

Living in Hope

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Date: 15 December 2024

Preacher: Pastor Steve Hersey

[0 : 0 0] that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest he be wearied and faint in your minds. All right, let's have a word of prayer. Father, I pray that you would help us as we study in Hebrews chapter 12, as we come toward the conclusion of our study in Hebrews, Lord, that you would help us to learn today.

You would help us to be uplifted and encouraged. Lord, you would help us to be ready for whatever may come. Lord, that we would know that you are there with us and you are helping us and you've been through it all already.

So, Lord, I pray that you would just help us right now to have our minds stimulated as we think about the things that you have for us.

We would have our spirits stimulated as we realize that you are there and you're going to take care of us. Lord, I just pray that you would just minister now to our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. This morning, as we begin Hebrews chapter 11, first I want you to see, if you remember chapter 12, chapter 11, we talked about living by faith.

[1 : 1 0] We're going to live by faith. Here in Hebrews chapter 12, we're going to talk about living in hope. We live by faith and we're going to live by hope. You notice the very first word of Hebrews chapter 12, wherefore.

Wherefore is just like therefore. If it's there, why? What's it referring to? It always refers to something that happened before.

So he says, based on chapter 11, the fact that we're going to live by faith, we have all these examples of faith. Wherefore, he says, now, seeing we also are encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight.

Who are the witnesses he's talking about? Well, that word therefore gives us a clue. He says, think about what we just talked about in chapter 11. Think about all those people who lived by faith.

We have a great cloud of witnesses who have told us and shown us what it is like to live by faith. Wherefore, seeing we are encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight.

[2 : 2 2] Can you hear me? Can you hear me, Dan? Am I on? Okay, now you can. How about now?

Is that better? Okay. All right. So he says, you've got all these people who have been examples of faith. Now, that you have all these people who have witnessed to you about their faith and what God did through them, he says, now you have hope.

Live in hope because of what these people have done. He says, look, these people who lived in faith, they had lived in faith, faced great challenges. They faced great triumphs. They faced great afflictions.

They faced all kinds of things. And they did it by faith. He says, now you live in hope. Now you go out and live your life in the hope, the confident expectation kind of hope.

That God is with you and he will take care of you. You know, we can't determine what we're going to face in life. We have no clue what's going to come up, what we're going to face.

[3 : 36] Just like Abraham and Moses and all those other Old Testament people that are mentioned in chapter 11. They didn't know it was coming in life. They just knew that they had to trust God and follow him.

And so he says to us, he says, look, you do the same thing. You follow in hope. So that verse, verse 1, he talks about that great cloud of witnesses.

Lay aside the weight. So easily we set us. Let us run with patience. The race that is set before us. How does that great cloud of witnesses in chapter 11 encourage you to endure?

How does that help you? When you're moving for something and you're looking for God's will in that, and it goes smoothly and everything falls in tight.

Now, it just encourages you to take a step in faith to be bold in Christ and to follow these instructions. Okay. Yeah? Anybody else?

[4 : 45] Okay. I feel that what they have to go through them, not even knowing about Jesus, and everything that takes place.

And what he's saying, sorry. Their faith has to be so strong. Because what they've faced is far beyond what he has to face. True. And all of the problems that there is that they have for shelter and food and all that kind of stuff.

They really have to rely constantly on that. And then they have to turn to the people who do the work. They say, look at all the miles they walk and all that.

And so then they do that and still praise God for what? You know, this provision for them shows a really large amount of faith.

I mean, let's face it. We have a thousand times set up. And they're going to go to church back then. Yeah. And they still praise God.

[5 : 51] And here we are, we complain. And God, why is this happening here? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, for me, that's... Yeah. It's had a land that's all the struggles and stuff that they've had.

And I really don't have nothing to say about it. Yeah. You're one of those who likes to see it rain because it fills your well up. But most people are like, ah, raining again today?

Oh, man. Think about Noah on the ark. You know, rain after rain after rain after rain. It blows quite so bad. I wish the wind wouldn't blow quite so bad. I'm with you there.

He says, look, because of all of the things that these people face, he says, you can face things that are coming up to you. And he says, and do it with patience.

Yes. Even when the Israelites were in the desert, and they complained, and they brought to death, God was so merciful to us.

[6 : 48] He still provided food, water, and stuff. Yeah. Yeah. All the complaining they did about things, they said, hey, you're on your own. You can find your own stuff.

