

What Does Faith Do?

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- [0 : 00] If you'd please take your Bibles and open up to Hebrews 11. I believe the Pew Bible, it's like page 1283 or something like that.
- So we started with verses 1 through 3 last week. And I have the ambition to go verses 4 through 40 today.
- We're not going to miss lunch, I don't think. I don't think the roast will burn, so we should be good. In 1882, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche made the statement, God is dead.
- And he gave a thorough explanation to the death of God in his work called The Parable of the Bad Man. I was going to take time to read that for you today, but anytime I can shave a couple minutes off, I would.
- But it's very thorough in establishing the death of God at the hands of philosophers. And from the time of that bold statement, many more writers and philosophers have contributed their pens to moving and shaping society away from God.
- [1 : 21] The death of God movement, as it's commonly referred to as, produced the idea that belief in God is impossible or meaningless in this modern world.
- And that fulfillment is found in just living a secular life. A life apart from any religious belief or acknowledgement of a God. And if there is any belief in God, it's a God of our own making and certainly not the God of the Bible.
- Yet in the midst of this overwhelming secularism that rules the thought patterns of our society, we stand as a people of faith. We reject all secularism and humanism and atheism and we hold firmly to our faith.
- We are here to worship a Christ we have never seen. Who promised us a heaven where we've never been. And we're banking our entire life in time and eternity on things that we have never seen.
- We've never seen God. We've never seen Christ. We've never seen the Holy Spirit. We've never seen heaven and no one has returned to tell us about it.
- [2 : 42] And we don't have any eyewitness accounts in our contemporary day to any of these things. And yet we build our life on these realities. Last week when we looked at Hebrews 11 verses 1 through 3, we outlined a working definition of what faith is.
- Faith is assurance and conviction. It is by definition a firm foundation and a practical response to that foundation. We do not simply float ourselves out there hoping that what we believe is true.
- We know it is true. Faith is the testimony of godly individuals. It enabled the heroes of the Old Testament to receive a good standing with God.
- They believed their god and believed that all that was revealed by him to his people through his word and Holy Spirit. Faith is an acknowledgement of our creator.
- Believing that God created the world involves us believing. That is having faith in the word of God. Faith is what leads to life and how our lives ought to be defined.

[3 : 57] Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4, the ending portion of that verse says, The righteous shall live by his faith. And in Romans chapter 1 verses 16 and 17, Paul writes, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. So I think we did well to establish the fact that faith is not a hope, but it is a firm conviction and belief that it's something that is real and true.

Now as we move through the hall of faith section of this chapter, we move from the definition of faith to answering the question, what does faith do?

What does faith accomplish ultimately? And I'm going to take a guess that probably have not heard this approach to chapter 11, but I feel is very faithful to the text and the message that is there.

In Hebrews 11, let's start reading verses 4 through 7. Verse 5, By faith, Here in these verses, we see that faith brings about deliverance from death.

[6 : 21] Faith brings about deliverance from death. We see that Abel, though he's dead, still speaks. How is it possible for a dead man to speak unless he had been delivered from death afterwards?

And isn't that what we come here in hopes and belief and talking about? When we talk about heaven and somebody dies and they go to heaven, we're talking about life after death. We're talking about being delivered from the power of death.

Enoch was delivered from experiencing death because of his walk with God. Noah was delivered from experiencing death by being commanded to build the ark. Now that is not to say that Noah didn't die.

It's not like he's still alive walking around in our midst today. But the focus is that because of his faith and trust in God, that he built this ark because God told him to.

And this is at a time that there was no extreme flooding and heavy rains. He's in the Middle East, probably not near a body of water, and here he is building this enormous boat, this water vessel, to save him and two of every kind of animal and anyone who would go on.

[7 : 44] And what happened? It was Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives, eight total people that believed the judgment was coming and the only way to escape it was on the ark.

They didn't see it, so many people didn't believe it. But Noah didn't see it, but he still trusted in God and was delivered from that judgment.

