

How To Effectively Live By Faith

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[0 : 00] are making their way out. The rest of you who are remaining, please take your Bibles, open up to Ephesians 4 for our scripture reading this morning, and hopefully you already have Hebrews 12 marked out. So Ephesians 4 is where our scripture reading is today, and then Hebrews 12 is where we will be in, the text we will be in for the sermon this morning.

I feel this passage here in Ephesians 4, verses 17 through 24, is a good introductory passage to the very topic that we're going to be looking at today.

Okay. Ephesians 4, 17 through 24. The Apostle Paul writes, Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greed, to practice every kind of impurity. Greedy, excuse me, to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ, assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

The Lord bless the reading of his word. Last week, the great walk through the hall of faith, maybe it seemed more like a run as we covered verses 4 through 40. Unheard of, I think, in any sermon I've ever done in my life to cover 36 verses, and I think it was only about 35 minutes. So we definitely were at quite a clip and quite a pace. But as you go through the hall of faith in Hebrews 11, you see men and women who lived their lives based on their faith in God and were commended for it. And the thing we must take away and must remember in that passage is that these are ordinary men and women. There is nothing extraordinary about them, except maybe their sin at times. But they're ordinary people like you and

I, but they're commended for their faith and their obedience. So as we consider the examples of their lives, we must also realize that we are called to live a life of faith. And in Hebrews 12, verses 1 through 3, we're given some practical advice on how to effectively live by faith. I just want to give a disclaimer here.

[3 : 28] This also is one of those topics and messages that could take us months at a time to go through. How do you effectively live a life of faith? How do you live by faith? I think as we're continuing here in Hebrews 12, let's jump into the text. We're actually going to pick up in Hebrews 11, verse 39.

Hebrews 11, 39, and we will read through chapter 12 in verse 3. The author writes, Verse 3,

So jumping in here in verses 1, 2, and 3 of chapter 12, keeping in mind what the author writes at the end of chapter 11 there, that all those who were commended for their faith never received the promises, but they still held firm to their faith. There was nothing shaking them away from their confidence in God's ability to fulfill and see it through.

And now we, on this side of the cross, so them before the cross, anticipated the promises that are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. And we, on this side of the cross, look back at the fulfilled promises and can worship and have confidence in that and thankfulness for that. So as you get into chapter 12 now, in verse 1, first point to how to effectively live by faith. First, you must run with endurance. You must run with endurance.

See, the author calls us to this great race. A great race that takes place in a stadium filled with the Old Testament saints. You know, it's not merely a Coliseum of spectators, but these are the enduring saints who have already finished running.

[6 : 23] they're the ones who didn't know how God was going to fulfill his promises but believed he would people like Abraham and Sarah promised a son Isaac through Sarah both of them too old to have children but yet God provided miraculously they had confidence and they believed and folks who as the text in Hebrews 11 says of whom the world was not worthy yet still walked about suffering being put to death in horrible ways but confident in God's promises these are the individuals that fill this coliseum these are the individuals who are the spectators of the race that we now are called to and get to run ourselves the race of life yes but the race of life lived by faith the word therefore in verse 1 it's a hinge from the examples of the Old Testament saints to the application to the life of the believer the writer saying since you have all these individuals to who serve as examples who serve as yes this can be done in your life it is not an impossibility now we're going to shift it over to you who is who is now the athlete running in this race and we're surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses let us also lay aside every weight lay aside every weight no athlete

I've got to I've got to give a disclaimer here by no means am I a runner you can look at me and tell that I do not like running I am happy to not run I am happy to watch other people run while I don't but even that makes me tired from time to time but the fact is this is that I know if you are running for competition if you are running in a race or a marathon the last thing that you want to do is be carrying a backpack while you run of supplies now I get it in the military you have no choice you run with backpacks on thank you Mr. Boggs I can see that on your face I know that's what you have to do but I'm not talking about that circumstance but no athlete intentionally runs a race carrying weights and so we're told to lay aside every weight and one of the most horrifying truths about sin is that it clings to the sinner it says that we lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us sin is a very real threat which Christians must constantly contend with it is not something that we should abide it is not something we should even permit ourselves to get close to sin