But no, he was faithful to make sure they were taken care of and everything. So he says, run with patience. He says, you're going to face things. Things are going to come up. Run with patience. Aren't we all dissatisfied when things aren't normal?

Yes. Yeah. We're all dissatisfied when things aren't normal. You're right. It's, yeah. We have our routines, and we like them. And when our routine gets messed up, we don't like it at all.

So, yeah. Thank you. We're going to try to work on having some new adventure. Yep. New adventure. Yeah. Fine. A modern day example is, you know, these people in West North Carolina, their lives were not changed.

They were regrouped. Yep. Yep. And one day they had everything in the next day gone, including family. And so, they, the believers there, have certainly had to just get back to, oh, I'm grateful I have food.

[8 : 02] Yeah. I'm grateful I have some kind of something. Yep. And they're still getting things that need. So. Yep. So. All right.

We complain about it. Yes, we do. Margaret? Isn't it ironic that when people lose everything, the rich people struggle more than the poor people?

Because the poor are used to going without. Yep. The rich people are used to sitting here. Yep. And they have to go without things. And sometimes maybe that's a good thing for them because he says here, in order to have patience, and he says, which will remove, does lay aside the weight that is to easily beset us, and the sin that easily besets us.

Huh? Every weight. If you go out running. If I go out running, I'm not wearing my suit. I'm not wearing my dress shoes and things. I'm getting those things off.

I'm putting on running clothes. I'm putting on sneakers designed for running, lightweight, and have the grips and things on them that they need to have. I'm putting on the right things, taking off the things that are going to weigh me down, things that are going to slow me down.

[9 : 18] I'm not going out and run against Usain Bolt in a 100-meter dash that he can do in less than nine seconds, and these clothes. Not going to happen. Of course, I'm not going to go out and race against him anyway because I would just be going up from the starting line he needs already at the end.

So, you know. But he says, remove those things. Take care of the sin and things that are going to weigh you down. Get rid of those things that are going to decrease your faith. Make sure you put faith as the number one thing.

And then he says, look, in this race for life, the success comes when you keep your eye on the prize. So what does he say in verse 2? Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

He says, keep your eyes there. That's the goal, is to become like him. It's our goal to eventually be with him in heaven.

What were you going to say? You're getting ahead of me. Okay. Hang on just a second. Because what happens?

[10 : 25] So often we take our eyes off the prize, take our eyes off of Jesus, and people start looking at themselves.

I can do this. I can take care of this. I got this. And they get discouraged. Think of an example I came up with that when we were studying about Elijah up there on top of Mount Carmel.

The prophets of Baal. They wanted to see Baal do great things. How did they do that? They did all kinds of things to themselves. They wind up cutting themselves and things and taking knives and slicing themselves and doing things.

And they kept focusing on what they could do. And they get nothing but further and further discouraged because nothing was happening. Elijah gets up, does nothing to himself, stands there, prays a 63-word prayer, and fire comes down from heaven.

Those guys must have felt so foolish. All the things they had done, trying to make themselves. And they were discouraged because of it.

[11 : 33] We come to Peter. Peter started looking at the circumstances and got distracted. Remember, Jesus is walking across the water. Hey, Peter.

Peter says, hey, if that's really you, let me come out there too and walk. Come on. And Peter gets out there and he starts walking on water toward Jesus. And he's got his eyes on Jesus and he's following.

Ooh. And then he starts looking around. And he sees the waves and he sees the wind and he sees all the other stuff going on around him. And he starts looking at the circumstances and he starts to sink.

He becomes distracted by those circumstances. We do that so often. Or a lot of times we look at other people. How come I'm not like so-and-so?

Or how come they've got this and this and I don't? And how come they have this gift and I don't have a gift? And the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 10-12, comparing ourselves among ourselves, we are not wise.

[12 : 36] We compare ourselves to what Jesus wants us to be. What he has for us. And we keep our eyes on him. And we become more and more like him. So he says, look.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. He went to the cross. So don't get discouraged, you Hebrews.

Don't get upset. Keep looking at Jesus. Look at what he has done. Look at what he has gone through. Look at verse 3 there.

He says in verse 3, For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest he be wearied and faint in your mind.

He says, look at Jesus and everything he went through before you become faint and weary. Don't give up. Look at what Jesus went through. Hold your finger there in Hebrews and go with me to Luke chapter 23.

[13 : 33] Luke 23. And I'll ask you the question before I read the scripture.

Luke chapter 23, we're going to begin at verse 33. Luke 23, 33. Here's the question. As we read through this passage, think about the contradiction of sinners.