Each of these men faced the certainty of death to some degree and were delivered from it. And consider the fact that we all face death, we all face a death problem, right? And these examples should allow us to breathe a sigh of relief.

Jesus addressed this very issue with Martha after Lazarus died. I read it for us earlier this morning. In John 11, 25, Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?

[8 : 50] The reality is that those who have faith, who have a firm foundation in Jesus the Christ, are assured of life despite the reality of death. If you physically die, you will physically live.

This is a bodily resurrection. This is well attested to in Scripture. 1 Corinthians, Revelation, other passages in Scripture that talk about the resurrection of the dead.

We will physically live. And if you spiritually live, you will live forever. That is what we refer to as eternal life. Again, teachings found in Scripture, in the New Testament, consistent with what we are seeing, both in Hebrews 11 and here in John 11.

The question we must answer for ourselves, though, is the same question that Jesus posed to Martha. Do you believe this?

Do you believe this? He's not saying this in hopes that to trick her and to fool her and like, do you believe you're gonna live? Do you believe if you believe in me, you'll live?

[9 : 59] You know, he's not trying to fool her. He's saying, listen, this is the fact. You believe in me, you will live, you will have life. Do you believe that? And that is the question all of us have to answer is, do we believe that Jesus, Jesus' promise that if we believe in him, we will have life?

Even if we die physically on this earth, that we will have life beyond the grave? That's a question we all have to answer. Hebrews 11, going back to that, verses 8 through 16.

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.

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

By faith, Sarah herself received power to conceive. Even when she was past the age, she was too old to have children, folks.

[11 : 19] She was past the age since she considered him faithful who had promised, verse 12, therefore from one man, and him as good as dead.

Abe was 10 years older than her, remember? Were born descendants, as many as the stars of heaven, as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. And these all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

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.

We see here in verses 8 through 16 that faith leads to a greater destination. Faith leads to a greater destination. See, Abraham was led by God to leave his father's house to a land which God would show him.

[12 : 37] A land inhabited by the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Horites, etc., etc. All the other ites that you read about through Genesis and Exodus.

It was a land promised to him and his descendants while he was still childless. God told Abraham, he said, I'm gonna show you a land that's gonna be for you and your descendants.

And he has no children. Yet God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a multitude of people. Sarah was promised to have a child in her old age.

And even though none of these made sense, it makes no sense at all. Abe's pushing 100. Sarah's pushing 90. They shouldn't be having kids. But God made a promise that they would have kids, that they would have Isaac.

And from him, all the descendants of Israel, of Abraham, and you get, well, I'm not gonna go on the whole genealogy train there, but you get the point.

[13 : 43] They shouldn't have had kids and they did because God made it happen. They still believed God. They had faith. They had assurance and conviction that it would come to pass.

And then all these, all the physical descendants through the Old Testament, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, they all died in faith as they had lived in faith.

See, their lives were regulated by the firm conviction that God would fulfill the promises that he had given them. In death, they continued to look forward to the fulfillment of those promises made evident by the fact that Isaac and Jacob in verses 20 and 21 of Hebrews 11, which we're gonna get to here in a second, they bestowed their final blessings on their children and grandchildren.

So they understood that, hey, you know what? I didn't receive this now. And this is something that's contrary to our society, right? We want to experience the satisfaction now, right?

We don't wanna hold off. We wanna give it to me now. Give it to me. Give it to me. Give it to me. Now, if we wanna know an answer to a question, we pull out our phones and we type it in or we say, hey, Siri, this or hey, Google that, whatever.

[15 : 02] Like, we're looking up answers immediately. It's like we can, there's no delay of gratification. It's like immediate, immediate, immediate. So in that context, that understanding, when we look at Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, all who received the same promise that Abe received from God, they lived their life and then they died and they had not received that promise from him.

But it didn't nullify the promise that God made because it was to Abraham and his descendants. And so they realized, they said, okay, we didn't receive it yet.