I'm not going to define it like well are there certain sins that it's okay to get closer to than others I'll just give you let you answer that for yourself no in case you didn't know there are no there are no lines drawn in the sand that it's okay to well it's okay to get this close oh okay I'm this close okay see I'm not I'm not running with this weight or this hindrance on me right now see it's over there and I'm over here and here's the line sin not sin I'm over here but when you get close to that line you know what happens sin doesn't doesn't believe in boundaries it's going to jump over and grab you it's going to cling to you so you need to shake it off and walk away and put distance between yourself and whatever hindrance you may have in your life and I don't define it because it's unique to each individual well one person may struggle with another person may not struggle with I've mentioned that before and you're aware of that there are people who are who are you know more prone to alcohol to be an alcoholic and that's like that's like a vice and it's something that controls their life and for other people that's not an issue that's not a problem there are people who are who are given to visual stimulation and you know pornography is a draw to them and it's a sticking point something that that's that harbors you know onto them and holds onto them and grows and brings people down and there are other people that that doesn't affect and that's one of the things that's one of the greater greater lies in our society today right is the is that pornography is just a freedom it's an expression it's a freedom of you have freedom of expression in speech in pornography that's what it is it's freedom of speech no no research has done been done so extensively on the negative effects of pornography in so many areas of our lives that I would have to take weeks just to you know bear it out so rather than toing close to the line oh I'm not there it's not that bad don't even get close shed yourself of your sins and your hindrance and get away drop it and run the race

Romans 7 verses 21 through 23 Paul talks about this contention that he has in his life as a believer he says I find it to be a law that when I want to do right evil lies close at hand for I delight in the law of God in my inner being but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members Paul realized this he realized that hey I concur with the law of God about sin and I delight in God's word and I delight in his law but I have this problem going on I recognize this war taking place because you think about this he's not going to get to it until Romans 12 but Romans 12 1 and 2 tells us to therefore I urge you brethren by the mercies of God present yourselves a living sacrifice right which is your reasonable service of worship or spiritual worship and be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so we see over and over in the text of scripture that as believers we are to be renewing our mind we are to be delighting in the law of God we are to be growing in Christ likeness and in obedience but Paul says here in Romans 7 that this that he delights in the law of God in the inner being but he sees in his members another law waging war we call that the sin nature we call that you know the the you know the way we are naturally as humans we are sinners we are inclined to sin we're inclined to selfishness we're inclined to lust we're inclined to whatever that is dishonoring to God he says in my members dwells this law in my members dwells this contention he says against the law of my mind he's saying

I've been I've been renewing my mind I've been walking in obedience I've been delighting in the law of God basically saying I'm doing what a good Christian should be doing but I still have this contention I still have this struggle and this fight in my life Paul recognized it and then I didn't put the answer here or I didn't put the question and answer here in Romans 7 he says who can deliver me from this body of death that phrase in itself carries an interesting illustration that I'll have to share with you sometime but who's going to deliver me from the body of this death thanks be to God in Christ Jesus he recognized that the only hope he had of overcoming sin in his life and overcoming the hindrance of sin was Jesus

[15 : 43] Christ come back to Hebrews 12 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 this word race is the Greek agon agon and we get our word agony from it all makes sense to me as I was studying this I'm like yes race running agony 100% agree race race race race is not a thing of passive luxury but it's demanding and it's agonizing it requires self-discipline determination and perseverance it is as much a physical battle or as much a mental battle as it is a physical battle I was chatting I met last Sunday with a local representative from Fellowship of Christian Athletes

I met with he and his fiancée they're getting married next weekend actually and I found out she was a runner so I had asked them what they were involved in when they were younger in high school and she said I like to run and I laughed I'm like I don't but I was talking to her I said what is it that you love about running why do you like running so much and she said well it's the discipline it's the endurance it's the pushing yourself but it's the getting to the point where you have to mentally push through and when you do and you're on the other side of that hurdle she said it just feels good freeing you know in that regard like I forgot exactly what she said but I took note of that it's a mental and physical exercise you know and it takes all of you to do it and so just as much as in like a race and running your life as a Christian it takes all of you to participate in it it is a physical mental emotional spiritual battle day in and day out you're to run with endurance that is steady determination to keep going it means continuing even when everything in you wants to slow down or give up it's one thing to participate in a sprint

I can sprint baseball okay I did baseball growing up so we did sprints 90 feet of running at a time okay I could handle that but see it's one thing to participate in a sprint you know and able to be fast over a short distance it's a whole matter to participate in a marathon any marathon runners here ever in your life I mean you don't have to be right now nope I think we all sit in the same boat on this don't we no I know Rachel runs so you're not fooling me so it's a whole nother matter to participate in a marathon the sprinter who approaches a marathon the same way he approaches the 100 yard dash will quickly find themselves slowing down and falling behind and by the end of it they'll be in great pain will have suffered tremendously in a tremendous defeat because if you go out there to run a marathon you know and you sprint that you're not going to last very long you have to pace yourself Tony you were a runner weren't you yeah you didn't raise your hand I don't know why

