his promises of God, and know God more. Know his character and attributes, thereby we know the God in whom is our trust
3. Living by faith is not a one time act. It is a daily and moment to moment trust of the powerful God who is working for me and all creation. It is daily depending on God and his strength.

By Faith, Seeking and Desiring a Better Country.

Pastor Jim, Intro, 11:13-16, 6/28/20: The glimpse that these people in Hebrews 11 saw was like seeing the Colorado Rockies appear on the horizon and also never getting to backpack in Roosevelt National Forest.

Big idea. Faith matters because by it God is not ashamed to be called My God.

Who and What? Who are the ALL who died in faith not receiving the things promised? What did they not receive? The who is Abraham and Sarah in this immediate context. The last verses are faith as acted out. These verse are faith on the inside. Abraham did see the birth of Isaac, but he did not even own a piece of land in the land of promise, except for the burial ground for Sarah. He never saw his descendants as promised as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Abraham and Sarah died joyfully waiting but never fully receiving what he saw. What did he see? John 8:56 Jesus said your father Abraham saw my and greeted it with joy seeing this from afar. He saw Christ was coming. Galatians 3:8-9 says the same thing. Abraham knew that there was more to his offspring than Isaac - it was Jesus, the Seed.

Abraham saw the city that God was preparing for him, Hebrews 11:16. He never got to live in here but died in this hope. This changed how Abraham lived.

Genesis 23:4 Abraham says he is a sojourner even inside the Promised Land because he saw the City.

Verse 14 says Abraham earnestly and longingly searches for his homeland, and verse 15 says he could have gone home to Ur to find this "home." But he believed there was promised him a real and better home. Filling in Hebrews 11:1 with this section: by faith Abraham had assurance of this homeland hoped for, he had conviction of this

Hebrews 11:16

But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.



Nürnberg Trials, Germany trip January 2020

homeland even though he could not see with his physical eyes.

Application: A. Do we have the sight that Abraham had in these promises? Do we think that America is our homeland? Or do we long for God and this city as sojourners as it is real? B. We need the power of the gospel in our hearts to bring about this inner resolve of faith. We need more than just positive thinking. We need the power of the gospel to bring us this desire to want to change, to want to know his promises, to want to forgive others, to want to lay down your life now because this future city is real. Run to Christ to work these things in our lives that we cannot work on our own.

Dark Story, Faithful God.

Intro 7/5/20, Pastor Ryan: This is a hard story - God asking Abraham to kill Isaac.

Big idea. Abraham's faith is in the God who is faithful to keep his promises.

Here are keys we learn from the story of Abraham that the author of Hebrews references from Genesis 22:

Verse 1: God is testing not tempting. Testing is not the same as testing. It is done in order to strengthen faith. We are given a picture behind the scenes of God's intent.

Verse 2: Abraham has more than one son, but this son is the son of the promise.

Hebrews 11

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."

19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

The backstory: Genesis 22 highlights

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." - Genesis 22:1

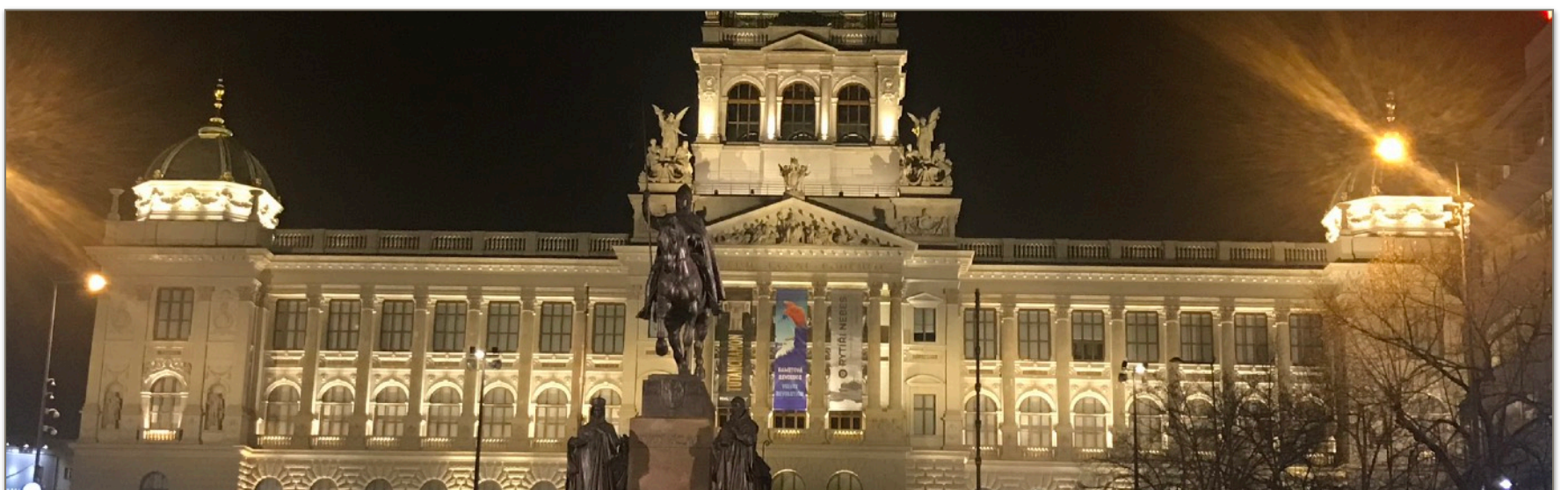
He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." - Genesis 22:2

Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." - Genesis 22:5

Verse 5: Abraham is ready to obey AND believe that somehow they will both retune. We will worship and then WE will come back to you.

A. What can we learn from Abraham's faith?

1. To live by faith requires a singular devotion to God above everything else. It is not family plus God. It is worshipping God as our primary focus above all things. Do you see him as the Great Treasure? God is not #1 and family or me is #1a. He alone is #1. Is your love for God more important than comfort and the beauty of family or reputation or money.



Prague, Czechia

2. To live by faith means we believe that God can do the impossible - even when they not make sense. Abraham knew that God would fulfill the blessing through Isaac, so God has to do something impossible to do this if Isaac is dead. He believed God would have to raise him because he was able. Let's live like we serve a God who can do the impossible.

B. What can we learn about the promise-keeping God in whom was Abraham's faith?

1. God is good, he is faithful, and his plan can be trusted. This is why Abraham was able to do the unthinkable because he knew God was good in his essence and worthy to be praised by trusting him. We can live for God and not the approval of others because his approval is sure and long and settled.
2. How do we know God is Good? Has he proved it? In the parallel story, like Abraham saw Isaac carry the wood to the hill to be sacrificed, God watched his own son carry the tree of wood, the cross, to the top of the hill and really become killed. While Abraham saw the angel and ram to be sacrificed instead, there was no ram for Christ and no angel to stop this. God is good to pay our debt in this way so we can know him.

Three Dying Men with One Forward-Looking Faith.

Intro 7/12/20: His 20 year HS reunion was all about looking back. We are all good at talking

Hebrews 11

20 By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

21 By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

about the good 'ole days. We as Christians need to get better at looking forward and talking about our real future, our death, and the hope of the new heavens and earth. Each of these men are cited with this kind of faith in facing their own deaths.

Big idea. Faith matters because in the face of terror even death, it will have current hope and peace.

What does forward-looking faith look like?

- A. This faith means we can trust God even in the midst of current and impending brokenness. This faith acknowledges difficult reality while moving forward in hope. Ignoring reality does not make the check-engine light go away. These three men acknowledged the difficulty yet to come facing them and their families but they acted in faith. They did not put their heads in the sand. They moved forward.
- B. This faith looks with hope for the future. When these three give blessing at their death, they are doing it grounded on the promises they received. Even though they did not experience all that God promised right then yet, they illustrated faith in that they knew God WILL fully



Great, Great Grandfather Abraham Diehl. Civil War remnants.

fulfill all his promises. They believed based on the character of God. We can be okay with being weak because God in his strength is enough to fulfill these real promises. Leaning on his staff from his weakness is a great picture as from that spot he is worshipping. He worships with his actions. Know the promises of God, and don't let them get pushed to the back of the refrigerator missing out on these beautiful truths.

- C. This faith means we act now in light of future realities. Why does the author of Hebrews tie faith to Joseph's bones? We see the promises and we act now in ways that would not make sense now unless these promises were true. Joseph believed God would fulfill his promises of the land and presence of God with his people, then we can too.

Conclusion: Practically, what do we do? Know and keep at front of mind God's promises. Live with future hope. Therefore, we can live differently now. For instance for us, we do not fully leverage our balance sheet like our culture values and our peers do because we believe we get it all anyway so let's give away generously at the edges of our fields in gleaning in freedom.

Hebrews' big idea is that Jesus is better. It is only because of what Jesus did on the cross that we can look at death differently. Our future inheritance is sure. His grace allows us to live like this - radically different because where we are headed is real and true.