So, you know, Isaac, when he blessed his children, Jacob, when he blessed his children, Joseph, when he blessed his children, it was all with the intent and expectation that God would fulfill his promise.

You know, at the time of his death and betrayal, Jesus assured his disciples of a greater destination. See, Abraham left his home, his father's house, and he was looking for a homeland.

But that homeland wasn't where he came from. It was where he was promised to go to. A city whose foundation and believer is God. And Jesus assured his disciples of a greater destination for them, a place that he was preparing for them.

[16 : 36] John chapter 14, verses 1 through 3, Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

Like Jesus is saying, if that was not the case, would I tell you I'm going to prepare a place for you? No, he wouldn't. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am, you may be also.

Jesus emphasized the need for his disciples to believe. You believe in God. That's what he's saying. We had this conversation Wednesday, Bible study.

We didn't come, we come away satisfied with the answer we came up with. But he's basically saying, he's like, hey, you guys, you're believing in God. Believe in me also. It's a command. It could be an imperative.

It could be indicative. It could be like, you are believing in God. You also are believing in me. We don't think so. I think it's just an imperative. It's a command. He's saying, you're believing in God. Believe also in me.

[17 : 44] Because I'm going to prepare a place for you. And when you believe in me and I go and prepare a place for you, I'm going to receive you to myself. So he emphasizes the need for his disciples to believe.

Not because they needed something simply to hope in. Remember at the end of John chapter 13, Jesus has told his disciples, my hour has come and one of you is going to betray me.

And no one knew who it was. Except Jesus. And he wasn't telling. And so you can imagine the disciples are in dismay.

Oh man, one of us? Peter, surely Lord, I will not. Yeah, yeah, you will. Three times before the rooster crows. It's going to happen. So they're in dismay.

They're distraught. Their Savior, their Messiah is going to die. His hour has come. He's going to leave. Is there hope in the world when Jesus is crucified?

[18 : 46] Well, the hope is beyond that. And so he said, believe in me. You know, they didn't need something to simply hope in to get them through their grief. faith. But it was a sure thing.

It's a firm foundation, a true faith. Jesus is saying, believe in me. I'm going to prepare a place for you. And I'm going to come and bring you along with me. It's a promise we're still waiting on.

It's a promise, nonetheless, that we need to have faith in. Let's read Hebrews 11, verses 17 through 31. By faith Abraham Abraham, that guy again.

When he was tested, offered up Isaac. And he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son as a sacrifice of whom it was said, through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

So this doesn't make sense. I'm going to pause for a second. This doesn't make sense, right? The whole life of Abraham doesn't make sense. Like, okay, God said through Isaac you're going to have all these descendants so Sarah miraculously gets pregnant, has a baby the name of Isaac, grows up, great strapping young man, awesome, you know, probably really close to dad because hey, dad waited 100 years to have one of these things, right?

[20 : 04] And he's pretty excited and getting along with his son and now God says, all right, take him up the mountain and kill him. Take your only son and sacrifice him.

I can't even begin to imagine Abraham's thought process, the difficulty, the struggle that existed. but he considered that God, verse 19, was able even to raise him from the dead from which figuratively speaking he did receive him back.

By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. By faith Jacob when dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

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

By faith Moses when he was grown up refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

[21 : 22] He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt. I'm going to read that again. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth more valuable than the treasures of Egypt for he was looking to the reward.

By faith he left Egypt not being afraid of the anger of the king for he endured as seeing him who was invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood so that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land but the Egyptians when they attempted to do the same were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. We see in this section verses 17 through 31 that faith looks beyond the obstacle.

Faith looks beyond the obstacle. So suffice it to say that Abraham's obedience to sacrifice his own son was a real obstacle to the fulfillment of God's covenant promise to him.

[22 : 43] If Isaac is the one through whom all my descendants are to come and you want me to kill him Isaac has no children you want me to kill him how are you going to fulfill that promise God?