I love you I don't like running but I love you but am I right though like if you're going to run distance you don't want to sprint yeah that's long distance all right yeah you don't want to be you don't want to be sprinting out and that's the Christian life and that's the way many people live the Christian life they start out fast but as the race keeps going they slow down and they give up or they just collapse it's not for me it's too hard it's because you were running out of the gate you're running from the start you didn't pace yourself Christian race is a marathon it's a long distance run and long distance runners they train for months or even years to get their bodies to the point of being able to endure the rigorous demands of running for miles on end I have a there was a guy I went to college with and I was connected with on Facebook and every now and then he'd post he'd just post a picture of he just got done with a run he'd post mileage there was one time I'm not kidding you I thought it was a typo but then I went back and looked at like the histories of things he'd posted before

I'm like no this wasn't a typo he had put 70 miles 70 miles I thought Forrest Gump was a fake movie like I didn't think it was based on a real story that way like the guy actually ran and ran across the country you know what I'm saying but I mean he did it like 70 miles and he had other ones that were like 50 and 40 and I'm like man why but he did it he did it so he could post it on Facebook no but he felt he felt accomplished in it because he pushed through so it's so important for Christians to have the same mentality in their walk with God we cannot expect a new Christian to begin acting like Jesus overnight it takes time takes trials and hardships and learning experiences to get there James chapter 1 verse 2 and 3 count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness interesting in the 1964 Olympic

[21 : 54] Games in Tokyo there was a message spelled out in lights it said the most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle the essential thing is to have fought well interesting I was intrigued when I had read that it's like wow it's not about winning or the triumph but it's the struggle in fact but you're fighting well so Christian let's shed the excess weight of sin and get in the race let's fight well as the Apostle Paul puts in Ephesians 4 let's put off the old self and put on the new self through the renewing of our minds rejecting sins entanglement lets us run our race with staying power we need to put sin off in a way and get away from it get gone don't even abide it at all so run with endurance verse one verse two look to

Jesus look to Jesus when you're running where you look is extremely important I mean this is just basic knowledge right I mean it's not about long distance runners I mean this is anybody you know if I'm running like in softball if I'm running to first base and I'm looking over this way I mean we we get after each other when when we're running the bases and we're looking at the ball in the outfield rather than the base that's ahead of us we have base coaches for a reason you know and so we do that we get after each other all the time about it don't watch the ball just run you got it because you got to see where you're going so if you're if I'm running this way and I'm looking this way I'm going to start running that way you know that's the problem we need to know where we're going it's typically detrimental to look at your feet or the runner coming up from behind you or the crowds in the stands or as I said the ball in the in the outfield the Christian race is very much like that you know considering the hall of faith it would be normal for us to look back to those great examples of faithful living but remember the ones in the in the crowd if you're running the race you don't want to be looking at the crowd you want to be looking ahead you want to be looking at the end goal and if we're looking at those if we're looking at those examples we're looking at those people who've lived their life of faith it goes against the complete the total focus of the letter of Hebrews we've spent now this is the 25th message from the book of Hebrews and we just covered a whole chapter last week you know this is the 25th message from Hebrews and throughout the entire time that we've been covering and we've been going through it we've been studying it and reading it and and being challenged by it over and over and over again the purpose of Hebrews is to exalt Christ is to present the superiority of

Jesus in all matters he's the superior he's the superior priest the superior sacrifice he's the superior everything the superior revelation that was the first if I recall right I think that was the first message we did the superior revelation God has revealed himself in so many ways but none better than when he took on human flesh and dwelt among his creation so we understand that Christianity is you know it's not a cult of hero worship we talk about Moses we talk about Abraham we talk about whomever David Gideon and we talk about these guys we see their stories and we're like wow look at that great you know that's a great act of the feet of faith there and feet of faith there and it's amazing how they walked in obedience and did this and did that but it's not about how amazing those people are it's about how amazing our God is who loves us in spite of our failures when you read about David I mean he's probably the most popular example that we know of a man after God's own heart you know the murderer and adulterer yeah that guy man after God's own heart he was not perfect but God is Jesus is so we're not here because of

Abel Moses Abraham or any of those guys or people who are son and two you know went to their grave believing the promises you know they didn't receive him the church exists because Jesus died and rose again and the only way to endure is by looking to him Jesus is the one on whom our faith is founded he's the unshakable ground remember that faith is firm assurance it's a firm foundation assurance and conviction he's the unshakable ground on which our hope and salvation rest and without him our faith is futile and we have no basis for belief I don't recall because sometimes life is a blur and my teachings a blur at times I don't recall if I shared these verses with you or if it was with the Bible study maybe it was both either way it's applicable first Corinthians 15 verses 14 and 15 if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain we are even found to be misrepresenting God because we testified about God that he raised Christ whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised very very sound logic here Paul saying look if the dead are not raised there is no resurrection of the dead that Jesus never raised and then our faith is futile our belief is in vain we're left without hope in the world we've made God out to be a liar or at least we've misrepresented him so we ourselves are liars the entire