Faith > Fear

Pastor Ryan, Intro 7/19/20: We are a people gripped by fear. There is, however, an antidote to

fear - it is faith. That is what this passage teaches and show us. Moses is our story today, illustrating how a real man put real trust in a real God moving past the real fear and retribution and evilness of Pharaoh.

Big idea. Faith quiets fear and speaks truth over uncertainty.

What do we learn about faith and fear in this passage?

1. Faith frees us from the fear of people. Moses'

Hebrews 11

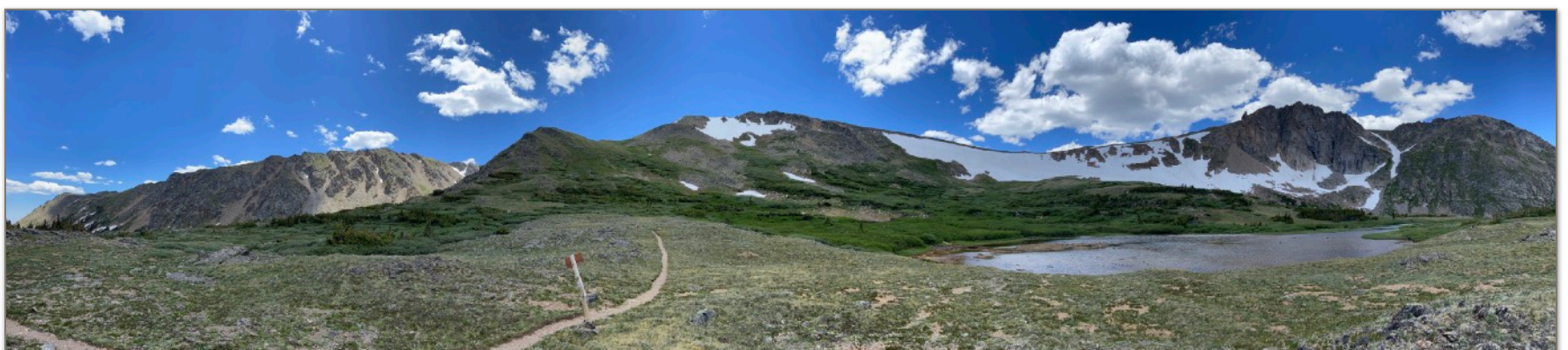
23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

27 By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

28 By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

parents showed fearless faith in God at great expense to themselves to defy Pharaoh. How is the parent's seeing Moses as a beautiful baby connect to their overcoming fear by faith? In Exodus 2:2, Moses' parents saw that the pleasure, favor, and protection of God was over their child. Because they trusted this God and his plans, they were not afraid of Pharaoh. In VS24-27 decades have passed. Exodus 2



Above Devil's Thumb Lake, Roosevelt National Forest, Colorado, July 2020

says Moses was afraid when he fled Pharaoh but in Hebrews 11 it says he was not afraid to leave. It is like the firefighter in face of burning alive, his actions overwhelm his fear and he enters the building to rescue the dying. Because I already have the approval over me and the guidance of Creator God, I do not need to fear man, just like Moses did not.

2. Faith frees us from the fear of missing out - vs24-26. Moses was motivated by the reward to come, it was real to him, as greater treasure than all the wealth of Egypt which he had at his fingertips. He traded in the treasures of Egypt - the power, riches, prestige, comfort - because he really believed by faith the God is a more real and greater treasure. It was greater than what he gave up. Moses was no fool. He knew what he was giving up. He traded this for difficulty and bearing shame with God's people. And he knew the real treasure he was getting was better. Adam and Eve's sin was a fear of missing out - God is holding back the best tree in the garden from me and I am missing this. Sin is a temporary pleasure. Don't miss that the favor of people is a pleasure. It is just a passing pleasure. Jim Elliotts quote: he is not fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.
3. Faith frees us from the fear of the unknown and the unseen. Why? Moses saw him who is Invisible. So that we no longer have to fear the visible or invisible. Why? Because Christ, the invisible God, took on visible flesh. He has

proved it to us. Jesus gives us eyes to see what is invisible.

Hebrews 11

29 By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.
30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.
31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

Conclusion: Look to Christ. Our faith that sets us free from fear is faith in Christ.

Going Forward by Faith Together

Intro 7/26/20: three stories from the OT are highlighted here in this passage: parting of the Red Sea, Jericho walls falling, and a maybe an unlikely Gentile woman being saved.

Big idea. Faith matters because it compels us to move forward one step at a time even when we do not see the big picture.

1. Faith brought the people across dry land through the Red Sea. God by his abundant grace acts on behalf of his people - his complaining, little faith people. God does it all. God promised deliverance to his people from the slavery and tyranny of the Egyptians. They



Omaha Triathlon, July 2020

did not sit down and stay in Egypt. They moved one step at a time forward in faith.