That Jesus faced. Okay. What contradiction of sinners did he face? Beginning at verse 33. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And they pardoned his raiment and cast lots. And the people stood beholding.

And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved himself. He saved others. Let him save himself. If he be Christ, the chosen of God.

[14 : 42] And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him and offering him vinegar. And saying, If he be the king of the Jews, save himself. And a superscription also was written above him in letters in Greek and Latin and Hebrew.

This is the king of the Jews. And one of the malefactors, which were hanging, railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. And the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation?

And we indeed justly, for we receive a due reward of our deeds. But this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today thou shalt be with me in paradise. Stop there. What contradiction of sinners did Jesus see? He's hanging up there on a cross. And what's going on around him?

Well, it says in verse 34, the end of it, he's hanging there on a cross. He's about to die. And what are they doing?

[15 : 52] They parted his raiment and cast lots. He's going to die. He doesn't need this stuff anyways. Which one of us is going to get it? They didn't care, not in the least.

And then it says, verse 35, And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also derided him. Verse 36, The soldiers also mocked him.

You know, and they had the sign over his head. And even one of the guys he's being crucified with said, Rail on him, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. You know, he was more concerned about the and us than he was anything else.

So Christ faced the contradiction of sinners. Christ came to save us. Christ came to give his life for us. And here's these, all of these people worried about nothing about what he's doing, only about what's going on for them.

And they're not even seeing that what he is doing is for them. He's giving his life for them so that they can have forgiveness of sins. They don't care in the least. So he faces this great contradiction of sinners, he talks about.

[17 : 04] Rather than focusing on our problems, we need to focus on Christ and his example. When we look at Christ and we keep our focus on him, we start to let what he did, we start to let the image of Christ who has gone through all of these things, become imprinted on our lives.

And we start to live like him, as long as we keep our eyes on him. But when we take our eyes off of him, things change dramatically. There's always a danger of growing weary.

Always a danger of, you know, giving up. There's always a danger of doubts. And he says, don't look at all those things. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus.

Then, secondly, notice the rigor of discipline. I don't know if I'll get all the way through this part today or not.

It's taking longer than I thought. The rigor of discipline. Look at verse 4. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

[18 : 18] And ye have forgotten the exhortation that speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastisement, wherefore all are partakers, then ye are bastards and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had fathers of the flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

For they verily for a few days chasten us after their own pleasure. But he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

[19 : 29] Going through chastisement, going through pain, going through difficulty is not pleasant. But we understand it. We understand that going through things not only corrects us, but builds us.

You know, if we've gone through pain and suffering, usually we get an education from it as well. We learn things that we go through.

You think of, I mentioned Usain Bolt a few minutes ago. I mentioned this to you before, but the training, the rigor of an athlete like him, the things that he goes through.

They mentioned the fact that he spent four years training for a race at the Olympics. The race was 100 meters. It took nine seconds.

Four years of training for a nine-second race. Now, I know he had to do heats, so I mean, he can bring that nine seconds four, five, six times.

[20 : 39] But that's it. Four years for nine seconds. You think of athletes, the things that they go through, the things that they do for training, they go through those things because they know there's a prize at the end.

They know there's something worthy at the end. And he says, look, we go through some suffering at times, but there's a prize at the end.

There are things that we're going to benefit from at the end. You know, moms, they go through nine months, and then they have the baby and there's a whole lot involved there.

But as soon as they're holding that baby in their arms, do they remember all the other stuff? Yeah. It's not just the things they have to do, it's some of the things they are not to do.

Yeah. When they're training. Yeah. Things that, I mean, in some cases, that's the suffering, the diet they have to be rigorous about, but the health routines that they do, not just the physical body of exercising.

[21 : 44] So yes, what you don't do is that. So you're telling me that Usain Bolt's favorite things are not Mountain Dew and Kit Kats? I knew I was getting something wrong there.

I said, you mean Usain Bolt's favorite things are not Mountain Dew and Kit Kats? See, when we go through things, when we face things, it's a learning time.

How are we? He says there in verse 4. He says, you haven't gone under blood yet. You haven't going against sin and things.

You haven't wound up shedding your blood yet. Christ did that. He said, don't give up. Don't get discouraged. Keep moving on. A verse you probably all know, could recite 1 Corinthians 10, 13.

There's no... I'm going to do that again. There is no temptation taking you, but such as is common to man. But God is faithful and will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.

[22 : 55] And will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it. You know, we go through times of distress. We go through times of difficulty.