Christian faith rests on the validity of Christ's person and work and if the dead are not raised then why do we come each month the beginning of the month and partake of this because it's purposeless so what Jesus died if he didn't raise again from the dead who cares that he died it doesn't matter but because he did it does it is important and our faith is not in vain God is true and every man a liar Jesus being the perfecter of our faith means he's the finisher or the one who completed it Christ's work was perfect when he said it is finished and when the father honored his obedience by raising him from the dead looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross the author and perfecter of our faith the writer of

[28 : 55] Hebrews made abundantly clear Jesus continues to act as our mediator and he'll succeed in bringing his people home he is coming again he's done all things necessary to secure our salvation and he will see his work through the end Philippians 1 6 for I'm confident this very thing that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus now is continuing on in that verse what I was going to do before I went back to that thought is that the author of Hebrews knows what he observes about Jesus first that he endured the cross say he's the author 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 he endured the cross to seize the blessed joy set before him the joy of our salvation the glory he receives through us being saved in his name the path to victorious joy led through the cross think about that victory and joy led through pain and suffering and shame in the eyes of the world second thing is that Jesus scorned the shame of the cross he recognized the humiliation of it but it was of no consequence to him as he considered the coming glory he looked beyond the obstacle that sounds familiar like I think I said that last week a couple times he looked beyond the obstacle to what he would gain remember in the garden of

Gethsemane he's sweating blood he's praying and his prayer is you know father if you will let this cup pass from me but not my will yours be done humanly speaking Jesus did not want to endure the cross who would it's suffering pain hardship but ultimately he said but it's not my will yours be done because he realized beyond all that was something even greater and finally Jesus sat down at the right hand of the throne of God from the pain and agony of the cross God exalted Jesus to the position of a throne Philippians 2 9 through 11 therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth in every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father he humbled himself was a servant to the point of death on a cross and God has exalted him above all else above everyone else that it's at his name people are saved in his name people will confess whether they want to or not everyone will confess every tongue confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord to the glory of God the founder so run with endurance look to Jesus and finally consider his example when we get weary in the race when our faith runs out we think God has turned his back when it seems we'll never get out of the mess that we're in and we're sure our faith cannot hold on any longer we need to read verse 3 consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary or faint hearted that's assessed carefully the endurance of Jesus he endured hostility from stubborn sinners nothing we will ever be called to endure will compare to that which he endured nothing that we will encounter in this life compares to what he endured through his suffering and death on the cross because death on the cross wasn't just a physical death but it was a separation it was a breach in fellowship between the father and the son when the father turned his back on the son martin luther says when i think of what christ suffered i am ashamed to call anything that i have endured suffering for his sake thought that was a thought to think about when i think of what christ suffered i am ashamed to call anything that i have endured suffering for his sake the believer under persecution should remember that he is only enduring what fell upon his master before him i know i shared this with you john 15 20 and 21 remember the word jesus saying remember the word that i said to you a servant is not greater than his master if they persecuted me they will also persecute you if they kept my word they will also keep yours but all these things they will do to you on account of my name because they do not know him who sent me because he endured hostility and shame and persecution we can expect the same a servant is not greater than their master we rejoice in the fact that one day we will live with jesus first thessalonians 5 9 and 10 for god has not destined us for wrath but to obtain salvation through our lord jesus christ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him so whether we are still alive when he comes back or we have died and are buried or cremated or wherever we end up after we've passed from this earthly life no matter what we will live with him it's a promise and assurance so we get to we get to look forward to heaven the presence of god forever but we can also live like him right now we do not live in our own power but in his just as on earth he did not live in his own power but in the father's go read the gospel of john over and over and over again his purpose is to do the father's will to speak the father's words it's all about pointing people to the father and his glory so think of galatians 2 20 i end on this verse and then one more point galatians 2 20 i have been crucified with christ it is no longer i who live but christ who lives in me the life i now live in the flesh i live by faith in the son of god who loved me and gave himself for me he is the author and perfecter

he is the goal he is the one we keep our eyes on we live in a time where things are getting worse there's no hope in society and there's no hope in government but there's hope in christ and we must cling to that hope i want to share this poem with you so i had three points in a poem i'm a good preacher today listen to the words of this poem i want to let go but i won't let go there are battles to fight by day and by night for god and the right and i'll never let go i want to let go but i won't let go i'm sick tis true wordied and blue and worn through and through but i won't let go i want to let go but i won't let go i will never yield what?

lie down on the field and surrender my shield? no i'll never let go i want to let go but i won't let go may this be my song mid legions of wrong oh god keep me strong that i may never let go let's pray go that i'm going to i'll let go okay i want to know