2. Faith brought down Jericho's walls. Israel goes along with God's unique battle plan to take over Jericho: after day 5 they kept walking around the walls with no weapons in obedience.
3. Faith saved Rehab the harlot. Joshua 2 recounts the details of this story, and the author of Hebrews pulls this one sentence in summary of the big idea. She believes the Lord has given them the land, she believes the Lord of heaven and earth is for them, she is looking for salvation, and she finds it by faith. Faith is not limited to the squeaky clean people but for anyone and everyone: the outsider, the pagan, the neglected, the sinner, the enemy - me. She is going against what the whole city believes as they are looking for the spies.

Conclusion: All three of these stories illustrate faith in the future power of the deliverance of God. How does faith in a scarlet chord or marching around a city or defeating the world's superpower by drowning?

We have the same weapons: Our trust is IN the God who keeps his word and will do so by any means for his glory and our joy. We fight enemies today: our sin, shame, broken relationships, lust, greed, addictions, plus 10,000 more enemies. They are as big as the wall of Jericho. 2 Cor 10 says we have weapons for this warfare: 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our

warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

Faith is a community project: All faith so far in this chapter have been done by individuals. Now

Hebrews 11

32 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

starting in this passage it is faith of the community of God. Living by faith is not only what I do personally but corporately as well. What could the Lord be calling us to do and go forward together to accomplish much for Him? Let's pray together to that end.

Living by Faith in Success and Suffering.

Intro 8/2/20 - from Okoboji; Pastor Jim: There are many top baseball players who acted poorly off the field that never then made it to the Hall of Fame. That is not what happens in Hebrews 11, the Hall of Faith - why? God is the story, not these fallen people. He establishes and restores the broken for his glory and our joy.



Alto for wine, July 2020

Big idea. If God can use imperfect “heroes” like these people, he certainly can use us and love us who are just as bad. There is hope!

These fallen people by faith made a trade. It is like when he was 10 and traded for a top, rare collectors item from Star Wars. He got what he wanted and 40 years later he can’t even remember what he traded for it! I wonder if that is how these saints in heaven feel today? It is.

How could they do this? Hebrews 10, they tasted the better treasure. Know Him today in his word and in reading and in good podcasts. Run for Him. He is the only one who can satisfy in a way we live radically because of that, by FAITH!

The Great Cloud of Witnesses.

Intro 8/9/20 - Pastor Ryan: The triathlon in Griswold, Iowa in summer of 2018, Ryan moved from encouraging spectator of his wife to fellow competitor.

Big idea. Chapter 11 is there to inspire us not to watch but get in the game and endure with Christ.

The passage: These stories from chapter 11 are not meant for us to stay in the stands and watch. They are meant to inspire us to take action, to run the race that is set before us. What type of race are you in? The 100m dash is not the 5k run. What

Hebrews 12

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

is your strategy and how do you prepare yourself. In the life of faith we need to answer both of those questions:

1. What kind of race are we running in?

It is an endurance, long race not a sprint. The New Testament makes it clear that the race is a brutal race often time in this broken world. It is a race that requires courage. But do not pace yourself - that is taking the metaphor too far.

The race we are running has already been marked out for us. Vs. 1 - the course is not random or purposeless. He has marked the course. It is not a 4.8998 race, it is 5k and purposeful. Whatever course you are on, know that he has marked your course for you in love and purpose.

2. How do we prepare for it and run it?

Strategy 1: Throw off all weight and sin. Will it help you run, not only is what you are considering to do sin? Serious runners get rid of every resistance. What is it that is holding you back from running this race more passionately? Bitterness? Respectable sins like overwork and family idolatry. What is the problem? It keeps us from the full weight of joy in following Christ.



Alto for wine, July 2020



Strategy 2: Look to Jesus vs 2-3. Have a razor focus on the goal: the goal is Jesus. Only because he lived a perfect life, died, raised, and seated at God's right hand, can I run well. He is the one who sets us free from sin. Jesus gives us the ultimate picture of what endurance looks like. The rest of the cloud of witnesses in their endurance point us to this one - Jesus endured perfectly. And it counts for me and replaces my shortcomings and sins. If they treated Jesus with hostility, why would they not do the same for us? He is at the finish line bidding us to finish and run well by his spirit in us.

Conclusion:

Why were they able to endure suffering, make right choices, forsake current pleasure for lasting reward? They KNEW the Better Treasure.

Hebrews 10:30 For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

32 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. 35 Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37 For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