That Abraham had a firm foundation of faith that God would raise Isaac from the dead if need be. Consider the assurance that Abraham had when he spoke to his servants.

Listen to this Genesis 22 verse 5 it's very it just like hit me yesterday whoa I didn't even think of that. 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.

I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you. He expected Isaac to come back with him.

There was no doubt in his mind or deception in his words. Abraham believed fully that he was walking up that mountain with Isaac and he was walking down that mountain with Isaac.

[24 : 02] Spurgeon says death is a great tester of man's sincerity and the great shaker down of bowing walls and tottering fences. when it came to the end of their earthly life Isaac Jacob and Joseph looked at the promise of God beyond their own death and blessed their children and their grandchildren in the confidence that it would still be fulfilled.

When we when we experience death when we when we go through that loss of life you know loss of a loved one it's overwhelming it can be it can really shake you to your core and wondering man I wonder about the eternal state I wonder what is beyond the grave I wonder if there is anything beyond the grave I wonder what's happened to this individual who's died I had the the opportunity this summer I had four four funeral services I was involved in in a month and a half time period and at each one do you know what there was grief sorrow pain and for some hopelessness that's the reality of a funeral in two weeks

I'm doing another one down in Massachusetts and I expect a lot of the same because when we face death it's a sobering reality it's something we don't think about we go day in and day out living our lives and death is not something that crosses our mind until it hits us or until the reality of it hits us somebody facing cancer uncertainty of life beyond 12 months six months whatever think of Alex Coyle who we've been praying fervently for I mean you even said it yourself didn't look good I've said it from up here didn't look good and God is working a miracle in that situation right now but man that family they're hit with the reality that death is coming but that's not the end you know like

Suburgeon says it's the great tester of man's sincerity where are you at in your relationship to God where are you at in your faith so Isaac Jacob Abram Joseph all of them recognize that yeah God made promises and we've lived our whole life and they lived long lives 100 plus years we didn't see it it must still be coming so they looked beyond the obstacle of death the fact that God will still fulfill his promise Moses' parents Amram and Jochebed were not afraid of the king's edict to kill the babies rather they believed that life was God's plan and they believed he would protect their child so when he grew up Moses chose to associate and be afflicted alongside his people the Israelites he gave up all the luxury that came with being a prince of Egypt because of the faith that he had in the promises of God furthermore faith was expressed by those who applied the blood for the Passover going back to

Exodus and the final plague and it was and faith was expressed when they crossed the Red Sea on dry ground and when they marched around Jericho for seven days before shouting at the city and seeing the walls come tumbling down and a Gentile prostitute who heard of the God of Israel knew his promises to his people chose to protect the spies and was spared death not to mention that same prostitute Rahab is in the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah faith faith faith looks beyond any obstacle we face to the God who has promised and rest assured in his word we look beyond our obstacles we look beyond the things that don't make sense we get to the Red Sea and we realize oh man there's no hope for us unless God comes through and he flat comes through for you because our faith is in God and his capability and his promises not in our ability to to to to manipulate through the world and to manipulate around an obstacle or over top an obstacle or whatever we realize that no no God's promise is true he's coming again song we could have sang coming again right he's coming again but and he made that promise 2,000 years ago it hasn't happened yet so the world will say well that was a lie he ain't coming why believe it you know what 2

[29 : 14] Peter chapter 3 says the world will say that 2 Peter 3 9 and following but what do we know that God will do he's he's patient he's waiting he's giving opportunity for people to repent and come to faith in him the time will come when he will come back it may not be in my lifetime it may not be in your lifetime but he'll be back because he made a promise we'll see it through let's finish verses 32 through 40 and what more shall I say what more could he say there's a lot for time would fail me to tell of Gideon Barak Samson Jephthah of David and Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms enforced justice obtained promises stopped the mouths of lions 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 women received back their dead by resurrection some were tortured refusing to accept release so that they might rise again to a better life others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment they were stoned they were sawn in two they were killed with the sword they went about in skins of sheep and goats destitute afflicted mistreated of whom the world was not worthy wandering about in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth and all these though commended through their faith did not receive what was promised since God had provided something better for us that apart from us they should not be made perfect fourth and final point faith enables us to endure affliction many kinds of suffering mentioned in this text points to the various forms of affliction that the people of