What does this verse say about the temptations and things that we face? The things that we go through, what? It's common. We all do it. See, we think a lot of times, I'm the only one.

No, you're not. Lots of people go through things. Same things. How we face it is a whole different thing.

How we handle it. Sometimes we overestimate the severity of the trials we're going through.

You ever met people who... You see these things on Facebook and other places, you know. You know. A woman going through childbirth is nothing compared to a man with a flu.

[23 : 58] Those type of things. You know. Those type of things. Sometimes we overestimate the severity of some of the things we're going through. But sometimes we don't. Sometimes they are tough. But he says, you haven't given up your blood yet.

All right. I have experienced both kidney stones and childhood. And I'll tell you what. If a man goes through kidney stones, that's a lot harder than labor.

In my estimation. Hey. So, you get in touch with it. I've been there. Yeah. I've had kidney stones. I understand. You don't have to throw your coat and try to get a bottle into your tongue.

Yeah. I did. Only Bonnie did that one. She took the lesser way out. According to Margaret. She took the lesser way out. So. A lot of the new...

Oh. People there in chapter 11 did give their lives. They did give their lives. And he says, look. You haven't had to do that yet. Don't faint.

[24 : 58] Don't give up. Keep going. And the second thing he said is, look. God uses those painful experiences to help you. To guide you.

To help you to grow. To help you to be strengthened. You look at... Hold your finger there again and go with me to Proverbs chapter 3. Proverbs chapter 3.

Another familiar verse that probably... Once I start reading and go, oh, I know that verse. Proverbs chapter 3. Look at verse 11 and 12.

Proverbs 3. 11 and 12. My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord. Neither be weary of his correction. For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth.

Even as a father, the son in whom he delighteth. He says, God's going to give you chastening. He's going to give you correction. But he says, that's because he's a father.

[25 : 58] And wants you to do what is right. See, don't get discouraged when things come into our life. Don't get discouraged when things happen. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus.

And what he is doing and what he is trying to teach. As fathers, we had responsibility of keeping our kids in line.

Correcting them. Did we do that because I get great joy out of messing with this kid and, you know, playing psychological warfare with him? No. In our day, we gave him a spanking and stuff.

But we did it because we want them to grow up to be good, responsible people. We did it because we wanted to grow up to love the Lord.

We did it because we wanted them to know right from wrong. It wasn't a matter of, I just get a thrill out of, you know, spanking this kid. No, it's a matter of, I want them to be right in their life.

[27 : 07] And so that they can get along with other people and everything. And be what God wants them to be. See, we're trying to build Christ-likeness into them. Trying to help them to know what Christ wants for them.

Children that are left to themselves, what happens?

There you go. Yes. They just do whatever they want, get involved in anything they want, go wherever they want. And just... Like the present generation. Exactly, like the present generation.

Because there hasn't been any discipline in their life. No one there to correct them. And especially all those who grew up without fathers, so many of them. Now, I hear a lot of testimony from a lot of sports guys.

You'll hear they grew up without a father. And they'll talk about their mother and what she did and how she took care of them. And she actually did the role of the father. But it's not necessarily her role. But so many of them grew up and did not have that influence in their life.

[28 : 11] And God says, look, the chastening that comes, that God allows to come into our life, it's his loving commitment to us to get us on the right track, to get us where he wants us to be.

Look at verse 7 and 8 there again. He says, So he says, So he says, Look, God's going to deal with you like a father.

And a father's going to correct. A father's going to give you what you need. He says, Look, you can take the chastening. You can take, because when your earthly father does it, look at verse 9.

He says, Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be subjection to the father of spirits and live?

Father's discipline. If they do it in the right way, the kids grow up to say, You know what? I'm glad they disciplined me. I'm glad they gave me what I needed.

[29 : 26] And especially after they have their own children, and they learn and start having to do things with their children, and a lot of times they will go, You know what? My parents taught me right. They helped me to be what I was supposed to be, and I want my children to turn out like that.

So it's the discipline, if it's done in the right way, will bring reverence, he says. It will bring what exactly they need.

You know, human parents can make mistakes. Human parents can do things, you know, that are wrong, and handle things in the wrong way and stuff, despite their best intentions.

But God is the perfect father. God is always going to give us just exactly what we need. Do we trust him to do that? And I was planning to get a little bit further than that today, but I'm not going to.

People are starting to line up out there already. It's already past, quarter past. So I'm going to stop right there. Let's have a word of prayer. Father, thank you for this.