God have to face the word tortured that you find in here is from the Greek word *tumpan* *tumpan* *nidzo* there you go *tumpan* *nidzo* which is the same root of our English word *timpani* or kettle drum the particular torture referred to involve stretching the victim over a large drum like instrument and beating him with clubs until dead God's faithful are willing to be beaten to death rather than compromise their faith in him Jeremiah was as emotionally abused as he was physically abused and it's no wonder that he's referred to as the weeping prophet tradition holds that Isaiah was sawn in two and so on and so on the bottom line that we need to take from these verses is this God does not promise his saints deliverance from all suffering in Mark chapter 8 verse 34 in calling the crowd to him with his disciples

Jesus said to them if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me the cross by the way is always symbolic of suffering when we see the cross I think of this often when I'm up here preaching I can see that cross on the back wall all the time walk in you see it some people for me for the longest time it when I see the cross I'd get hope and joy and refreshment and like look at that but the more I'm in the word and the more I'm exposed to the truth of scripture the more I'm studying it and deep in it when I see the cross I begin to feel like I want to weep and cry because it's a symbol of suffering and it's through that suffering that Jesus endured that we have hope and joy in all those things but realizing that Jesus says for us to take up our cross and follow him he meant expect to suffer

John 15 20 if they persecuted me they will also persecute you the old testament saints did not receive what was promised but they had gained approval through their faith and their faith was not in some immediate fulfillment but in the ultimate fulfillment of the promises their salvation was based on what Christ would do and ours is based on what Christ has done their faith looked forward to promise ours looks back to a historical fact so faith while ridiculed thoroughly in our secular culture is of utmost importance to the promises of God so as we conclude our walk through the hall of faith it's very encouraging to see how these saints put on full display of their faith for us they showed us that faith brings about deliverance from death we have the promise of a bodily resurrection and eternal life in heaven they provided the example of how faith leads to that deliverance they showed us that faith leads to a greater destination we are not of this world this is not our home we are citizens of a heavenly home and they showed us that even though they were wealthy and possessed much land

Abraham could have lived anywhere had as much as he wanted he did he had a lot Abraham and Moses and Isaac and Jacob and all of them they had immense wealth but they realized that their land was not their home they looked to something greater a city constructed by God they showed us that faith looks beyond the obstacle even though hardships and uncertainties come our way we must look beyond them to the promises of God they showed us that even though they did not see the promise they still lived in obedience and even when they didn't receive the promise it didn't mean it wasn't going to happen their faith stood firm even as they passed out of this life and faith enables us to endure affliction we're not promised a life on easy street in fact we're told to expect trials and hardships and the Old Testament saints showed us that no matter what affliction we face we can continue to count on God's promises ladies and gentlemen our faith is assurance and confidence let's not give it up let's continue to hold firm and hold fast and hold steady knowing that the one who made the promise is the God who is able to see it through whether we get to see it personally or not let's pray

[36 : 11] Father God I thank you for your word thank you for this time wow what a text of scripture Lord what lessons to learn I just pray Father that if there's any doubt in our minds about our faith there's any question wondering what promises you have indeed made Lord I pray that we would tackle them head on Lord you call us to believe in Jesus for salvation to repent and be washed for the forgiveness of sins Lord I just pray that our faith would stand firm that we would know without a shadow of doubt that we know Jesus Christ as our savior and that through that knowledge and through that faith and belief and that firm confidence and assurance that we have eternal life we are born again Lord I just pray that we're not sure that we'd make sure that today we love you Lord thank you for this time to share just pray bless us as we go from here as we sing this final song together amen